

# Annual Review 2009



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**New books**

BSBI handbooks: No. 12 *Fumitories of Britain and Ireland*, No. 13 *Grasses of the British Isles*. John Poland in association with BSBI: *The Vegetative Key to the British Flora*.

**Conferences and Field-meetings**

"Alien Trees and Shrubs", Berwick-upon-Tweed; Scottish Annual Meeting, Perth; Exhibition Meeting, London. Forty field-meetings (over 65 days) and two overseas tours.

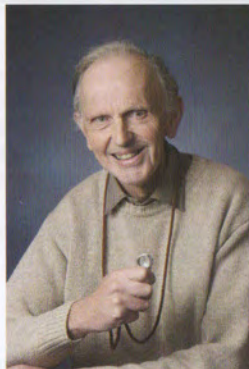
**Training**

Nine of the field meetings were planned with beginners and learners especially in mind, with experienced botanists on hand to help. Three events took place for BSBI Field Identification Skills Certificates (FISCs).



Thank you to Jim McIntosh, Richard Pryce, Kevin Walker and Lynne Farrell for photographs

The Society should celebrate two landmark publications of 2009. John Poland and Eric Clement's *The Vegetative Key to the British Flora* has taken the concept of the vegetative identification of plants to a new level, achieving something that many botanists thought could not be done in a practical way. Tom Cope and Alan Gray's *Grasses of the British Isles*, BSBI handbook No. 13, takes the study of grasses a long way forward along the road way-marked by Charles Hubbard half-a-century earlier. If you have not done so already, buy them and read them, but spare a moment also to think how BSBI has contributed to them as a Society.



BSBI can take pride in having fostered the talent of John Poland, introducing him to those botanists who could best help him, providing him with plant specimens, supporting his work through BSBI's database resources and the vice-county network and, not least, by providing an important market for the book. The authors have generously reciprocated by displaying details of BSBI in their book. In contrast, while *Grasses* is a BSBI publication, it has only been possible because of the massive voluntary commitment of the authors, in the case of Tom Cope supplemented by paid time courtesy of his employers, the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and by access to their collections. The result is

that the work of two top professionals has been brought to BSBI members and the botanical public at an exceedingly modest cover price.

There has been much else to be grateful for, as you will read in this *Annual Review*, and the Society moves into the new decade in confident mood with an ability to offer valuable service.

*Michael Braithwaite*

March 2010

### **BSBI Website [www.bsbi.org.uk](http://www.bsbi.org.uk)**

The BSBI website has become a key element in how the Society communicates its work not only to its members but to a far wider audience, and it is all for-free. Some of the main features are up-to-date distribution maps of the British flora at hectad and tetrad scales and digitised back numbers of BSBI Journals. All readers of this *Review* are urged to explore the website's resources. Grateful thanks go to Alex Lockton and the team of people he organises to maintain all the various datasets that are behind the information one sees on the screen.



## BSBI Plant Unit: Botanical Research, Survey and Interpretation

### Recording Strategy 2010-2020

Following consultation with vice-county recorders, a forward Recording Strategy has been drafted for a suite of BSBI projects. This is now being discussed with partner organisations and will be issued in spring 2010 with detailed guidance to follow. One element in this strategy is to be a new surveillance scheme, which may be worked alongside a reiteration of BSBI Local Change. The new scheme is being developed under JNCC contract in close collaboration with Plantlife, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the British Trust for Ornithology.

### Threatened Plants Project

2009 was the second year of fieldwork for this project. Of the 718 threatened plant populations surveyed in 2008 only 62% were refound. The ten species surveyed in 2009 were Rare Spring-sedge (*Carex ericetorum*), Narrow-leaved Helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*), Frog Orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*), Maiden Pink (*Dianthus deltoides*), Copse-bindweed (*Fallopia dumetorum*), Heath Cudweed (*Gnaphalium sylvaticum*), Opposite-leaved Pondweed (*Groenlandia densa*), Crested Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum cristatum*), Tubular Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*) and Wood Bitter-vetch (*Vicia orobus*). The response was again excellent with around 650 population reports received. A further ten species will be surveyed in 2010.



### Data Handling

The BSBI MapMate database is slowing down under its load of six million plant distribution records, and this is only a fraction of BSBI's holdings. So a database capable of handling all BSBI's distribution records adequately has become essential for the work of the Plant Unit and development work on such a "Big BSBI Database" is progressing under contract from BSBI. Meanwhile the Plant Unit is developing "best practice" guidelines for vascular plant records submitted to the NBN Gateway.

### Research Grants

Science and Research Committee awarded just under £3,000 in grants to five applicants for research into the taxonomy of Common Broomrape (*Orobanche minor*); seed production in sedges; the status of Northern Spike-rush (*Eleocharis mammillata*); mycorrhizal diversity in Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*); and a visit to Dublin to study brambles (*Rubus*).

During 2009 over 15,000 herbarium specimens were documented: this represents a substantial and very much appreciated contribution of time and expertise by many volunteers. All data generated by the project is freely accessible on the website, and has contributed to other projects (for example a recent update to the BSBI maps scheme database included 5,460 records from herbaria@home). Almost 50,000 herbarium sheets have now been documented, but there are thousands more images photographed by Tom Humphrey yet to be worked on.

Thanks to Allan Hamerschlag's legacy, BSBI continues to provide training grants, bursaries and conference grants to botanists who are starting or enhancing their careers, or wishing to improve their botanical recording skills for voluntary recording. In 2009 the Society awarded 37 grants and bursaries towards short identification courses, conference costs and tuition fees, amounting to more than £7,000.

The Field Identification Skills Certificates (FISCs) ran twice in 2009 with two "open" events being fully booked and one event held for Leicester botany students. There are to be two more FISC events in 2010 and there are now over 100 botanists who have been awarded a FISC.

Close work between Meetings Committee and Training and Education has allowed us to continue to provide field-based Training Meetings for members and their guests, where emphasis has been placed on learning identification of particular habitat or taxonomic groups. In 2009 two committee members attended the BSBI Irish AGM and talked about the training and education work of the BSBI in the hope of expanding botanical training activities in Northern Ireland and the Republic.



## Encouraging an Interest in Plants

### England and Overseas

Thirteen field meetings took place in England, with two overseas tours: to the Paramos of Northern Spain and to some of the protected areas in Transylvania, Romania.

The Spring Conference, with the theme of "Alien Trees and Shrubs", was held at Berwick-on-Tweed. James Cullen presented an important paper on the taxonomy of *Rhododendron ponticum* indicating the hybrid origin of the all-too-familiar British plant. The venue of Berwick Guild Hall was delightful and many local naturalists joined the BSBI members, some taking the party on tours of this attractive town and its walls. Delegates were also treated to a short performance on the Northumberland pipes after dinner. Visits to a commercial nursery, forestry areas and local farmland proved stimulating and provided topics for further discussion.

In the autumn, the Annual Exhibition Meeting was held at Baden Powell House, London, with the theme of "Floras of Small Areas". The introduction of a theme gave cohesion to the event, and attracted a large numbers of participants and exhibits.

Books published by members included Trevor James's *Flora of Hertfordshire* and Vol. 3 of Sell & Murrell's *Flora of Great Britain and Ireland*.

### Wales

The Countryside Council for Wales have now agreed to part-fund a Welsh Officer post, along similar lines to that of the Scottish Officer. Funding for the post will form part of a Strategic Partnership grant to be negotiated during 2010. Matching funding will be enabled by a generous donation.

Close cooperation continues with CCW and the Welsh Assembly Government, with Diana Reynolds, WAG's Head of Biodiversity, continuing to recognise the important and unique contribution that BSBI members make to conservation in Wales in support of the statutory bodies.

Welsh BSBI Recorders and members have maintained their support of Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnerships and Local Record Centres thereby feeding into the conservation of their local floras. Their contributions and generous donation of time often tend to be overlooked and taken for granted by these professionals who have come to rely on the unrivalled expertise that volunteer BSBI experts are able to offer.

There has also been an ongoing close and cooperative association with Plantlife in Wales. BSBI Recorders and members have contributed data to an investigation of invasive alien plants as well as further research into Welsh "Red Data" species, both of which feed into WAG's conservation strategies.

Nine field meetings were organised throughout Wales and continue to embrace species recording and site monitoring as well as training.



The AGM was held at the Royal Welsh Showground at Builth Wells with "Meadows" being the principal theme. The associated field excursions to the Elan Valley hay meadows were particularly memorable with many species at their flowering best, made all the better by the sunny weather.

Two issues of the *Welsh Bulletin* were produced during the year with the new team bringing to it a new, attractive appearance. The team members continue the BSBI's long association with the National Museum and Gallery of Wales which provides plant identification and curatorial services as well as *Bulletin* production.

### Scotland

A residential workshop was held at Kindrogan in early April to promote County Rare Plant Registers (CRPRs) in Scotland. Twenty-eight recorders attended and the BSBI guidelines on the production of Rare Plant Registers are being revised in the light of this event. During the



year one CRPR was published, that for Angus by Barbara Hogarth, and another was updated, that for Easter Ross by Brian and Barbara Ballinger. Both are on the BSBI website. In addition Andy Amphlett published the excellent *Flora of Banffshire - an Annotated Checklist* which is available on a dedicated webpage on the BSBI website. Ken Butler and Ken Crossan published the lavishly illustrated *Wildflowers of the Northern Highlands of Scotland*.

Site Condition Monitoring continued apace in 2009 with monitoring visits by volunteers and Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer, to six far flung sites including St Cyrus, Glen Strathfarrar, Sunart and the Solway. Recorders undertook rather similar rare and scarce plant monitoring for the Threatened Plant Project. The task of Scottish recorders was eased due to only five of the selected species being widespread in Scotland.

The SNH grant-aided Computerisation Project finished its penultimate year with over 500,000 paper-based records digitised and forwarded to BRC and the NBN Gateway. As the project nears completion, attention has turned to how BSBI can find volunteers to help Recorders who are not keen, or not able, to enter their current data. The first two Recorder Assistants have been informally appointed and have begun work.

A very enjoyable week-long field-meeting was organised by Ian Strachan for recorders to survey the Corrou Estate near Roy Bridge in exchange for free accommodation. Some 7,000 records were collected and a report compiled: these will help inform conservation management of the estate. The year's eight field-meetings were very well attended. They included four educational field-meetings at various sites across Scotland and a week-long visit to Tiree, organised by Lynne Farrell, in wonderful Hebridean sunshine.

### Ireland

Paul Green received the Distinguished Recorder Award at the National Biodiversity Centre (NBDC) for the flora of County Waterford. This flora is available from the BSBI website. In 2009 Tony O'Mahony published *Wildflowers of Cork City and County*, the fruits of over 40 years' work in the county. *Irish Botanical News* 19 was published under the new editorship of Paul Green and John Wallace.

Nine field meetings were held in 2009, including two to learn more of notable orchid populations to assist with ongoing projects in Ireland on that family. The Committee for Ireland is keen to develop its field programme to include a training and education element, and good contacts have been made with Training and Education Committee to take this forward.

The NBDC has been assembling a "vegetation" database, based mainly on surveys carried out for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The Centre has now extracted site-based plant records from this database and is preparing to transfer them firstly to individual vice-county recorders and then to the general BSBI database.

The AGM was held in the Lough Neagh Discovery and Conference Centre. Pondweeds and Willows proved challenging subjects during the morning walk, and in the afternoon there was a presentation and discussion on Field Identification Skill Certificates, plus a light-hearted talk by Brian Rushton on his love of the natural world.





### Journals

*BSBI News* and *Watsonia* remain the two main journals of the Society. There is a third publication, *BSBI Recorder*, which has a limited circulation to vice-county recorders. The Committee has been working towards a restructuring of these journals whilst ensuring that they maintain their prime purpose which is to publish material of interest to all members of the Society, both amateur and academic botanists. BSBI plans to replace *Watsonia* with a journal aimed at attaining an "Impact Factor" to encourage the flow of papers from a wider pool of scientific study than at present. It is expected that the new journal will be launched in 2011 or 2012. BSBI also aspires to bring articles that appear in *BSBI Recorder* to a wider readership.

Thanks are due to the hard-working editors. Martin Sanford and his very small team of editors continue to maintain the high standard in *Watsonia* and all members are deeply indebted to Trevor James and Gwynn Ellis for the three editions of *BSBI News* published. Thanks are also due to Alex Lockton for the stimulating *BSBI Recorder*.

### Books

This year has seen the culmination of many years' work with the publication of *Grasses of the British Isles* by Tom Cope and Alan Gray with illustrations by Margaret Tebbs. The Society would like to thank all three for their dedicated work over the years, and its thanks are also due to Paul Ashton, Handbooks Editor, for his work in steering it through to publication. The book has been received to critical acclaim and will, along with the sedges handbook, probably be the most popular of the series in the years to come. It is, incidentally, the first work in the handbook series to be published in both hard- and soft-back.

*Fumitories of Britain and Ireland* by Rose Murphy was also published during the year. The innovation brought to the series in this work is the use of coloured photographs and BSBI hopes that this will become a regular feature of future handbooks. Thanks are due to the author and to Ian Bennallick and Alex Lockton for their assistance and also to Tim Rich who edited the book and steered it through to publication.

A third work appeared during the year which was not an official BSBI publication but the authors are Society members and the Committee encouraged the work from its inception. As many members know John Poland has been educating us over recent years about the use of vegetative characters for plant identification. With the help of Eric Clement *The Vegetative key to the British Flora* was published containing a wealth of information, never before available, and giving all field botanists a whole new way of seeing the plant world. Grateful thanks are due to John for his untiring studies over recent years.

### Summerfield Books

Paul O'Hara continues to provide members with an excellent service. By circulating a list of in-print titles and by bringing a huge variety of books to Society meetings, he ensures that members are kept informed of the latest works in the botanical world. BSBI offers him thanks for this and for ensuring that its own publications receive wide publicity in Britain and Europe and further afield.



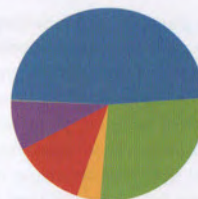
2009 resulted in a general funds surplus of a little over £22,000 against a budgeted deficit of £14,000. Savings have been made in administrative salaries to support the Plant Unit and the cost of printing BSBI's journals was over-estimated. There has also been extra income, much of it from the excellent sales of the two new BSBI handbooks, *Fumitories* and *Grasses*. Council have authorised a budget for 2010 with a projected deficit of £30,000 to allow further development of the Plant Unit including a "Big BSBI Database".

Investment income held up better than expected in 2009 and the Society's investments recovered about half the value lost in 2008. Nevertheless the Society remains vulnerable to the current bleak economic outlook.

Anthony Nixon, Honorary Treasurer

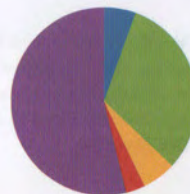


## Incoming Resources 2009



- Subscriptions & donations
- Core grants
- Legacies and development fund donations
- Investment income
- Botanical survey and interpretation
- Botanical education

## Resources Expended 2009



- Botanical education
- Botanical publications & website
- Governance costs
- Membership admin & publicity
- Botanical survey and interpretation



## SUMMARY STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES For the year ended 31st December 2009

	2009	2008
<b>Incoming Resources</b>	£	£
Voluntary Income		
Subscriptions & Donations	77,341	69,196
Core Grants	89,462	45,715
Legacies and Development Fund Donations	12,715	12,850
Investment Income	39,124	54,635
Charitable Activities Income		
Botanical Survey and Interpretation	26,510	52,195
Botanical Education	1,124	13,191
Botanical Publications and Website	78,551	23,466
	<b>324,827</b>	<b>271,248</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>		
Cost of Generating Funds		
Membership Administration and Publicity	9,956	11,374
Charitable Activities		
Botanical Survey and Interpretation	163,155	162,891
Botanical Education	17,045	31,142
Botanical Publications	94,521	58,384
Governance Costs	17,731	11,930
	<b>302,408</b>	<b>275,721</b>
<b>Net Incoming Resources</b>		
General Funds	22,409	277
Restricted Funds	10	(365)
Legacies and Development Fund Donations	-	(5,000)
	22,419	(5,088)
<b>Gains (loss) on Investments</b>	<b>161,503</b>	<b>(330,720)</b>
	<b>183,922</b>	<b>(335,808)</b>

## Summary Balance Sheet 31st December 2008

	2009	2008
	£	£
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Investments - at Market Value	1,064,904	902,801
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Stocks and Work in Progress	22,045	24,558
Debtors	36,377	26,488
Cash at Bank and on Deposit	152,078	158,703
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Creditors & Deferred Income	(35,307)	(56,375)
	<b>1,240,0971</b>	<b>1,056,175</b>
<b>Represented By</b>		
Endowment Funds	308,381	264,049
Restricted Income Funds	6,727	6,717
Allan Hamerschlag Fund	618,958	525,034
Other Unrestricted Income Funds	306,031	260,375
	<b>1,240,097</b>	<b>1,056,175</b>

The Summary Accounts are extracted from draft full Annual Accounts that were reviewed by Council on 18 March 2009 and have been verified by the independent examiner. A copy of the full Annual Report and Accounts will be supplied on request to the Hon. Treasurer, when the final accounts become available. The full Annual Report and Accounts will be submitted to the Charity Commission after being laid before the Annual General Meeting.

## Thank you

The Society gratefully acknowledges grants from the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage. The Society wishes to thank all those members who have served, both nationally and regionally, as officers, on committees, as editors and indexers, in leading and arranging meetings and as assistant secretaries and as minutes; also members who have participated in surveys, prepared reports and read papers. BSBI would especially like to thank its network of Vice-county Recorders and Referees which underpins so much of its work. BSBI has Recorders for each of the 153 main units into which naturalists have traditionally divided Britain and Ireland. With subdivisions such as the Isles of Scilly and the individual Channel Islands and with joint recorders for some counties, this encompasses about 180 members. To support all members engaged in recording BSBI has a team of 115 referees covering many of the more taxing genera. Many of these volunteers have served for very many years, and, whilst these are only a selection, the Society notes the retirement of Goronwy Wynne (Flints, 1963), Eric Philp (Kent, 1970) and Gillian & Ken Beckett (Norfolk, 1988).

Without the contribution of all these the work of the Society could not have been possible, for with the exception of those who work for the society within grant-aided projects, every other duty is performed by volunteers.

BSBI is indebted for the continued support from its many partners:

Armagh County Museum  
Berwick-upon-Tweed Corporation Trustees (conference venue)  
Biological Records Centre, Wallingford  
Countryside Council for Wales  
The Field Studies Council (in particular Preston Montford Field Centre)  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee  
Linnean Society of London  
National Biodiversity Data Centre, Waterford  
National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin  
Natural England  
Natural History Museum, London  
Plantlife International  
Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh  
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew  
Royal Welsh Agricultural Society  
Scottish Natural Heritage  
Society of Antiquaries, London  
Summerfield Books  
The National Museums and Galleries of Wales  
Ulster Museum, Belfast  
University of Birmingham  
University of Leicester

The Society is also very grateful to its staff who have continued to support its volunteer network and to promote BSBI at all times: Kevin Walker, Alex Lockton, Bob Ellis, Jim McIntosh, Quentin Groom and Alan Hale.

**The Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI)** is open to anyone who is interested in the flora of Britain and Ireland. From its earliest days (1836) it has welcomed both professional and amateur members. BSBI is one of the world's largest contributors of biological records, providing over ten million items of data to the Vascular Plants Database. The Society's notable recent achievements include The New Atlas of the British and Irish flora (2002). Jointly with the Biological Records Centre, it was the data provider underpinning the new Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain (2005). The Society maintains several major databases, covering a total of 9,700 plant species. All this activity is coordinated by 180 "Vice-county Recorders" and a network of Referees distributed across Britain and Ireland. It has 2,977 members and five full or part-time paid staff aided by others on small contracts.

BSBI's key objectives are:

- promoting the study of, and interest in, the British and Irish vascular plant and charophyte flora
- supporting, encouraging, conducting and participating in research into the taxonomy, ecology, biogeography and conservation of the British and Irish flora
- co-operating with continental and other botanists in matters of mutual interest and concern.



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