

BSBI eNews – November 2017

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

BSBI Welsh Officer

It is a real pleasure to return as BSBI Welsh Officer. I would like to thank Polly on behalf of the BSBI for the sterling job she did over her six-year term as Welsh Officer. Last time, I was based in Cardiff and had an office space in the National Museum Wales. This time, I am going to work from home, at Pembroke Dock (see address below). I plan to work from Wednesday to Friday one week and from Monday to Wednesday the next, then repeat. My main role will be helping Welsh VCRs, surveying rare species across Wales, arranging workshops and recording meetings for Atlas 2020. I look forward to catching up with everybody!

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[Paul Green](#), BSBI Welsh officer

BSBI Plant Records

A Scottish County Recorder asks “I’ve been in the habit of sending an annual submission of new VC records to Mike Porter, aiming for a 31st October deadline. This was to enable the VCCC to be updated, and for records to be published in the NJB, if accepted. However, I notice that, in the DDb, new VC records are annotated with ‘1st’. Could the VCCC be kept up to date automatically from the DDb, using these annotated records?” And I’m sure many of you must be wondering about the same thing.

I asked Tom Humphrey about this and he responded “The ‘1st’ annotations in the DDb shouldn’t be regarded as equivalent to the well-checked published lists. The automated note is largely intended to highlight that a record may need scrutiny - while the record may be valid it might equally be a data entry or taxon ID error. There are plans to allow records in the DDb to be annotated as well-checked and verified first records. Those marked records could tie-in with the list of records published or used for a future edition of the VCCC. The details of how this will work has not yet been finalised.”

So, for the moment, please continue to send in new county records as you have in the past.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Atlas 2020 Data Entry

Records are coming into the DDb at a fantastic rate, but how are you getting on with digitisation and validation in your Vice-County? Andy Amphlett has just refreshed the very popular tetrad/monad coverage maps by VC for Ireland, using the latest data available on the BSBI Distribution Database (DDb), and Maria Long has sent them out directly to Irish Recorders. Andy plans to update those for GB and the Isle of Man just before the BSBI Exhibition Meeting, around the 20th November. If you have records waiting to be submitted to the BSBI DDb, please send them in before then, so they can be displayed on the maps.

Andy tells me he plans to update all the VC maps again just before the next field season (and apologies that he is unable to produce maps for the Channel Isles).

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Plant status at vice-county scale

I have been writing up two interesting plant records from [Berwickshire](#) in 2017. The colonies of *Ophrys apifera* (Bee Orchid) and *Orobanche minor* (Common Broomrape) both appear to be recent colonisation by species 'new' to the vice-county. The colonisation is probably linked to climate change and may be linked to human activity in that the orchid has been spreading up the corridor of the A1 trunk road and the broomrape was found on recently-disturbed ground in an industrial area.

I have had to clear my mind on their status and share my thoughts here as I may not be alone in continuing to find the subject confusing. It seems to me that the orchid population is a neophyte (or casual) population in the context of Berwickshire and Scotland but a native (or casual) one in the context of Britain as a whole, where it is merely a relatively minor (though interesting) extension of range in respect of which the link to human activity is of little relevance. The broomrape may or may not be native in Scotland: while many of the Scottish records may relate to casuals or recent colonisation, at least one population, that in Fife, has been known for well over 100 years and has thus some claim to be native.

Taking all this into account, I have reported the finds to BSBI Plant Records as native with a comment that they are recent colonists, and to the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club Plant Records as introductions with similar comment. I find I have not been completely consistent in my Berwickshire Flora. I have treated *Asplenium ruta-muraria* (Wall-rue) as native to Berwickshire although it is a colonist of man-made structures in the vice-county, or, very rarely, a presumed colonist from such structures to natural rock exposures nearby. I now feel it would have been better classified as native or archaeophyte in Berwickshire. Suitable comment is indeed the answer to most status problems, except when faced with compiling bare check-lists.

In mapping projects, the emphasis is on making the maps as instructive as possible. Thus, I would argue that it is pragmatic to map roadside halophytes as if they were neophytes and not as an extension to native populations, as long as the nature of the colonisation is explained in accompanying captions.

The issue becomes more complex in lists drawn up for conservation purposes. I was recently asked whether *Spergularia rubra* (Sand Spurrey) should be retained on a list of native species scarce in the Scottish Borders 'as there seem to be quite a lot of records'. This species has rather few native grassland populations in the Region, but an increasing number of populations in man-made habitats, particularly forestry roads. It was agreed that the position had become too complex for it to be practical to retain the species on a list of scarce species used for conservation assessments.

[Michael Braithwaite](#), Retired Recorder for Berwickshire

***Utricularia intermedia* agg.**

Following last month's piece by Pete Stroh, I had an email from Nick Stewart, which he was happy I published, saying "Personally I would go further; *Utricularia intermedia* s.s. is present in calcareous fens in East Anglia and central Ireland. It is unlikely to be present in Scotland and, if it were, I would suggest the Uists machair as the most likely place. *U. ochroleuca* is also extremely doubtful in Scotland. I did identify three specimens from NE Scotland as this about 25 years ago but have never seen any since and now very much question my original determinations. However, if correct it may be a northern continental distribution. Otherwise out of several hundred Scottish specimens I have looked at over the years, all *U. intermedia* agg. have been *U. stygia*."

I would reiterate Pete's comments about using the quadrifid hairs inside the bladders for identification. There have been a number of leaf characters mentioned in various texts, particularly in relation to leaf-toothing which are unreliable and records based on these characters should be reduced to *U. intermedia* agg. When reviewing records, Recorders should also be aware that there was an interim period when *U. stygia* was not separated from *U. ochroleuca*. There are a number of records of the latter in the system from this period, including specimens identified by Thor, which should be interpreted as *U. ochroleuca* OR *U. stygia* (but not *U. intermedia* s.s.). As well as John Day, I would also be happy to look at any specimens which might be contenders for *U. intermedia* s.s. or *U. ochroleuca* but they need to be pickled as the hairs become deformed when pressed and rewetting of bladders is almost impossible."

[Nick Stewart](#)

BSBI Field Meetings

The BSBI field meetings for 2017 have all been held, but there is of course the Annual Exhibition Meeting and AGM at the Natural History Museum in London to come. I hope to see you there. A few vice-counties still have meetings in their 2017 calendars, and although recording is getting more difficult, many plants are still in flower. Some dead plants are easy to recognise, and there is of course the Vegetative Key.

Locally I have been looking at a few tetrads which were well-recorded in terms of percentage refind rate, but which still had more than 90 species not seen since before 2000 according to the DDb. In some I didn't refind many species, but in all of them I added significant numbers, in part because of changing land use, or turn-over of ground during construction work.

Offers of meetings for 2018 are slowly coming in, and these are posted on the Meetings web page <http://bsbi.org/field-meetings> when details are available. It would be great to have more meetings to show, particularly for England, so if you are planning a local meeting that could be of wider interest do consider opening it up to all BSBI members by sending me the details. You can always have a limit on numbers if you need to cater for your local group. I will be displaying a list at the AEM and in the New Publication, so it would be really helpful to have details in the next fortnight.

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

BSBI Scottish Annual Meeting

As we 'go to press' I have just closed booking, with 146 members booked in for this Saturday's BSBI / BSS Scottish Annual Meeting. It is, by far, the biggest meeting of botanists in Scotland every year - and this year it seems to be more popular than ever. This is perhaps surprising given the charge (£25) we must levy to cover room hire, teas & coffees and speaker costs. The ID mini-workshops have are proving to be particularly popular. I think members like the variety of talks, exhibits and posters, meeting friends and the more interactive learning in the workshops. All, of course, in the lovely Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. We will aim to post the presentations as pdfs on the [Scottish Annual Meeting webpage](#) after the event.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

BSBI Annual Exhibition Meeting

Bookings are flooding in for the BSBI Annual Exhibition Meeting which will be held on Saturday 25th November at the Natural History Museum, London. 142 people have already booked and there are still three weeks to go until bookings close on 21st November. You can see the programme [here](#) and there is an [online booking facility](#). Unfortunately, there are no spaces left on the behind-the-scenes tours of the Sloane Herbarium but we will be offering tours of the famous NHM Wildlife Garden – you

can sign up for these on the day. We have a fabulous array of exhibitors lined up for you this year, including Leif Bersweden, author of 'The Orchid Hunter' (see below) – it should be quite a day! We are offering exhibitors a chance to tell us about their exhibit in advance with a guest post on the BSBI News & Views blog so keep an eye on that in the next few weeks. Attendance at the AEM is free again this year, thanks to our friends and colleagues at the Natural History Museum who are very generously making the venue available to us free of charge. Hope to see you there!

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

Transparency and good governance

BSBI is always striving to become more accountable and to encourage all our members to take an interest in [how the society is governed](#). We have therefore made our [Governance website](#) (password required) accessible to all BSBI members, so they can view minutes of all meetings of BSBI Council, country and standing committees and the Board of Trustees. Head over to our [members-only area](#) (password required) for access details. Email me if you've forgotten your password!

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

BSBI Membership Special Offer

Our Membership Special Offer runs from 1st October until 31st December 2017 and it's proving very effective in encouraging people who have been hesitating over joining BSBI to take the plunge. If you know anybody who hasn't joined yet, do please point them towards the Subscriptions page and let them know that if they take out a subscription for 2018, their membership will start at once, so they can enjoy several "free" months. They will also be able to take advantage of special money-saving offers on [BSBI publications](#) such as [Threatened Plants in Britain and Ireland](#).

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

BSBI News & Views

On the News & Views blog in October: details of the forthcoming [Flora of Sussex](#) and the money-saving pre-publication offers; a report on the [second meeting of the new Kerry BSBI group](#); a note about the forthcoming [Scottish Annual Meeting](#) (see above); we pay tribute to Polly Spencer-Vellacott's excellent work as [BSBI Welsh Officer](#) and welcome Paul Green back to the post (see above); Field Meetings Secretary Jon Shanklin tells us about his [busman's holiday](#) – Jon went to the Yorkshire Dales and did a lot of recording for Atlas 2020 (see above); we pass on the very sad news that [Michael Proctor](#), one of our most eminent botanists/ ecologists and a BSBI member since 1950, has just died; there's a note about [Leif Bersweden, author of 'The Orchid Hunter'](#), who will be at the Exhibition Meeting (see above); we offer a peek inside the [September issue of BSBI News](#) and pay tribute to editors Gwynn Ellis and Trevor James; and there's a report on the very successful [Training the Trainers](#), held in Shrewsbury last month.

[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 or forward it to anyone else who 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 (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.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer