



**January 2024 Sample Issue**  
See inside for a selection of articles from *BSBI News* no. 155 and details of how to join the BSBI. Members receive three issues of *BSBI News* each year as part of the package of membership benefits.



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Cover photo:  
*Chenopodium murale* (Nettle-leaved Goosefoot), Laboratory Battery, Steep Holm (Helena Crouch).  
See England country roundup, p. 46.

Contributions for future issues should be sent to the Editor, John Norton ([john.norton@bsbi.org](mailto:john.norton@bsbi.org))

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## BEGINNER'S CORNER

### Stitchworts (Part 1)

MIKE CREWE

In this edition of Beginner's Corner, I'm returning to the chickweed and campion family – the Caryophyllaceae – for a first look at members of the genus *Stellaria*, of which we have seven species in Britain and Ireland. One of the reasons why keys are so popular as a way of identifying plants is that they allow us to break down the choices into smaller, manageable groups as we work towards an identification, and this method works well in the campion family generally. We've looked previously at the closely related mouse-ears in the genus *Cerastium* (*BSBI News* 152: 37–40). That genus can generally be separated from *Stellaria* by a close look at the flowers: *Cerastium* has four or five styles, while *Stellaria* has only three (though annoyingly, there's one exception). Further, *Cerastium* species typically have a relatively shallow cleft in the tip of each of the petals, along with hairy leaves, while the petals of *Stellaria* are cleft to beyond half way to the base and the leaves are more or less hairless. Indeed, the petals of several

Flowers of Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*), showing the five deeply cleft white petals, characteristic of the stitchworts. Mike Crewe

of our stitchworts are so deeply cleft that one has to be careful not to believe that they have 10 petals – an easy trap for those still learning their plants! A few other members of the campion family could perhaps be confused with *Stellaria*, such as the various sandworts, but those species typically have entire, un-notched petals.

Having separated out our *Stellaria* species from their relatives, the commoner species can fairly easily be split into two manageable groups by means of their leaves, all of which are carried in opposite pairs along the stems, as is typical for the family. Here, I'll be looking at the subset of species with rather narrow leaves and which are generally known as stitchworts. In a later issue, I'll have a look at the broader-leaved species, known as chickweeds.



## The Basal Project – photo contributions needed!

RICHARD MABBUTT

The Basal Project is a free web resource to help with the identification of the basal and juvenile leaves of wild plants of Britain and Ireland. It is aimed at beginner botanists, to give them the opportunity to use picture matching for non-flowering material. Developing more botanists is extremely important for the future. Many of us started out by picture matching; the Basal Project will help beginners to focus on not only the flowers in their books, but on the vegetative features too, thus encouraging them to become better all-round botanists.

Basal leaf of *Agrimonia procera* (Fragrant Agrimony). Richard Mabbutt

sought after. There are approximately 1750 species still to find, and that's where I am asking for your help – otherwise this project may take another 15–20 years to complete! The Excel sheet has a search facility, so trawling through 1750 plant names is not required when you are off out for the day, and have a rough idea of what you may see and, hopefully, photograph.

Not all species groups are readily identifiable vegetatively, so I have omitted hybrids, microspecies, varieties, grasses, sedges, rushes, ferns, some rare trees and submerged aquatics. I am keen to ensure that every image includes something to provide a sense of scale, such as a hand, car keys or a ruler.

## The Basal Project

I have worked on this project for five years, and have found and photographed 650 species so far in their juvenile and basal state. There is a link on the website to a downloadable Excel spreadsheet which lists all species found so far, and all those still

There is a search bar on the home page where you can enter partial or full scientific or common names, genus, species or family. Enter 'thistle', and all the thistles come up, enter 'Hypericum' and

From the latest research on population declines to first records of alien plants on these islands



## Species population decline at tetrad and hectad scales

MICHAEL BRAITHWAITE

This article is intended as a simplified introduction to the question of what exactly is being measured by the individual species declines demonstrated by *BSBI Plant Atlas 2020*.

For Berwickshire (v.c. 81), where I was BSBI Vice-county Recorder for 35 years, I published a *Berwickshire BSBI Botanical Site Register* giving for each site considered by me to be of botanical interest, an OS map at 1:25,000 scale with site boundaries marked, a site description and species localities. Rare and scarce species were listed by 6-figure grid reference with supporting detail, often including 10m localities. Selected axiophytes were listed by 6-figure grid reference, while other axiophytes were just listed without detail. This reflected my consistent recording strategy over many years, always at monad scale or finer within sites.

In the process of writing this *Register*, I reflected on what population loss means for scarce species. I found that such species almost always occur singly or

*Betonica officinalis* (Betony) and *Teucrium scorodonia* (Wood Sage), two of the declining species considered in this study. John Norton

as a group of colonies within a modest area, typically less than 1 km<sup>2</sup>, though often overlapping a monad boundary. I concluded that loss at monad scale gives the best available measure of scarce species decline in the context of species distribution mapping, as it is applicable equally to the great majority of species. At finer spatial scales individual colonies often die out but may, or may not, be compensated for by a similar number of new colonies elsewhere in the same site, so the situation becomes complex.

### BSBI studies of change in the distributions of individual species

BSBI has studied the decline of individual species over time for Britain as a whole in two ways. At tetrad scale the BSBI Monitoring Scheme 1987–88



## British herbaria, with special reference to alien plants

DAVID PEARMAN

For the last six years my colleague, Chris Preston and I, have been researching afresh when each of the alien species in the four editions of Stace's Floras were introduced to Britain and Ireland and when they were first reliably recorded here in the wild. Previous attempts for the latter have been very largely based on literature records, which perforce are all that are available for earlier (pre-1800 records), as well as a mixture of field records and known herbarium references. We felt that searching for supporting herbarium records, and, in the rare cases where we felt able to, re-examining the determinations, would be a much more satisfactory project and lead to a more rigorous outcome.

In the last two years we have visited or corresponded with all the larger herbaria and many others too. We have visited eight ourselves, some of them multiple times, and corresponded with museum curators or arranged for vice-county recorders and others to visit another 32. We have

Part of a sheet of *Potentilla rivalis*, from the herbarium of Eric Clement. A rarely grown American annual, first seen in near Bridgnorth, Shropshire in 1976 but collected again in 1978 and then confirmed by Eric Clement. It persisted there until 1993. This is a really good and informative pressed specimen.

been met with courtesy in almost every case, and from the point of view of our original aim, it has been a very successful exercise.

There are a number of points that might be of interest to BSBI members and other researchers:

- Very few herbaria, even including some of the major, are now staffed by botanical experts. As keepers have retired, they have not been replaced, other than at the Natural History Museum (BM) and one or two others. However in almost all of those that we have approached we have managed to contact someone who has been prepared to search for the required

## ADVENTIVES & ALIENS

### Adventives & Aliens News 31

Compiled by Matthew Berry

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In keeping with the shorter preambles of late, I won't use any more space than that required to express my pleasure at the better coverage Scotland, Wales and Ireland receive in this compilation and to thank everyone who has helped by supplying records for those vice-counties, and indeed for all the records received, whether featured below or not (more will of course appear in News 32). I am ever grateful.



#### V.c. 4 (N. Devon)

*Vinca difformis* (Intermediate Periwinkle). Yarnacott (SS62123045), 24/5/2023, R.I. Kirby (conf. M.

Berry): Glasnakille (NG54211396), 7/6/2023, S.J. Bungard (conf. M.J. Crawley): single rhizome with four flowering stems and three non-flowering, in small marsh with *I. pseudacorus* (Yellow Iris). New to Britain and Ireland. A clump-forming perennial garden plant (Iridaceae) with a wide ranging if interrupted distribution. It resembles a dwarf, shorter-lived *I. sibirica* (Siberian Iris), with a highly



*Iris setosa*, Glasnakille, North Ebudes (v.c. 104).  
Stephen Bungard

#### V.c. H12 (Co Wexford)

*Cuscuta campestris* (Yellow Dodder). Mulrankin (S991112), 20/8/2023, G. Draper (det. P.R. Green): one coming up in a garden plant pot. New to Ireland. A twining yellow-stemmed parasitic annual (Convolvulaceae) native to N. America. As an adventive it has been particularly associated with cultivated Carrot plants and in recent times even more strongly with Niger-seed. *Adventives & Aliens News 3*, v.c. 85. Stace (2019): 603.

*Solanum villosum* subsp. *villosum* (Red Nightshade). Wexford (T0457822171), 2022, D.A. Berridge (det. P.R. Green): many plants at base of wall and a few on wall, Westgate Tower. They were initially thought to be *S. dulcamara* (Bittersweet) with abnormally coloured berries, redetermined by Paul Green from photos taken in August 2023. The abundant presence of patent gland-tipped hairs indicated subsp. *villosum*. The first Irish record of *S. villosum* of any subspecies. Very like *S. nigrum* in flower and chiefly distinguished by the yellow to red colour of the ripe berries (vs black) and the usually deeper lobing of the leaves. *S. villosum* subsp. *miniatum* differs from the nominate subspecies in being less hairy and none of the hairs gland-tipped, and the angled stems with dentate ridges (vs terete and entire). A native of Eurasia and north Africa and

#### V.c. 83 (Midlothian)

*Datura stramonium* (Thorn-apple). Newbridge (NT11947249 & NT11867248), 28/8/2023, S. Jury & D. McKean (comm. S. Jury): two flowering and fruiting plants on a brownfield site soon to be built on. These are only the fourth and fifth v.c. 83 records, and the second and third records since 1988. Stace (2019): 606–607.



*Datura stramonium*, Newbridge, Midlothian (v.c. 83).  
Sue Jury

#### V.c. 87 (W. Perth)

*Silene armeria* (Sweet-William Catchfly). Aberfoyle (NN499018), 14/8/2023, J.R. Jones (comm. M. Harding): two plants of unknown origin appeared in a well-established garden. *Zinnia elegans* made a similarly unplanned appearance in the same garden. The first v.c. 87 records. *Adventives & Aliens News 29*, v.c. 4.

#### V.c. 95 (Moray)

*Asperugo procumbens* (Madwort). Forres (NJ03105889), 23/6/2023, I.P. Green: two plants in garden; otherwise the most recent v.c. 95 record is for 1909. A prostrate, subhispid, self-pollinating annual (Boraginaceae) which is a native of much of Europe, western Asia and north Africa. The blue flowers are 3mm across, in clusters of up to three

on short downturned pedicels; the deeply five-lobed accrescent calyxes eventually engulf the fruit. It has mainly been a rare casual of sandy arable and waste ground, hardly ever becoming naturalised. One of the last British records was for v.c. 5 in 1996, when it turned up under a bird table and was seen by, among others, Ian Green. There was a v.c. 68 record in 2019. Stace (2019): 584.

#### V.c. 104 (N. Ebudes)

*Astilbe rivularis* Buch. – Ham. ex D. Don (River Astilbe). Dunvegan Area (NG24844943), 4/5/2022, J. Walmisley (det. S.J. Bungard/conf. M.J. Crawley): wet ground between road and ditch in deciduous woodland, Dunvegan Castle estate. New to Britain and Ireland. A perennial garden herb (Saxifragaceae), native to Asia, with 2- to 3-pinnately compound leaves and brown hairy stem. The inflorescence is a panicle up to c.40cm long. The name has been misapplied to *A. chinensis* (Tall False-buck's-beard) from which *A. rivularis* differs in its sparsely flowered inflorescence (vs densely flowered) and the usually absent or sometimes few, vestigial petals (vs 5 non-vestigial petals). In the present case, the flowers that were examined had no petals and five stamens.

*Cardamine raphanifolia* (Greater Cuckooflower). Portnalong (NG34853542), 28/4/2023, S. Bungard, N. Roberts & W. Macruary (det. S.J. Bungard): large patch in woodland at top of shore, 2.5 × 1.5m. New to v.c. 104. *Adventives & Aliens News 26*, v.c. 12.

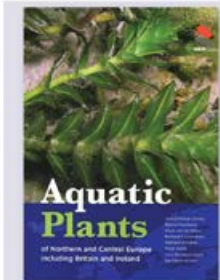


*Cardamine raphanifolia*, Portnalong, North Ebudes (v.c. 104).  
Stephen Bungard

Other regular sections include book reviews, news and announcements from BSBI and a round-up of plant records from across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

## REVIEWS

Compiled by Clive Stace, Book Reviews Editor  
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**Aquatic Plants of Northern and Central Europe including Britain and Ireland**  
J.C. Schou, B. Moeslund, K. van de Weyer, R.V. Lansdown, G. Wieglob, P. Holm, L. Bastrup-Spohr & K. Sand-Jessen  
Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2023. Pp. 746, with numerous photographs and line drawings; hardcover, ISBN 9780691212121

This is an uncommon phenomenon that fills a genuine gap. A substantial A4 on glossy paper 3kg, it provides copiously illustrated of submerged, emergent aquatic of those found in marshy areas, late in sites 'where it persists for a period (p. 61). The authors include 318 species and hybrid counted 385 native species, 16 added 37 hybrids, with

mentioned in passing. The scope is broader than that of Preston & Croft's *Aquatic plants* (1997), including an additional 50 British native or neobiotic plants of marshy areas and excluding only three (*Carex nigra*, *C. recta* and *Rumex aquaticus*). Two numbered *Erythranthe* taxa make no claim to be aquatics and three *Sparganium* species are only potential future introductions. The area covered might best be described as north-western and north-central Europe, extending from Finland and the Baltic states westwards through Scandinavia, Poland, Czechia, Germany and the Low Countries to Britain, Ireland and even to Greenland (presumably as a Danish territory) but France is completely excluded as are the undeniably central European

However, some numbered taxa have much briefer accounts. Throughout the work, naturalised species are as thoroughly treated as natives.

The accounts of the large aquatic genera will clearly be very useful to British and Irish botanists. All species and the commoner hybrids of *Potamogeton* and *Stuckenia* are given full treatment (though I question the assumption that stipule/sheath structure can safely be distinguished in the field). There is a long introduction to batrachian *Ranunculus* and full accounts of the species, defined on familiar lines, but not the hybrids. The account of Lemnaceae (15 taxa) is likely to be outstandingly useful, as are those of *Baldellia* (with superb photos of *B. repens*), *Sparganium*

roadside near Five Lanes. *Erodium maritimum* (Sea Stork's-bill) has spread along this road between Chepstow and Newport where it can be locally abundant. A day in November checking many laybys along main roads for halophytes on the A48 towards Newport and A49 dual carriageway between Newport and Raglan was quite productive, despite lorries roaring past. *Sagina maritima*

### SCOTLAND

Two hundred botanists gathered at the RBGE in November for this year's Scottish Botanists' Conference, with a fascinating range of talks, workshops and exhibits. We were delighted to be joined by Prof. Mathew Williams, Chief Scientific Advisor for Environment, Natural

as a self-employed botanist, packed with superb images of terrific finds, including a remarkable 'aquatic' *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* (Irish Lady's-tresses) plant, submerged by floodwater! We learnt about the highs and lows of managing Plantlife Scotland's Munsary Nature Reserve from Alistair Whyte, and were fabulously entertained and educated by Richard Milne



*Cardamine occulta* (Cryptic Bitter-cress), St Mellons garden centre (v.c.35). Tim Rich

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- Your password for the members-only area of the BSBI website where you can access all the scientific papers published in *New Journal of Botany* 2011–2017, hear about exciting volunteering opportunities for BSBI members... and much, much more.

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