



Recorder eNewsletter

for the botanical recording community

December 2024

British & Irish Botanical Conference 2024

A record 270 people booked to attend the 2024 [British & Irish Botanical Conference](#), which took place on Saturday 23 November at the Natural History Museum, London.

There were 42 exhibits (another record!) and we are uploading digital versions of as many as possible of the posters to the [Conference webpage](#). The [programme](#) included talks by ten speakers including Sandy Knapp, Trevor Dines, Micheline Sheehy Skeffington and BSBI President Paul Ashton, and ten 1-minute flash talks by exhibitors. We recorded all the talks and flash talks and have started uploading them to a [playlist](#) on the [BSBI YouTube channel](#).

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

BSBI Annual General Meeting 2024

This year's BSBI Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place online on Thursday 21 November. Seven trustees were up for election or re-election - all were voted in and their details can be seen on the [trustees page](#). Members also voted unanimously to award Honorary Membership of BSBI to Dr Brenda Harold, creator of [Identiplant](#), the online plant identification course.

The AGM was preceded by introductory talks by some of the winners of the 2023 Awards for [Outstanding Contributions to Botany](#). The talks were recorded and these links will take you to videos of [Tim Rich, talking about his research on Wild Asparagus](#), and [Michael Philip interviewing Malcolm Macneill about his recording of Glasgow's urban flora](#).

Nominations are now open for the 2024 Awards for Outstanding Contributions to Botany, so please consider [nominating any fellow members](#) who you think are really going the extra mile to promote botany locally, nationally or regionally.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

New Year Plant Hunt

Our fourteenth [New Year Plant Hunt](#) will run from 29 December 2024 to 1 January 2025. We are pulling together a listing of group Hunts happening across Britain and Ireland, so if you or your local recording group are planning a Hunt, please let us know by emailing nyplanthunt@bsbi.org so we can help spread the word. The New Year Plant Hunt is a great way for people to take their first steps in plant recording.

New for this year: the spotter sheets we launched last year, to help first-time hunters identify the Top 20 species, proved so popular that this year we have created separate versions for each country. They will go live next week [here](#). Please encourage botanists at all skill levels to [register to take part](#) in the Hunt so they can access spotter sheets, tips on how to photograph plants for ID, and lots more.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

The BSBI Documentation site

The [BSBI Documentation site](#) continues to be updated with useful guidance and I encourage all County Recorders (VCRs) to bookmark it. James Drever has recently [added a page for VCRs](#) with a list of useful DDb searches, a useful one (especially when writing Annual Reports) is how to find a [list of new taxa recorded in your county](#) this year.

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Manager

Plant combos - querying on the DDb

Related to the above post, I thought I'd share a link to something I wrote about querying combinations of plants using the DDb. In other words, if you want to find locations where two or more taxa occur together, then this search on the [documentation website](#) might be of interest.

[Alastair Hotchkiss](#), BSBI Wales Officer

Webinars from the Northern Ireland Botanical Skills Project

Under the banner of our DAERA-funded Botanical Skills Project in Northern Ireland, we have organised a [webinar series](#) running from November through to February. The webinars cater to botanists across the skill spectrum, so some may be of interest to you, whereas others

may be of more interest to developing botanists in your network. Each webinar is on a Tuesday evening at 7pm and lasts for around an hour, and we intend to record them for the [BSBI YouTube channel](#) so they can be viewed by anyone who couldn't join them live. The talk series, and links to book, are:

3rd December - [Dryopteris in Northern Ireland \(and further afield\)](#)

10th December - [An Introduction to the Equisetum of Fermanagh, Ireland, and the UK](#)

14th January - [Grasses, Sedges and Rushes for Absolute Beginners](#)

21st January - [Grasses and grassland habitats](#)

28th January - [Getting started with Cotoneasters](#)

4th February - [Rubus \(Brambles\) in Northern Ireland](#)

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Manager

Take part in a Mistletoe abundance survey

Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) is thought to be spreading in Britain and Ireland, but where will the mistletoe go? With a changing climate, an evolving treescape and shifts in distributions of seed-dispersing birds, the future of this Christmassy parasitic plant is unclear. To predict mistletoe distribution, we are collecting data on local mistletoe abundance, and you can help!

After a successful season of 1,250 records last year, we want more data on where mistletoe is today to forecast where it is going to be. Submit your photos and locations of mistletoe to the "MistleGO!" survey via the Survey123 app, and record how much mistletoe you see – it's the perfect addition to your winter walks! You can still help us if there is no mistletoe in your area by submitting a valuable absence record. Follow [this link](#) to download the app or use in browser. For more information, check out the [Tree Council's website](#).

[Ollie Spacey](#), University of Oxford and the Tree Council

Surrey Rare Plant Register - Out Now!

I'm delighted to let you know that, after nearly 15 years in preparation, the Surrey Rare Plant Register has at last been published and is now available for pre-order from [Summerfield Books, here](#). The Surrey Rare Plant Register is the first published work on the flora of Surrey, Watsonian vice-county 17, for over 35 years. It provides details on the status and distribution of Britain's rare, scarce and threatened plants that occur in VC17 and includes species that may be widespread elsewhere but are at risk in the county.

[Susan Medcalf](#)

***Euphrasia* records update**

I have recently uploaded *Euphrasia* records from the Belfast Museum (**BEL**), about 275 in total. The majority are from Ireland, however about one third are from Scotland, England and Wales. Mainly pre-1980 records but some are from the 1990s. Let me know of any corrections to grid references etc. The data set can be accessed [here](#) (link requires you to be logged into the DDb and have the correct permissions to view the data).

I have now received the *Euphrasia* herbarium of the late Alan Silverside (probably about 1,000 gatherings) and await the delivery of the relevant paperwork from his collection. Many of the specimens already appear as records on the DDb but I would guess about half do not. As you can imagine it will take a long time to go through and check all the material. I will contact individual VCRs as I work through it. My intention is to start with the earliest material and work forwards, however if any VCR is currently writing a Flora or has a particular need it will be perfectly possible to "jump the queue". Let me know and I'll give you a timeframe!

Finally I have been verifying, on their systems, quite a backlog of *Euphrasia* records submitted to both iRecord and iNaturalist. If you have manually transferred *Euphrasia* records from these to the DDb you might want to check back to the original record to see whether it has been redetermined. In the future this should not be necessary as I hope to keep up to date from now on!

[Chris Metherell](#), BSBI *Euphrasia* referee

DDb Spreadsheet upload - second training session and recording

As mentioned in the [previous issue of this newsletter](#), we are now rolling out direct spreadsheet upload to the DDb to all VCRs on a by-request basis.

An online training session on the process was held on 19 November and was attended by over 60 VCRs. A [recording of this session](#) is available on the BSBI YouTube channel. As some VCRs were unable to attend, we are running another session on 11 December at 19:30 via Zoom. Please contact me if you'd like to attend.

You can also email me or your Country Officer to arrange upload permission without attending the training. We're asking that all VCRs share the first spreadsheet they plan to upload for review before upload permission is granted.

[Sam Thomas](#), BSBI England Officer

Scottish Newsletter 2025 - call for content & volunteers

Work has begun on the next issue of the [Scottish Newsletter](#), due out in spring 2025, and we are looking for your contributions to help make this issue a cracker! If you have a story to share with the Scottish botanical community, be it an exciting local project, an important find, a special place or a thoughtful perspective on a botanical subject, why not get in touch?

We are also looking for volunteers to help with some of the publishing preparation in the New Year, so if you want to unleash your inner sub-editor then let John know! It is a gargantuan task for just one person, but many hands (and eyes) can help make it light work.

[John Crossley](#), Scottish Newsletter Editor & [Matt Harding](#), BSBI Scotland Officer

Updated Scottish vice-county Rare Plant Registers!

There has been a whirl of activity in Scotland on this front in 2024, with the fourth edition of the VC89 Rare Plant Register (RPR), 'The Special Plants of East Perthshire' by Martin Robinson, now published in hard copy and available to buy [from Summerfield Books](#). This updates the previous edition with nine years of fieldwork, so expect lots of additions - congratulations Martin!

In Berwickshire, Robin Cowe has updated the Berwickshire RPR in light of several years' targeted fieldwork, and the updated [VC81 RPR list](#) is now available on the DDb. Sarah Cowan has also provided an updated RPR list for Arran in VC100, which will be uploaded to the [checklists](#) area of the DDb soon. Well done all on this work, which can be painstaking and time consuming, but is essential to inform our understanding of local plant populations and conservation priorities.

[Matt Harding](#), BSBI Scotland Officer

Scottish Botanists' Conference

This year's Scottish Botanists' Conference was a fantastic event, with a record 220 attendees, great talks from across the spectrum of Scottish botany, a packed exhibition hall and eight different training workshops, most running twice!

If you missed out, or would like to catch up again on something that caught your interest, you can view posters and download workshop materials via the [SBC exhibits and handouts page](#), and despite some hiccups with the technology most of the talks will be uploaded to the [BSBI YouTube channel](#) for viewing.

Thanks to all who came, all those contributors who provided talks, workshops and exhibits, and RBG Edinburgh for hosting!

[Matt Harding](#), BSBI Scotland Officer

Irish field meetings in 2025

The 2025 field meetings programme is not yet final, so if you would like to lead an event or have a great idea for the perfect Irish field outing - either a single day or a weekend event - there is still time to get it on the programme. Please contact our Field Meetings Secretary [Mark McCorry](#) or myself with any suggestions you might have.

[Bridget Keehan](#), BSBI Ireland Officer

Plans afoot for an Irish FISC!

Until now, Irish botanists have had to travel to Britain if they wished to undertake a FISC (Field Identification Skills Certificate), and the Committee for Ireland have agreed that going forwards, it would be great to run FISCs here in Ireland. So, in 2025, it is aimed to undertake a trial of a FISC in Ireland, to see what adaptations, further actions and/or resources would be needed to get an Irish FISC up and running in earnest.

To achieve this, we will need at least two experienced botanists (at Level 5 or above on the [Botanical Skills Ladder](#)), based in Ireland, to join a voluntary Irish FISC development team and help carry the process forward.

If you would be interested in volunteering for this role, or you know someone who you think might be suitable and interested in doing this, please do get in touch.

[Bridget Keehan](#), BSBI Ireland Officer

Yearbook contributions

I am putting together the field meeting reports from 2024 and the adverts for 2025 meetings to go into the Yearbook. This year we plan to publish in full colour and will aim to include illustrations with the text where possible. I have most of the reports for 2024 from England and Scotland and half of those from Wales. Do send me any missing reports by early December if you can. The accounts may provide a valuable resource for future historians as well as providing information for members and prospective members.

I know that many VCRs don't really start planning their local field meetings until the New Year, which is too late for the Yearbook deadline. However if you are able to identify one meeting that might be of wider interest outside your county, do consider submitting it as a BSBI national field meeting. The 2024 Yearbook (available to view on the password-protected members' area of the BSBI website) is a good model to follow for the information that is required. It is also possible to have late submissions that go straight onto the [Field Meetings & Indoor Events webpage](#), and VCRs might like to offer one or two of their local meetings to be advertised in this way. You may get unexpected visitors from far away (as I did for a v.c.29 meeting advertised this way).

[Jonathan Shanklin](#), BSBI Hon. Field Meetings Secretary

Charity Raffle for the BSBI

We're excited to announce our first ever charity raffle, with all ticket proceeds going towards the work of the BSBI in supporting [our work](#) and our community of botanists.

Greenwings, one of our [BSBI Corporate Supporters](#), have kindly donated a place on their 2025 Rhodes Orchid Odyssey tour - worth over £1,300 - to be won by one lucky BSBI supporter.

Tickets cost £10/€11.90 and there are a maximum of 2,000 available, so be sure to enter to be in with a chance to win. The draw will take place in the first week of 2025.

To enter and for full Ts&Cs, click [here](#).

[Sarah Woods](#), BSBI Fundraising and Engagement Manager

County Membership Lists

If, as a BSBI volunteer such as a County Recorder, you need access to members' contact details in your area, we can arrange this. We will need you to read and sign our Volunteer Confidentiality and Data Protection Agreement. For more information see the [membership list](#) page on the password-protected [members' area](#) of the BSBI website.

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Manager

Recorder eNewsletter

Recorder eNewsletter is aimed at all BSBI recorders, referees, members and supporters involved with recording. If you have active recorders in your county that you think would appreciate receiving it then please encourage them to [subscribe to it here](#).

I'd welcome short contributions from anyone on topics of interest to fellow readers. Recorder eNewsletter is generally published at the beginning of each month so contributions should reach me at the beginning of the preceding week. I'd also be pleased to have feedback.

[James Harding-Morris](#), BSBI Countries Manager