



GUIDANCE for PARTICIPANTS AT FIELD MEETINGS

One of the delights of membership of the Society is to be introduced to new areas of the country and new species. An important consideration for the BSBI is that this is done well and with the welfare and enjoyment of attendees in mind.

Some meetings are suitable for slow progress over level ground. At others there may be steep terrain or boggy conditions. If you are not able to keep up with other members of the party, or need to return to the starting point, you may become a liability to them. We ask all participants to consider whether the meeting is appropriate for them.

Needless to say, people will come along with different background knowledge, expectations and abilities, but we aim to provide outings that everyone enjoys. This guidance gives you some suggestions on how to make the most of the meeting. We welcome feedback on how to make improvements and these should be sent to the party leader after the event or to the Hon. Field Meetings Secretary Jonathan Shanklin fieldmeetings@bsbi.org.

These notes particularly apply to BSBI meetings advertised in the Yearbook and web page and marked as BSBI or Country in the meetings diary. Other arrangements may be in place for meetings listed in the calendar as vc, vcr or local.

1. Meeting types

We organise many different types of meeting. Some will be designed to show off the flora of a specific site or to record it if a County Site Register is being compiled. Others are designed for improving botanical skills, and may range from those with tutors helping complete beginners, to those teaching recorders how to split “difficult” taxa. BSBI meetings are keyed as: **B**eginners (these meetings are specifically targeted at beginners, but will often be of interest to improvers), **G**eneral (these meetings will explore the whole flora of an area, possibly with some recording; beginners and experts are equally welcome), **R**ecording (all participants will help with recording an area so should be suitably experienced, but this can include beginners), **S**pecialised (the meeting will concentrate on one species or on a particular group) and **T**raining (these meetings will have a tutor to help with identification skills, but can be specialised). If you have never attended a BSBI meeting before, then a Beginners, General or appropriate Training meeting is a good place to start.

The terrain over which meetings take place varies from the flat fens to steep mountains. The distance travelled can vary too, ranging from barely getting out of the car park to 10km or more hikes. In order to help members decide which is best for them, BSBI is introducing a traffic light system: Red, Yellow or Green. A “Green” meeting will be largely on level, even ground, though may include

public footpaths and gentle ascents over a short distance. A “Red” meeting could include mountainous terrain, uneven ground or a long hike. A “Yellow” meeting would be somewhere in-between, so do ask the organiser if you are unsure if it would be suitable for you.

2. **Booking**

Most meetings are now booked in advance by email. Make sure you give your name and additional contact details. Guests are welcome if there is space – please check with the leader. Indicate if you are arriving by car, and if you are able to provide lifts if necessary. The organiser may make further information available, by letter, by email, on a web page or via social media. Please do not just turn up on the day.

3. **Attendance**

Meetings are often over-subscribed, so members who have booked places **must** inform the leader if they cannot attend. This may allow another member to take your place. You will need to arrange your own transport and accommodation (if necessary) which you will have to cancel if you are unable to attend the meeting, or if the meeting itself is cancelled.

4. **Young People and vulnerable adults**

Coming to a BSBI meeting may start a life-long interest in plants in a young person (someone who is under 18). Some meetings may have to exclude young people, possibly because of difficult terrain or because of restrictions by the landowner. Please inform the meeting leader if you are planning on bringing a young person, so that they can consider whether the meeting is suitable and advise you of any specific hazards. Parents have full responsibility for any young person attending a meeting and they or a guardian must accompany them. Our meetings may also be beneficial for vulnerable adults, but we will usually need to have special provision in place.

5. **Charges**

There is usually no charge for BSBI day field meetings, though there may be an entry charge at some sites. Meetings lasting more than one day may include a registration fee and an offer of an accommodation package. This will usually be made clear in the Field Meetings Programme published in the Yearbook and on the meetings web page. Please read the booking details and instructions carefully and refer to the leader(s) if in doubt.

6. **Insurance**

BSBI members attending excursions, and their guests, do so at their own risk. Individuals may wish to organise their own insurance cover, and this is highly recommended for overseas excursions.

7. **Medical**

It is in your interests to inform the leader of any relevant medical condition which may require special consideration. The meeting description will give information on what the day entails, and you should be fit enough to comfortably complete the trip. Contact the leader if in doubt. Remember to bring any necessary medication with you on the day. In some circumstances, you may be

asked not to attend if you are particularly vulnerable during a national or local epidemic.

8. Equipment

Come appropriately prepared for the weather and terrain, with the necessary clothing and footwear. Items that may be useful at a field meeting include: maps, ruler, GPS, identification guides, record card (often provided by the organiser), hand lens, pen/pencil, penknife, sample bag, first aid or medical supplies and mobile phone. For an all-day meeting, always bring your lunch and enough to drink, even if there is an intention to return to the cars by lunch time. Progress is often slower than expected!

9. Arrival

Arrive promptly, so as not to inconvenience other members of the party. We recommend aiming to arrive about 10 minutes early. Introduce yourself to the leader who will check you off on the sign-in sheet.

10. Code of Conduct

No specimens should be picked unless this is suggested by the leader – plants common in one area may be rare in another. Please follow the [Code of Conduct](#) for the conservation and enjoyment of wild plants. You should also be aware of the advice given in [Safety in the Field](#). Members are expected to follow the [Countryside Code](#) or the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#), avoiding damage to property and ensuring that livestock does not escape. When you are on a road you should follow the [Highway Code](#), paying particular note to the [section on pedestrians](#) (the links take you to the code for the majority of the UK). Please observe appropriate social distancing when national guidance is in force – whilst it is tempting to crowd around a specimen this could put others at risk.

11. Safety

At the start of all meetings, the leader will give a short safety briefing, in which members are given information about the major hazards and how to deal with them. You can assume that the usual hazards of a day in the field are present. If it is your first field trip let the leader know. Please pay careful attention to the briefing and respect the advice of the leader, who will usually be very familiar with the terrain to be explored. For further advice, see the document "[Safety in the Field](#)".

Leaders have the right to exclude participants on grounds of safety. For example, those who are not adequately shod or clothed or who may become a liability to other members of the party, particularly on rough or mountainous terrain. Vehicles and their contents are parked at their owners' risk.

A meeting may have to be cancelled if meteorological or environmental conditions mean that it cannot safely go ahead.

12. Dogs

Because many field meetings are held in nature reserves or where there are grazing animals, dogs are not normally allowed. Registered guide dogs are exempt from this requirement, unless they are prohibited by the landowners. In

exceptional circumstances a dog may be brought to a meeting, provided that there is explicit advance agreement, in writing, with the leader and all other party members.

13. Photography

Participants often take images during meetings and these are valuable in helping to illustrate it in reports on the BSBI Blog and in the Yearbook. Photography of the flowers, scenery and people can all bring the meeting to life for those who weren't there, so do share them. If you do not wish to be featured in such images please make this clear to the report writer.

14. GDPR

The information collected when you book is only held in order to administer the event. We will treat your information as confidential, hold it securely and will never pass it on to third parties. Your information will be deleted within 6 months of the event taking place. The lawful basis for processing this data is defined under GDPR regulations as contractual. You can request to see the data we hold on you at any time and we will remove you from our systems and discontinue contact if you so request the meeting organiser.