Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland
Scottish VCR Newsletter, Winter 2014

Scottish Recorders

It is sad to report that two of our long-serving Recorders are retiring at the end of the year; Ken Butler in Caithness and Michael Braithwaite in Berwickshire – both after 36 years in post!

Michael has recently completed the re-survey required for Atlas 2020 (though more could always be done) and has published the results as a Site Register and as a Flora. He says he has enjoyed it all hugely but now finds the long commute to the vice-county difficult, and it seemed a good time to stop. He plans to botanise around Hawick in 2015.

Meanwhile Ken has never really regained full fitness after his stroke three years ago. He cannot do any of the work in remote places that is needed and he believes now would be a good time to step down with five field seasons to complete coverage for Atlas 2020. He is also leaving the VC in fine fettle, with all records digitised and a Rare Plant Register.

Both posts will be listed as 'Vacant' in the 2015 Year Book and we will advertise the Vacancies in the forthcoming BSBI News. Both Recorders have kindly agreed to 'hold the fort' until new appointments can be made. The BSBI is *deeply grateful* to the remarkable contributions they have made over the past three and a half decades.
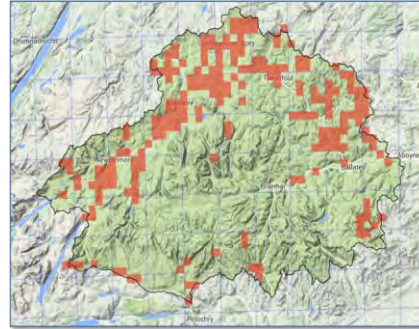
BSBI Scottish Officer

It's almost exactly ten years since my appointment as Scottish Officer. Although I'm employed by the BSBI, they only fund 50% of the project costs. The balance largely comes from SNH and their funding contribution expired a month ago. However I'm pleased to report that I've received a draft funding offer from SNH and expect a finalised offer shortly. Whilst the offer is less than bid for, it's more than we have been receiving in recent years. Unusually the term is three years four months, to bring it into line with financial years. In these financially straitened times this support is better than we could have reasonably hoped for and much appreciated. A significant contribution also comes from RBGE by way of the provision of subsidised office facilities.

Support for Recorders in North-East Scotland

Andy Amphlett kindly volunteered to work one day a week for the BSBI in 2014 – in addition to his normal Recorder duties in Banffshire. His voluntary work involves supporting Recorders and promoting data collection & flow in the North-East of Scotland. He has done some great work in 2014 including:

- Developing DDb User guidance – now on the [BSBI website](#) & DDb Message Board.
- Providing Recorder support (visits, phonecalls and emails) to recorders in five VCs.

- The collection of almost 6,000 high resolution records in Easterness for Atlas 2020
- Developing and managing a project to promote recording in often remote parts of the Cairngorm National Park, involving securing £2,000 from the CNP Authority to support BSBI recorders' travel expenses. More than 19,500 records have been received and incorporated in the DDb via Recorders' databases. Here's a map showing the tetrads that we recorded in.

Andy retires from his day job with the RSPB at the end of March 2015 and is keen to do even more voluntary work for the BSBI. He particularly likes working with data and datasets. So he might be able to help folk with data issues (such as exporting, importing, validation, advice on using MapMate & the DDb etc) beyond the north-east of Scotland. However in the first instance please come to me. We are very grateful to Andy.

The BSBI Database (DDb)

Talking about the DDb, if you haven't already registered to use the BSBI DDb, I cannot recommend it highly enough. It is very simple to use and truly amazing. Give it a go! Also take a look at DDb Message Board and the grid reference look-up Tool – which plots the grid reference on an OS 1:50k map and tells you which VC it is in. (You don't need to login to use these).

The DDb is updated from the MapMate Hub every 2 to 3 weeks. Generally there will be more records on the DDb than in locally-held databases like MapMate for any given vice-county. That is not to downplay the importance of MapMate of course. It is **the** way we recommend Recorders enter data and contribute their records to the Hub & DDb. Records held in MapMate and other systems that are not forwarded to the Hub / DDb will not be available to other users of the DDb. So please do consider adopting MapMate - if you haven't already!

Scottish Statistics from the DDb

Here are some interesting stats from the DDb - as of 12th December:
- 394,785 Scottish records had been added to the DDb in 2014.
- Of these, 124,563 records were new records made in 2014 and came from 29 VCs
- 116,702 of the new 2014 records came via MapMate (94%).
- In 2014, 1334 records of red list taxa and 1444 records of nationally rare or nationally scarce taxa were added to the DDb.
- The hectad with the most taxa recorded in 2014 was NT29, in Fife, with 442 taxa.
- Of the 116,702 records from MapMate, only 6 have a mismatch between the site grid reference and the vice-county (incredible!).
- 99.7% of records made in 2014, and on the DDb were at tetrad precision or better
- 68% of records made in 2014 were at monad precision or better.
- 1590 species and hybrids were recorded in Scotland in 2014

Atlas 2020 – Taking Stock

It would be great if you'd make a real push to get your backlog of records digitised and sent through to the MapMate hub by the 31 January. We will then be able to take stock of where we are at – essential for planning the final five years of Atlas 2020. To ensure that none of your records have gone astray we recommend you periodically Reset Sync Record with the hub then Synch ALL your records through. Would everyone please do that now? (Instructions appended). Also please make sure you receive the confirmation of receipt email entitled "Sync Received OK' from 2qg to [your cuk]" from Bob Ellis (bob@elymus.demon.co.uk) and check with him if it doesn't arrive.

Would Recorders who do not use MapMate please make their usual alternative arrangements to supply the hub by that date?

Assessing Atlas 2020 Coverage

Andy and I have improved and updated the Analysis worksheet that I mentioned in my last Newsletter which can be used to help you take stock. It is available on the BSBI DDb Message Board and supersedes all previous versions (which no longer work due to changes to the BRC website).

Specifically it calculates the percentage of taxa recorded at tetrad or better resolution since 2000 against all taxa ever recorded for each tetrad. It now allows the user to vary three input parameters. The minimum number of species per tetrad (default 100); the proportion of species recorded since 2000 (default 0.75, ie 75%); and the number of tetrads to sample per full hectad (default 5).

Full instructions with links to the DDb queries are included. Once you get your dataset up to date and update the DDb with it, I'd encourage you to try it out. It is excellent for identifying where the hectad and tetrad gaps are in your VC and great for planning the final five field seasons of Atlas 2020. If you need help to use it, then please just ask.

Survey a square for Atlas 2020!

Recorders in many parts of Scotland will need all the help they can get from the membership to achieve good hectad coverage for Atlas 2020. An interesting initiative to engage members is *Survey a Square for Atlas 2020* (linked from the Atlas 2020 page). A selection of under-recorded squares that members might record is shown on a zoom-able map of the British Isles. When you click on a square, you can choose to see a detailed OS map of the monad or tetrad along with a list of previous records for it, or to see photos taken in the square (useful to give you a feel for the habitats and landscape).

There are a few things recorders should note about this initiative. We have tried to *suggest* squares *across* the country. So some are obviously more under-recorded than others! Also if recorders would like to come up with a different set of suggested squares – we would be delighted to substitute our suggested set of squares with yours. You will note that we strongly recommend that any member planning to record in a Vice-county gets in touch with the Recorder first to ensure the area they plan to visit is where help is needed most and so that they adopt the local recording method (monads or tetrads, etc).

MapMate not synching?

When you connect to the MapMate server to send (or receive) a synch file, a box saying "Welcome to the MapMate web-server" pops up in the bottom right corner accompanied with a slap-crunch noise (assuming sound is enabled). However if that does not happen or if the box appears and the synch starts but there is then a long pause and you are told 'synch failed or stopped by user', one of the most frequent problems is that your computer's firewall may have intervened to prevent the connection. It is always worth *temporarily* disabling your firewall, if your security software permits this, and then trying to synch, just to check whether that is the problem.

MapMate have recently changed the IP Address for their services. Typically you need do nothing unless you have set a Firewall rule - in which case you will need to change the friendly IP address for MapMate to **88.208.192.96**. On some recent McAfee versions, under certain providers, MapMate is blocked by default and you need to add a new friendly IP – if you need help to do this let me know.

What is the point of entering detailed grid references in the MapMate site field?
(From a Recorder who prefers to include them in the comments field!)

The whole point of collecting high resolution records is lost (or at least not easily found!) if those detailed grid references are in the Comments field and not in the Site field. It means they cannot be readily analyzed or mapped at anything other than the given tetrad or monad resolution. If people search MapMate or the BSBI DDb for records with detailed grid references for any reason (e.g. to try and refind) it is likely that it will be overlooked if they are buried in the comments field.

If, for example, a DDb user wants to find records from, or a species list for, a nature reserve or SSSI, or a site where development is proposed, the DDb can use powerful GIS based tools to find the records. But it cannot make use of more detailed grid refs in the comments field, so these are effectively 'lost'. With more than 38 million records (and rapidly growing) there are just far too many records to look for and process manually. If altitudes of plant records interests you, the DDB can automatically calculate the altitude of any records, but again, only using the grid ref in the site field, not any given in the Comments.

So we strongly recommend that detailed grid references are **never** put in Comments fields. Whack in all your records at monad or tetrad resolution then edit those that you want to give them a higher resolution, using the Site@GR approach. If you have more than one detailed grid ref for a species in the square, then Save as Common Settings, open a new Data Entry window, Get Common Settings, re- enter date and the additional grid reference by amending the existing into a new Site@GR.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, there is good guidance on Data Entry on the BSBI website. There is also good guidance on entering data into MapMate (and much else) on the BSBI MapMate support website.

Importing records into MapMate

I hesitate to encourage folk to enter records using EXCEL for importing into MapMate or other recording systems as it bypasses all the checks that are done during data entry. They then have to be done tediously while importing. However there is a place for it; for example when extracting records from reports or when receiving records from others, and they might be persuaded to provide the records in this format.

But if you must use Excel, the spreadsheet created by Andy Amphlett, and included with the electronic version of this Newsletter, must surely be the one to use! It uses Excel 2007, but it also seems to work fine with the current version of LibreOffice (free software). Andy reports "one recorder provided me with 3000 records using the spreadsheet, and the records took very little work to tidy before importing into MapMate, so this can be a big time saver."

The file is in MapMate Import format, with a couple of additional columns. Drop down lists are used to select Taxon, Stage and Status. The Taxon list is taken from the latest version of the MapMate dictionary (basically Stace 3). Full instructions are included on a separate worksheet tab but it's very simple and straightforward to use.

Recorders' Workshop: *Atlas 2020 – the Final Five Years*

I am now taking bookings for a Recorders' Workshop on the theme *Atlas 2020 – the final five years* at Kindrogan Field Studies Centre. It will begin on Friday 6th and finish on Sunday the 8th March 2015. As the workshop is residential, numbers will be limited. Friday will be spent on MapMate with sessions for beginners in the morning and more advanced users in the afternoon. On Saturday and Sunday there will be talks and workshops on Atlas 2020, using the DDb, using Excel for Recorders, Memory Map and more general interest topics. Sessions will be as practical and hands on as possible, and we'd encourage folk to bring their own laptops and even desktops (if they have MapMate on them).

Scottish Recording Cards

If the VC Recording Cards which can be downloaded from the BSBI website Resources page are not customised in exactly the way you would like for your VC, then it *may* be possible to get them amended. Currently Nationally Scarce or Rare species listed are either emboldened or completely omitted to encourage recorders to use the space on the front of the record card to record full details – including full grid references. This is very helpful to visiting recorders who may not be aware what the notable species are in any particular vice-county and is a useful aid to memory for Recorders. By the way, the Recording Card coversheets can also be downloaded from the same page.

Let me know if you would like to amend listings of all nationally important species (including Red Data and Scottish Biodiversity List species) and any locally important (Locally Rare or Scarce according to a RPR). Also please let me know if you would like a batch of VC Recording Cards printed out for you on card.

The BSBI /BSS Scottish Annual Meeting

The 2015 Scottish Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday 7th November at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Stick the date in your diary now!

Finally…

Many, many thanks for your contribution to the BSBI in 2014 which is **much** appreciated. As always, if you are visiting Edinburgh, perhaps to use the lovely library and herbarium facilities at RBGE, please do let me know you are planning to visit, and let's meet up!   I'll buy you lunch or at least a coffee in the staff canteen.

Hope you have a fun and fulfilling year of BSBI recording in 2015!
Best Wishes,

Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer,
December 2014 jim.mcintosh@bsbi.org

MapMate Instructions to Reset Sync Record:

1. If necessary change default partner to hub – Replicator>Change Default Partner> and select "2qg – BSBI Hub" from drop down list.

2. Check filters have been set Replicator>Special>Set Filters… Records..All Records, Sites…[Your VC], Taxa..Vascular Plants (microspecies) and charophytes and click OK. N.B. There has been a case where Records were set to <no filter> and a significant number of records were NOT sync'ed.

3. Then Replicator>Special>Reset Sync Record & click OK.

MapMate Instructions to Create and Send Sync file

1. To create sync file…Replicator> first check it says "Synchronising with Centre – 2qg – BSBI Hub" then click on the "Synchronise" button on bottom right hand corner and follow instructions…

2. To Send sync file…Double click the synch file "[Your CUK]to2qg.sqz to upload to MapMate web server and then click the "Upload" button.