

***Agrostis curtisii* Kerguélen**

Bristle Bent

Native

GB & England: Least Concern

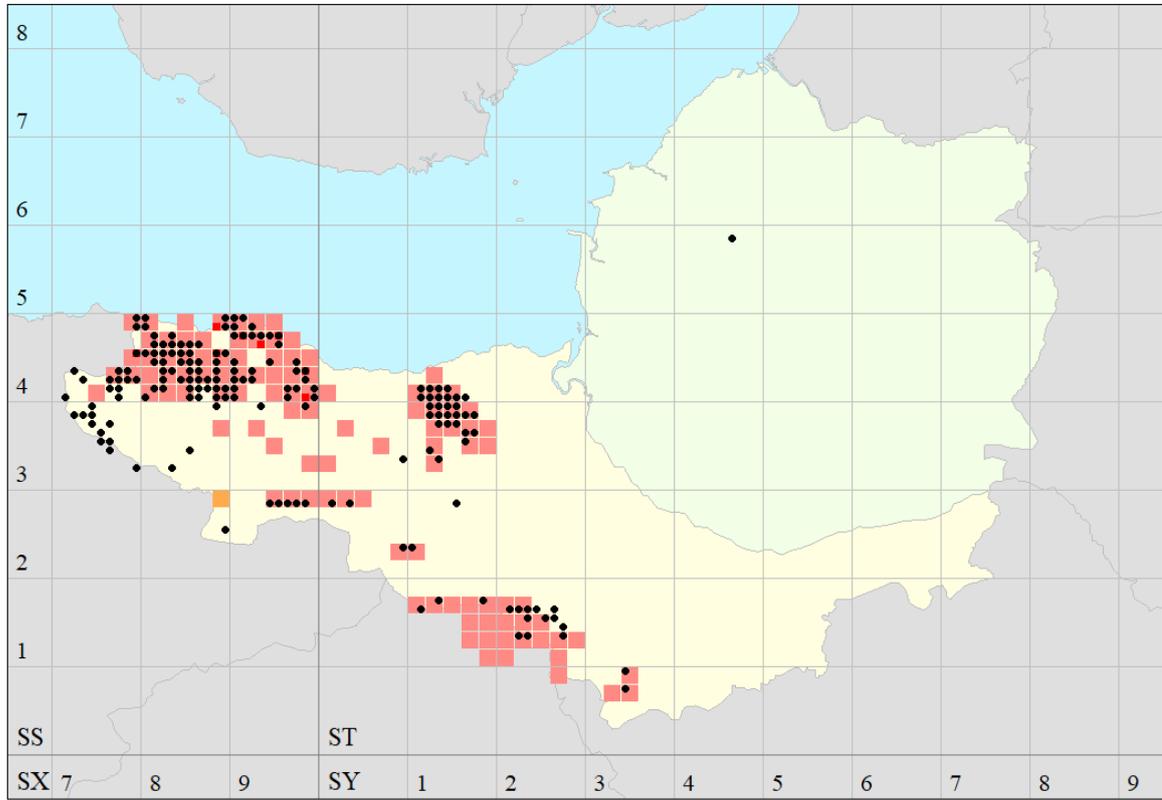
VC5 Not Scarce; VC6 Rare

A densely tufted perennial grass of poor acid soils, on dry sandy or peaty heathland, dry open woodland and heathy banks. In VC5, known to Murray (1896) on Exmoor, the Quantocks and the Blackdown Hills. Marshall (1914) added records for Crowcombe Heathfield (just west of the Quantock Hills) and for a roadside bank near Chard Common; Roe (1981) added Langford Heathfield. Green *et al.* (1997) recorded this grass as “Locally abundant on Exmoor, the Quantock and Blackdown hills where it is often the dominant grass. Away from these three main areas it is also found on a few isolated heaths, moors and dry hedge banks.” This perfectly describes the current situation, with a few additional sites found since then: Briggins Moor (SS8925), just south of the Exmoor National Park, in 2014; Willett Hill (ST0943) in 2018; and Ash Prior’s Common (ST1528), where fifteen clumps were found in 2000 and over 70 clumps were recorded in 2012. As described by D.A. Pearman (in Preston *et al.*, 2002) this grass is usually found as scattered plants, but can seed prolifically into burnt or disturbed ground: this was observed on Hurlstone Point in August 2008, where swathes of this species dominated a burnt hillside. In VC6, *Agrostis curtisii* was unknown until September 2008, when a few small tufts were discovered by Liz McDonnell at the side of a wide path on Black Down, an outcrop of Devonian Old Red Sandstone and the highest point of the Mendips. This is still the only known site for VC6. *Agrostis curtisii* is found in southern and southwest England and in South Wales. D.A. Pearman ((in Preston *et al.*, 2002) noted that it had been lost from some sites at the edge of its range, yet colonised others: indeed, its range extended by 60km when it was found in Oxfordshire in 2007 (Erskine *et al.*, 2018). This situation is mirrored in Somerset, where it appears to have been lost from a few sites, found at some new sites, and extended its range dramatically when discovered on Black Down.



Agrostis curtisii on Black Down, Mendip (2008). Photo HJC

VC6					
Black Down		ST46935807	2008	EJMcD	A few small tufts on E side of main path
Black Down		ST46925807	2011	SRPG	4 large and several small pl on E side of path



Distribution of *Agrostis curtisii* in Somerset mapped using MapMate. Black dots: post-2000 records; pink squares: 1987-1999; sepia squares: pre-1987 records



Swathes of *Agrostis curtisii* at Hurlestone Point (2008). Photo: HJC