

Epipactis purpurata Sm.

Violet Helleborine

Native

GB & England: Least Concern

VC5 Lost; VC6 Rare

A perennial orchid of woodlands on calcareous soils or clay-with-flint deposits, usually found under beech. In VC5, only recorded from a wood near Quantock Lodge [ST13] by H.S. Thompson in 1889 (specimen in **BIRM**, see <http://herbariaunited.org/specimen/255577/>). In VC6 first found by Rob Randall at Hunstrete in 1981, growing under limes and hornbeams. Numbers at this site are variable, with 27 flowering spikes recorded in 1997, only 11 in 2006 and 31 in 2008, 40 in 2015, 35 in 2016 and about 40 in 2019. Plants found at Wooscombe Bottom and Dowlings Wood, believed to be this species, have been determined as *E. helleborine* (Rich Mielcarek, pers. comm.): the site at Hunstrete remains the only currently known site in Somerset. *Epipactis purpurata* is largely restricted to southern England and the Midlands. It declined before 1930, probably as a result of woodland clearance, but is easily overlooked. In Somerset this species is close to the western edge of its range.

VC6

Hunstrete

ST644622

2019

RGM

c.40 plants [under trees N of fishing lakes]



Epipactis purpurata at Hunstrete (2008). Photo: HJC