



Dear Vice-county Recorders (VCRs) and members in Ireland,

I hope this finds you well in this strange year of Covid-19, with lockdowns, and travel restrictions. Hopefully you can all meet up with family over Christmas. All the best for the holiday season. Paul.

IRELAND OFFICER UPDATE

Sarah Pierce took maternity leave in mid-October, and I'm sure you'd like to join me in congratulating Sarah on the birth of baby Greta last month! I will be the acting Ireland Officer whilst Sarah is on maternity leave.

RECORDER NETWORK NEWS

This year we are pleased to welcome five new VCRs. Phoebe O'Brien, Donncha O Cathain and Hannah Mulcahy are joint VCRs for Co. Clare, this is the first VC to have 3 people at the helm. Phoebe will be the lead VCR. In Co. Longford Ciarán Bruton has been appointed, and finally Sharon Spratt has filled the position for Co. Tyrone. We wish them all the best in their new rolls. You can read more about the five of them in the next issue of *Irish Botanical News*.

Sadly we say goodbye to one of our veterans, Gerry Sharkey who is retiring as VCR for E. Mayo & W. Mayo, after being in the post for 31 years. This was a large county for just one person to cover, and we thank Gerry for all his time and hard work he put in over the years. We wish Gerry all the best in his retirement. Eamonn Delaney who has been joint VCR with Gerry for the last couple of years for E. Mayo is now sole VCR for that VC.

Also retiring is Robert Northridge, as VCR for Co. Cavan, a role he took on for the recording of *Atlas 2020*. We thank Robert for all his great effort ensuring that Co. Cavan was recorded well. He will be continuing as the VCR for Co. Fermanagh.

Vacant VCs

There are vacancies waiting to be filled for Co. Cavan, Co. Waterford and W. Mayo. If you are interested in taking on one of these vice-counties, or know of somebody who would be a good candidate please let me know.

IRISH BOTANICAL NEWS

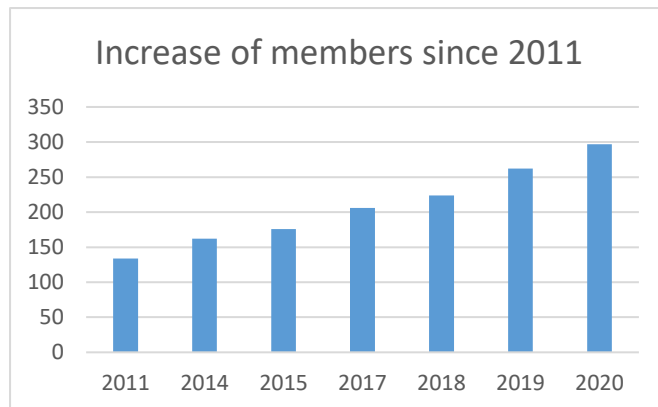
I'm pleased to announce that Alexis FitzGerald (alexisfitzgerald434@gmail.com) will join me as joint editor of the *Irish Botanical News 2021*, which will be published in March, and that he will completely take over as sole editor in 2022.

We'd welcome contributions, but note the deadline for submitting material is 31st January.

Remember all issues of *Irish Botanical News* are available on the BSBI website.

IRELAND OFFICER'S REPORT

I took over in mid-October as the acting Ireland Officer. This is not the first time I have been in this post, as I worked as the Wales Officer for 3 years between 2012-2015, and again for 8 months in 2017-2018. If you would like to find out a bit more about me there is an interview posted on the BSBI Blog: <https://bsbipublicity.blogspot.com/2020/12/paul-green-returns-for-while-as-bsbi.html>



Members in Ireland

Our membership numbers have continued to grow again this year, reaching a new high of 287 members in Ireland as of December. This includes 223 in RoI and 64 in NI.

As we continue to grow our goal is to make sure all members have opportunities to get involved with our work and improve their skills.

Conferences

The planned Spring Conference in March was cancelled because of the Covid-19 lockdown. The Autumn Meeting in September which was planned to be held at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, was changed to an online zoom meeting, the first to be run by the BSBI. Sarah Pierce did an excellent job of organising and running this event. 47 people attended. It included a welcome from BSBI President Lynne Farrell and four talks, including one on *Atlas 2020* recording in Ireland. All talks are available to view on the [Autumn meeting webpage](#).

Plans are now underway for the 2021 Spring Conference, scheduled for 27 March, and information will go up on the website early in the New Year.

Communications

We continue to be active on Twitter and Facebook, which continue to play a big part in how we keep in touch with members, and others who are interested in Irish botany. We use these platforms to highlight interesting and important plants, botany in general, BSBI, our projects, and the support we receive from NPWS. We currently have 1796 followers on Twitter (a >40% increase since last year), with our tweets gaining 50,000 to 100,000+ impressions per month. On Facebook we have 2676 followers, an increase of over 400 in the last year. The start of a BSBI YouTube Channel has provided another way to engage audiences, and now hosts 8 Irish BSBI training videos and 4 talks from the Autumn meeting with over 6000 views between them.

For those who use Twitter, joining in with [#wildflowerhour](#) from 8-9pm on Sundays is a great way to interact with hundreds of other botanists across Britain and Ireland and to share the plants you've found in the previous week.

Funding

I work part-time for the BSBI as their Ireland Officer for 3.2 days per week. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has continued to support the BSBI in Ireland by funding the equivalent of 1.2

days per week of Irish Officer time. This fantastic support lets us do so much more to support botany and botanists in Ireland.

Projects

The **Aquatic Plant Project** received funding from NPWS and CEDaR. Nick Stewart returned for a week working in the Ulster Museum herbarium in February, where he worked through their collection of aquatics, and mentored a small group of botanists. This was followed by an aquatic plant workshop at Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Co. Armagh, attended by 16 people. Because of Covid-19 restrictions the planned summer programme by Nick was entirely done online. There were two webinars and one online workshop. The first webinar was an intro to aquatic plant ID, this was attended live by 91 people, and a Stonewort ID webinar had 52 attending live. Videos of both were also [posted online](#), and together have been viewed over 600 times. The third was an interactive workshop attended by 19, with a limit of 20. It received excellent reviews from attendees and showed we are able to offer effective, interactive online learning.



The project also included some recording to update pre-2000 aquatic plant records, including a couple of sites previously surveyed by Heuff and Ryan in the 1970s. I spent four days in September recording aquatic plants mainly in Longford, Westmeath and Roscommon, with short excursions into Leitrim and Offaly as well. I was joined for one day by Kate Harrington, VCR for Louth. Despite high water levels I collected a total of 456 records, including updating 19 hectad records to post-2000.

The highlight was *Callitriche truncata* (Short-leaved Water-starwort), found around the shores of Lough Ree, and a short distance in the River Shannon, in Counties Longford, Roscommon and Westmeath. This is a protected species under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015, and was previously only known in Ireland from the River Slaney in



Co. Wexford. The identification was confirmed by Richard Lansdown, BSBI Referee for *Callitriche*, and a specimen has been prepared which will be deposited in the National Herbarium, Dublin (**DBN**).

NPWS and CEDaR funded the **Irish Grassland Project**, and again this was an online affair because of Covid-19 restrictions. We were more ambitious and ran 5 webinars, with 500 unique individuals joining at least one webinar, including more than 20 members of NPWS staff. Live attendance at each webinar ranged from 116 to 327, and the [recordings](#) combined have been viewed over 5,700 times.



In March just before the lockdowns kicked in, a two day **workshop on conifers** was led by Matt Parratt and funded by CEDaR. It was based at Castlewellan Forest Park, Co. Down. 19 people took part over the two days, where most of the time was spent looking at living trees in Tollymore Forest Park, on the outskirts of Newcastle, Co. Down. This site was planted in the 1950s with a wide range of species, which made it an excellent venue for an ID course. A huge thanks to Forest

Service Northern Ireland for giving BSBI free access to both these sites and to retired Chief Forest Officer Malcolm Beatty who gave up his free time to take John Faulkner around the sites in advance of the workshop. But especially to Matt for being such a wonderful enthusiastic teacher, making this a very memorable two days. Here is a link to Matt Parratt's excellent Conifer workshop YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/TOQKvCjJSGE>

Huge thanks are due to NPWS and CEDaR for all they do to support the work of BSBI in Ireland!

New Year Plant Hunt

The 10th New Year Plant Hunt will run from 1-4 January 2021 - a great excuse to get outside and record some plants after all the holiday festivities. Details on how to take part are available on the website: <https://bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt>

Please note, it is essential that you use the 2021 version of the recording app <https://nyph.bsbi.org/app2021> and delete any previous versions installed on your phone or laptop: they won't send your records direct to the NYPH team so your finds will not appear on the interactive results map or be included in the 2021 analyses.

Taking part in the 2021 Hunt:

Find out [how to plan your Hunt and stay safe](#).

Please note there are to be no group gathering for the NYPH.

You can follow the 2021 New Year Plant Hunt on social media: on Twitter [#newyearplanthunt](#) to see the records and photos. You'll also find photos of this year's finds on the BSBI Facebook accounts ([Britain](#) and [Ireland](#)) and on [Instagram](#). BSBI will be posting daily highlights on [News & Views blog](#).

Happy Plant Hunting!

The DDb and validation

Despite restrictions on travel this year, there have still been 65,834 new records from 2020 added to the DDb so far this year (as of 11th Dec). There have also been over 150,000 records added to the DDb for Ireland from previous years.

BSBI is very grateful for all the time and effort you have put into validating records for your VC. It still isn't too late to take another look, and validate any remaining records.

New plant names in 'Stace 4'

The majority of the time a name change has no effect on recording or how records are entered into a database.

One of the exceptions to this is *Rosa canina*, but there might be others.

Prior to 'Stace 4' you could get away with entering *Rosa canina* into your database, as in theory it was correct. As this included *R. canina* 'group Dumales', *R. canina* 'group Lutetianae', *R. canina* 'group Pubescentes' and *R. canina* 'group Transitoriae'.

In 'Stace 4' the 4 groups have been split into 3 separate species:

Groups Lutetianae & Transitoriae are now *R. canina* (Dog-rose), this has glabrous foliage, and the stipules and rachides have no glands.

Group Pubescentes is now *R. corymbifera* (Hairy Dog-rose), this has petioles that are hairy, and the leaves are hairy on the lowerside. It is free of glands.

Group Dumales is now *R. squarrosa* (Glandular Dog-rose), this has red glands on the teeth of the leaves, and many on the stipules and rachides. It is glabrous.



If you see a rose and want to record it as *Rosa canina* without seeing if it is one of the above 3 roses, you need to record it as *R. canina* agg. You might find that you will need to go into your database and edit your records. I have gone into MapMate and edited all my personal records across Ireland to *Rosa canina* agg. except for the rare occasion when I had recorded one of the groups.

I'm bringing this to your attention as until this year I had never made any effort to see which 'group' my *R. canina* plants belonged to. I spent quite a bit of time looking at them this past September and October and have only been able to find *R. corymbifera* and *R. squarrosa* in Wexford.

This could become a fun little project for 2021 to see which of the three is the commonest in Ireland.

A new native fern for Europe found in Kerry

I'm sure by now you have all heard about Rory Hodd's discovery in 2019 of *Stenogrammitis myosuroides* (Mousetail Fern). Below is a link to the paper Rory wrote with Fred Rumsey and published in British & Irish Botany. Also included are 3 links written about the fern in Irish newspapers. It was also talked about on the radio, and from this several members contacted me and asked why they had never heard about this discovery. I explained that Rory had a display at the BSBI Annual Exhibition in 2019 and that a paper had been published online in British and Irish Botany. The response from one member was: I don't use the internet!

<https://britishandirishbotany.org/index.php/bib/article/view/48>

<https://www.rte.ie/news/2020/1004/1169346-ireland-fern-discovery/>

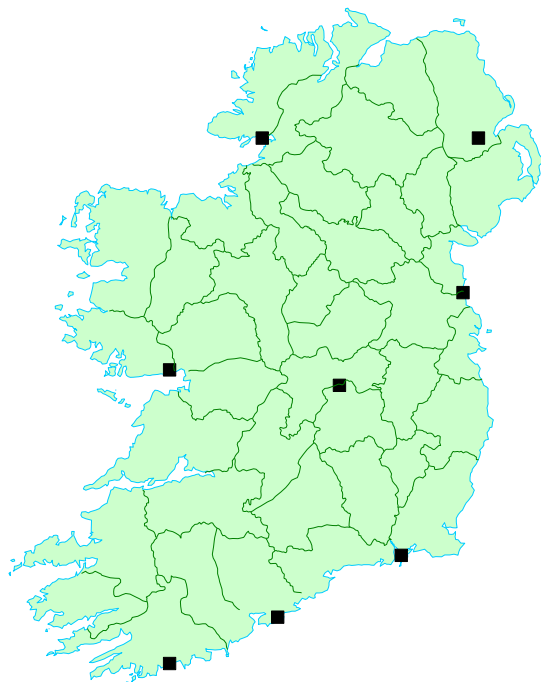
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/oct/04/rarest-fern-europe-discovered-ireland>

<https://www.independent.ie/regionals/kerryman/news/location-of-rare-fern-is-kept-under-wraps-39595832.html>

Field meetings

Unfortunately all the field trips planned for this year had to be cancelled because of Covid-19. We are hoping in 2021 that at least some will be able to go ahead, especially those in the later part of the year.

Irish BSBI field meetings 2021



Some general notes for 2021

There is a higher probability than normal that meetings could be cancelled or postponed in 2021 due to the uncertainty of Covid-19 public health crisis. However, The Committee for Ireland will endeavour to run field meetings in 2021 and adapt any meetings to comply with public health guidance.

Due to this uncertainty and need for Covid-19 public health requirements, all meetings will require booking.

There will also be the possibility of more field meetings organised at short notice in 2021, if circumstances permit.

The planned meetings as shown on the map are:

Saturday 5th June – Connemara, West Galway (H16)

Saturday 12th June - Baltray, Co. Louth (H31)

Sunday 20st June - Roscarbery, West Cork (H3)

Saturday 26th June - Black Mountain and Windy Gap, Co. Antrim (H39)

Saturday 3rd July - Slieve Blooms, Co. Laois (H14)

Saturday 24th July - Ardnahinch beach, East Cork (H5)

Saturday 7th August - Murvagh, East Donegal (H34)

Saturday 18th September - Fethard, Co. Wexford (H12)

Salicornia disarticulata
which we
should see on
the Fethard
meeting



BSBI eNewsletter - The first issue of the new mid-month **BSBI eNewsletter** for members and supporters went out on 11th December. If you haven't already signed up please do [sign up](#) so you can see future editions.

Recorder eNewsletter – the monthly newsletter for the recording community will continue to be published at the beginning of the month – [please subscribe here](#).

In the meantime may I wish you all a Very Happy Christmas and more freedom in 2021.

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