

BSBI eNews – March 2020

From Jim McIntosh, Senior Country Officer, [jim.mcintosh@bsbi.org](mailto:jim.mcintosh@bsbi.org)

### Atlas 2020 – Validation I

It has been an incredibly busy time for County Recorders. First, getting digitisation completed early after an intense final year of fieldwork, when in previous years it has taken many of us at least until the beginning of the field season. And now going through a major data checking and validation operation. But after just one more month of validation, can we look forward to getting out into the field to look at spring flowers? Well yes (weather permitting) but expect periodic queries from the Atlas 2020 team as they examine the national maps!

Meantime, if you missed last month's articles on validation (or need a refresher) here are links to the [first](#) and [second](#) main articles. Perhaps the most important point is to concentrate on removing incorrect records that would lead to errors on maps and on checking and confirming notable occurrences that might be doubted by reviewers.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

### Atlas 2020 – Validation II

A County Recorder writes "I am working on validation and am puzzled by the 'records with records with no Atlas hectad status assigned' category in the Data validation tab in [My County](#). What does this mean and what is the best way to deal with the records?"

If a hectad has 'no Atlas status assigned', it simply means that it has not been mapped in a previous Atlas within that hectad. The vast majority of new hectad occurrences will be fine, and are a result of more intensive recording. But there will be errors hiding in between the 'good' records, so it's worth having a look at this list, and picking out records which require closer scrutiny.

Removing any mistakes by correcting or rejecting the records will avoid spurious new hectad dots on the Atlas maps. Confirming valid occurrences is less critical but may help the Atlas editors who might otherwise question the validity of unconfirmed records in 'new' hectads.

The headline record count is inevitably inflated by the presence of multiple records of the same species in many of the hectad squares without a status assigned - which is a good thing as it makes it clear that the hectad really is occupied. In fact, it's the singleton 'new hectad' records that often require a closer look.

For narrow atlas purposes (operating at hectad scale) there's only need for a single taxon-hectad exemplar to be confirmed for each new hectad. If working on that basis, you could narrow down the total to look at by adding an additional filter to exclude combinations that have already been confirmed for the new square. That can be done using a [query with 'more options' => 'validation' => 'co-occurrence validation state', setting the filter to exclude confirmed hectad](#). That will reduce the total down to a more manageable number.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

## **BSBI Welsh Officer**

I'm sad to report that Barbara Brown our Wales Officer will leave the BSBI when her contract finishes at the end of March. She will take up a new full-time surveying job with CEH in Wales in April. Meantime we are still in discussion with our friends at Natural Resources Wales over funding for a Wales Officer next financial year. We would like to thank Barbara for her enthusiasm and hard work as BSBI Wales Officer and wish her the very best for the future.

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

## **Vice-County Annual Reports for 2019**

So far 21 County Recorders have responded to the VC Annual report questionnaire which I send out earlier this week. Thank you! If you haven't received the questionnaire email please let me know.

The Annual Report itself is best drafted in Word first and then pasted into the questionnaire. Please follow the instructions for writing your Annual Report carefully. Note that the window doesn't expand when you paste in, but we can see it fine. County Recorders who are in charge of two vice-counties should be able to submit a report for each, but if this is not possible, please just send me the Annual Report for your second VC and I'll paste it in for you.

Once the report is written, the questionnaire will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. I did say that you should be able to go back in and edit after completing the survey, but a few people have reported difficulty doing that. So perhaps it safer to assume you can't, sorry. Also, I've not figured out how to send automatic confirmation emails however we will let you know if your report doesn't arrive. Responses by 10 March please!

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

## **BSBI future direction**

The BSBI resilience project is working towards a final draft strategy document. This will be looked at by the Board at their March meeting and finalised shortly thereafter. This is a summary of where we have got to in mid-February: -

In the November BSBI *eNews* I reported how we were progressing with the project following the first really detailed work that was done by members of the Board, Council and Staff when they met in October. Since then, much more work has been done by staff, the Board and the Steering Group.

Three goals have emerged under which our priorities and actions will be focussed. The first is about building and sustaining a diverse community of botanists so that we can develop the skills to maintain the BSBI's expertise and so that people can get greater enjoyment from our wild flora. This will see an enhanced focus on training and learning activities for all levels. The second is about maintaining our high-quality data and interpreting that to help plant conservation. This would be our main contribution to the biodiversity and climate change challenges. The third is to sharpen our communication and information sharing through more public engagement projects like the New Year Plant Hunt and continued evolution of our web and social media interfaces.

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

## Field Meetings

We have reviewed the Guidance documents for [participants](#) and [leaders](#) at field meetings and have made one or two minor changes. We would like to try assigning colour codes to terrain difficulty, so a meeting might be red (requiring steep ascents or long distances), green (short distances or over largely even ground) or yellow for something in between. We can incorporate this as a filter on the [new field meetings web page](#), where members will then be able to select events by country, county, category (General, Beginners, Training, Specialised or Recording), time period or by terrain difficulty. So, if you have organised a meeting for this year would you please let me have a colour code for it.

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

## Committee for England

The first [England Annual Meeting](#) took place at rather short notice at the Natural History Museum on 1<sup>st</sup> February. Minutes are on the [BSBI Governance page](#). There was interesting discussion on prospective future field projects. The meeting put production of an England Newsletter as a high priority, so a meeting report will be published there. If anyone has suitable items for inclusion in the Newsletter do send them to me in the first instance. I will aim to produce the first one by the summer.

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

## Conifer ID course in Northern Ireland

Thanks to funding from CEDaR, we will be running a two-day conifer identification course at Castlewellan Forest Park on 6-7 March. The course will be run by the fantastic Matt Parratt and will include a mix of classroom and field sessions. Everyone is welcome and you can choose to come for either day or both. Full details and booking information are available on the [BSBI Ireland webpage](#).

[Sarah Pierce](#), Ireland Officer.

## BRC recording schemes meeting 2020 in Edinburgh

A quick reminder about the Biological Records Centre (BRC) meeting in Edinburgh that focuses on national recording schemes that will be held on Saturday 7 March at the National Museum of Scotland. There is an excellent array of speakers, covering a range of different taxonomic groups and approaches to recording and data use. The [programme](#) will allow plenty of time for posters, demonstrations and discussions. All BSBI County Recorders and active recorders are very welcome. Book your place [here](#).

[Martin Harvey](#), BRC

## English Regional Recorders' Workshop

A first Regional Recorders' Workshop for England is being held in March. As it is a small venue, this Workshop is by invitation to regional County Recorders, but we hope that such events in future will allow wider participation. There may be two each year, in different regions of England to minimise travel by participants. A report will appear in the England Newsletter in due course.

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

## Irish Spring Conference

The Irish Spring Conference is scheduled for 28 March at the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin. Booking will open next week - all details will be posted on the [Irish conferences webpage](#).

[Sarah Pierce](#), Ireland Officer

## Scottish Spring Conference

Coronavirus permitting, we are planning two one-day [Spring recording conferences in Scotland](#). The first is at [Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh on Saturday 4 April](#) and the second on the following day, [Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> at Strathpeffer Community Centre](#), near Inverness. The same programme will be repeated (more or less). Everyone is very welcome. Click the links for more information and to book. This is a momentous point for the BSBI, as we look back (some nostalgically) at Atlas 2020 and muse over what a post-Atlas world promises. So, plenty to talk about!

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

## BSBI Annual Summer Meeting

We have a great programme of field meetings organised for the BSBI Annual Summer Meeting in the Scottish Borders. We will be based at the Waverley Castle Hotel, in Melrose, which does a great three-night DB&B deal but has a limited number of single rooms. (See the booking page for more details.) Alternatively share a twin with a friend, or there are plenty other hotels, guest houses and B&Bs in the area. Note that all accommodation should be booked *directly* with providers. There will be a charge of £10 per person for a soup and sandwich lunch on Friday and a small flat rate admin charge of £20, which everyone must pay. There is an overall limit of 45 on the meeting - regardless of where you plan to stay. Consequently, if you have booked accommodation already - book your place on the [BSBI Annual Summer Meeting](#) webpage **asap**. If you have yet to book accommodation, check that there are places available before booking accommodation.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

## **British & Irish Botany: latest issue published**

The latest issue of *British & Irish Botany* is out now, available to [view or download 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.* [Submissions](#) from recorders are invited for publication during 2020 - please [contact us](#) to discuss your proposal.

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

## New on the BSBI website in February

- The [plant identification page](#) has had a major overhaul: many new ID resources have been added and two new sub-pages have been created: [ID resources for beginners](#) and [ID resources for more experienced botanists](#). If you know of any ID resources which are not available on these pages, please let us know so we can add them.
- Two new county pages have been created, for Wester Ross and for Cambridgeshire; county pages for Kent, Somerset, Sussex, Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Lancashire, Flintshire, Glamorgan, Merionethshire, Lanarkshire and Co. Wexford have all been updated with details of forthcoming events, reports on recording in 2019, newsletters and/ or new ID resources. Links to all county pages and updated contact details for County Recorders are available via the [Local Botany page](#).
- Six new training meetings were posted on the new [Field Meetings and Indoor Events page](#) – four in Scotland and two in northern Ireland – and you can also find updated versions of the guidance for [participants in](#), and [leaders of](#), BSBI field meetings (see notes above).
- An extra FISC date was added – 3<sup>rd</sup> September in Canterbury. The FISC is the industry standard for assessing botanical survey skills. Head over to [the FISC page](#) to book your space.
- Minutes of recent meetings of BSBI standing and country committees have been uploaded to the password-protected [Governance website](#).

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

## BSBI mentioned on BBC Countryfile

Traffic to the [BSBI website](#) saw a surge on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February after BSBI was mentioned on BBC Countryfile. Naturalist and author Brigit Strawbridge was being interviewed and very kindly mentioned BSBI and [Wild Flower Hour](#). The programme is [on iPlayer here](#) and you can catch the brief mention c8 minutes in.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

## On the News & Views blog in February

We told you about the [forthcoming Botanical University Challenge](#) and how to follow the action on Twitter; there was a [guest blogpost all about phenology](#) from the Citizen Science Officer at Nature's Calendar, a Woodland Trust project; we interviewed BSBI member Rebecca Wheeler about the [Wild Flower Hour initiative](#) in the run-up to the Wild Flower Hour promotion on BBC Countryfile (see above); and we told you about the [articles and authors featured in the latest issue of British & Irish Botany](#) (see above).

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

## BSBI eNews

A link to BSBI eNews is sent out to 365 subscribers, including Recorders, Referees, staff, committee members and ordinary members. A total of 161 County Recorders subscribe (69 in England, 43 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 generally 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