

***Scirpoides holoschoenus* (L.) Soják**

Round-headed Club-rush

Native

GB & England: Vulnerable

UKBAP/Section 41

GB Rare

VC5 Extinct; VC6 Rare

A tall rhizomatous perennial herb, found in damp slacks and sandy hollows amongst sand dunes by the sea. Now restricted to two native locations in Britain: Braunton Burrows in Devon and Berrow Dunes in Somerset. First noted as a British plant by Ray in his “*Historia Plantarum Generalis*” of 1688, but although he gave Somerset as its locality, he later wrote that it had been “found by Mr. Stephens in Brounton Boroughs in Devonshire”. In the third edition of Ray’s “*Synopsis Methodica Stirpium Britannicarum*”, published in 1724 after his death, a note was added that “it also grows in Somerset and Hantshire”. W. Sole, in his list of species published in Collinson (1791), included this species, giving its locality as “near the sea-side below Watchet” (VC5). During the early nineteenth century, several specimens were collected and labelled “Watchet”, the last distributed in 1849 by the Edinburgh Botanical Society (White, 1912). It is not known when it became extinct here, but Murray (1896) had never seen it. In 1896, Mrs E.S. Gregory found a small solitary clump of *Scirpoides holoschoenus* on sands near Berrow (VC6). White (1912) described the clump as about fifteen inches (less than 40cm) across, commenting that it had not increased since it was found. He listed various “rude experiences” which had befallen it: being chopped down with a billhook, smashed by the wheels of a heavy wagon, trampled by a horse and effectively threshed by its dragging chain, and inundated by the sea. Thankfully, when the golf course was extended, the club officials were sympathetic and for the last century the solitary patch has remained; since 1952 the site has been part of Berrow Dunes SSSI. Attempts in 1927 to introduce further plants by sowing seed from Braunton Burrows were not successful (Miller, 1933). In Somerset, this species is at the more easterly of its two native sites; it also occurs as an alien at a few locations in southern England, South Wales and Northern Ireland.

VC6

Berrow Dunes SSSI ST29185250 2014 HJC, FJR Patch 4m diameter, in reedbed N of pond



Scirpoides holoschoenus at Berrow Dunes (2009). Photo: HJC.