

BSBI eNews – April 2020

From Jim McIntosh, Senior Country Officer, jim.mcintosh@bsbi.org

Coronavirus

We hope that you are all well and coping with this [unprecedented situation](#). It seems odd and almost irrelevant to be drafting BSBI eNews, when many of you will have much more important things to worry about. However, we hope you might enjoy reading eNews and some of its suggestions.

BSBI Staff

Garden Wildflower Hunt

[Garden Wildflower Hunt](#) is a new BSBI project to help us find out more about the wild plants that grow in gardens across Britain and Ireland. It's a departure from our usual recording activities "beyond the garden gate" but should offer botanical recorders, wildlife enthusiasts and the general public a chance to improve/ practice their plant identification skills while at home. We hope to gather data which will help us understand more about the distribution, ecology and phenology of the wild plants in our gardens. Our definition of 'garden' includes balconies, paved yards, planters and window-boxes, so almost everyone should be able to participate.

There is more information on the [Garden Wildflower Hunt page](#), with FAQs, links, tools and a [support email address](#) which people can contact if they need help. Records are submitted via an [online recording app](#) (which you can use from your web browser or phone). Results will appear quickly on an interactive map, as they did for the New Year Plant Hunt.

Garden Wildflower Hunt has been conceived with the [Covid-19 restrictions](#) in mind, and will last as long as we are house-bound and probably beyond. We hope however that the records you submit will help establish a baseline set of data that we might build on with new projects in future years. We also hope that you will all be able to enjoy some garden-based botany while staying safe and well.

[Kevin Walker](#), BSBI Head of Science

[Tom Humphrey](#), BSBI Database Officer

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

Atlas 2020 Validation

It feels a bit glib discussing validation, but if you have time on your hands, and the inclination, then the completion of validation of your county records would be a massive help when it comes to mapping as accurately as possible the distribution of all taxa.

The focus of validation ought to be to confirm noteworthy records and to remove significant errors, but there's no need or expectation that the majority of uncontroversial records will be checked or marked individually. You should have all the information you need with regard to how to validate using the DDb, but if you have any questions, please get in touch – I'm not going anywhere for a while!

The deadline for the completion of validation of county data was loosely set for the end of April, but if you need more time, that's fine, although please do bear in mind that taxon distributions are beginning to be fixed. I am currently working my way through all the native taxa to be mapped (I'll

need to repeat this process at least twice), and will at some point in the near future be sending out the first batch of queries to VCRs, in much the same way as I have done for rare/scarce/threatened taxa in the past. I'll be doing this periodically throughout the year - as you might imagine, there are quite a few records to examine.

[Peter Stroh](#), BSBI England Officer

Rare Plant Registers I

Many County Recorders have been putting off making a start to a Rare Plant Register or updating an existing one until Atlas field work and validation is (more or less) complete. Well there may be no better opportunity than now – again assuming you have the time and inclination! Also, it might be useful in identifying the odd validation issue. And once you have a draft Rare Plant Register, you have the perfect tool to guide interesting field work in a post-Atlas post-Coronavirus world!

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Rare Plant Registers II

An updated version of the Radnorshire Rare Plant Register is now available to download from the BSBI website at <https://bsbi.org/radnorshire> This version builds on the work of Polly Spencer-Vellacot and Ray Woods to include many new records found during the Atlas 2020 recording effort. Elizabeth Dean (VCR 43) and Sue Spencer have done a tremendous amount of work searching out old sets of records and checking sites. They then collated and validated those records and the new register owes much to them. Barbara Brown (previously Wales Officer) edited the register using the BSBI Database and Access software.

During these times of social distancing Rare Plant Registers are a great way to plan those future botanising jaunts once the current restrictions are lifted, although please be aware that you may need to ask access permission from local landowners.

A new version of the [Flintshire](#) Rare Plant Register has also been completed and is available on request to Gail Quartly Bishop, joint VCR for 51, gailqb@hotmail.com

Barbara Brown, former BSBI Wales Officer

BSBI Resilience

Following the update I gave in the February issue of *eNews*, the Board met electronically in mid-March to consider a final draft of the BSBI Strategy document. The Board welcomed the Strategy and subject to relatively minor edits will adopt it as the guiding statement for BSBI's business in the coming 5 or so years. The first year will be a transition year, though that may have to extend given the current uncertainties around the Coronavirus.

Last month I spelt out the three Goals under which we have set out some key Priorities and with these the activities that we will pursue using the centrally resourced staff and associated volunteer effort. There will also remain the opportunity for locally, regionally and nationally run initiatives not using central resources.

Underpinning our ability to realise the Goals we will strengthen the organisations foundations like our relationships and engagement with others, strengthening our governance and management practices,

making our data management system more resilient and flexible, improving our business model by diversifying funding and strengthening volunteer and staff opportunities and working environments. The Strategy sets out the kinds of things we are looking for as measures of our success. As examples we are aiming for an increase in membership, a balanced budget, an increase in participation in our projects and at our events each year, increased use of our data in scientific works, a new data entry system, a greater number of book sales and of social media downloads and views.

[Chris Miles](#), BSBI Chair of Board of Trustees

Vice-County Annual Reports for 2019

114 VC Recorders completed the 2019 VC Annual report & questionnaire: 40 from England, 34 from Scotland, 29 from Ireland and 11 from Wales. Thank you to all those who completed their report, and supplied many thoughtful responses to the questionnaire.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Senior Country Officer

Alien Plant Illustrations

For many years Gwynn Ellis and myself have felt that it would be a really useful project to collate all the line-drawings of alien plants that used to grace the front covers of *BSBI News*, as well as the Aliens & Adventives sections inside. In recent years, very few line-drawings have appeared, and instead have been replaced, by and large, by colour photos. Many of those line-drawings were reproduced in *Illustrations of Alien Plants of the British Isles* (Clement, Smith & Thirlwell, 2005) but many were not.

We have now compiled references to plants depicted, in whole or in part, in all of these works, but have widened the scope to something much more ambitious – we have added all the alien plant drawings in all the BSBI Handbooks, together with anything illustrated in Stace, Sell & Murrell, Stella Ross-Craig and Butcher, the Plant Crib, Alien Grasses and John Poland's *Vegetative Key*.

The new webpage with a table listing more than 2,000 taxa in alphabetical order, with common names, online references and a search facility to help you find what you want, is available here: [Illustrations of Alien Plants](#).

Stace 4 names are used, but most Stace 2 synonyms are included. We have chosen to list only line drawings, though for completeness we have included colour photos of Aliens illustrated in *BSBI News*.

We would be pleased to be notified of any errors or omissions, or suggestions for further work.

[David Pearman](#) & [Gwynn Ellis](#)

Ragwort Study

A planned project to collect, measure and study Ragworts, due to start this spring, has been scaled back due to the Coronavirus restrictions, but recorders are still invited to participate by collecting and measuring groundsel specimens in their gardens, e.g. while taking part in the Garden Wildflower Hunt. Details of the aims of the project, and how to take part, can be found here: <https://bsbi.org/ragwort-study-project>. It is hoped that the project will result in a paper for submission to *British & Irish Botany*.

[Kevin Widdowson](#), BSBI Training & Education Committee

Activities 2020

A new webpage pulls together some of the activities BSBI's members and supporters can enjoy while under lockdown: <https://bsbi.org/activities-2020>

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

Scottish Newsletter

Printing firms in Scotland have been advised to close except for strictly essential business (e.g. for government or NHS business). Consequently, there will be no printed version of the Scottish Newsletter, at least not initially. We apologise to those of you who prefer to receive paper copy. The electronic version will be emailed out to all subscribers shortly. It will include the collation of VC 2019 Annual Reports.

[Angus Hannah](#), BSBI Scottish Newsletter Editor

BSBI eNews Back-issues

Readers often complain that they don't have time to read BSBI eNews in full and follow up some of the ideas and links set out in it. Well now is a great chance to do exactly that! All back issues are available on the [BSBI eNews page](#).

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Senior Country Officer

British & Irish Botany

Similarly if you haven't yet got round to reading the most recent edition of *British & Irish Botany* you can [view or download it in full here](#); it features several papers that will be of particular interest to botanical recorders: Chris Preston considers [The phenology of an urban street flora](#); Kevin Walker *et al.* report on [Cotula alpina naturalised in the British Isles](#); and Ambrose Baker reports on an [alien mint naturalising in NE Yorkshire](#). There are also papers on hybridisation in *Helosciadium*, a dandelion in Devon, and two hawkweed papers by Tim Rich *et al.*

Another idea on how to use your time while being stuck at home just now, is to write articles for publication in *British & Irish Botany* (or *BSBI News*). [Submissions](#) from recorders for BiB are invited for publication during 2020 - please [contact us](#) to discuss your proposal.

[Ian Denholm & Louise Marsh](#), *British & Irish Botany*

English Regional Recorders' Workshop

The first Regional Recorders' Workshop for England planned for March has had to be postponed. It is hoped that this will now take place in September (with the same participants), but at the moment all diary dates are in pencil. I am hoping to circulate some material that I prepared for it, initially to those that were due to attend, then more widely to England recorders. I will also investigate the possibility of holding some sort of virtual meeting using Zoom – probably as a webinar.

[Jonathan Shanklin](#), Chair of the Committee for England

Scottish & Irish Spring Conferences

Sadly, both the Irish & Scottish Spring Conferences have had to be cancelled.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

New on the BSBI website in March

- A new [Covid-19/ Coronavirus page](#) was set up in order to share BSBI's response to the virus, the latest Government guidance and information on restrictions.
- A new webpage was set up with information about [Hawkweeds of south-east England](#), the latest in the series of BSBI Handbooks, due to be published this month. The page features a PayPal facility so people can order a copy at the special offer price of £29.50 + P&P (compared to the RRP of £35.00) and a link to the interview with author Mike Shaw.
- The new [Ragwort Study Project](#) webpage was set up (see above).
- Two updated cribs for Dandelion sections Erythrosperma and Naevosa were added to the [Plant Crib page](#).
- Many more new plant ID resources and useful links for beginners have been added here: [ID resources for beginners](#). If you know of any ID resources which are not available on these pages, please let us know so we can add them.
- County pages for Radnorshire and Flintshire (see above), the Clyde Islands, Wester Ross, East Ross, Co. Down, South Lincs., Co. Durham, Sussex, Cambridgeshire and South-east Yorkshire have all been updated with reports on recording in 2019, newsletters, RPRs, changes in VCR details and/ or new ID resources. Links to all county pages and updated contact details for County Recorders are available via the [Local Botany page](#).
- Minutes of recent meetings of BSBI Council and Board of Trustees were uploaded to the password-protected [Governance website](#).

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

On the News & Views blog in March

We brought you a [short interview with Chris Miles](#), Chair of BSBI's Board of Trustees, summarising the Resilience process, progress so far and what it all means for BSBI members and supporters; we published the [latest news \(as of 24th March\) about BSBI's response to the Covid-19 virus](#), with a message from BSBI President Lynne Farrell, guidance around national events and local field meetings, and suggestions for how botanists can entertain themselves during lockdown; Tim Rich told us about [identifying Dandelions in our gardens](#) (see above/below); our Wildflower of the Month feature is back and BSBI Head of Science [Kevin Walker tells us about Purple Saxifrage](#); and we featured an [interview with Mike Shaw](#), author of the latest BSBI Handbook, *Hawkweeds of south-east England*.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

BSBI eNews

A link to BSBI eNews is sent out to 353 subscribers, including Recorders, Referees, staff, committee members and ordinary members. A total of 162 County Recorders subscribe (69 in England, 44 in Scotland, 37 in Ireland and 16 in Wales). But it is freely available to all on the [BSBI eNews](#) page of the BSBI website. I'd welcome short contributions from anyone on topics of interest and relevance to fellow readers. BSBI eNews is normally published on the last Friday of each month so contributions should ideally reach me at least two days before that. I'd also be pleased to have feedback on any of the articles appearing in BSBI eNews.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Senior Country Officer