



Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland Scottish Recorder Newsletter, Winter 2015

VCR News

We have lost some good friends in 2015 but not before they had contributed richly to our lives and to our interests. They are remembered with affection and gratitude. After Peter Macpherson's and Pat Evans' deaths earlier in the year (reported in the previous Newsletter), Edna Stewart sadly died in August. She had only recently retired (in 2013) as Recorder for vc86, Stirling, a post which she had held since 1994. Edna was an early adopter of technology and digitised over 50,000 records well before many others had really got to grips with computers, which has been a great starting point for her successors, Philip Sansum & Ruth McGuire.

In October, Walter Scott resigned as Shetland BSBI Recorder after 55 years! Walter has an unparalleled knowledge of the local flora, which he passes on in several excellent publications: *The flowering plants and ferns of the Shetland Islands* (Scott & Palmer, 1987), *Some aspects of the botany of the Shetland Isles* (Scott, 2011), *BSBI Handbook no. 15: British Northern Hawkweeds* (Rich & Scott, 2011) and as lead author of the *Rare Plant Register for Shetland*, published in 2002. Although Walter is standing down as Recorder, he is happy to respond to any query on Shetland's flora. We are indeed deeply indebted.

Vacancies for Recorders in Berwickshire, Lanarkshire, Caithness and Shetland will be advertised in January's BSBI News. In order to attract applicants (or at least not to discourage them!) the positions may be offered as time-limited Atlas 2020 VC Recorderships. If you know of anyone potentially suitable and interested, please encourage them to apply.

Ian and Pat Evans recognised by national Recording Award

Ian Evans and the late Pat Evans, BSBI Recorders for West Sutherland were announced as the winners of the Gilbert White award for recording terrestrial and freshwater wildlife, at the first UK Awards for Biological Recording and Information Sharing in November. The awards were developed by the NBN, the National Forum for Biological Recording and the Biological Records Centre. Their intention is to recognise and celebrate the outstanding contributions to biological recording, which is helping to improve our understanding of the UK's wildlife.

Michael Braithwaite receives Bob Saville Award

The recipient of this year's Bob Saville Award is Michael Braithwaite, recently retired BSBI Recorder for Berwickshire for his extraordinary contribution to recording. The award is presented each year to recognise special, individual contributions to the recording of wildlife in The Wildlife Information Centre area. Previous BSBI recipients include Rod Corner last year and Jackie Muscott in 2012.

I'm sure you will want to join me in congratulating all these award recipients. Well done!

Atlas 2020 – Taking Stock

So far 120,000 2015 records have been added to the BSBI DataBase by 31 Scottish vice-counties. An amazing achievement! But ten of those VCs forwarded fewer than 50 records and another ten have yet to forward *any* records. So 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 end of January if possible. We will then be able to take stock of where we are – essential for planning the final four years of Atlas 2020.

To ensure that none of your records have gone astray we recommend you Reset Sync Record with the hub then Synch ALL your records through. Would everyone please do that now? 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?

Atlas 2020 – Using the BSBI Distribution DataBase (DDb)

There are still a few folk not using the DDb. It is a fantastic tool and everyone should register, logon and explore it. I can remind you what your username if need be. As an example of the analysis one can do, of those 120,000 2015 records mentioned above, 20% were tetrad, 52% monad, 24% 100m resolution and 4% 10m or better. The most commonly recorded taxa were *Calluna vulgaris*, *Juncus effusus* and *Plantago lanceolata*.

The DDb feature called "*my county*" helps identify gaps in Atlas 2020 coverage - assuming all your data is in the DDb! This menu option should appear to the left of "*message board*" when Recorders login, along with "*my mapmate records*" – if you are a MapMate user. The "*my county*" option has three tabs: *Summary* which includes a year-by-year breakdown of recording since 2000, *Data validation* and *Atlas 2020 survey coverage*. This last tab displays colour-density maps of your VC showing the *Number of intensive tetrad surveys* and another showing *Taxa not refund since 2000 (at hectad scale)*.

Atlas 2020 – Changes to the BSBI Distribution DataBase (DDb)

Tom Humphrey, our Database Officer has made some changes to the features in *Atlas 2020 survey coverage*. Some are minor like the new map colour schemes. These maps are a useful and simple way to assess coverage for Atlas 2020. Generally, the more intensive tetrad surveys per hectad the better. Any full hectads with fewer than five tetrad surveys probably need a closer look. And generally the darker the hectads shown in *Taxa not refund since 2000* the more attention needs to be paid to them.

However both maps need careful interpretation and thought. For example, if the hectad was poorly or very well recorded pre 2000 then the shading on the *Taxa not refund since 2000* map will be misleading. If full dates have not been recorded for surveys and depending on the pattern of recording, the *Number of intensive tetrad surveys* may understate true recording effort. By the way, the underlying data can be seen by clicking "view data" links at the bottom left hand corner of the maps.

Atlas 2020 – Analyses of Hectad & Tetrad Coverage for your VC

There is one major change. If you scroll down below the maps, you can see analyses of hectad and (below that) tetrad recording coverage in your vice-county. These are summaries of recording-coverage based on pre/post-2000 re-recording rate and the number of visits to a tetrad. It is based on the spreadsheets that Andy Amphlett developed but appears completely automatically. Brilliant!

There are a couple things to bear in mind. A *Well recorded tetrad* is defined as “Any tetrad where 100 or more species have been recorded all time AND 75% or more of them have been recorded post 2000.” Also the number of tetrads to survey for a *Well recorded hectad* is defined as 5 per full hectad. These are all default values of criteria that can be set by users in Andy’s spreadsheet. The ability to set these criteria by online users has yet to be enabled.

Atlas 2020 - Guidance for Vice-County Recorders

Much new Atlas 2020 guidance has been published this summer and is now available on the [Atlas 2020](#) page of the BSBI website. The most important is the [Atlas 2020 Guidance for Vice-county Recorders](#) – a collation of all the information and advice specifically for Recorders that has already appeared in various editions of BSBI News, so little is new, but it is really useful to have it all set out in one place in logical order. Another essential read is guidance on [Where and what do we record?](#)

Many of you will remember the series of green Atlas 2000 guidance booklets which were distributed during the Atlas 2000 project. These guidance booklets have been comprehensively updated and revised and are now available online. I recommend that all Atlas 2020 recorders read [Notes on identification works and difficult and under-recorded taxa](#), which was distributed with September’s BSBI News, very carefully. The other booklets in the series include [Collecting and Pressing Specimens](#), [Atlas 2020 Instruction Booklet](#) and [A Beginner’s Guide to Recording](#). The holiday period is a good chance to review all this guidance. Please get back to me if you have any queries.

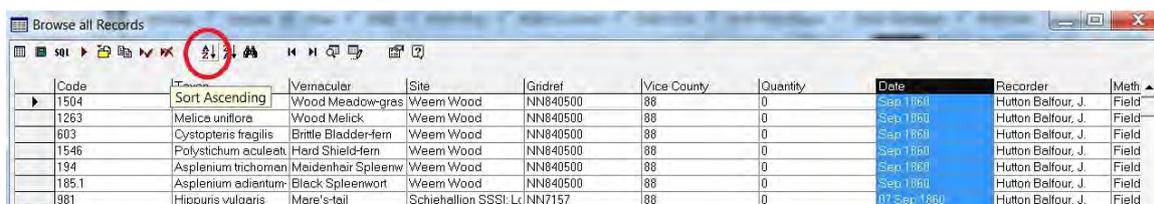
Atlas 2020 – Validating your data

We hope that by 2020, or shortly afterwards, everyone will have validated their own VC dataset using the BSBI DDb. However, very few Recorders have attempted it yet. We touched on the subject at the Recorders’ Workshop back in March and Andy’s PowerPoint gives many useful examples of how he tackled this. It is still available [here](#).

To help you begin this task, Tom hopes to send out customised validation reports in the New Year. And Andy Amphlett is very kindly offering to help anyone who is ready to make a start on validation within reasonably travelling distance of his home (Grantown). Perhaps with an initial visit, and follow up email or phone-calls. I have a small pot to cover Andy’s expenses. If you are interested let me and Andy know, as soon as you like (this is a good task for winter).

A simple Validation check in MapMate

A useful validation check can be done very simply in MapMate. List all records for your vice-county (*Analysis > Browse Records > Browse All Records*), then highlight the Date column by clicking in the same box as the Date heading, then click the A to Z button on the toolbar to sort in ascending order. Then check carefully for ancient records by recorders who weren't active (or even born) at the time! If you sort Z to A in descending order, you can check for records that are in the future (an easy mistake to make in MapMate). Check and correct any incorrect dates and synch data to the hub.



Code	Sort Ascending	Vernacular	Site	Gridref	Vice County	Quantity	Date	Recorder	Meth	
1504	Sort Ascending	Wood Meadow-gras	Weem Wood	NN840500	88	0	Sep 1860	Hutton Balfour, J.	Field	
1263		Melica uniflora	Wood Melick	Weem Wood	NN840500	88	0	Sep 1860	Hutton Balfour, J.	Field
603		Cystopteris fragilis	Brittle Bladder-fern	Weem Wood	NN840500	88	0	Sep 1860	Hutton Balfour, J.	Field
1546		Polystichum aculeat.	Hard Shield-fern	Weem Wood	NN840500	88	0	Sep 1860	Hutton Balfour, J.	Field
194		Asplenium trichoman	Meidenhair Spleenw	Weem Wood	NN840500	88	0	Sep 1860	Hutton Balfour, J.	Field
185.1		Asplenium adiantum	Black Spleenwort	Weem Wood	NN840500	88	0	Sep 1860	Hutton Balfour, J.	Field
981		Hippuris vulgaris	Mere's-tail	Schiehallion SSSI: Lc	NN7157	88	0	07 Sep 1860	Hutton Balfour, J.	Field

A refinement is to list all records for particular recorders and check that they occur during that recorder's active recording period.

Standing Waters Database

The NCC/SNH Scottish Loch Survey Project surveyed over 3,000 lochs in Scotland during the 1980s and 1990s. Although the Standing Waters data is already in the BSBI Database (67,000 records for Scotland) it is useful to see the original paperwork. The original data forms can now be accessed in the [Standing Waters Database](#).

The database contains the original macrophyte¹ species lists for each loch along with their abundance on a DAFOR scale, and sketch maps that show the distribution of aquatics. Surveyors also sampled the water and the database includes water chemistry data. Other details such as surface area, altitude and links to designated site information are also provided. Occasionally species lists for the surrounding habitat were noted. Expert determinations may be indicated on the species forms e.g. for *Potamogeton Utricularia* & Stoneworts.

The annotated maps may also enable you to work out more specific locations for plants recorded rather than a central GR. If you filter by survey – e.g. *Skye and Lochalsh 1989*, this will list all the sites. Those with a lake group classification are the ones with survey information. Click on a site of interest then open the pdf which is a scan of the original paperwork. Note there is also a 'search by map' option which shows lots of dots (these are all the standing waters shown on 1:50 000 maps) though only a proportion (c.10%) were actually surveyed.

Please don't re-enter any of the Standing Waters data into your MapMate, as there are already multiple copies of the dataset in the DDb.

¹ Mainly vascular plants but also stoneworts.

New [SEWeb Protected Nature Sites website](#)

The new SEWeb tool allows users to analysis the condition of features, negative pressures and historic condition trends and view the results in the form of graphs, maps and data tables that can be exported to spreadsheets. The information is based on that held in the SNH Site Condition Monitoring and other databases.

As an example users can find the woodland features in unfavourable condition due to invasive species by Local Authority/National Park/SNH Area and view the results on a map or download a spreadsheet. The best way to see what it can do is to give it a try!

2016 Scottish Newsletter

I'm pleased to announce that Angus Hannah has agreed to take on the role of Editor, after Peter Macpherson's death back in springtime. We plan to include a questionnaire about the format and content of future editions with the Newsletter – as it seems a good time to take stock. Angus would welcome contributions for the next Scottish Newsletter. They are required by the end of February to meet the April publication deadline.

VC Annual Reports

One of the most avidly read and much enjoyed articles in the 2015 Scottish Newsletter was the collation of Scottish Vice-county Annual Reports that folk had sent me last New Year. It was also published on the [BSBI Scotland](#) webpage. It is a fascinating account of botanical endeavour by BSBI Recorders and members across Scotland, which left me feeling truly humbled. So let's repeat the exercise! Please summarise exciting news and activity in your VC in 2015 in less than say 250-300 words. If mentioning species, please do so in *Scientific name* (Common Name) format. Remember to avoid repeating any points that were reported in the Scottish Annual Meeting exhibition abstracts which will also be published in the Newsletter. I'll make a further call for Annual Reports in the New Year.

Balsam Poplars

Andy Amphlett writes "As something of an antidote to endless plant recording, in the autumn I spent some time looking in detail at Balsam poplars, trees that I have been having trouble identifying to my satisfaction. My guide to vegetative ID of Balsam poplars is on the BSBI website now. It can be downloaded from this page: <http://www.bsbi.org.uk/identification.html> (under *Other Identification Resources*.)

It covers the five taxa I have been able to find in vcc 95 and 96:

- *Populus balsamifera* (Eastern Balsam-poplar)
- *Populus trichocarpa* (Western Balsam-poplar)
- *Populus 'Balsam Spire'* (*P. balsamifera* x *trichocarpa*)
- *Populus x jackii* (*P. balsamifera* x *deltoides*)
- *Populus maximowiczii* (Doronoki)"

Recorders' Workshops in 2016: *Atlas 2020 – the Final Four Years*

Following on from the Recorders' Workshop in March 2015 at Kindrogan, I plan to hold two one day workshops in Scotland in 2016. One will be held on Sunday the 10th April at Strathpeffer Community Centre for northern Recorders and another on Saturday the 16th April at RBGE for southern Recorders. We will cover the same ground on these days, so you may attend whichever is more convenient. The days will be 10am-4pm approx.

The theme of the workshop will be *Atlas 2020 – the final four years* (surprise surprise!) We will give you an update on Atlas 2020 followed by a discussion on any issues. Then there will be several sessions on the DDb covering an introduction to the DDb, general searches, using it to monitor Atlas progress and for validation. There will be short sessions on MapMate & Memory Map. And I would also like to include a mini species workshop and a general BSBI Q&A session.

VC Recorders and anyone contributing to the BSBI Atlas 2020 fieldwork are very welcome! Feel free to invite anyone who helps out in your VC.

Shetland Recording Week: Sunday the 31st July to Sunday the 7th August 2016

We are going to base the Shetland Recording Week in Scalloway in 2016. It is Shetland's second town, five miles west of Lerwick – ideal for covering the Mainland of Shetland. We have block-booked Port Arthur House which is the student accommodation for the North Atlantic Fisheries College (part of the University of the Highlands and Islands). We have very comfortable *en suite* study bedrooms: 21 singles and four twins. Catering arrangements have yet to be finalised but are likely to be a mixture of specially cooked family style dinners and eating out in local restaurants.

If you have never been to Shetland before then this is a great opportunity – that might be the last, at least for recording during Atlas 2020. As usual we will record in small groups. There will be a mixture of easy and more difficult terrain to survey and few places are very far from a road on Shetland. Please let me know if you are interested before the remaining places get snapped up once the meeting is advertised in the yearbook.

Christmas Lunch

It was really nice that 18 BSBI members joined me for Christmas Lunch at RBGE in December - particularly as a BSBI staff Christmas lunch would be a pretty miserable affair in Scotland with just me! I hope to repeat this in future and promise to give folk a bit more notice next time. Remember you are welcome to visit me at RBGE anytime and to take advantage of the other lovely RBGE facilities – such as the library and herbarium – not to mention the canteen! Just get in touch before hand to arrange a date!

Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer, December 2015 jim.mcintosh@bsbi.org