

BSBI eNews – November 2016

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

BSBI Annual Exhibition Meeting

A reminder that you are invited to attend the AEM on 26th November at CEH Wallingford, Oxfordshire. The theme this year is 'From Field to Map: the story behind the dot' so we are especially keen to invite exhibits on any aspect of botany and recording in your VC. Speakers include Jo Judge (National Biodiversity Network), David Roy (BRC/CEH) and Chris Preston. You can see the programme and make a booking [here](#). Please read the notes on travel carefully.

You may also wish to contribute anecdotes and images to speakers, [Paul Smith](#), who will be talking about 'Surprising plant records and the botanists who recorded them' and Field Meetings Secretary [Jon Shanklin](#), who is talking on 'Do BSBI national field meetings throw up interesting records?'

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

BSBI Review

BSBI's Council and Trustees are keen that as many of our members as possible feed in their views on what they value about the Society, and ideas and suggestions on how the activities it undertakes and how it is organised might be improved. It is particularly important that we hear from County Recorders, perhaps our most important members who give so much time and energy to BSBI. To participate in the Review please visit the [BSBI home](#) page and click the [link](#) to the Review document. Alternatively, if you would like to participate via post, please write to me at 7 Grafton Gardens, Baxenden, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 2TY to request a copy of the Review document.

[Jane Houldsworth](#), BSBI Head of Operations

BSBI Field Meetings

I hope to have a draft list of meetings for 2017 on display at the AEM, so do send in outline details as soon as possible. For those of you planning a field meeting (whether local or national) we have put together [guidance](#) to help you and those coming to the meeting. It is a great reference that you can dip into it and extract what is appropriate for your meeting. If there are aspects of field meetings or the guidance that you think need revision, or other items you think that Meetings & Communications Committee should discuss, please let me know.

[Jonathan Shanklin](#), Field Meetings Secretary, BSBI

Access to the BSBI Database

As well as Recorders, all BSBI Referees are very welcome to use the BSBI Database. If you are not already registered to use it, please click [here](#). Any actively recording members are also welcome to access the Database. County Recorders should send them the [registration](#) link and nominate them for access to [Tom Humphrey](#). This is an excellent way to encourage botanical recording.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Validation of Atlas 2020 Records

With the end of Atlas 2020 fieldwork three years away, I am beginning to turn my attention to the magnificent dataset that you have assembled for the project over the last 16 years with a view to getting it into shape for publication. This may seem slightly premature, but better to start now than to leave it to the last minute. Consequently, I thought it timely to write brief guidance to help you use the Database to validate and edit your county records. This is an essential undertaking if we are to have as clean a dataset as possible for Atlas mapping and analyses and, although there will inevitably be lots to do 'centrally', as County Recorders you are best placed to spot glaring errors or dubious records. I hope that once you've become familiar with what is involved, you'll find it a very useful and interesting exercise.

Over the past month, we have been busy simplifying the process so that now, even I can validate and edit a record! The guidance documents are almost finished, and I'll send them out within the next week or so. Please do try to find the time to read them. They are purposefully concise, in part because we didn't want to bore you and also because the basic process really is straightforward. The first document helps with validation (i.e. spotting records that need checking or are clearly wrong), and the second with editing such records. There is also reference made to Quentin Groom's excellent and more detailed guidance on the same subject, which I'd urge you to read once you've got to grips with the basics. Quentin's document, titled '[Editing and validating records on the BSBI distribution Database \(DDb\)](#)', can be found by going to the [BSBI resources](#) page.

Hopefully this hasn't come as a great shock. There is plenty of time to validate your records, and I am keenly aware that you are all very busy with recording, digitising data and life in general (!), but I am also mindful that three years can pass by incredibly quickly. Do have a go, and if you have any problems, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can arrange help.

[Pete Stroh](#), BSBI Scientific Officer

Puzzling symbols?

BSBI Database users may have been puzzled by records with various symbols following the taxon. If you hover your mouse pointer over the symbol, its significance will be revealed; † signifies a county singleton (i.e. the only record of this taxon in the county in the BSBI Database), * signifies a hectad singleton and "1st" the first record of this taxon in the county in the BSBI Database.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Finding the first and most recent records

Following on from the above item, you can easily search the Database for the earliest (or latest) records for each taxon in your vice-county. This is very useful if preparing Rare Plant Registers or Floras but obviously only works correctly if all the records are in the Database! Look at [this](#) example! If you want the earliest and latest records for all taxa in your county, just leave the Taxon field blank.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Buying a new GPS?

My first GPS unit was the original Garmin eTrex, which I later replaced with a Garmin GPSMAP 60CSx. This was a considerable improvement over the original eTrex; quicker to lock onto satellites, more consistently accurate and able to lock onto satellites under tree cover. I was very pleased with it. Annoyingly I recently lost it ... Needing a replacement I looked at Jim McIntosh's [advice note](#) on [BSBI Resources](#), in which he says "Even the basic models do more than most users will ever need – and I recommend a basic model like the yellow [Garmin eTrex 10](#)".

I have now been using an eTrex 10 for 7 weeks. It cost one third what my GPSMAP 60CSx had cost five years ago. I set it up following Jim's instructions, and have set the Trip Computer page to just display OS Grid reference, GPS accuracy and Altitude. The real-world improvement over my previous GPSMAP 60CSx is probably as great as the improvement that model was over the original eTrex. It locks onto satellites very quickly, and holds a remarkably precise signal in difficult conditions. So far, I have never found it to give an 8 figure grid reference that was more than 10m different to my actual position as checked against online air photos (e.g. on [Cucaera](#)). Battery life (two AAs) is remarkable; I am still on the original batteries. Absolute accuracy is probably no better than older models, but the eTrex 10 is so much more consistent in its accuracy than my previous GPS models, that it is a much better tool to use for field recording. Recommended.

[Andy Amphlett](#), BSBI Recorder for Banffshire

Stoneworts

[Ken Adams](#) writes "BSBI *eNews* readers who saw your articles on *Charophytes* in the September issue might like to try out my simplified Keys to [Chara](#) and [Nitella](#) taxa that use a minimum of technical terms." I notice that there are also great diagrams of [Chara](#) and [Nitella](#) characters and a whole range of other helpful online keys at [Ken's Keys](#).

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

New Member contact details

Following requests from several County Recorders, our Membership Secretary, [Gwynn Ellis](#), will now send all County Recorders the contact details of any recently joined members who live in their VC or existing members who have moved to their VC (provided the member has indicated that they are happy for their contact details to be shared on the membership list). Some VCRs would like to make contact with members in their area to invite them to participate in recording or local botany group activities. Of course, there is no obligation for County Recorders to make contact, but the information will be provided should you choose to use it.

[Jane Houldsworth](#), BSBI Head of Operations

Making the most out of your BSBI membership

The [members' page](#) on the BSBI web site (accessible via the green box on the BSBI homepage) allows access to *New Journal of Botany* on-line and to recent issues of the *BSBI Yearbook* and *BSBI News*¹. This is very useful if you don't subscribe to the paper copy of NJB or need to refer to these

¹ Older issues of *BSBI News* (prior to 2015) are available to everyone in our [Publications Archive](#)

publications but don't have the paper copy to hand. The current BSBI membership list is also available. [Contact us](#) if you are a member and need the password for the members' page.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

BSBI News & Views

Training featured on the News & Views blog last month, with Martin Godfrey's report on his [fern workshop in Staffs](#), and an [account from a BSBI grant recipient](#) on the grass ID course we enabled her to attend. There was also a [report by VCR Clare Heardman](#) of September's very successful [Cork Recording Event](#). Members were alerted to some of the highlights in the [latest issue of BSBI News](#) and the opportunity was taken to invite potential new members to subscribe. The [AEM](#) and [SAM](#) were promoted widely, as was Michael Braithwaite's [latest publication](#) – a comparison of the floras of road and rail routes in [Roxburghshire](#).

For the latest news from BSBI, as well as links to papers and events of interest, can I also encourage you to keep an eye on the [News page](#) and please feel free to send contributions which you think might be of interest to fellow botanists?

[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*.

Finally, please let me know if you'd prefer not to receive the BSBI *eNews* email, or would like me to use another email address.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer