

Annual Review 2006



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Staff Changes

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Kevin Walker as our new Head of Research & Development. Kevin, currently with CEH at Monks Wood, is due to start in June 2007. This post replaces that held by Gabriel Hemery, who left in May 2006. We are very grateful to Gabriel for his considerable contribution to the Society and its development. Read more about these staff changes and the Development of the Society on



Training

Thanks to the generous bequest from Alan Hamerschlag we have continued to give grants to new and improving botanists and have developed a way of assessing botanical skills levels. See page 4 for more details on this and other plans.

Hybrids

Work is progressing well on the Hybrids Project. Clive Stace has now almost completed the text, the distribution maps are being checked, and we hope to complete the project in 2007. Read more on page 5.

Recorders' Conferences

Two recorders' conferences were held during the year. A national conference was held at Shrewsbury, in September on the themes of Introductions and taxonomic developments. A smaller workshop for Scottish recorders was held at Kindrogan in Perthshire in April. Read more about these events on pages 6 and 7.

Local Change

The Local Change survey report, *Change in the British Flora 1987–2004* was published in 2006. It was launched during the Plant Diversity Challenge conference at Kew in April and received widespread publicity. Read more about this and our other publications in 2006 on page 8.

The Society has experienced another eventful year. Our efforts to establish a professional wing, chiefly to allow us to improve our outreach work and to develop and pursue a more focussed science policy, received a set-back early on with the resignation of our Development Officer, Gabriel Hemery. Whilst he was with us, among other things, he was very successful in raising the profile of the Society with the country agencies, and for this we are most grateful.

His departure, of course, left us in a predicament about how to move forward. Following an assessment of the Society's aspirations and capabilities (outlined in *BSBI Review Paper, 2006*), it was decided that we should establish formally a Plant Unit as soon as possible. Consequently we have hired Kevin Walker (a botanist from CEH Monks Wood), to do this. This is a bold step as the Society has agreed to underwrite the lion's share of the funding. But it is a necessary one if the Society is to flourish and continue to provide top-quality scientific information to people who need it.

The Society's committees continue to work hard and to great effect. Of particular note is the interesting development of vascular plant *Field Identification Skills Qualifications* by the Training and Education Committee. The significance of these FISQs is that they are validated by our Society. We are working towards them being recognised by ecological consultancies and others as an essential professional qualification, thereby making them the new industry standard. This will take time but clearly will be of benefit to the Society in terms of its public and professional profile.

Finally, I should also like to highlight some other important developments on the academic front that have taken place owing to our much improved financial position. Over the last couple of years, the Society has become an important source of funding for both botanical research and training. Although the sums involved are not huge, they nevertheless have provided opportunities for numerous botanists (amateur and professional alike) to undertake research projects and register for courses that they would otherwise have been unable to do.

Importantly the Society now also awards bursaries to students to allow them to attend the annual Ecological Genetics Group meetings and is now a potential CASE funding scheme partner in Research Council studentships. The new Plant Unit should provide an important focus for further developments in this area and I am looking forward to seeing our achievements in 2007.



Richard Gornall, President, BSBI



Mertensia maritima, Shetland Field Meeting © Jim McIntosh, 2006



BSBI Review

We decided with our former Director of Development, Gabriel Hemery that the Society should develop its scientific potential, principally by focussing on what it does best – plant recording and interpretation. And after a further debate and discussion we approved a model of our proposed Plant Unit and how we want to run it – described in *BSBI Review Paper, 2006*.

We have just appointed Kevin Walker as Head of Research & Development to lead our plant work. Kevin is currently a botanist at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Monks Wood and our joint recorder for Huntingdonshire, and has authored a large number of papers in *Watsonia* and elsewhere.

Kevin will start in June and his main task will be to develop and implement the *Review*. The post is for an initial three year period but we intend that it will become permanent. It is largely financed using BSBI funds, but we hope key partners will also contribute and provide support.

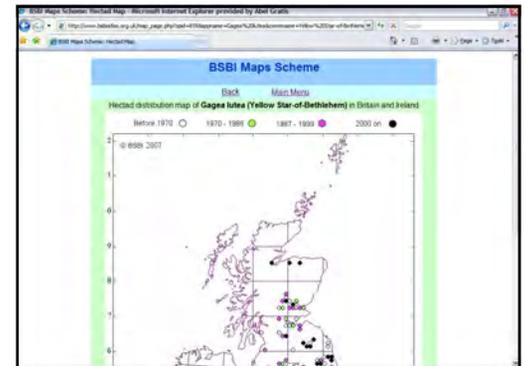


Empetrum nigrum © Jim McIntosh, 2005

The Plant Unit

Of course, we already have a *de facto* Plant Unit, with our existing staff, Alex Lockton, Bob Ellis, Quentin Groom, and Jim McIntosh in Scotland, and they are paving the way and handling millions of records annually. During the year, some 3.5 million records were entered. Most of these records have been contributed via the MapMate network which has continued to grow, with most county recorders and some referees now using it. Given the widespread adoption and power of modern personal computers, we are planning to decentralise our system of data management. In essence, the authority for control of records will be devolved from the central Vascular Plants Database to the 150 county recorders and referees. In turn, the Plant Unit will provide recorders with support, training, data and backup facilities.

An integrated database is planned for the proposed Plant Unit that can store, edit and retrieve more records than we are likely to collect during the next decade. It will provide the mechanism to transfer and communicate information, and the ability to compile data and reports.



An example of its use is to supply the data for the BSBI Website's Maps Scheme pages, which display Atlas-style distribution maps of all plant species, using data submitted by hundreds of contributors, updated on a fortnightly basis.

Gagea lutea © Sarah Whild, 2006

Training and Training Grants

In 2006, thanks to Alan Hamerschlag's legacy, we awarded eleven training grants to botanists who were either starting their careers or wishing to improve their botanical recording skills for voluntary recording. Although there is no shortage of people queuing up to study plant identification, there is still a shortage of good trainers. To encourage a sharing of skills and new ideas, we ran a workshop on Training the Botanical Trainers, attended by twenty five people.

Close work with Meetings Committee has allowed us 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.

Field Identification Skills Qualifications

One of the most exciting areas in teaching field identification has been an increased awareness of quantifying levels of skill; Training and Education Committee coordinated a trial of new qualifications - Field Identification Skills Qualifications, or FISQs for short. We recruited twenty five willing guinea pigs who spent a day in the lab and the field being subjected to a series of tests, resulting in a graded pass at levels 1 to 5. In 2007 these BSBI-validated qualifications will become generally available to botanists.

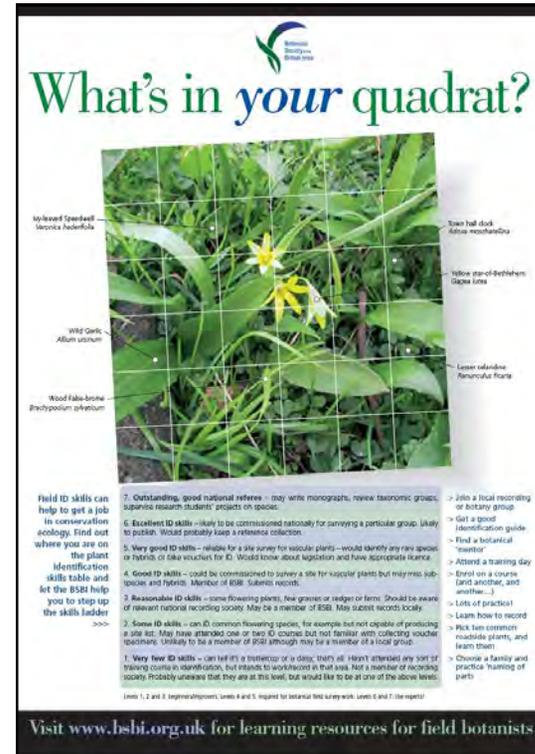


Botany students © Alex Lockton '06

Careers in Botany

Although most of the work of T&E is aimed at university-plus ages, we couldn't resist the opportunity to sponsor a 'Botanist' career card for Loop Science Career Cards. These packs have gone to every secondary school in the UK. The card has our logo and website on the back, with a cartoon of a botanist and a description of the types of work a botanist may undertake on the front. We are not expecting to generate many new members from this initiative but it may help to raise the profile of botany in schools. The profile of botany in universities

also needs raising, so there are now A3 and A4 posters available with the slogan 'What's in Your Quadrat?', a botany 'ladder' to climb, and also tips on improving your botanical skills, plus a link to the BSBI website.



Career Development

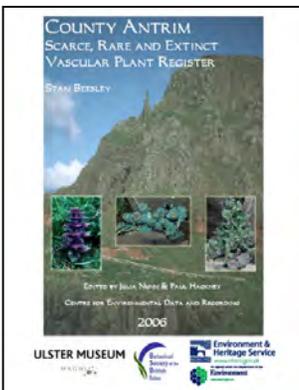
Career development has also been a recurring theme, with input from the committee into the government's Connexions website with detailed descriptions of career paths for aspiring botanists. We have also worked with the British Ecological Society's education officer to provide a career profile characteristic of a young botanist.

Hybrids Project

Work has continued apace on the Hybrids Project. The Plant Unit has played a key role in gathering and compiling records of hybrid taxa from a wide variety of sources. Some 80,000 hybrid taxa records have been collected, more than four times our target, thanks to contributions from county recorders, local records centres, herbaria, museums, universities and individuals. There are about eight main partners in each country but key contributors include those at the Natural History Museum and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Clive Stace has now almost completed the text, the distribution maps are being checked, and we hope to complete the project in 2007.



Looking at *Epilobium* hybrids © Richard Pryce, '06



Rare Plant Registers

Work continues with long term initiatives such as County Rare Plant Registers. Three new registers were published in 2006 - Anglesey, Cheshire and County Antrim – and others updated.

Future Projects

One of the first tasks for Kevin and the other BSBI staff will be to work on our strategies for recording and monitoring Rare and Scarce plants, in conjunction with the new Red list. A small team has already done much preparatory work towards this end. The new Red List reflects fundamental changes in approach so there is still a wealth of work to do.

Support for Recorders

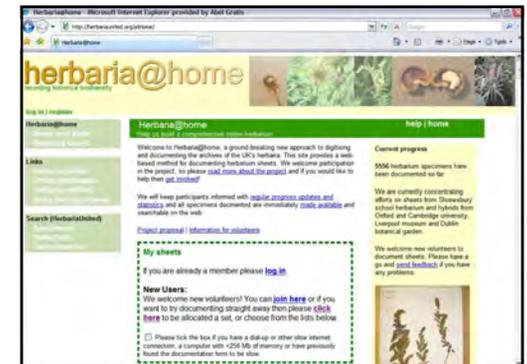
Alongside the glamorous side of launching new projects or seeing the unfolding of the results of existing plans, much work continues behind the scenes supporting our network of 157 vice-county recorders and over 100 Referees to deliver the results. The Society continues to work closely with the Biological Records Centre and the National Biodiversity Network on better exchange of records.

Small Grants for Research

Our Research committee awarded five grants in 2006, including one to fund University of Birmingham researcher Maria Scholten's cycling expeditions around the Outer Hebrides and the Northern Isles in search of relict populations of the traditional crop *Avena strigosa*; Paul Green's survey of x *Festulpa hubbardii* in south-eastern Ireland was also supported and both have already resulted in new records on the Maps Scheme distribution maps. John Poland received a grant for fieldwork to support the vegetative key to the British flora that he and Eric Clement are preparing.

Herbaria@Home

The BSBI supported the development of an exciting new project, a 'virtual herbarium' website devised by Leander Wolstenholme and Tom Humphrey at Manchester Museum. [Herbaria@Home](http://herbaria@home) invites the general public to help with the transcription of herbarium labels, and its trial phase has been remarkably successful. Together with the Linnean Society, we are supporting the project in its search for more substantial funds for expansion. Look for the link on www.bsbi.org.uk



Recorders' Conference

Seventy nine people attended a weekend conference held in September in Shrewsbury organised by Alex Lockton and Sarah Whild. On the Friday speakers Tim Rich, Heather McHaffie, Mary Gibby, Ian Trueman and David Pearman presented talks on the theme of Introductions. Saturday's sessions were largely devoted to the Hybrids Project, with talks about the project itself and several on taxonomic developments in *Euphrasia*, *Ranunculus* and *Carex*. There were also workshop sessions on *Euphrasia* by Alan Silverside, *Taraxacum* by Bert Reid, *Fumaria* by Rose Murphy and *Rosa* by Roger Maskew, as well as discussions on MapMate and microscopy.

Indoor Meetings

The Society's Annual General Meeting, which incorporated Richard Gornall's Presidential Address, was held at the London Wetlands Centre, Barnes, in May. Leicester University was the venue for the successful Annual Exhibition Meeting. A welcome innovation at this meeting was a competition to find the photograph that was thought to depict best the ethos of the Society. We congratulate Kath Pryce, the first winner of what is intended to be an annual event. Although Wales, Scotland and Ireland organise their own annual meetings (see below), they cater for members everywhere.



Field Meetings

Forty two field meetings were organised during the year, including an



overseas field meeting in western Portugal. They ranged from a gentle stroll along the River Thames to six days scrambling around the Isle of Mull. As usual, these meetings included a mixture of general botanising for beginners, getting to grips with difficult groups, and serious recording for forthcoming county floras



West Ross Field Meeting © Jim McIntosh, 2006

Wales

2006 Welsh Annual Meeting The theme of the weekend was ferns and their allies. It was held at Plas Tan-y-Bwlch, Maentwrog in Snowdonia and enjoyed by members from across Britain who learnt a great deal from the expert presenters, Nigel Brown, Trevor Dines, Sam Thomas and Ken Trewren.

The Anglesey Rare Plant Register was published in January 2006 by Ian Bonner. Other Welsh members and recorders continued with the collation of their county registers, with help from CCW on production and distribution.

Important issues addressed in Wales in 2006 included:

- BSBI vice-county recorder's relationships with the Local Records Centres, which will soon be operational across Wales;
- the production of a new Red List for Wales to help with forthcoming legislation by the Welsh Assembly Government;
- the Wales Committee's advice to the Welsh Assembly on the *Nature Conservation and Planning Technical Advice Note*.

Ireland

‘Saturday at the Herbarium’, the first ever herbarium open day, was held in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. This was well attended and much enjoyed by vice-county recorders. Further open days are planned for 2007.

Republic of Ireland National BioDiversity Data Centre. The committee was represented at a symposium held to announce the establishment of this new facility, to be located in Waterford.

Orchid Ireland Project. Work started on this project, fieldwork for which will be the main emphasis for 2007. Field meetings will have a particular emphasis on known and possible new orchid sites. In addition, we intend to provide research and recording data in co-operation with the publishers of a planned book, *The Natural History of Ireland’s Wild Orchids*.

Scotland

Site Condition Monitoring. After our ambitious programme of 20 Site Condition Monitoring surveys in 2005, the BSBI had a big report writing job to complete before handover to SNH in early spring. The 2006 programme was more modest covering just five sites. The fieldwork was again largely conducted by volunteers with help from the Scottish Officer, and a similar programme is planned for 2007 and 2008.

Curved Sedge and Lesser Butterfly-orchid Projects. BSBI recorders continued the work begun last year to try to understand the reasons for Curved Sedge’s apparent decline which led to its recent re-classification as Endangered in the new Red List. A new project was also initiated by SNH in partnership with the BSBI and Plantlife to gain a better understanding of the status of Lesser Butterfly-orchid. Members of the public were encouraged to submit their own records directly to a bespoke webpage.



Platanthera bifolia, SNH

Computerisation Project. A programme to computerise paper-based records held by Scottish vice-county recorders is underway. During 2006, the 105,000 records computerised in the first phase were handed over to recorders and copied to BRC for the Vascular Plant Database and NBN. The Scottish Officer raised £100,000 to fund two further phases, which will process another 600,000 Scottish records, and launched the first of them.

Scottish Recordors’ Workshop. Twenty five Scottish recorders participated in a two day workshop organised at Kindrogan Field

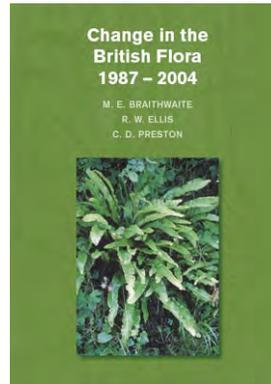


Studies Centre in April. Topics included Local Change, Rare Plant Registers and the Computerisation and Hybrids Projects. The second day was largely devoted to MapMate and three workshops were arranged: for beginners, intermediates and more advanced users. A Workshop Report was compiled and distributed to recorders, along with an Information CD containing useful guidance, reports and datasets.

Scottish Annual Meeting. A record 129 attended this year’s meeting in early November at RBG Edinburgh. The morning started with presentations by both BSBI and BSS presidents, Richard Gornall and Richard Abbott, respectively, and by Deborah Long of Plantlife. Of course there were the usual exhibits, and four of the exhibitors also gave very interesting short talks. The afternoon closed with an excellent lecture by Richard Bateman on the detailed science underpinning his estimate of the number of orchid species presently occurring in Britain.

Local Change

During the year the Local Change survey report, *Change in the British Flora 1987– 2004* was published. Written by Michael Braithwaite, Bob Ellis and Chris Preston, and co-ordinated by Bob, it was launched during the Plant Diversity Challenge conference at Kew in April and received widespread publicity. We are confident that the report broke new ground in the assessment of change in our flora and did justice to all the voluntary effort by our vice-county recorders and other Society members. We are grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their generous financial support and to Plantlife, our partners in the 'Making It Count for People and Plants' project.



Conference Proceedings

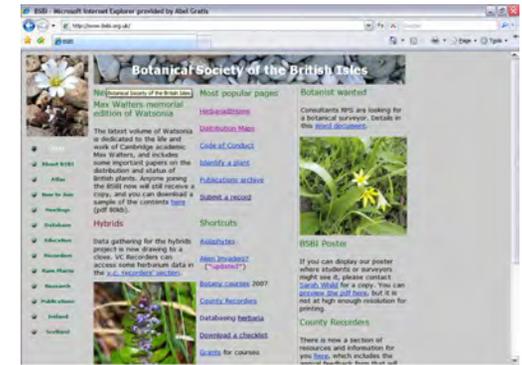
The proceedings of two major conferences were published in 2006. *Botanical Links in the Atlantic Arc* (edited by Simon Leach, Chris Page, Yves Peytoureau and Martin Sanford) contains a fascinating range of papers from an international conference held in 2003. This meeting was the brain child of the late Franklyn Perring, and brought together botanists from Britain, Ireland, France and Spain. We feel that the resulting volume is a fitting memorial to him. The second conference proceedings, *Current Taxonomic Research on the British and European Flora* (edited by John Bailey and Gwynn Ellis), represents the conference in 2003 that marked Clive Stace's retirement from the University of Leicester.

Journals

Our regular publications, *Watsonia* and *BSBI News* were transformed in 2006. Both are now in a two-column format with illustrated front covers – glossy and in colour in the case of *BSBI News*. The page size of *BSBI News* was increased to A5.

BSBI Website

The BSBI website now regularly receives 200,000 hits from some 5,000 visitors each month. The Maps Scheme pages are amongst the most popular, where anyone can freely view up-to-date distribution maps of all British and Irish species. The website has been made even more popular by the incorporation of Quentin Groom's *Reticule* webpages, with its highly valued identification keys and additional resources.



Also on the BSBI website is the definitive list of British vascular plants. It is based on the taxa listed in the 1992 *List of Vascular Plants of the British Isles* by D.H. Kent but has been regularly updated and extended ever since.

We have also launched a long-term project to make historical BSBI publications available on-line. For example, *Watsonia* now becomes available as a free download one year after publication. We hope the programme will also include *Proceedings of the BSBI*, *BSBI News* and the *Botanical Exchange Club Reports*, as well as *County Rare Plant Registers* and the *Plant Crib*. The entire website is one of many to be permanently archived by the British Library every six months, as part of its record of public life in Britain.

In January 2006, with the help of a volunteer, Jane Squirrel, the Scottish pages of the BSBI website were launched. They are designed not only for members but also for Scottish botanists generally. By popular demand, they include abstracts, and in some cases full accounts relating to exhibits at the Scottish Annual Meeting.

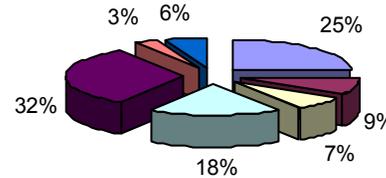
2006 was our first year to gain the income from the Hamerschlag legacy, which is about £25,000, and we planned to spend half of this in trial projects to develop our training and education activities, while using the other half to augment our fledgling Plant Unit. In the event the trial programme cost less than expected and it will not be until 2007 that the budgeted funds are fully expended.

Meanwhile the resignation of our Director of Development led to a need to rethink our plans for the Plant Unit and this process, which has been generously grant-aided, has restricted our progress. This has led to a further underspend. The Society's other projects and recurring activities have progressed satisfactorily, on or within budget. In particular the BSBI Local Change project was completed at almost exactly the costing so generously grant-aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Society is thus left with a surplus for 2006 on general funds of £19,683. However our plans for 2007 suggest a potential deficit of some £35,000. Although only very limited grant funding is currently available to support our new Head of Research and Development, Council has decided to continue this post with pump-priming from the Hamerschlag Fund so that our Plant Unit plans do not lose momentum. Meanwhile our Research Fund continues to support the Hybrids project.

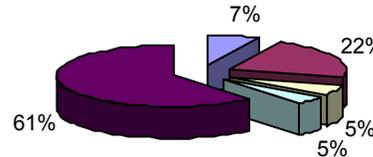
Development fund donations of £20,000 continue to underwrite our support staff and 2006 also saw the last instalment of £15,000 of an exceptionally generous donation. The Society's Stock Exchange Investments, added to from the Hamerschlag legacy, had a good year. On an annualised basis our equity investments have increased in value by 10.3% and have generated income of 3.3%. Our fixed interest investments and bank deposits have yielded an average income of 5.1%. The performance of our equity investments has closely mirrored that of our benchmark, the FTSE 100 index, while our other investments have outperformed the UK 5 year Gilts Index.

Incoming Resources 2006



- Subscriptions & Donations
- Core Grants
- Endowments Utilised
- Investment Income
- Botanical Survey & Interpretation
- Botanical Education
- Botanical Publications & Website

Resources Expended 2006



- Botanical Education
- Botanical Publications & Website
- Governance Costs
- Membership Admin & Publicity
- Botanical Survey & Interpretation

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' STATEMENT TO THE COUNCIL OF THE BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF THE BRITISH ISLES

We have examined the summarised financial statements of the Botanical Society of the British Isles.

Respective responsibilities of Council and Auditors

The Council are responsible for preparing the summarised financial statements in accordance with the Charities Act 1993.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion of the consistency of the summarised financial statements with the full financial statements and Council's report. We also read the other information contained in the summarised financial statements and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statements.

Basis of Opinion

We conducted our own work in accordance with Bulletin 1999/6 "The auditors' statement on the summary financial statement" issued by the Auditing Practices Board for use in the United Kingdom.

Opinion

In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements and Council's report of the Botanical Society of the British Isles for the year ended 31st December 2006.

Greaves West & Ayre, Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors
Berwick upon Tweed. 14th March 2007.

Summary Statement of Financial Activities For the year ended 31st December 2006

	2006	2005
Incoming Resources	£	£
<i>Voluntary Income</i>		
Subscriptions & Donations	68,149	69,614
Core Grants	24,726	46,902
Legacies and Development Fund Donations	35,651	706,162
<i>Investment Income</i>	49,551	22,413
<i>Charitable Activities Income</i>		
Botanical Survey and Interpretation	88,576	56,799
Botanical Education	9,136	10,218
Botanical Publications and Website	16,179	18,492
	291,968	930,600
Resources Expended		
<i>Cost of Generating Funds</i>		
Membership Administration and Publicity	11,795	7,693
<i>Charitable Activities</i>		
Botanical Survey and Interpretation	158,041	136,648
Botanical Education	18,399	14,412
Botanical Publications and Website	56,693	51,304
<i>Governance Costs</i>	14,120	16,726
	259,048	226,783
Net Incoming Resources		
General Funds	19,683	11,386
Restricted Funds	(1,914)	4,250
Legacies and Development Fund Donations	15,151	688,181
	32,920	703,817
Gains on Investments	68,696	58,390
Increase in Funds	101,616	762,207

Summary Balance Sheet 31st December 2006

	2006	2005
Fixed Assets	£	£
Equipment	1,075	2,113
Investments - at Market Value	1,178,878	658,446
Current Assets		
Stocks and Work in Progress	32,339	27,467
Debtors	19,135	451,607
Cash at Bank and on Deposit	217,122	176,790
Current Liabilities		
Creditors & Deferred Income	(76,093)	(45,583)
	1,372,456	1,270,840
Represented By		
Endowment Funds	358,818	322,010
Restricted Income Funds	6,732	8,646
Allan Hamerschlag Fund	725,832	685,964
Other Unrestricted Income Funds	281,074	254,220
	1,372,456	1,270,840

The Summary Accounts are extracted from full Annual Accounts that have been subject to audit and were approved by Council on 14th March 2007. The Auditors' report on the full Accounts was not qualified. A copy of the full Annual Report and Accounts is available on request to the Hon. Treasurer. The full Annual Report and Accounts will be submitted to the Charity Commission after approval at the Annual General Meeting.

Dr R J Gornall - President
M E Braithwaite - Honorary Treasurer

Thank you

The Society gratefully acknowledges grants from the Countryside Council for Wales, English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, The Heritage Lottery Fund and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. 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 minuters, also members who have taken part in surveys, prepared reports and read papers, and especially our Vice-County Recorders and our referees. Without the contribution of all these the work of the society could not have been possible, and with the exception of those who work for the society within grant-aided projects, every other duty is performed by volunteers.

We are indebted for the continued support from our many partners:

Biological Records Centre, Monks Wood
Countryside Council for Wales
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Field Studies Centres, in particular Preston Montford
Greaves, West & Ayre
Heritage Lottery Fund
Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Linnean Society of London
National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin
Natural England
Natural History Museum London
Plantlife International
Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog
Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
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

We are very grateful too to our staff who have continued to support our volunteer network and to promote the Society at all times:
Alex Lockton, Bob Ellis, Jim McIntosh and Quentin Groom.

The Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) is for everyone 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 nine million data points to the Vascular Plants Database. The Society's notable recent achievements include *The new atlas of the British and Irish flora* (2002), and 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 9700 plant species. All this activity is coordinated by 157 'Vice County Recorders' distributed across Britain and Ireland. It has 2950 members and three paid staff.

BSBI's 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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