



Botanical Society  
of Britain & Ireland

BSBI Annual Review  
31 March 2016

# Contents

02	BSBI: Who We Are and What We Do	10	Publicity and Outreach
03	Message from the President	11	Botanical Publications
04	BSBI Staff, Science and Projects	13	Financial Report to 31st March 2016
06	Training and Education	16	Thank You
07	Encouraging an Interest in Plants		

## BSBI: Who We Are and What We Do

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland is for everyone who is interested in the wild plants of Britain and Ireland. We have welcomed both professional and amateur members since 1836, and the society remains the biggest and most active organisation devoted to the study of botany in Britain, Ireland, the Channel Isles and the Isle of Man.

### BSBI's objectives are to:

- promote the study, understanding and enjoyment of British and Irish wild plants and stoneworts;
- support, encourage and participate in research into the taxonomy, ecology, biogeography and conservation of the British and Irish flora; and
- co-operate with Continental and other botanists in matters of mutual interest and concern.

BSBI has a long and influential publications history, including plant distribution Atlases, ID Handbooks and our scientific journal, *New Journal of Botany*. Our research, training and outreach programmes benefit botanists across Britain and Ireland, whether beginners or experts. BSBI pioneers new approaches to data collection and distribution mapping, and has become one of the world's largest contributors of biological records. BSBI's distribution

mapping projects record new plant arrivals and changes in the distributions of both native and non-native plants.

These achievements are only possible thanks to our many volunteer members, whose records are validated by BSBI's network of 186 volunteer County Recorders and more than 100 specialist Referees, and to our voluntary officers, committee members and trustees, who are responsible for the governance of the society.

BSBI has a team of 13 paid staff and contractors who support our volunteers and keep the society active and functioning smoothly. This Annual Review includes messages and updates from many of these staff members and volunteer officers, telling you about our activities and achievements during 2015-6, starting with a message from BSBI President John Faulkner.

Cover photo – Crested Cow-wheat (*Melampyrum cristatum*)

# Message from the President

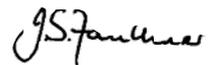
BSBI's new Articles of Association and Standing Orders are now firmly in place. It is a limited company and a charity, and its governing body is the Board of Trustees. Many people, both staff and members, have put a great deal of work into making these changes happen, and into striving to capitalise on them in the interest of botanical science.

It is in this broad spread of effort, and the pre-eminent position of volunteers, that our greatest strength lies. BSBI has remarkable members. They are very diverse and many have extraordinary skills – some innate, some self-taught, and some learned from others. As the study of plant taxonomy and systematics declines in universities and other institutions, so the position of our Societies and its members becomes ever more important in perpetuating botanical field skills and knowledge about wild plants. Training, educating and raising awareness of wild plants are all becoming more important features of our work.

This Annual Review summarises our work in 2015-6. The lion's share at present is geared towards Atlas 2020, which will be a comprehensive study of the state of the wild flora of Britain and Ireland in the early decades of the 21st century. The scale of this

project is huge: thousands of botanists covering tens of thousands of grid squares to generate millions of records. Almost all of the recording is done by volunteers giving freely of their time and expenses. Ultimately, we hope to make the information available as widely as possible to maximise the public benefit.

There are of course some costs in managing the BSBI, servicing its members, training botanists, and maintaining the BSBI's database, publications and other scientific assets. These costs are tiny in relation to the scale of our work, but they are absolutely essential to our operation. I am therefore pleased to record our grateful thanks to all our funders, sponsors and donors, and to give them an assurance that what they give us is magnified many times over in the process of converting into our output".



John Faulkner and botanists at Binevenagh, Northern Ireland on the BSBI Summer Meeting 2015



# BSBI: Staff, Science and Projects

With 13 full-time or part-time staff and contractors, we are able to provide more effective support to our members and ensure efficient management of the society and its finances.

## BSBI Staff:

Jane Houldsworth	Head of Operations
Kevin Walker	Head of Science
Bob Ellis	Projects Officer
Paul Green	Welsh Officer (to June 2015 job share)
Gwynn Ellis	Membership Secretary
Tom Humphrey	Database Officer
Alex Lockton	Website & Network Officer
Clive Lovatt	Administration Officer
Maria Long	Irish Officer
Louise Marsh	Publicity & Outreach Officer
Jim McIntosh	Scottish Officer
Polly Spencer-Vellacott	Welsh Officer (from August 2015)
Peter Stroh	Scientific Officer

As ever, a dedicated team of recorders, supported by BSBI staff and officers, continued to provide data of the highest quality, vital for achieving our scientific and conservation objectives. We have also forged partnerships with other organisations to launch new projects to deepen our understanding of changes in our flora. This year's achievements include:

## Atlas 2020

Recording effort notched up another gear in 2015 in anticipation of the next Atlas, with national and local field meetings held across Britain and Ireland. Updated resources for Atlas 2020 Recorders were made available via the website, and our network of County Recorders continued to do a splendid job co-ordinating the efforts of volunteers throughout Britain and Ireland.

<http://bsbi.org/atlas-2020>

## National Plant Monitoring Scheme (NPMS)

BSBI worked throughout the year alongside partners from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Plantlife to deliver this scheme, launched in March 2015 with funding from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. The NPMS enables volunteers at all skill levels to get involved in recording and BSBI has been leading on methodology and assessment of the results, as well as providing training in identification skills. The scheme aims to provide quantitative data on the status of widespread plants and the habitats on which they depend.

<http://bsbi.org/npms>

## Threatened Plants Project (TPP)

Analysis of data for this flagship project investigating 4000 populations of 50 threatened species across Britain and Ireland was close to completion by the end of March 2016.

<http://bsbi.org/threatened-plants-project>

## Species Accounts

By March 2016, 56 Species Accounts had been made available via the website, providing another valuable resource for botanists, with 24 further accounts in preparation.

<http://bsbi.org/species-accounts>

## Irish Species Project

Work concluded on this two-year project, co-ordinated by BSBI's Committee for Ireland, to study eight species of conservation concern in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Irish Species Project used a similar sampling approach and methodology to the TPP, with volunteers revisiting historic localities to collect information including population size, habitat quality and management, and current or perceived threats.

<http://bsbi.org/ireland>

### BSBI Database (DDb)

Supported by this recording activity, our in-house database of plant records has continued to expand. 2.1 million records were added during the year ending March 2016, taking the total to 31 million. Our Database Officer Tom Humphrey has continued to refine the software, adding new reporting and data validation tools and improving usability. Over

the past year more than 300 people accessed the database directly, alongside many others who made one-off requests for BSBI data. The database supports the ongoing recording and validation work for Atlas 2020 and provides external users with reliable data for academic research, land management and conservation uses.

Field of Common Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*) at Birling Gap, East Sussex



# Training and Education

BSBI awarded 50 training grants in 2015 plus conference bursaries and Plant Study Grants, and we continued to support the Field Studies Council's Young Darwin Scholarships.

Our Training & Education Committee worked with the Publicity & Outreach Officer to bring successful grant applicants into the fold, by offering each of them a guest spot on the BSBI News & Views blog. Eight students took up this invitation and two went on to produce posters and attend the society's Annual Exhibition Meeting.

We had a second reprint of *So You Want to Know Your Plants*, a guide to getting started in plant identification, which can be downloaded free of charge from the BSBI website.

The Identiplant on-line plant identification course, supported by BSBI and the Field

Studies Council, went from strength to strength and is rapidly becoming a national standard for new botanists.

Field Identification Skills Certificates (FISCs) ran in Leicester, Kent and Shrewsbury and we were delighted that all were fully subscribed. Most participants were consultants who use their FISC grade as an endorsement of their botanical field skills – a useful personal marketing tool in the jobs market – but FISCs are open to anyone to take, whether amateur or professional botanists, beginners, improvers or experts. We were also delighted that Natural England adopted FISCs as their industry standard in assessing botanical field skills.

Eyebright workshop at Treborth Botanic Garden



# Encouraging an Interest in Plants

In 2015 we again offered a varied programme of field meetings and indoor events, encompassing the whole of BSBI's geography and offering botanists at all skill levels opportunities for recording, training, networking and contributing to botanical research.

Volunteers from BSBI's Meetings & Communications Committee including Hon. Field Meetings Secretary Jon Shanklin (taking over from Dr Jill Sutcliffe) worked in conjunction with country officers, local volunteers and the Training & Education Committee to deliver this programme. Meetings ranged from day-long excursions to week-long residential events and, while Atlas 2020 was the main focus, training meetings were also offered for both beginners and the more experienced botanist. Many thanks are due to all who contributed to making the 2015 programme such a success.

## BSBI Field Meetings

57 field meetings were held during the period covered by this review, including:

- 24 training meetings including ones aimed at beginners in plant identification;
- five workshops on challenging plant groups: Atriplexes, brambles, dandelions, rushes and sedges;
- four week-long recording meetings based at Glynhir and Caerdeon, (Wales) and Shetland and Ayrshire (Scotland);
- 12 field meetings in the Republic and North of Ireland, which also contributed records for the Irish Species Project.

## England

Meetings were held across England from Dorset to Sussex to Northumberland, with longer Atlas 2020 recording meetings in the Brecks, Dorset and Yorkshire. Training meetings ranged from difficult groups such as brambles and dandelions, to general interest

and some, such as Arthur Copping's 'Grasses', were targeted at beginners.

The Annual Exhibition Meeting and Annual General Meeting were held in November at the Natural History Museum, London, offering a stimulating mix of 46 exhibits, nine talks and guided tours of the herbarium and the wildlife garden; it attracted a record number of more than 200 participants.

## Wales

The 53rd Welsh AGM, with a theme of 'Peatlands', was held at Plas Tan-y-Bwlch in Snowdonia and attracted botanists from all over Britain to hear the excellent talks, with keynote lecture by Dr Peter Jones, and enjoy a diverse range of excursions leading as usual to new and important plant records.

The ten recording meetings held in Wales included four which lasted several days: the traditional weeks at Glynhir, Carmarthenshire and Caerdeon, Merionethshire, were joined by meetings in Flintshire and Denbighshire.

A second Eyebright (*Euphrasia*) workshop was held at Treborth Botanic Garden in March 2016 and proved very popular.

BSBI activities and VCRs in Wales were supported by Welsh Officers Paul Green (until June 2015) and Polly Spencer-Vellacott (from August 2015). Local botany groups across Wales also continued to actively support many of the vice-county recorders.

Two issues of the *Welsh Bulletin* were produced, including all the new Welsh Plant Records. Work on Rare Plant Registers for Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire continued apace



Ryan Clark enthuses a young botanist at Big Nature Day 2015

# Encouraging an Interest in Plants (continued)

and electronic updates were provided for Radnorshire, Montgomeryshire and Anglesey.

## Ireland

An ambitious programme of 12 meetings was held throughout the year, including many two- and three- day events aimed at helping with recording for Atlas 2020. The Mayo Recording Week, held from 27th July to 3rd August was a huge success: 42 botanists collected almost 11,000 records from a total of 132 monads and across 33 hectads.

A two day conference held at the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin in April was well attended by seasoned members and, as one third of the delegates were not members, BSBI membership in Ireland gained a consequent boost. The BSBI Annual Summer Meeting, based at the University of Ulster over four days in June 2015, also attracted newcomers who went on to attend local recording meetings.

VCRs were kept busy filling in gaps in the distribution of plants in their VCs for Atlas 2020 and BSBI activities in Ireland continued to benefit from the enthusiasm of Irish Officer, Dr. Maria Long, who offered help and support to VCRs and kept them up to date via regular newsletters. *Irish Botanical News*, under the editorship of Paul Green since 2009, celebrated its 25th year.

More than 230 data sheets were returned for the Irish Species Project and almost 60 recorders participated, with half of them non-VCRs, from 29 vice-counties. Analysis started in 2015-6 on a species -by- species basis.

BSBI worked with the National Biodiversity Data Centre on a partnership project recording a suite of spring plants.

<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/vascular-plants/>

## Scotland

Site Condition Monitoring of SSSIs for their vascular plants remains an important aspect of BSBI fieldwork in Scotland and in 2015 fieldwork was completed and reports drafted by volunteers with help from Scottish Officer Jim McIntosh for six sites including Eigg-Cleadale and Glas Tulaichean. BSBI volunteers also worked with climbing guides to find and monitor rare plant populations on Ben Nevis as part of the continuing North-face project.

Atlas 2020 recording was boosted further by another year of survey for the Cairngorm National Park Recording Project with 30,000 records gathered, digitised and uploaded to the BSBI Database. Residential recording weeks in Shetland and Ayrshire also contributed towards Atlas 2020 coverage and special mentions go to Andy Amphlett and Stewart Taylor who collected an amazing 15,000 records in Easternness. Andy has also been providing support across the VCR network, particularly on data and its validation.

Rare Plant Registers were published for West Perth, by Liz Lavery & Jane Jones, and for Orkney by John Crossley & Eric Meek.

In May an Introduction to Recording day at RBGE was well attended, while beginners' workshops and follow-up field meetings in Identifying Plant Families were held in Inverness and St Andrews. A total of 41 beginners participated and particular thanks are due to Faith Anstey and her outreach team.

Another very successful BSBI/BSS Scottish Annual Meeting was held at RBGE in November organised by Liz Lavery's team of volunteers and featuring a wide range of interesting exhibits from recorders, the BSBI Photographic Competition arranged by Natalie Harmsworth and a well-received keynote from Ken Thompson on Aliens in the British Flora.

# Publicity and Outreach

In 2015 our Publicity and Outreach initiative, launched in June 2012, continued to find innovative and cost-effective ways to raise BSBI's profile and build up our communications infrastructure.

We shifted our focus to working with partners at national level and providing display material for local recording events and Bioblitzes, rather than attending high-profile public events, although we did participate in the Natural History Museum's Big Nature Day in May 2015. We are very grateful to the many volunteers who contributed their time and enthusiasm to help with presenting exhibits and promoting the society at all these outreach events.

Our network of local recording groups continued to flourish in 2015-6, with an increasing number of local groups having their own webpages hosted by or accessible via the BSBI website. Some groups also set up their own blogs and social media platforms to keep local botanists updated on activities and resources in their area.

The BSBI News & Views blog continued to attract a wide readership, with an average of around 400 visits each day. Increasingly, posts were provided by County Recorders, local group administrators, staff and officers and "ordinary members" across Britain and Ireland, offering them all a chance to share the latest news about BSBI projects, reports on national events and local activities, and links to plant ID resources. By the end of March 2016, blogs by more than 50 BSBI members were also listed on the News & Views blog.

<http://bsbi.org/news-views>

We continued to build our social media profile and by the end of March 2016, more than 8,000 organisations and individuals were using the BSBI Twitter account to keep up with the latest botanical news from BSBI and partner organisations. Regular promotions such as the weekly #wildflowerhour on Twitter and the launch in March 2016 of a 'Wildflower of the Month' slot on BBC Radio Scotland's 'Out for the Weekend' programme helped new audiences take their first steps in plant identification. Our Facebook page also continued to attract interest and helped us reach a different audience, with several new (young) administrators contributing their time, energy and enthusiasm.

<https://twitter.com/BSBIbotany>

<https://www.facebook.com/BSBI2011>

With the help of volunteer Ryan Clark and Head of Science Kevin Walker, our fifth New Year Plant Hunt in January 2016 was the most successful yet. We received 432 lists containing 9,265 records from 865 botanists in 108 vice-counties across Britain and Ireland, and they recorded 653 species in bloom during the New Year holiday. Our increasingly popular social media platforms and growing network of print and broadcast media contacts made it easier to publicise our activities and we were able to achieve widespread media coverage and engage and enthuse new (and younger) audiences.

<http://bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt>

# Botanical Publications

## Periodicals

Volume 5 of our scientific journal *New Journal of Botany* featured 19 scientific papers or short notes from north-west European authors, alongside Book Reviews and Plant Records. Our previous publishers, Maney Publishing, were bought out by Taylor & Francis in 2015 and BSBI welcomed the transition to publication by a major international publishing house. At the end of 2015, Richard Gornall stood down as Editor-in-Chief and was replaced by Ian Denholm, following the latter's handing over of the BSBI presidency to John Faulkner at the AGM in November 2015. We also moved in January 2016 to publishing *New Journal of Botany* on-line as default, with the option to pay £10 per annum to receive print copies.

*BSBI News* continued to be issued three times a year with the editors, Gwynn Ellis and Trevor James, ensuring a high standard and varied range of articles. The *BSBI Year Book 2015* contained information about BSBI and its officers, committees, vice-county recorders and referees, as well as comprehensive field meeting reports and obituaries.

## Books

June 2015 saw the publication of a major new BSBI title, *The Hybrid Flora of the British Isles* by Clive Stace, Chris Preston and David Pearman – this ground-breaking publication will set the standard for other hybrid Floras around the world and has already been hailed as “remarkable”.

A new BSBI Handbook for the identification of *Oenothera* (Evening-primroses) was published in 2015, while work continued apace on a Handbook for *Alchemilla* (Lady's-mantles) and neared completion on Handbooks for *Euphrasia* (Eyebrights) and *Viola* (Violets and Pansies).

*The Flora of Derbyshire*, which benefited from a BSBI grant, was also published in 2015.

## Summerfield Books

Summerfield Books have been a regular exhibitor at Society events this year selling the latest botanical publications and continuing to expand their range of natural history titles, as well as field equipment. BSBI members receive a discount on all BSBI Handbooks and other selected titles.

[www.summerfieldbooks.com](http://www.summerfieldbooks.com)





Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) flowering in south Wales

# Financial Report 31 March 2016

## Treasurer's Report

As BSBI is currently without a Treasurer, with Terry Swainbank retiring and the prospective replacement not yet in office, we, the undersigned, have prepared this Treasurer's Report. We would like to thank Terry for his wise guidance for much of the year in question.

Last year's report set out the decisions that we had made in using our reserves in furtherance of our charitable aims, and the steps that we were taking to implement these decisions. The results for this year reflect that path, with a further substantial though reduced deficit of £128.4K (2015: £177.8K) on our operations. This deficit was increased by largely unrealised losses on our investments of £73.1K (2015: gain £42.1K), making the final deficit for the year of £201.5K (2015: £135.7K). It should be noted that the markets continued to be volatile after the year-end and by the end of July 2016 the gross investment losses (revaluation deficit) for the year ended 31 March 2016 had more than been recovered.

During and just after the end of the financial year ended 31 March 2016, we have been able to do considerable work in rationalising our staff structure, but even so we expect to run a

further deficit in the current year and, as we said last year, whilst this is sustainable in the short-term, it is not a medium- or long-term strategy. We are continuing to develop a closer understanding of the Society's capacity to derive income from its two principal assets, the botanical expertise of its volunteer network throughout Britain and Ireland, and the intellectual property entailed in the botanical records largely generated by those members and accumulated in the Society's Distribution Database.



**Ian Denholm**  
Chair of the BSBI Board of Trustees



**Chris Metherell**  
Trustee/Honorary General Secretary



**David Pearman**  
Trustee

Oblong-leaved Sundew (*Drosera intermedia*)



# Financial Report 31 March 2016

<b>BSBI DRAFT SUMMARISED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES For the year ended 31 March 2016</b>	<b>Year ended 31 March 2016</b>	<b>Year ended 31 March 2015</b>
<b>Incoming resources</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<i>Voluntary Income</i>		
Subscriptions and Donations	85,621	70,360
Core Grants	90,151	64,715
Legacies and Development Fund Donations	25,000	33,174
Investment Income	41,130	43,450
<i>Charitable Activities Income</i>		
Botanical Survey and Interpretation	89,171	94,225
Botanical Education	30,935	13,949
Botanical Publications and Website	36,148	21,042
	<b>398,156</b>	<b>340,915</b>

<b>Resources Expended</b>		
<i>Cost of Generating Funds</i>		
Membership Administration, Publicity and Investment Management	49,571	60,959
<i>Charitable Activities</i>		
Botanical Survey and Interpretation	279,634	275,848
Botanical Education	41,266	30,954
Botanical Publications and Website	113,403	93,446
Governance Costs	42,704	57,485
	<b>526,578</b>	<b>518,692</b>

<b>Net Outgoing Resources</b>		
General and Endowment Funds	(128,172)	(176,822)
Restricted Funds	(250)	(955)
Total Net Deficit before (Losses)/Gains on Investments	<b>(128,422)</b>	<b>(177,777)</b>

<b>Other (Losses)/Gains</b>		
(Losses)/Gains on Investments	(73,115)	42,065
Deficit for the Year	<b>(201,537)</b>	<b>(135,712)</b>

# Financial Report 31 March 2016

<b>BSBI DRAFT SUMMARISED BALANCE SHEET As at 31 March 2016</b>	31 March 2016	31 March 2015
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Investments - at Market Value	948,522	1,180,698

<b>Current Assets</b>		
Stocks	30,351	12,993
Debtors, Prepayments and Accrued Income	47,188	53,569
Cash at Bank and on Deposit	69,499	69,840

<b>Other Liabilities</b>		
Creditors, Accruals and Deferred Income	(128,758)	(148,761)
	<b>966,802</b>	<b>1,168,339</b>

<b>Represented by</b>		
Endowment Funds	363,271	387,421
Restricted Income Funds	4,971	5,221
Unrestricted Funds	598,560	775,697
	<b>966,802</b>	<b>1,168,339</b>

## Notes to the summarised accounts

The summarised accounts presented here are not the full statutory accounts.

The full statutory Annual Report and Accounts of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland made up to its reporting date of 31 March 2016 will be posted on the BSBI website in early October 2016, and filed with the Charity regulators and at Companies House after the completion of independent scrutiny and approval by the Board of Trustees. A paper

copy will be posted to any member on application.

In line with the requirements of the new Charities Statement of Recommended Practice based on Financial Reporting Standard 102, the 31 March 2015 balance sheet and summarised statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 March 2015 have been re-stated to include an accrual for staff leave earned but not taken.

# Thank You

The Society gratefully acknowledges financial support from Cairngorms National Park Authority, Esme Fairbairn Foundation, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, National Museums of Northern Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The Society also 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 minuting secretaries; and the many members who have participated in surveys, prepared reports and read papers.

BSBI would especially like to thank our network of 186 Vice-County Recorders and more than 100 Referees, acknowledging the invaluable work they do and their huge contribution to BSBI's success.

Many of these volunteers have served for very many years, and, whilst these are only a selection, the society notes the sad deaths during the period covered by this review of Pat Evans, Rev. George G. Graham OBE, Yolande Heslop-Harrison, Peter Macpherson, Alan Newton and Edna Stewart.

Without the contribution of all these volunteers, and our wider membership, the work of the Society would not have been possible.

BSBI is indebted to the following bodies for continued support in many various ways:

Biological Records Centre, CEH, Wallingford  
Cambridge Botanic Garden

Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Field Studies Council (in particular Kindroan and Preston Montford Field Centres)

Manchester Metropolitan University

National Biodiversity Data Centre, Waterford

National Biodiversity Network Trust

National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin

Natural History Museum, London

Plantlife

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh

Summerfield Books

The National Museums and Galleries of Wales

The Wildflower Society

University of Leicester

Images supplied by: Pete Stroh, Louise Marsh, Dave Steere, Polly Spencer-Vellacott.

Registered Address:

Botanical Society of Britain  
and Ireland

BSBI  
57 Walton Road  
Shirehampton  
Bristol BS11 9TA

Charity Numbers:

England and Wales (1152954)  
Scotland (SC038675)

Registered Company No.

England and Wales (8553976)

