

**BSBI Scottish Officer**

Jim McIntosh celebrated 10 years in the post of Scottish Officer in November 2014. Co-incidentally SNH funding for the support post expired, so a new bid was prepared, submitted and was ultimately successful after much discussion. It is for a 3.4 year period – until March 2018. While less than bid, it is more than the previous grant, which in these difficult financial straitened times is very satisfying. We were asked to prepare an estimate of the notional value of the work undertaken annually by BSBI volunteers in Scotland. It was valued (conservatively, I think) at £230,000 and there is no doubt this was a key factor in securing such a good deal from SNH. I am very grateful to both SNH and to all those BSBI volunteers.

The other good news is that the anonymous donor who has supported the BSBI Scottish Officer project since its inception has very generously agreed to continue their support. In effect it means BSBI are only left to cover a quarter of staff costs and half of office costs which are, in any case, subsidised by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. All the other budget lines such as Recorder Support, MapMate Support, and the facilitators' costs of Recorders' Workshops and Recording Weeks are more or less wholly funded. We are very grateful to the anonymous donor and to SNH, RBGE and to all those BSBI volunteers!

**Site Condition Monitoring**

The other factor which greatly helped the funding bid is the BSBI's continued contribution to vascular plant Site Condition Monitoring. In the early part of 2014, SCM Reports were completed, checked and forwarded to SNH for four sites surveyed in 2013; they were Cove, Dalcroy, Sands of Forvie and Spey Bay SSSI. During 2014 the BSBI Scottish Officer and volunteers monitored a further five sites - Arthur's Seat Volcano, Craighall, Derskelpin Moss, Glen Strathfarrar, Milton Wood, and reports are now in draft for those sites. We also assisted SNH with surveys of three other sites Ben Lui, Endrick Mouth and Islands and Ben Nevis (as part of the North-face project). Again, thanks are due to all the contributing BSBI volunteers.

A copy of all vascular plant SCM reports completed to date has been received from SNH. Currently I am validating a collation of SCM target species records, before arranging to import into DDb and forward to NBN, on behalf of SNH.

**VCR Network Support**

In January, a questionnaire on Atlas 2020 progress was sent out to all BSBI Recorders. 39 out of the 41 Scottish VC Recorders responded and that initiated a useful dialogue with many vice-counties. At least eight will need a fair bit of support to achieve full hectad coverage for Atlas 2020. We asked specifically what help would be required and one of the major issues highlighted was the need for joint (or successor) Recorders.

We therefore advertised joint recorder vacancies in Easternness, vc96, to help Adam Fraser, and Dumbarton, vc99, to help Pam Murdoch. Sadly no-one responded to the Dumbarton advert, but we have made a very promising contact in Easternness. Later in the year we advertised for two further vacancies, this time specifically for Atlas 2020 recording, in South Ebuades, vc102 and East Lothian, vc82. This led to the recently-ratified appointment of Simon Smart, as Atlas 2020 Recorder for Jura, which will be a time limited appointment, with Malcolm continuing as the main point of contact. Although many young members expressed interest East Lothian, vc82, unfortunately none were sufficiently confident to undertake the role. I'm planning to set up a local BSBI Botany Group in the Lothians to nurture these people and help with Atlas recording locally.

Two support newsletters were prepared and sent to Scottish Recorders during the year – in [spring](#) and [winter](#).

### **VCR Network Support: Andy Amphlett**

Andy Amphlett volunteered to work for the BSBI for 45 days in 2014. He agreed to provide support to recorders in the north-east of Scotland, including recording in under-recorded areas like Easternness, and to help develop guidance for the [BSBI DataBase](#) (DDB).

His main achievement during the year was to devise and manage a project that promoted recording by BSBI volunteers in remote parts of the Cairngorm National Park. He also successfully bid for project funds. Consequently, a total of 20,000 high quality records were added to the DDB and made available to the CNP Authority. It is hoped to repeat this or a similar, project in 2015.

Andy also prepared user guidance for the [BSBI DDB](#) and made over one hundred posts on a variety of issues on the [DDB Message Board](#); and has produced spreadsheets that help recorders identify gaps in their Atlas 2020 hectad and tetrad coverage. I recently met Andy to thank him for his splendid contribution, and to agree an expanded recorder support programme in 2015.

### **Rare Plant Registers**

During 2014, Angus Hannah published separate Rare Plant Registers (RPRs) for [Arran](#) and [Bute](#) in Clyde Isles, vc100 and Barbara Sumner published an [RPR for Midlothian](#), vc83. Meanwhile, Jane Jones and Liz Lavery have been busy drafting an [RPR for West Perthshire](#), vc87 which is very nearly ready to publish. Chris Metherell was contracted to help Chris Miles and Dave Lang with their RPRs for Dumfriesshire, vc72 and Ayrshire, vc75 respectively.

### **MapMate Support**

Work by Martin Rand to redraft and expand The [BSBI MapMate Handbook](#) was completed. Martin Harvey updated [BSBI MapMate](#) support website and uploaded the Handbook, along with additional training videos and user queries and an updated version of the BSBI Data Entry Guidelines.

### **Data**

A few years ago we set up a project to digitise the back-log of paper records in Scotland. Unfortunately, a number of the resulting Computerisation Project datasets got 'stuck in the system'. In 2014 a concerted effort was made to extricate, validate and upload these datasets to the DDB. Andy Amphlett led on work to upload datasets containing the Mar Lodge Recording Week, vc92 and

the North Aberdeenshire, vc93 records. The Scottish Officer led on work to get the much delayed Dunbartonshire, vc99, dataset cleaned-up and forwarded to the DDb, where it now awaits uploading. He also imported the West Lothian, vc84 data into the Recorder's MapMate and uploaded it to the DDb.

In addition, two datasets of notable species records, one from Forest Enterprise Scotland's Open Habitat Survey, and the other from visiting BSBI members, were validated and uploaded to the DDb

### **Atlas 2020 Recording**

Eighteen botanists enjoyed great weather and a lack of midgies during the 2014 Scottish Recording Week at Glen Shiel Lodge. While Ian Strachan led daily forays into the Glenelg peninsula in Westernness, the majority of the survey work was organised by Duncan Donald and Jim McIntosh in the southern part of Wester Ross. A parallel Recording Week was organised by Angus Hannah on Arran to utilise the many disappointed members who came late and found Glen Shiel fully booked. Detailed reports appear in the *BSBI Yearbook 2015*.

Robin Payne, Recorder for Angus, vc90, organised a very enjoyable three-day recording meeting based in Tarfside in July, which I attended. The records made a valuable contribution to the Recorders' datasets and to the Cairngorm National Park Project (see above).

Planning work began in 2014 for Recording Weeks in July 2015 on the Northern Isles of Shetland and in the south of Ayrshire, where Angus Hannah is helping local recorders, Dave Lang and Gill Smart.

### **Training**

We undertook more training in 2014 than ever before, thanks to a group of enthusiastic volunteer leaders and tutors (the BSBI Outreach Group) who organised three Plant Families Workshops for beginners. A total of 67 beginners participated in the workshops which were held in Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews. A dozen follow-up evening and short-day meetings were held specifically for those on the workshops. The feedback was very positive. Particular thanks are due to Faith Anstey and Jenny Farrar.

Two field meetings were organised which specifically welcomed beginners and folk who had never been on a BSBI field meeting before – at Kippenrair and Ardtalnaig. Three "Introduction to" days to Sedges, Grasses & Ferns were organised the Scottish Officer with help from Mike Porter, the Sedge Referee, and BSBI & BPS members. They complimented two field meetings for improvers lead by volunteers. For the more advance, a Grass Id weekend workshop at Melrose in July was organised and led by referee, Arthur Copping, and Chris Metherell led two *Euphrasia* Study Group days.

### **BSBI Meetings**

Much work was done with the help of BSBI and PSNS volunteers to organise the *BSBI Annual Summer Meeting* in Dunkeld in June. 90 members from across Britain & Ireland enjoyed a day of talks followed by two days of field meetings to a wide range of Perthshire botanical localities. As usual, I helped the Scottish Committee with the BSBI/BSS Scottish Annual Meeting (SAM) at RBGE in November. A presentation was given to help launch *Atlas 2020 – the final five years*.

Claudia Ferguson-Smyth did a great job of organising the 2014 BSBI Photographic Competition. The photographic entries were displayed at the SAM and the Leicester AEM. The winning photographs adorn the front and back covers of *BSBI News: 128* and runner up images are published in this Newsletter. Thanks are due to Claudia and to Paul O'Hara of [Summerfield Books](#) for providing the prizes.

### **BSBI Publicity**

Publicity work in 2014 culminated in another rare appearance of the BSBI at Scottish Birdfair in May. However the Botanical Survey of the north face of Ben Nevis, which we were intimately involved with, also got a good airing on national media, including BBC Scotland. The [BSBI Scotland](#) website was more frequently maintained than ever before and the Scottish membership email group was used regularly to promote botanical activity in Scotland.

### **Networking**

In 2014, I participated in SNH's Sharing Good Practice workshop on Citizen Science, where it was pleasing to hear so many references to BSBI data, and BES/CIEEM's Protecting Scotland's Biodiversity Conference on monitoring. It was with great pleasure that I represented Scotland at Kew at an event to celebrate David Pearman's contribution to the BSBI and to launch the English Red Data List.

### **Thanks**

Thanks are due to *all* the BSBI Recorders and volunteers who contributed so magnificently in 2014! And I look forward to seeing you in the field in 2015!



**Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer, March 2015**