

BSBI eNews – April 2017

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

Scottish Recording Conference

The 2017 BSBI [Scottish Recording Conference](#) was held over the weekend of the 10-12 March at FSC Kindrogan. All the talks have been uploaded to the website for a wider airing. Take a look!

The main programme included four talks on Atlas 2020: a [Progress Report](#); [Some early findings](#); [Taxonomic issues](#) and one on [How to Assess your Atlas Coverage](#). We also had [introductions to the BSBI Database](#) and to [validation and verification](#) and then one on [Validation using the DDb](#) with some [examples](#). By way of light relief, Arthur Copping held an *Agrostis* ID workshop, Ian Strachan held a session on Conifer ID, Paul Smith on using the Vegetative Key and I held one entitled Making the most of your GPS.

On Sunday we heard talks on [Rare Plant Registers and Atlas 2020](#) and on [Axiophytes](#) – both by Andy Amphlett and the latest news about [BSBI data and the NBN](#), then finished up with a lively Q&A session.

During an optional Friday afternoon session, I gave a sequence of talks on MapMate: [An Overview](#); on [Data entry](#) and one on [the future of MapMate](#) interspersed by practical sessions. Tom Humphrey gave a final talk on this theme entitled [A post-MapMate future](#).

[Jim McIntosh](#), Scottish Officer

Irish BSBI Conference

A very successful [Irish BSBI Conference](#) was held on Saturday 25th March at the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin and attracted 75 participants. The [programme](#) included workshops and talks from Irish botanists, VCRs and the leader of Ireland's Rough Crew, as well as Jim McIntosh and Ian Denholm, who travelled over from Scotland and England. Delegates shared their comments about the day on social media using the hashtag [#IrishBSBIConference](#) and the conference was soon 'trending' on Twitter (a sign that many people were following the action even if they did not attend the event). The conference attracted a high number of young delegates including non-members, reassuring VCR Ralph Forbes that "a new generation of people exist who are genuinely interested in getting their feet wet and recording plants". There was a huge number of contributors on the day, and talks from many of them will be available on the [Irish BSBI webpage](#) soon - so check them out!

[Maria Long](#), Irish Officer

Full set of Welsh Rare Plant Registers

On 27th March in Aberystwyth, we celebrated the completion of the Rare Plant Registers in all the counties of Wales. After a warm introduction from Emyr Roberts, Chief Executive of Natural Resources Wales, Kevin Walker spoke about [Rare Plant Registers](#) and the [Threatened Plants Project](#), with an emphasis on the value of BSBI data for conservation.

Later, Andy Jones and I spoke about the development of Rare Plant Registers in Wales, and their potential use now and into the future. The event was attended by a number of people from NRW, Welsh Government, Aberystwyth University, and BSBI - including many of the County Recorders who had worked on the RPRs. For more details of the event, see the News and Views blog [here](#) and [here](#) and [my blog](#). I also ended up in a live interview on BBC Radio Wales, which can be heard [here](#) (listen at 1 hr 54 minutes). I will also be on their [Country Focus programme](#), at 7am on 1st April, and you will be able to "listen again" after that.

New Rare Plant Register Guidelines

We have also updated the Rare Plant Register [guidelines](#), which can be downloaded from the [Rare Plant Register](#) page. The new guidelines have retained the previous introduction, but hopefully include a simple guide to what to include, the format, and some ideas on how to go about it. Creating a Rare Plant Register can be a daunting task and certainly has taken many hours of Welsh Recorders' time. Exactly how to approach it may depend to the extent to which your county data is digitised and on the DDb. Although my time is limited I am would be happy to talk to anyone (even beyond Wales) who would like to discuss their RPR.

[Polly Spencer-Vellacott](#), Welsh Officer

New Species Accounts

Over the winter, I have written new species accounts for *Clinopodium calamintha*, *Lathyrus aphaca*, *Lotus angustissimus* and *Medicago minima*. These will be on the [website](#) with the other accounts in due course, but if you want to see the latest drafts in advance, perhaps to comment on the text, or to add to it, then please get in touch with me, [Pete Stroh](#), and I'd be happy to share them with you.

A request for TPP photos

I've already contacted some of you about photographs for the forthcoming [Threatened Plants Project](#) book – thanks to all who have sent me such wonderful images. I am now searching (fairly urgently) for images of surveyors recording (ideally) for the TPP. If you can provide such a photo, could you please send it to me at peter.stroh@bsbi.org. In addition, and at the time of writing, I'm still searching for a photo of road verge cutting/raking/scrub clearance, and a habitat photo (you don't necessarily have to be able to see the plant) for the following: *Cicendia filiformis*, *Dianthus deltoides*, *Gnaphalium sylvaticum*, *Polystichum lonchitis*, *Pyrola media*; and, although I already have a few to choose from, a close-up/full plant shot of *Pyrola media*, *Sedum villosum* and/or *Stellaria palustris* would be wonderful. To update you on progress with the book, after umpteen re-writes we have now completed the 50 species accounts, and they are with the designers. We are in the final stages of editing the introduction, summary of results, conclusions and main tables, and generally putting the whole thing together. We'd expect copy to go to the printers sometime in early July, all being well.

Thank you for your patience!

[Pete Stroh](#), BSBI Scientific Officer

Snippets: Recorder Names

In last month's BSBI *eNews* we suggested that, due to a proliferation of recorder names, first names could be included when entering 'new' names. However, we should have recommended the following format: surname, followed by forename and middle name or middle initial (e.g. Long, Maria P.). As we pointed out there is a lot to be said for using the same approach consistently. So, if you have been using the "Surname, initials" format for years, you may wish to continue with that format – even for 'new' names. But make sure that whenever you enter a new recorder name for the first time, you spell it correctly, use ALL the recorder's initials and get all the full-stops, spaces and commas in the right place and right order! (e.g. McIntosh, J.W.). And always use precisely the same recorder name, spelling and format every time you subsequently enter records by them.

We have also redrafted the guidance on recording Status in the revised [Data Entry Guidance](#).

Snippets: Vice-County Annual Reports

All [English](#), [Welsh](#) & [Scottish](#) VC Annual Reports for 2016 are now on the [England](#), [Wales](#) and [Scotland](#) pages of the BSBI website. The Scottish and Welsh Annual Reports will also appear in the Scottish Newsletter and Welsh Bulletin respectively. I've enjoyed reading the Scottish reports as they have come in. They are a fascinating and impressive summary of botanical activity which will be of great interest to fellow recorders, referees, members and staff. Thank you to all involved!

Snippets: Resetting Sync in MapMate

We requested that everyone re-sync'ed after the replacement of the MapMate hub back in August but many users have not done so yet. Re-syncing helps both to catch any data that has gone astray and also makes it possible to tag the 'definitive' version of each record - there are some cases where the DDb cannot tell which version of a record is current, resulting in records flipping between states as different versions are repeatedly sent in. It is therefore good practice for ALL MapMate users to reset sync with the hub as their partner, create a new sync file and send it off.

Remember to look out for the two confirmation emails. If you don't receive these within an hour or two, your sync has NOT reached the DDb and you need to investigate why not.

Snippets: New Sites in MapMate

Periodically I come across a MapMate user who is unaware of the quick way to enter sites using the format "sitename@gridref" in the Site field. This is a great way to save time which I can thoroughly recommend. However, you must watch out if the site is near the VC boundary as MapMate occasionally allocates the site to the wrong VC. Partly because the base map that it uses was digitised at a crude scale (1:200k), and the boundary can be a few hundred metres out. Also, if the centre of the tetrad or monad is outside the VC boundary MapMate tends to allocate the site to the other VC.

Snippets: Moving MapMate

Following on from last month's piece on moving MapMate to a new computer... If images are used as backdrops (e.g. OS 1:250k maps) and they do not reappear on MapMate on your new computer you can easily rectify this by clicking the purple tick to the left-hand side of the feature box to get your Base Map into edit mode, and then Edit > Insert > Map Picture file... and navigate to select the image that was there originally and finally click OK.

Snippets: Conservation Statuses on the BSBI Database

If you have recently done a search on the DDb, you may have already noticed that additional status information helpfully appears in the Status column of the results table. Species are tagged with the UK Red Data List categories (e.g. GB:EN, etc) and as "NR" if Nationally Rare, "NS" if Nationally Scarce, "RPR" if listed in an RPR, "Ax" if listed as an Axiohyte, and as "Sco" if on the Scottish Biodiversity List.

Snippets: Taxon lists on the BSBI Database

Even those that are not registered to use the DDb can now check Atlas coverage in a tetrad: Just type the tetrad grid reference in the [Grid Reference Lookup](#) tool. Then click the *View Taxon list for tetrad...* link. Finally tick *sort recent records separately* and click *show taxon list*. All the taxa that haven't been re-recorded since 2000 are shown in feint at the top of the list, and all the taxa that have been recorded post 1999 are in bold further down for that tetrad. County Recorders may wish to demonstrate this new feature to local members who are keen to help recording for Atlas 2020.

[Jim McIntosh](#), Scottish Officer

Field Meetings

The field season has started for some, although the first scheduled meeting that I was aware of was cancelled thanks to storm Doris. I maintain an online [diary](#) of all national, country, county or local BSBI field meetings. Full details of all the meetings (including a [pdf version](#) of the diary) are also available on the [field meetings page](#). Check them out and book this year's meetings now! Meeting organisers should note that being listed in the diary is a necessary step for being considered under the BSBI insurance cover. Should you have any questions regarding insurance please contact [Jane Houldsworth](#) (Head of Operations) or me.

I'm already looking forward to the 2018 field season, and would point out that members are very keen to help with Atlas 2020 Recording. So, if you would like to tap into this great pool of expertise and enthusiasm, do offer a field meeting in your vice-county. Please ask the Country Officers if you need any help with organisation.

BSBI Annual Summer Meeting

This year's Annual Summer Meeting in Flintshire (5-9 June) will provide a great opportunity to meet fellow botanists, for mutual learning, to help with recording for Atlas 2020 and generally to have an enjoyable time – and we'd love to see you there! For further information and booking see the [Annual Summer Meeting](#) page. Note that all rooms at the Stamford Gate Hotel have now been booked, but there are many other hotels and B&Bs nearby.

The ASM will visit the Isle of Man in 2018 in a joint meeting with the British Bryological Society, so do put the dates in your diary now (July 16 – 23).

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

BSBI News & Views

On the BSBI News & Views blog in March: a note from Dave Morris, VCR for Oxfordshire about the new [State of Nature report](#) for that county; a link to an obituary of [Jean Bowden](#), the former higher scientific officer in the Kew Herbarium and author of a book on John Lightfoot - Jean went on to become curator of Jane Austen's house; two posts on the Rare Plant Register event and one on the Irish BSBI Conference (see links above); [coverage of Plantlife's report](#) on nitrogen deposition; notice of a one-day event, to be held at Kew Gardens in June, to celebrate the [life and work of J.D. Hooker](#); [and finally](#), reminders about this year's [State of the World's Plants Symposium](#) at Kew and the [NFBR conference](#) in Nottingham - both take place in May - and [Botanical University Challenge](#), planned for November.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

BSBI eNews

The current and recent back issues of BSBI *eNews* are available on the [Publications](#) page of the BSBI website. An email with a link to BSBI *eNews* is circulated to BSBI Recorders, Referees, staff and committee members. Please feel free to forward it to anyone (including non-members) who you think might be interested.

I'd welcome short contributions from anyone on topics of interest and relevance to fellow readers. BSBI *eNews* is generally published on the 1st of each month so contributions should ideally reach me by the 21st of the preceding month. I'd also be pleased to have feedback on any of the articles appearing in BSBI *eNews*.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer