



## Recorder eNewsletter

*for the botanical recording community*

January 2025

### **Vice-county Annual Reports for 2024**

Vice-county Recorders should have recently received an email from their Country Officer with a link to submit their Annual Reports (if you haven't, please let them know!).

The reports will be published on county webpages in the New Year, and some countries may also publish them in Country Newsletters. Annual Reports are a valuable way for members and the general public to find out more about what's been taking place near where they live, as well as offering you another way to inform us (the Country Support Team) about any needs and issues you need support with.

And, of course, I can't be alone in thoroughly enjoying reading through all the exciting botanical finds and re-finds from the past year.

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

### **BSBI New Year Plant Hunt**

Our fourteenth [New Year Plant Hunt](#) will run from 29th December to 1st January. We hope that data from this project may be beginning to provide useful insights into long-term climatic changes. The plant hunt is also a great way to engage with enthusiastic beginners.

Across Britain and Ireland, many County Recorders and local groups are running [plant hunt events](#), if your meeting is not yet on the list then please tell us. If you haven't yet made plans, then please consider leading a local plant hunt, which we'd be happy to publicize. The New Year Plant Hunt is a great way for people to take their first steps in plant recording.

We've expanded the [NYPH Top-20 species spotter sheets](#), with customized versions for each country. Please encourage people in your networks to [sign-up to take part](#). We'll send them links to the spotter sheets and guidance to help them take part in the plant hunt.

Louise Marsh and the [BSBI New Year Plant Hunt Team](#)

## **New - Vice-county Recorder Resources page**

Do you ever find yourself *knowing* that a document or resource exists, but can't remember exactly where on the BSBI website it is? You're not alone!

To try and help with this we have created a brand new [Vice-county Recorder Resources page](#). Here we have tried to aggregate and organise the key support materials and guidance vital to the VCR role, but we might have missed something. If you have an idea of a resource to add to this page, please let me know.

Hopefully, between this page and the Documentation Site (below) you should be able to find everything you need (if it exists).

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

## **The BSBI Documentation web 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

## **Irish records submitted via the Recording App**

Just to highlight: there are currently [thousands of Irish records](#) that have been collected via the BSBI Recording App, which have not been yet transferred to the DDb, so if you are a VCR it's worth checking the BSBI App workspace (you can select this from the 'project workspace' tab at the bottom of the basic DDb search page) to see how many records have been submitted for your County (select this, too, under 'County/Region'). They won't be added into the DDb itself without being verified by you, but it's a really straightforward process to view and transfer records, and they can be sorted in a number of ways to make verification even quicker and easier: for example, sort by 'Recorder' to quickly transfer all those records you know will be reliable, or sort by entries that include a photo, so you can check the ID. There is very clear, concise [guidance on the whole process](#) on the documentation website, which should make the process very do-able, so do check out the app workspace to see what exciting records may be lurking: maybe a nice job for the quieter winter months! If you need any support with this, do get in touch and I will do my best to help.

[Bridget Keehan](#), BSBI Ireland Officer

## **Wales Annual Meeting, Exhibition and AGM 2025**

The [2025 BSBI Wales Annual Meeting](#), exhibition and AGM together with the associated field excursions will be based at The Drapers' Field Centre on the western edge of VC50 [Denbighshire](#) in the Snowdonia National Park. A preliminary programme has been prepared which will include evening talks and workshops and a range of field visits to reflect this diverse and spectacular part of North Wales. Preliminary plans include RSPB Conwy nature reserve, which boasts a range of salt marsh and wetland habitats; Bryn Euryn SSSI a prominent limestone hill overlooking Rhos-on-Sea which has a rich mixture of limestone grassland and woodland; Bodnant Gardens which houses a number of National Collections and boasts Wales's largest collection of UK Champion Trees together with extensive areas of semi-natural woodland and meadows; Pensarn SSSI and/or Kinnel Dunes nature reserve with an extensive range of shingle, dune and coastal species, whilst the upland right-to-roam Pen yr Orsedd, part of Mynydd Hiraethog SSSI, is a wetland acid bog comprising a typical flora. Further programme and booking details can be found [here](#).

[John Palmer](#), Chair, Committee for Wales

## **Could you grow or collect plants for BSBI's FISC assessments in 2025?**

[Field Identification Skills Certificate](#) (FISC) assessments involve two lab tests and a field survey. Plants across the two lab tests need to come from a wide range of habitats throughout Britain and include national rarities and hybrids, as well as plants across a range of taxonomic groups.

One of the main tasks of the FISC Assessor running the assessments is to source plants for these tests, and BSBI would like to give them as much support as possible.

We are hoping to expand our network of native plant growers and collectors around the country who may be willing to help supply the plants for the two lab tests associated with the assessment.

If you grow native plants yourself or are willing to collect some plants for assessments from habitats in your local area, I would love to hear from you.

[Chantal Helm](#), BSBI Training Coordinator

## **FISCs in Ireland: request for expertise!**

As mentioned in the last edition of Recorder eNews, we are hoping to pilot an Irish FISC in 2025; however, 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.

We are still looking for someone to help with this, so if it's something you might be interested in, and would like information, or you know someone who might be suitable and willing to consider this, please do let me know.

[Bridget Keehan](#), BSBI Ireland Officer

### **BSBI Recording App updates**

Thank you to everyone who has been trialling the [BSBI Recording App](#) over the past year. Your feedback and suggestions have been invaluable. Development work on the App this year has focused largely on ensuring that it is fast and reliable. Next year, I'll start adding many of the new features that you've requested, including a separate tabular form for quickly transcribing more complex records.

Among the recent changes made is support for entering taxa using BRC code numbers, which may be a good shortcut if you use numbered recording cards.

If you haven't used the app recently, then please consider trying it out again, as most of the early teething troubles have been resolved. The BSBI New Year Plant Hunt recording form has been integrated into the app, so that could be a good opportunity to explore the app.

[Tom Humphrey](#), BSBI Database Officer

### **County Floras and Checklists**

For some years, Martin Rickard and I have been compiling a comprehensive list of County Floras and Checklists, drawing from books, journals, and local history sources. We aim to publish this work in 2025 as a booklet and online.

Previous compilations, such as Simpson's *Bibliographical Index of the British Flora* (1960), filled with so much detail that it is often hard to see the important references. A [digitised version](#) – which is also out of date - is on the BSBI website. A summary of the [principal County Floras](#) is also available.

Our draft reveals that some VCs lack a County Flora or even a checklist. Wales has a few gaps, Scotland rather more. Ireland has around a third of counties without a Flora or checklist. England is better covered but often only with older works.

James Harding-Morris highlighted a straightforward method for [creating VC checklists using the DDb](#). These lists depend on existing data, and older records (pre-war) often remain uncaptured. Nonetheless, this approach could be valuable and stimulating.

For checklist queries, contact James or your Country Officer. For historical sources, feel free to contact me.

[David Pearman](#)

## Forestry England - new information on arranging access for recording meetings

Following several VCRs encountering problems with arranging access to Forestry England land for local recording meetings we have been in contact with FE to clarify group access requirements.

FE have confirmed that botanical survey visits of 25 or fewer people should generally be treated as 'low-impact events' under their permission assessment system. Botanists arranging such a meeting should not have to provide evidence of public liability insurance or pay an application fee.

Applications should be made to the FE ecology contact (given below) in each [District](#) using this [form](#) and mentioning that you consider the event to be 'low-impact'. Please note that some VCs span more than one district. There may also be specific instances where land ownership or other restrictions mean that permission is not possible or is more difficult to obtain.

FE have emphasised that they are keen for us to record on their land and that they understand the value of the records we generate so hopefully this will help recorders get out on FE land more in 2025 and beyond. Please let me know if you do still encounter any issues with access to FE land.

- North Forest District - [tom.dearnley@forestryengland.uk](mailto:tom.dearnley@forestryengland.uk)
- Yorkshire Forest District - [cath.bashforth@forestryengland.uk](mailto:cath.bashforth@forestryengland.uk)
- Central Forest District - [milly.robinson@forestryengland.uk](mailto:milly.robinson@forestryengland.uk)
- West Forest District - [sam.pegler@forestryengland.uk](mailto:sam.pegler@forestryengland.uk)
- East Forest District – [neal.armour-chelu@forestryengland.uk](mailto:neal.armour-chelu@forestryengland.uk)
- South Forest District - [leanne.sargeant@forestryengland.uk](mailto:leanne.sargeant@forestryengland.uk)

[Sam Thomas](#), BSBI England Officer

## 2025 Field Meetings and Indoor Events

[Meetings for 2025](#) will be posted as soon as practicable. Thanks to all those who have contributed to the programme. If you have a sudden urge to offer another event for a wider audience, it may be too late for the Yearbook, but details can be added to the webpage at any time. Meetings posted there at the moment are virtual, apart from one on Sedges and the Wales Annual Meeting. You can also book for the [Recorders' Meeting](#).

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

## Northamptonshire RPR

Alyson Freeman's 2022 Rare Plant Register (RPR) for Northamptonshire is now available on the VC32 [county page](#) and as a [checklist](#) on the DDb.

[Sam Thomas](#), BSBI England Officer

## Congratulations!

Three cheers for two busy bees! At the recent [British & Irish Botanical Conference](#), Susan Medcalf had a [poster about the Surrey RPR](#) which has just been published and is available from Summerfield Books. And from [Co. Monaghan](#), Alexis Fitzgerald has emailed to say that his *Flora of County Monaghan*, which was ten years in the making, has also been published and is available [here](#). Well done to both of them!

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

## Pteridoportal

At one of our recent webinars from the Northern Ireland Botanical Skills Project, Alison Evans recommended a website called [Pteridoportal](#), a site which '*provides one-stop access to digitized fossil and herbarium pteridophyte specimens, and their associated data*'. I thought it may be of interest to our recording community.

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

## Take part in a Mistletoe abundance survey

In last month's Recorder eNews we had a note from Ollie Spacey on the MistleGO! survey. Having had a go with the app (available for a [desktop browser or to download](#)) it's very easy to use and I've enjoyed logging a few recent sightings. Please consider sharing with your recording groups, or submitting a few records yourself.

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

## BSBI Scotland 2024 Christmas Quiz

This Christmas, why not test your Scottish botanical knowledge with this [festive quiz](#) - 100 questions on topics from species ranges to historical figures, distribution trends to traditional medical uses!

Answers will be circulated in the New Year. There are no prizes other than a glow of personal satisfaction, and you can make as much use of references and/or Google as your conscience can bear. Enjoy!

[Matt Harding](#), BSBI Scotland Officer

## **Webinars from the Northern Ireland Botanical Skills Project**

Our webinar series, part of our DAERA-funded Botanical Skills Project in Northern Ireland, is taking a Christmas break until mid-January. The talks that have already taken place can be viewed on the [BSBI YouTube channel](#), and the remainder of the talk series, and links to book, are:

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

## **Help spread the word about BSBI?**

I regularly receive enquiries from wildlife groups and regional event organisers asking for speakers to talk (either in-person or online) about the BSBI or more generally about wild flowers and recording; or to lead a guided walk or have a stall at a Bioblitz.

It would help to have a list of County Recorders who would (or definitely wouldn't) be happy to be approached. So please let me know if you would consider such an approach so I can add you to a list - or if the very thought makes you shudder, do tell me and I'll know not to pester you!

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

## **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