



Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland

Irish VCR Newsletter No. 7, December 2016



Hello Irish vice-county recorders (VCRs),

Hopefully this lands on your doorstep just before Christmas, and I hope it finds you well. As usual, the newsletter contains a mix of news and tips and updates, and I'd be delighted to get feedback on whether this is useful for you. The email version will have colour photos, and working hyperlinks. Happy Christmas to you all! Maria

RECORDER NEWS

New VCRs

I'm delighted to be able to say that we have four new vice-county recorders on board since the last newsletter. John Wallace is taking on H04 - Mid Cork. Edwina Cole and Finbarr Wallace (no relation of John's I don't think!) will jointly take on H05- East Cork. And Michelle Molloy is coming on board to be joint recorder in H29 - Leitrim with Michael Archer. We are all delighted with this expansion in the recorder network, and welcome the new recorders heartily on board. It goes without saying that existing VCRs will be only too delighted to help out the 'new guys'... so do get in touch with your neighbours!

Vacancies

H24 – Longford

IRISH OFFICER NEWS

Volunteers

I have been very lucky to have had considerable help from volunteers in 2016. Foremost in recent months has been Shane Brien, recent MSc graduate from UCC, who has powered through the data entry of all sorts of records – for example, many of the almost 3,000 records gathered during the Longford recording weekend, and numerous others, both old and recent. Conor Blunt, recent BSc graduate from NUIG, has also been working hard digitising records from publications. Volunteers provide invaluable help to the BSBI, and to individual VCRs, with tasks like these, and they are to be commended for taking the initiative to offer to help. It benefits their CVs hopefully, and it benefits BSBI, so it's win-win.

Irish BSBI Conference 2017

Put Sat 25th March 2017 in your diary – this is the date for the now annual Irish BSBI Conference. The CFI (Committee for Ireland) and myself have lots of ideas already for content, but we would also like to ask you for your thoughts on what you'd like to see covered,

discussed, taught, etc. And also for contributions – would you give a workshop (or mini-workshop) on a topic, or speak about an issue relevant to botany and Irish recorders? At the last conference we had mini-workshops on *Hedera*, *Ficaria verna*, grasses (*Poa* and *Agrostis*) and *Euphrasia*, and these seemed to go down well. Please come forward with ideas or potential contributions, and we'll try to make it happen. With just three recording seasons to Atlas 2020, the emphasis will rest strongly on that of course. Ideas and suggestions can come to me and I'll pass them to CFI and the conference organising group (maria.long@bsbi.org).

Irish webpage, county webpages

I try to keep the Irish webpage up-to-date, and I'd be really pleased to hear from you on whether you use it, what you'd like to see there, etc. Please have a look now and let me know: <http://bsbi.org.uk/ireland.html>

Also, it would be lovely if during the first few months of 2017 we could get webpages set up for most Irish VCs. As a template, we could have each be as simple as this:

1. VCR name, contact details (as much or as little as you'd like to provide here; and my contact details could be given if you'd prefer)
2. Photo – plant(s)/landscape (I can help with this if you feel you don't have suitable photos)
3. Sentence about the VC in general
4. Sentence about recent recording in the VC (could be a nice find, could be a request for help with recording, etc.)

It makes a real difference to new-comers if they can see something local, no matter how simple the content, and I feel that we may be losing out on potential newbies due to the lack of simple VC webpages. Just look at the main BSBI page (<http://bsbi.org/>) and you'll see that the first thing any visitor sees is a map of Britain and Ireland with counties to click on. Let's make all Ireland's counties clickable this coming year!

COMMITTEE FOR IRELAND (CFI) NEWS – Paula O'Meara

The current Committee for Ireland (CFI) 2016 – 2017 as elected in September is:

Robert Northridge (Chair)
Paula O'Meara (Secretary)
Rory Hodd (Treasurer)
John Conaghan (Field Meetings Secretary)
Con Breen
Edwina Cole
Joanne Denyer
Mark McCorry
Gerry Sharkey
Ralph Sheppard

Also invited to meetings are: Paul Green (IBN editor), Maria Long (Irish Officer), Mike Wyse Jackson (NPWS) and Mark Wright (NIEA).

Other news in brief:

- Flora of Connemara and the Burren: Gerry Sharkey has been working with Cambridge University Press on the reprint of the Flora of Connemara and the Burren for some time. This year his persistence has paid off and it is now available as a print on demand publication. It is available in hardback from <http://www.cambridge.org> for £55.
- Irish Species Project: CFI is grateful to all the recorders who searched for the species at the pre-selected sites and the generous return of field sheets from all the extra sites

visited. ISP volunteers have completed initial analysis on the eight ISP target species and collated findings will be published in the New Year, probably in IBN (Irish Botanical News). There is an interesting story emerging from all of the species selected.

- VCR Appointments: CFI welcomes the new raft of VCRs appointed this year - Michelle Molloy, John Wallace, Edwina Cole and Finbarr Wallace.

For CFI news or communications, contact Secretary Paula O'Meara (paulaomeara@eircom.net)

FIELD MEETINGS

Since the last newsletter, the following **2016 field meetings** took place:

Sat 16 July	– Laois
Fri 22, Sat 23, Sun 24 July	– Longford recording weekend
Sat 30 July	– Carlow
Sat 6, Sun 7 Aug	– East Donegal
Sat 13 Aug	– Derry/Londonderry (read all about it here)
Sat 20, Sun 21	– South-east Galway
Thur 1, Fri 2, Sat 3, Sun 4 Sep	– Cork (multiple sites, long-weekend of recording)

I attended and helped organise the Longford, Derry and Cork events. All were well-attended and great fun, as well as productive. And I have it first-hand from attendees that all the other field meetings were enjoyable and fruitful also! As an example of what can be achieved in a very short period of time, but just a few people, over 2,700 records were collected from all across **Longford** during the three day event, which was attended by nine people each day. We spent a day each in south, mid and north Longford, for maximum coverage, and we split into three groups of three each day – it's a very efficient way to cover the ground, and gets each and every attendee involved in the recording.

As with the Mayo recording week in 2015, I think the crown of the field meetings calendar 2016 has to go to the **Cork four-day recording event**. It was really great all round – in terms of numbers of attendees, in terms of new-comers, in terms of the landscape, the botany, the records made, the 'finds', and just simply the enjoyment.... there was such a buzz. It really was a great event, and echoes of its success are still being felt. I can't encourage you enough to read about it [here](#) and [here](#) – two excellent blog posts by two of the central people, local VCR Clare Heardman, and rough crew leader and neighbouring VCR Rory Hodd. In summary, some words from Clare in a follow-up email to attendees:

"I just wanted to say a massive thank you for coming along to the Co Cork BSBI event. I had a brilliant time and I hope you did too. It was great fun meeting everyone and exploring some parts of West Cork I wasn't familiar with. Also, the contribution to Atlas 2020 was impressive both in terms of numbers of records and number of species recorded: Nearly 4,000 records were generated during the four days, the majority of which were in some of the previously most under recorded parts of West Cork (H3). The 37 of you that came along helped change that! During the event nearly 400 different plant species were recorded along the lanes, woodlands and hills around Ballyvourney, Macroom and Millstreet, covering 11 different 10km squares. In addition, impressive numbers of records were gathered during forays to mid-Cork (H4) and east Cork (H5)."

As well as field meetings, 2016 saw a number of **training days** take place – two *Euphrasia* days (one in Feb and one in Nov), a sedge ID course and a two-day residential charophyte course. I

was present at all of these, and can vouch for the quality of the tuition and the excellence of the experience. As proof of what was learned, below is a photo I took just this week while trying to ID some of my pressed *Euphrasia* specimens! (Let's see whether Chris agrees with my determinations!)

I organised the charophyte course following comments from many VCRs that they felt support with ID was needed for this group. It was held jointly with NBDC (National Biodiversity Data Centre) and with the support of NUIG. The event was heavily subsidised - only €35 in total for two days tuition, accommodation and snacks! In the end only a few VCRs attended, but the course was booked out nonetheless, and the attendees were mostly freshwater specialists – people who come across charophytes relatively regularly, or have an interest in getting to know them better. The event was a real success – lots and lots was learned, and it was really fun to be staying over at the field station. Arising from the event is the Irish Charophyte Working Group, through which we hope to share the knowledge gained, and importantly, increase the records collected for this group. I will be emailing all VCRs in coming weeks to see if you'd like to be included in the email list.

A huge thanks is due to Chris Metherell, Cilian Roden and to Robert and Hannah Northridge – all of you put on top class courses, enjoyable yet educational. Well done!



Measuring the length of a *Euphrasia* flower (in the absence of a graduated lens).
(Ph: Maria P. Long)



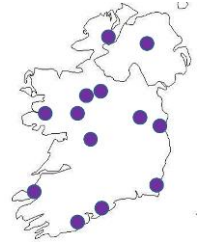
LHS: Attendees at the charophyte course weekend in the Burren. (Ph: Passerby!)



RHS: Working hard in the lab at the charophyte course. (Ph: Maria P. Long)

Below is a sneak preview of the planned field meetings for 2017 – **put them in your diary right now** so that you don't miss one!

Sat 13 May	– North-east Galway
Sat 27 May	– Leitrim
Thur 1 to Mon 5 June	– Kerry, <u>recording week</u>
Sat 10 & Sun 11 June	– East Donegal
Fri 16 to Sun 18 June	– Roscommon (north), <u>recording weekend</u>
Sat 24 June	– East Cork
Sat 1 & Sun 2 July	– South-east Galway and Roscommon, <u>joint outing</u>
Sat 22 & Sun 23 July	– West Galway
Sat 5 August	– Derry/Londonderry
Sat 12 August	– Dublin, <u>Workshop</u> 'Introduction to Botanical Keys'
Sat 19 August	– Westmeath
Sun 3 September	– Wexford, <u>focus on Atriplex</u>
Sat 9 & Sun 10 September	– West Cork & Mid Cork



There will also of course be **many others**: outings, field meetings, workshops and events – such as rough crew, local groups and late additions. I'll keep you posted on all of these as they arise. Remember that you can download the schedule of the main field meetings in the form of a handy flier from the Irish BSBI webpage: <http://www.bsbi.org.uk/ireland.html> (Coming very soon, once details finalised.) And field meetings for all areas are listed on the main BSBI page: <http://bsbi.org/field-meetings>

LOCAL GRUOPS

We now have number of local groups in Ireland, each with their own unique way of contributing to the BSBI and providing an open and supportive learning atmosphere for newcomers and improvers. Here are the ones I'm aware of that have strong links with BSBI – but there are of course many other natural history and field clubs groups too.

Cork - contact Edwina Cole (edwinacole@eircom.net) to be put on the email list

Clare - contact Stephen Ward (sdward@eircom.net) for more info

Wexford - contact Paul Green (paul.green@bsbi.org) or Paula O'Meara (paulaomeara@eircom.net) for more info

South-east Galway - contact Micheline Sheehy-Skeffington to be kept in the loop (micheline.sheehy@nuigalway.ie)

Dublin - contact Maria Long (maria.long@bsbi.org) or Róisín Nig Fhlóinn (rnigfhloinn@gmail.com) to be added to the email list

Down - contact Graham Day (gvd@cherrycottage.myzen.co.uk) or visit Graham's [County Down webpage](#) for more info

In formation:

Longford-Westmeath 'roving recorders' - contact Maria Long maria.long@bsbi.org or Robert Northridge robhannort@aol.com

Belfast – watch this space – we had a very successful inaugural meeting, and will be planning 2017 events shortly.

And of course, the 'Rough crew' - contact Rory Hodd (rlhodd@gmail.com) (further news below).

ROUGH CREW NEWS

What a success the 'rough crew' has been! As of end of Sept 2016, a total of 45 different people had taken part in a rough crew event. That's impressive I think! And those outings have resulted in records from typically hard-to-reach places. Below, Rory Hodd, whose expertise and commitment have been the main reason for the success of the rough crew, gives us a few words on activities in recent months.

"During the second part of 2016, the Rough Crew continued its work in the more remote parts of Ireland, with outings in both the southwest and northwest of the country. In early September, as part of the Cork recording event, a group tackled the corrie of Lough Murtagh on Caherbarnagh. A good range of species was found, despite difficult weather, with a particularly good range of ferns present, including *Phegopteris connectilis*, *Oreopteris limbosperma* and *Cystopteris fragilis*. Towards the end of September, two days were spent in the Bluestacks Mountains of Donegal, with once again sometimes challenging weather conditions. On the Saturday, Binnasruell was visited, with several montane species recorded including *Lycopodium clavatum*, *Diphasiastrum alpinum*, *Salix herbacea*, *Saxifraga stellaris* and *Antennaria dioica*. On the Sunday, the target was Croaghnageer, but the group was driven back by driving rain and wind on the side peak of Brown's Hill, but not before making a good list of species, including *Carex bigelowii*, *Oreopteris limbosperma* and *Juniperus communis*. The Rough Crew has wound down for the winter since then, but plans are already afoot for a range of fun adventures in 2017."

Email Rory (rlhodd@gmail.com) to be added to the email list to hear about trips. No commitment necessary – you'll just be kept in the loop.



Rough Crew leader Rory Hodd taking a break during search for *Lycopodiella inundata* in Co. Mayo (but VC West Galway!). (Ph: Maria P. Long)



A day full of rainbows! Ciarán Bruton and Jessica Hamilton, rough crew attendees, heading for home under the rainbow after a cold but beautiful day by Lough Mask searching (fruitfully) for *Lycopodiella inundata*. (Ph: Maria P. Long)



The target plant, legally protected under the Flora Protection Order, marsh clubmoss *Lycopodiella inundata*. (Ph: Maria P. Long)

ATLAS 2020

Dataflow – records for Atlas 2020

I can report that 191,478 records were sent to the DDb from Ireland in 2016. This is an impressive figure, and includes data from 33 of the 40 VCs. Fifteen VCs sent in over 1,000 records, and six sent in over 5,000. However, if we remove the tally from the top county (127,364 records), things don't look quite so rosy! The good news is that records are coming in from more counties than before, and more frequently than before – so thank you all very much for that. Your collective efforts are really starting to show in the maps.

This winter I'd urge you to clear the decks – any record cards you have from the post-2000 period should be entered to MapMate or to excel (email me and I will send you a template. We have some that even auto-fill the names making data entry quick and easy.). If you or a locally-based helper cannot do this, I may be able to provide support through the work of the volunteers that I have helping me. Please get in touch if you have a backlog – of any size! We want to head into the final three field seasons with the best idea possible of where our real coverage gaps are.

Your VC 'plan of action'

I've already had meetings with a number of VCRs this winter, usually in small groups, and have been in touch to arrange a number of others. One of the main purposes of the meetings is to support each VC with making a plan of action. Given the rather intimidating fact that there are just three field seasons from now until the Atlas 2020 deadline (end of 2019), it really is time to take stock.

A typical plan involves listing the hectads in the VC, deciding on how many 'good monad lists' you'd like from each hectad, being realistic about how many good monad lists you can do in a day, being equally realistic about how many days recording you do each year... and seeing if the numbers add up! In some cases, they won't... i.e. you may not be able to achieve the amount of coverage you would like, in the time remaining. If this is the case, you can drop your expectations in terms of coverage, you can up the number of days you can give to recording, you can draft in helpers of your own, you can hold a dedicated recording event, or... you can ask for support or help from the Irish Officer and/or CFI with filling the gaps – there are a number of options available. If you'd like to discuss making a plan for the next three years, get in touch (maria.long@bsbi.org).

As a reminder, BSBI hopes to have a 'good' list of plants from a minimum of three tetrads or nine monads in each hectad from Ireland. (And to avoid confusion – BSBI does not WANT recorders to record by tetrad, rather, tetrad level is the *minimum level of resolution* that BSBI would like to accept records at, i.e. hectad level records are no longer very useful or desirable. Typically, however, the vast majority of VCRs across Britain and Ireland now record at monad level, with notes and more detailed grid refs for interesting finds.)

OTHER NEWS

Botanical news from the NBDC (National Biodiversity Data Centre) – Úna FitzPatrick

It has been a busy year on botanical projects within the Data Centre. We worked on the decline calculations to assist the NPWS in developing the vascular plant Red List for Ireland. We were also delighted to collaborate with the BSBI on the 'spring flowering plants' project in 2016. This involved the Data Centre developing species profiles for 14 easily identifiable spring flowers along with a special on-line recording form. The species were chosen in collaboration with the BSBI and both organisations promoted the scheme. Aimed very much at encouraging beginners to start recording plants, it was very successful in mobilising additional data. 2,300 records were received of the 14 species promoted. Records were received from all 32 counties in Ireland and from a total of 376 different recorders. Data for the full 12 month period will be made available to the BSBI in January 2017. The future challenge lies in supporting these recorders so that they can ultimately be encouraged to join the BSBI.

Most of the time allocated to botanical projects in 2016 was spent on a pilot Plant Monitoring Scheme. The pilot scheme was trialled on semi-natural grasslands and was built around a subset of the 1,092 semi natural grassland sites identified in the NPWS national grassland survey (2007-2012). Volunteers were asked to visit a grassland near them and to mark out two 2x2m plots and record all plant species found within each of these small areas along with their percentage cover. The rationale in developing a scheme like this is that it provides the highest quality data for the lowest amount of recorder effort. The data is comparable and repeatable and can be used to detect trends in species and habitat quality over time. Importantly, because it focuses on one habitat at a time, it provides a structure within which the Data Centre can better support volunteers in gradually improving their plant identification skills. The pilot was very successful. 176 volunteers signed up to the scheme with

a total of 74 grassland sites being surveyed. Of these, 65 were of sufficient quality for monitoring. The scheme showed that there is a recorder base to support a plant monitoring scheme in Ireland and that the structure of the scheme could allow the Centre to contribute to ongoing efforts to increase botanical taxonomic capacity nationally. Future roll out of the scheme is entirely dependent on getting additional funding.

We have also been working on a sedge and rush identification guide. It'll be in a similar format to the grass guide published in 2015. It has gone through extensive field testing in 2016. Pending funding, it will be designed and made available next year.

Visit the [Data Centre website](#) for more info on the above, and much more besides.

Other news in brief:

- One of the most exciting pieces of news of the year has been the launch of the new **Red List for Vascular Plants**. This has been long-awaited! You can download it from the NPWS website: <https://www.npws.ie/news/red-list-no10-vascular-plants-published>
It is dedicated to BSBI VCRs – and deservedly so!
- Kew have recently produced '**State of the World's Plants**'. You can read more about the project and download the document [here](#), but I also have hard copies in the Gardens – just let me know and I can send you a copy.
- CEDaR have recently announced an **online recording system** – you can try it out by following this link: <http://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/home>
- An impressive looking guide has been made freely available by the Natural History Museum, London, called 'A beginner's **vegetative guide to orchids** of the British Isles', written by Mike Waller. I am attaching a PDF version of the guide with the email version of this newsletter, but you'll also find it by following [this link](#). I've yet to put it to the test, but am excited at the prospect. It's so frustrating seeing orchid leaves and not knowing what the plant may grow to become!
- '**Conifers in the British Isles** – a descriptive handbook' is available as a PDF. Copy and paste the following link into your browser (I can't send a copy easily by email as it's quite large.): [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCBK033.pdf/\\$FILE/FCBK033.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCBK033.pdf/$FILE/FCBK033.pdf)
- For the past three editions of the NBDCs 'Biodiversity Ireland' magazine, I have compiled the **notes on vascular plants** for their 'Biodiversity Tales' section. This allows us to celebrate the finds of BSBI recorders and reach a wide audience. Every piece I've written has been compiled entirely of short pieces submitted by VCRs, and I am very grateful to all of you. The magazines can be read [here](#), and I encourage you to have a look if you haven't already. There is much to interest us all in these, not just the plants!
- Which wild plants have you spotted in flower during the past week? Let us know during **#wildflowerhour** - every Sunday evening on Twitter, 8-9pm. Don't forget to tag @BSBIBotany, and me at @murlong77 if you want to too!
- Paul Green is the editor for **Irish Botanical News** (IBN), as most of you know. Paul will be accepting contributions for 2017 IBN until the end of January, so please, drop him a line if you have anything you'd like to be included. This could be an account of a field meeting or other event, a few photos, your thoughts on something botany-related, or anything at all that might be of interest to Irish botanists and BSBI members. Please don't be shy - this is a publication for all BSBI members, and all contributions are welcome. Paul, and even myself, can help you if you'd like to contribute but are not sure. Contact Paul at paul.green@bsbi.org or me at maria.long@bsbi.org. All old editions are downloadable on the Irish webpage: bsbi.org/Ireland

- The BSBI is a partner organisation and supporter of the **All-Ireland Pollinator Plan** – a project co-ordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC). You can read more [here](#) about this great project and what it has achieved thus far.
- Ever feel like computers might take over?! Well check out this webpage for some Apps that purport to identify plants from just a photo!.... <http://www.growsomethinggreen.com/an-app-that-will-identify-plants-from-just-the-snap-of-a-picture/#more-37894> Let me know if it's true!

PROJECT UPDATES

New Year Plant Hunt 2017

The first stop is to visit the [NYPH webpage](#). This project has been a phenomenal success in recent years, achieving greater things than expected year on year. If you are interested in taking part between 1st-4th January 2017 visit the webpage and download the App. Head out on your own, or join a group. Get in touch with the organisers, or with me (maria.long@bsbi.org), if you want to know if there's a group heading out near you. All lists are valuable, long or short, and in the new App you can upload photos. If you are planning a hunt, *please let me know!* I will be heading out to Bull Island with the Dublin Local Group – meet at 10.30am on 2nd Jan at the Causeway road.

Remember that last year in Ireland we had an astounding 235 species of wild plant in full bloom, and people submitted data from 18 VCs. There were 50 plant lists submitted, and the longest list from Ireland contained 53 species. Can we beat that this year??? And will the weather play ball?!

Irish Species Project

The ISP was a great success, with 224 completed record cards submitted. The data has had preliminary analysis done, mainly on a species-by-species basis by a team of volunteers (mainly CFI members), and is currently being looked at now as a whole. We hope to have an article in IBN presenting at least some of the findings, and doing justice to the work of all 55 participants from across 29 vice-counties. As a reminder, the list of target species was: *Botrychium lunaria* (18 surveys), *Carex pseudocyperus* (24 surveys), *Gentianella amarella* (17 surveys), *Lathraea squamaria* (53 surveys), *Parnassia palustris* (34 surveys), *Primula veris* (39 surveys), *Pyrola minor* (12 surveys) and *Vaccinium oxycoccos* (41 surveys).

'Spring Flowers Project'

This project has already gotten a mention in Úna's piece above – so please refer to that to remind yourself of what a success this simple project was. We are likely to re-run it, with few changes, again this coming year. It both involves beginners and improvers, and also generates valuable records for vernal species – these are often hard to pick up across a whole VC, so additional records are very welcome.

TECHNOLOGY & MAPPING SECTION:

REMINDER: Irish Grid, changeover to Irish Transverse Mercator

There is a big change afoot in the world of Irish mapping. Many agencies, and indeed all official maps, will be changing from Irish Grid (IG) to a new system called 'Irish Transverse Mercator' (ITM). This has the potential to cause problems for biological recording, or at least significant confusion. All Irish VCRs should ***please continue to record using Irish Grid***, and make sure that

your GPS is set to Irish Grid. If you work as a consultant, increasingly clients may want data in ITM. If this is the case, please ensure that you switch back to IG when recording for BSBI.

NYPH - new app!

I have mentioned this above already, but don't forget to download and use the New Year Plant Hunt app, developed for BSBI by colleagues at the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology. It is being trialled for the first time this year. Records submitted via the app, once validated, may be added to the DDb. The app is available for iPhone [here](#), for Android phone [here](#) and it's hoped to have a desktop version available before Christmas. Watch out on the [NYPH webpage](#).

Fix for problem with analysis tree in MapMate in Windows 10

If you don't even understand the title of this paragraph, skip on over this section! However, if you have had problems with MapMate on Windows 10, you should try the following:

Quite a few people have found that stopping the '**Touch Keyboard and Handwriting Panel Service**' in Windows 10 solves the MapMate issue. Follow these steps:

- click start, type services, hit enter
- find the 'Touch Keyboard and Handwriting Panel Service', right click on it and stop (MapMate should work fine from this point on)

To make it a permanent change: right click on 'Touch Keyboard and Handwriting Panel Service' and go to properties, change startup type to disabled. Some graphical instructions here: <http://www.howtogeek.com/259900/how-to-permanently-disable-the-touch-keyboard-in-windows-8-and-10/> (under Solution One: Disable the Touch Keyboard Service). Many thanks to Charlie Barnes at www.glnp.org.uk for this information.

Following a blog

For a long time I struggled with blogs... how to follow them, how to search them. But things have gotten easier. I'm sure you'll have noticed that I often mention the top class blog that BSBI's Communications Officer Louise Marsh writes and manages and which is available here: <http://bsbi.org/news-views>. If you want to get an email alerting you when there is a new article, you can do so on the page... scroll down so that you get to very near the bottom of the column on the right hand side. You can enter your email address (and a pop up window will appear – though sometimes hidden at first), just follow the instructions. You can also choose to 'follow' in the section just directly above this box.

I highly recommend you all to choose whatever method you like, but to read these blog posts regularly. They are packed full of information, and the way that Louise sets them up means that she has cross-links through-out all the articles, meaning added value and great opportunity for learning and linking while you are reading!

Oh and by the way... Louise is ALWAYS looking for people to write guest blog posts, long or short, and is always willing to help writers out! Get in touch with her any time: louise.marsh@bsbi.org

'My County' on the DDb – By John Faulkner

Have you tried out the '**my county**' section of the DDb yet? In my limited experience, it can be both fascinating and very helpful in planning where you still need to record for Atlas 2020. But it can also be rather off-putting if you take it at face value and don't adjust the thresholds.

When you log into the DDb with your username and password, there is a series of options along the top RHS. Click on **my county**. This will bring up a couple of bar charts with statistics about

records in your VC. Next click the tab (top left) that reads **Atlas 2020 survey coverage**. This will bring up two colour-shaded maps of your VC. The first map shows, for each tetrad, on how many days since 2000 at least 40 taxa have been recorded. At first sight, this one is rather depressing as the overall picture is probably very pale. Don't be put off by this pallor. Few Irish recorders aspire to total tetrad coverage, and it is perfectly possible to get reasonable coverage of a hectad with a relatively few really thorough days' surveying.

The second map shows the number of taxa that were recorded in each hectad in 1987-2000 and have not been re-found since. I was rather shocked by the non-refinds when I first looked at mine. The centre of the county seemed OK (mainly mid-green, i.e. <20% not refound), but all round the fringes there appeared to be lots of 'missing' taxa (shown as brown hectads, i.e. >25% not refound). Then I realised what seemed to be happening. They were not necessarily missing at all, as these were the hectads shared with neighbouring VCs, and many of the allegedly missing taxa had not been recorded in 'my' part of the hectad.

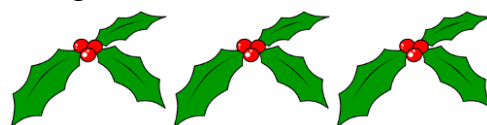
Below these two maps is a large table of tetrad and hectad coverage. Again, at first sight, this made dismal reading. There is a row for every hectad and one for every tetrad in your VC. One of the columns poses the direct question **Well Recorded?** In VC H37, the answer **No** predominated over **yes** by a wide margin – even at hectad level. And I had thought my county was fairly well covered for Atlas 2020!

Delving a little deeper revealed some of the reasons. The default threshold for "well recorded" is set at 75%, and the threshold calculation excludes newly found taxa, i.e. is based on the refind percentage for previously recorded taxa only. You can re-set these default thresholds. I prefer to run with a 70% target and to include new finds. These seem more realistic for the Irish situation. Without them, the criteria can give an unduly favourable impression of squares which were poorly recorded pre-2000, and a harsh one of those that were well recorded. To illustrate the effects of changing the thresholds, consider tetrad H84S, which covers part of Armagh City. The all-time total is 250 taxa. Of these, 107 have been found both pre- and post-2000. 38 were present only pre-2000, and 107 only post-2000. With the default criteria, the tetrad rates as a **no** as only 73% of taxa had been refound, and the 107 "new" taxa were ignored. With the modified criteria, the refind rate goes up to 85%, and the tetrad is a comfortable **yes**.

FINAL WORDS

I will send this newsletter to all VCRs by email also over the Christmas period, and it will be available along with all the previous newsletters on the [Irish webpage](#) soon too. If you have any feedback, please send it on. It will help me to compile useful and informative newsletters.

Please drop by to see me at any time at the National Botanic Gardens – just check that I'll be in as I work part-time. I'm always happy to chat with VCRs. And remember, I'm also happy to visit you at home or in your area, so if that suits better, no problem. Either way... keep in touch, and here's to a productive and satisfying 2017 of botanical recording for us all!



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