

BSBI eNews – January 2018

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

New Year Plant Hunt

We hope that you will participate in our seventh [New Year Plant Hunt](#) which will take place between 30th December 2017 and 2nd January 2018. This year we have a new recording form for you to use. It was developed by BSBI Database Officer Tom Humphrey and replaces last year's recording app (which you should NOT try to use this year please).

The new form works on your smartphone or on your computer and it should be even simpler to use than the app. Records, once verified, will appear on the [Results page](#) of our [New Year Plant Hunt website](#), where there is an interactive map – click on any of the red markers on the map to see the full list of species recorded there. Details of how to submit records are [here](#) and don't forget that lists with few records are just as important as long lists.

We also have a [new events page](#) giving details of New Year Plant Hunts organised by local recording groups. So, if you know of, or are leading, a New Year Plant Hunt in your vice-county, please [email the New Year Plant Hunt Team](#) with details. A few people have asked if they can hold their Hunt a little later – that's fine as long as we [know in advance](#) and as long as you can get your New Year Plant Hunt records to us by the deadline of midnight on Friday 5th January 2018.

[Last year](#), almost 900 botanists across Britain and Ireland recorded 492 taxa in bloom so it will be interesting to see what we find this year. You will be able to follow 2018 results as they come in each day [here](#), [here](#), via [BSBI News & Views](#) and on this [New Year Plant Hunt feed](#). If you are tweeting about the Hunt, please remember to use the #NewYearPlantHunt hashtag.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

Vice-County Annual Reports

We had great feedback from members who enjoyed reading the Vice-County Annual Reports for 2016. Take a look - [England](#), [Wales](#) & [Scotland](#). They are a fascinating account of botanical endeavour by BSBI Recorders and members across the UK. Recorders also enjoyed drafting them – and saw it as a chance to take stock. So, let's repeat the exercise for 2017 – for the whole of the UK and Ireland!

Please summarise the most interesting and exciting news and activity in your VC in the calendar year of 2017 in 200-250 words. Your reports will be collated with those from other VCs and will be published online and in country newsletters. Please include a few short succinct sentences on:

- Progress with Atlas 2020 recording, digitisation and validation
- Progress with other initiatives such as Rare Plant Registers, Checklists, Floras, etc.
- Initiatives, such as local groups, leading field meetings, giving talks, working with other organisations, undertaking particular surveys, etc.

And, depending on space, include *brief* details of exciting new finds. Full guidance is included in the pro-formas that the Country Officers will send out early in the New Year.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Field Meetings in 2018

Thank you to all those who have offered field meetings and to those who have helped coordinate the [meetings programme for 2018](#). We've ended up with a bumper set of meetings to offer members, and I'm sure that they will respond and participate in them. Details of the meetings that arrived in time for the Yearbook will be published there, and any late arrivals will appear with them on the meetings web page. I hope to publish some meeting reports or synopses of the meetings in BSBI News, so please do send in your reports to me as soon as possible after a meeting. Reports will also appear in the Yearbook as before, but we'd like to have more rapid feedback to members of any significant discoveries or events during the season.

I am guaranteed a white Christmas here at Halley Research Station in Antarctica, making weather and ozone observations for the next couple of months. The weather is highly variable, with days with whiteout conditions caused by blowing snow limiting visibility to a few hundred metres mixed with calm sunny days when it is possible to go out in a t-shirt (and lots of sun-block). The landscape is effectively a white desert - the snow never melts and there is little in the way of life. If we're lucky a Snow Petrel or penguin might be seen, but there is no vegetation of any sort. Elsewhere in Antarctica there are a couple of plants - a pearlwort *Colobanthus quitensis* and the grass *Deschampsia antarctica*. If you'd like to hear a little more about my life and work in Antarctica – read my [blog/diary](#).
[Jonathan Shanklin](#), Hon Field Meetings Secretary

Taking stock of Atlas 2020

Just over a million Atlas records have now been added to the BSBI DataBase for 2017. 1,180,516 to be precise. This is 200,000 more than the equivalent number this time last year. An amazing achievement! Here are some interesting statistics based on an analysis of them (figures in brackets are equivalent figures for 2016 as at this time last year):-

- 99.7% of all 2017 records in the DDb were at tetrad precision or better (99.6%).
- 92.9% of records made in 2017 and in the DDb were at monad precision *or better* (89.1%).
- 98.2% of 2017 records in the DDb came from MapMate sources. (97.8%).
- 1,761 (1,586) hectads had more than 40 species recorded in 2017.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Entering Quantity in MapMate

There are more than [1 million records](#) on the DDb that have a Quantity value of '1' (one) including many from recent years. But there are only 27,500 records that have a Quantity value of '2' (two).

While many records with Quantity = 1 have additional qualifying Comments, e.g. 1 spike, or 1 clump etc. (which we would recommend) most do not, and it looks very much like a count of 1 (one) is being used to signify 'Present'. Further evidence of this is that records with Quantity = 1 are much more likely in some vice-counties than in others. The incorrect use of Quantity = 1 makes it hard to interpret records unambiguously and we would strongly discourage it.

Would all MapMate users please note the correct way to indicate 'Present' is to enter “p” or “0” (and then return) in the Quantity field. Please do enter the absolute quantity instead whenever you record that information – and always include Comments as to what the count relates to.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Checking your Records

If you are up to date with data entry you may like to make a start on data validation – assuming you haven't already done so! This may seem a daunting task, but remember we are not asking that every single record to be checked. Only notable species and records need be checked. Helpfully these are listed on the Data Validation tab of the [My County](#) page of the BSBI DDb. Login first then click the preceding link. First take a look at the list under “Grid-reference – vice-county boundary matching”, then scroll a little further down to see “Records to target for validation for Atlas 2020”.

We have produced two simple guidance documents to get you started – one on [Validating Records in the DDb](#) and another on [Editing Records in the DDb](#). I have run a few ‘validation workshops’ in England (and one in Ireland) this year for VCRs, and am more than happy to help you get started if you wish. Andy Amphlett is also offering one to one help or advice with validation. Just drop Jim an email and he'll put you in touch. Please do take us up on these offers.

I thought it worth repeating (apologies for the bold type!), that **the last date for records to be sent to the DDb is December 31st 2019. This is also the last date for validating records using the DDb.**

Thank you very much for all your hard work in 2017; wishing you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas, and a fruitful 2018.

[Pete Stroh](#), BSBI Scientific Officer

Online Aerial Photography

Most BSBI *eNews* readers will be familiar with the online aerial photos provided by Google. These are used by '[Grab a Grid Reference](#)' and by '[Cucaera](#)', and by the [BSBI Distribution Maps](#) and the [DDb](#). 'Grab a Grid Reference' and Cucaera, remain the most efficient way to look up and check grid references against OS mapping and air photos.

But, Google is not the only, or even the best provider of aerial photos. [Bing Maps](#) - provides a different set of photos to that provided by Google, though neither has complete coverage of large scale photos. But where both Google and Bing large scale imagery is available, that from Bing tends to be better. You can zoom in to a larger scale, the time of year the photos were taken is often different, the photos are sharper, and they tend to have more vibrant colours. Bing also provides access to OS 1:50K and 1:25K scale maps (for GB). There is no way to obtain a readout of the grid reference at the cursor location on Bing Maps.

Bing aerial imagery can also be accessed via the [National Library of Scotland](#) website. Despite the name, this website provides historic mapping of the whole of GB and Ireland. Select a map series from the drop down menu, and select a second background layer. Background layers included Bing air photos and yet another set of aerial images from ESRI. To view the air photos move the transparency slider to the left. You can set the transparency of the upper layer to allow the background layer, eg air photos, to show through. The webpage also gives a precise grid reference readout at the cursor location. The ESRI imagery again differs from that from Bing and Google.

Air photos are invaluable tools for plant recording and it is worth checking which of these providers has the best imagery for your local area.

[Andy Amphlett](#)

BSBI Photo Competition

All the images from the 2017, 2016 and 2015 [BSBI Photographic Competitions](#) are available to view on the [BSBI's Flickr photograph collection](#). There are albums for each of the competition categories. In 2017 the two competition categories were "Archeophytes" and "Plants in the landscape". Click on the album you'd like to look at. You can see them in a timed slide show, big or small photograph tiles, depending on which of the three options you select at the top right. However, if you click on the first image that appears with either tiled option, you can step through the images one at a time and see subtitles with the species, location (often vice county) and photographer's name. The images look particularly good on the Flickr app.

The collections include some great photographs of less common species. If they are in your vice-county and you would like full details of the record, please get directly in touch with the photographer. They are all BSBI members and their details should be in the Membership List.

Why don't you enter the 2018 competition? The categories are simply 1) Plants & Pollinators and 2) Plants & People. Full details are on the [BSBI Photographic Competition](#) page.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Records of Mistletoe growing on Oaks please!

The earliest known report of mistletoe on oak in Britain is the poem attributed to the 13th century Scottish poet, Thomas the Rhymer, describing the mistletoe-oak at Errol in Perthshire. It's a rare association and there were only 11 existing oak trees with mistletoe that I knew about in 1996-98 in Britain. I had a huge amount of help from local record centres and BSBI recorders. Twenty years later I'm updating my paper on mistletoe growing on oaks that was published in [Watsonia in 2000](#).

I would be very grateful for any new records since 1998 of mistletoe growing on any oak species that you hold. I have already circulated the local environmental record centres and this has resulted in reports of five locations of mistletoe on oak trees that were not in my paper in 2000. So, there are now 16 locations which are mainly in Herefordshire and Worcestershire with single records for Berkshire, south Hampshire, Monmouthshire, Staffordshire and Sheffield.



Full descriptions of the locations of the oak trees with mistletoe will not be given in the short paper that I hope to publish. This is because there have been financial offers to reveal locations of oak trees with mistletoe in Britain, especially on *Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea* - for which, you can thank Pliny the Elder and his account of Druids in Gaul collecting mistletoe on oak with a golden sickle.

[John Box](#) FLS FCIEEM

Field Key to Winter Twigs

Publication is imminent for John Poland's forthcoming book on winter twig ID. He has opened a mailing list so that people can register their interest in buying a copy at a discounted pre-publication price. More information [here](#).

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

And finally, some reminders...

- You can now download around a dozen of the exhibits from November's [Annual Exhibition Meeting](#), as well as all eight talks.
- You can also download all the talks, including the main talk on Mountain Flowers by Michael Scott, from the recent [Scottish Annual Meeting](#), as well as abstracts of all the exhibits.
- Applications for BSBI Training Grants open on 1st January 2018. They are open to any aspiring botanists (whether or not they are BSBI members) wishing to improve their ID skills by attending a short training course. Grants of up to £250 are available - more details [here](#).

BSBI News & Views

On the News & Views blog in December: an [interview with Chris Metherell](#), BSBI's new President; a note from Jon Shanklin about his [Antarctica diary](#); two posts about Kevin Widdowson's new poster showing fruits of 45 taxa, the [first showing the mystery fruits](#) and the [second naming them](#); a report on the [Genebank55 initiative](#) to conserve rare plant species at local level; a [note from the Stoke Herbarium](#) about a specimen of *Tillaea aquatica*; a note about the [North West Rare Plant Initiative](#); details of how to join John Poland's mailing list for his [forthcoming winter twig ID key](#) and a follow-up note [naming the twigs shown](#); an [invitation giving details](#) of how to take part in the New Year Plant Hunt and a follow-up post from one of the volunteers who will be serving on the [New Year Plant Hunt support team](#); news of publication of the [final issue of New Journal of Botany](#); and a [Christmas message from Chris Metherell](#) with some important news about Chris's first task as President. Daily reports about the New Year Plant Hunt will start on Saturday 30th December.

[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 let me know if you wish to unsubscribe or amend your email. 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 (unless it happens to be a bank holiday!) 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*.

Happy New Year to all BSBI *eNews* readers!



[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer