

## ***Scutellaria altissima* L.**

## **Somerset Skullcap**

Neophyte

VC5 Rare; VC6 Rare

A perennial herb of woodlands and hedgerows, native to southeast Europe, reaching Hungary and Galicia in the northwest. In Britain, this species was first discovered as a garden escape in Somerset in 1929, hence its accepted English name. Initially the plants were thought to be *S. columnae*; they were re-determined as *S. altissima* by A. Melderis (1958). In VC5 found in 2022 by Ro FitzGerald, Jeanne Webb and S. Austin at Currypool Mills, self-sown in cracks in concrete. In VC6, first recorded in a wooded valley near Mells, by H. Trevor Baker in 1929. Here in the Wadbury Valley it is found both sides of the stream, being particularly abundant on the north side, along an old wall and extending far up the rocky wooded slope behind it. This deeply incised valley was formerly intensively industrialised, the site of Fussell's iron works and later a water-powered sawmill (Farrant, 2008). In 2017 *Scutellaria altissima* was found by Helena Crouch and Dave Green under trees in Locksbrook Cemetery in Bath and on stonework of the Kennet & Avon Canal at Claverton. Long naturalised in Somerset, this pretty neophyte has since been found in at least 20 other vice-counties in England and Scotland.

### **VC5**

Currypool Mills	ST23173830	2022	RFitzG, JW, SA	Self-sown in cracks in concrete by bridge
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### **VC6**

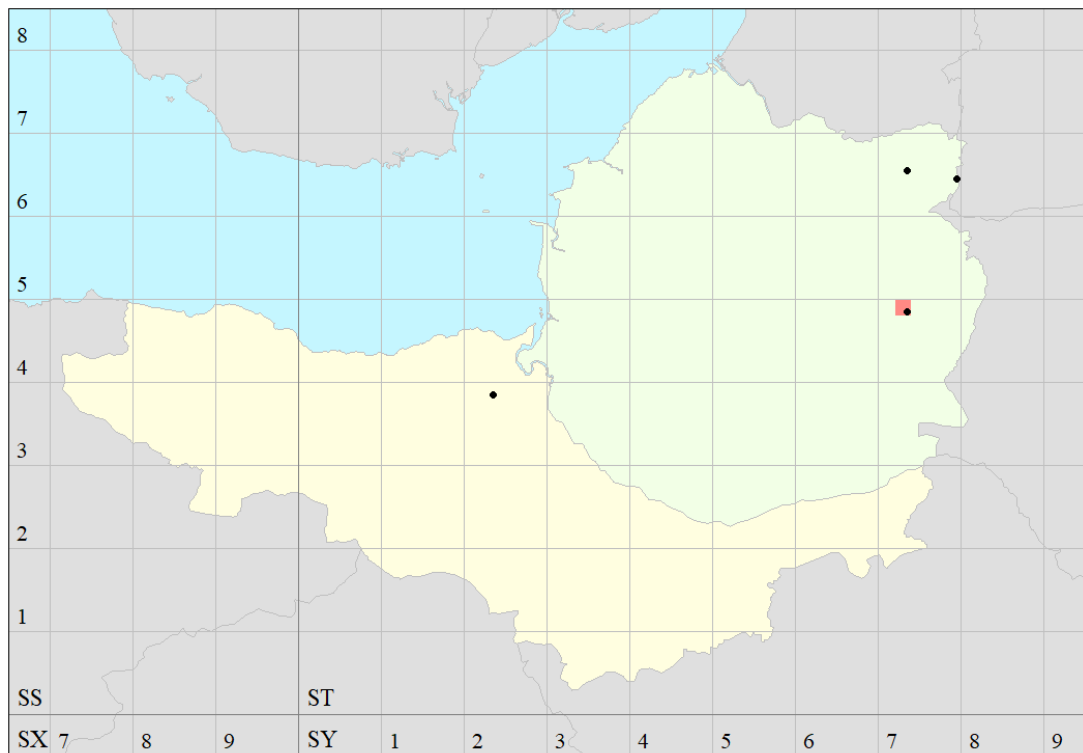
Wadbury Valley	ST73524881	2017	HJC, GHR	Large patch on bank opposite small building
Wadbury Valley	ST73714879	2017	HJC, GHR	Large patch on bank on S side of stream
Wadbury Valley	ST737488	2017	HJC, GHR	Abundant on old wall and on slopes above
Bath	ST73216528	2017	HJC, DEG	1 clump under trees in Locksbrook Cemetery
Claverton	ST79066420	2017	HJC, DEG	1 plant on stonework of canal



*Scutellaria altissima* in the Wadbury Valley (2012). Photo: HJC



*Scutellaria altissima* in Locksbrook Cemetery (2017). Photo: HJC



Distribution of *Scutellaria altissima* in Somerset, mapped using MapMate. Black dots are post-2000 records; red squares are 1987-1999 records