

BSBI eNews – November 2018

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

New BSBI Welsh Officer

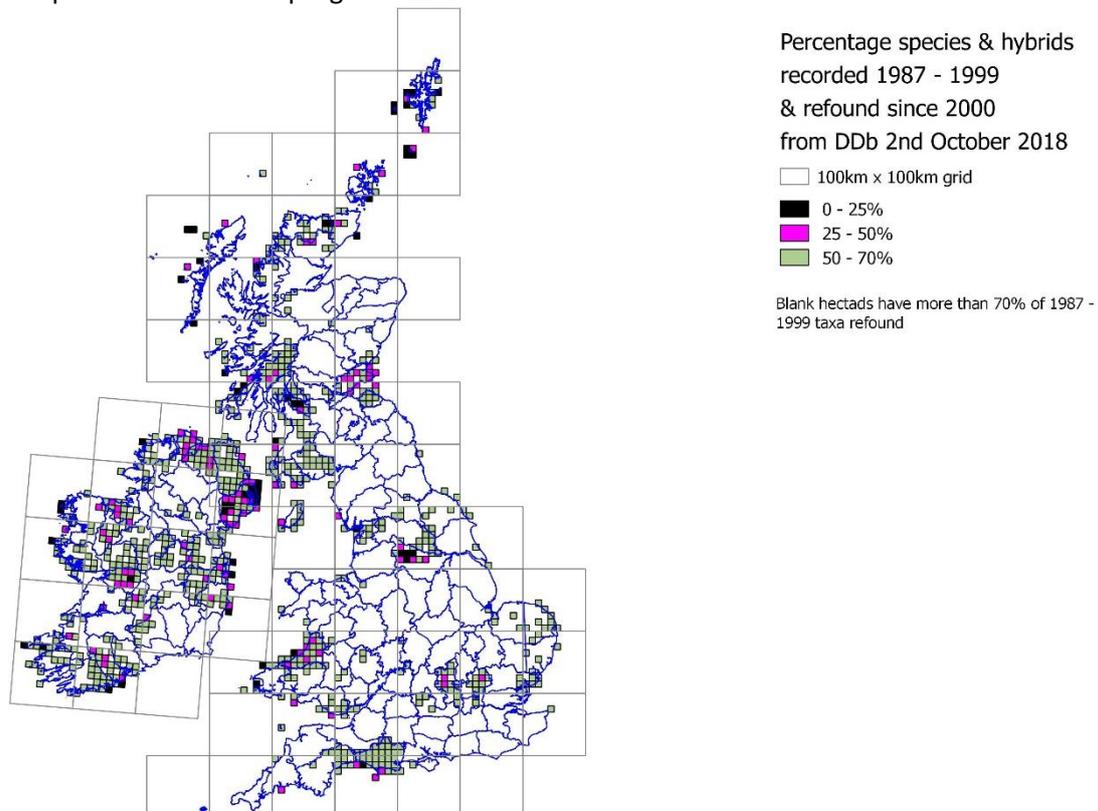
I'm delighted to let you all know that we've appointed a new Welsh Officer. Barbara Brown comes to us from the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust where she has been responsible for supporting volunteers in managing and monitoring a wildlife reserve. She is also a lichen apprentice under the Plantlife scheme and has worked previously at the National Museum of Wales as well as many other volunteer and community led science, conservation and gardening projects in Wales, North East England and in France.

Barbara's first day at BSBI is the 6th of November and she'll be working for us for three days a week until December 2019. I'm sure she'll be in touch with many of you as she gets to know BSBI.

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

Atlas 2020 Progress

This map shows Atlas 2020 progress based on records in the BSBI DDb as at 2nd October 2018.



Of course, there are many reasons why particular areas *apparently* look less well-recorded than previously. It may not be feasible to record some areas in the same detail that were covered intensely for a Flora in the last Atlas date class (for example). In some hectads the decline in taxa will be real, and not a result of under-recording.

However, it may be that records have yet to be digitised and uploaded to the DDb – like those from the Wigtonshire Recording Week this year and I am currently looking for an experienced volunteer to help with their digitisation. (Please let me know if you might be able to help.) Or where records have been digitised, but, for whatever reason, have not been uploaded to the DDb. Renfrewshire is an example of where a large and difficult dataset awaits being uploaded.

Other apparently less well-recorded areas could simply be the result of records in MapMate waiting to be sent to the DDb. Regardless of where you are with data entry, if you are a MapMate user, NOW would be a good time to Reset Synch with the DDb and resend all your data. Andy Amphlett will update the tetrad coverage maps at the end of November and it would be good to base those maps on as full a dataset as possible.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

The problem with pearlwarts

Until recently *Sagina apetala* included two distinct subspecies: subsp. *apetala* and subsp. *erecta*. Stace (2010) attributed these taxa to separate species: *S. apetala* s.s. (*S. apetala* subsp. *apetala*) and *S. filicaulis* (*S. apetala* subsp. *erecta*). These are quite distinct ecologically with markedly different habitat associations: *S. apetala* is a native of bare ground in heaths and near to the sea whereas the archaeophyte *S. filicaulis* is confined to anthropogenic habitats such as pavements. Despite these differences many recorders continue to record them both as an aggregate. However, Michael Braithwaite has alerted us to a problem with the way MapMate deals with *S. apetala*. MapMate lists four taxa within the aggregate: *S. apetala*, *S. apetala* subsp. *apetala*, *S. apetala* subsp. *filicaulis* and *S. filicaulis*. The latter three taxa are clearly synonymous with those given in Stace (2010) whereas *S. apetala* could be interpreted in the broad or the strict sense (sensu Stace 2010). As a consequence, it is unclear to which Stace taxon MapMate records submitted since 2010 refer.

In order to deal with this problem, we are proposing to change all DDb records of *S. apetala* that originated from MapMate after 2010 to *S. apetala* s.l. We realise that this might overturn some genuine records of *S. apetala* s.s. so we would encourage any recorders who are confident that they have recorded it to change their records to *S. apetala* subsp. *apetala* in MapMate. We will also be asking Mark Yates to change the MapMate dictionary so that *S. apetala* s.l. is available to use.

[Kevin Walker](#), BSBI Head of Science

***Betula papyrifera* (Paper-bark Birch)**

Betula papyrifera is a scarce, perhaps overlooked, alien Birch. It has been recorded from 62 hectads (51 hectads post 1999). There are no records from Ireland. According to Stace (2010) variants planted here usually have white, extensively peeling bark, while in 'Trees of Britain & Europe' Rushforth (1999) says that cultivated clones are planted for the vivid white bark.

I have found *B. papyrifera* on two occasions, in vc96 and recently in vc57. Identifications were determined / confirmed by Hugh McAllister. In neither case did the trees have obviously peeling or especially white bark. In the first instance I thought the tree might be *Betula x aurata* (*B. pendula* x *pubescens*). The vc57 tree I did tentatively identify as *B. papyrifera*, but without a huge amount of confidence! So, it seems that *B. papyrifera* is rather variable in appearance. As with all Birches, identification needs to be based on the whole suite of characters. A [detailed set of images and notes about the vc57 tree](#) is available.

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

Identification resources

A reminder that for any beginner or intermediate level recorders looking for ID help and keys to a range of plants, including grasses, rushes and aquatics, [Ken's Keys](#) are available to access free of charge on the BSBI website. As the eponymous Ken is [County Recorder for Essex](#), his keys have a distinct south-eastern bias but they are well worth a look even if you are based further north. They are illustrated by some very helpful line drawings or photographs.

Another helpful ID resource is [Makaques](#), Chris Dixon's Pictorial Guide to the Flora of the British Isles, which is fairly comprehensive and is arranged in taxonomic order. Chris is also County Recorder for East Gloucestershire but, as the name suggests, his Pictorial Guide is suitable for recorders from across Britain and Ireland.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

Referees

One of the BSBI's greatest strengths is its panel of Referees whom we encourage [members](#) to consult whenever there is any doubt about an identification. Currently we have 107 Referees, covering nearly 200 taxonomic and non-taxonomic categories. The Referees are all volunteers and include national and international experts in their fields. Most of the authors of the [BSBI Handbooks](#) and contributors to the Plant Crib (available on the [Identification page](#) of the BSBI website) are current or past BSBI Referees. We are very grateful to them for helping members and - ultimately - helping to maintain the quality of the Society's data.

Most of the 'difficult' groups are covered, although new recruits are always welcome to ensure continuity. There has recently been considerable progress with *Hieracium*, one of our most problematic genera for which there has been an 'embarrassing' vacancy for several years.

There are currently vacancies for the following genera: *Polygala*, *Oenothera*, *Galium*, *Verbascum*, *Solidago* and *Hedera*; and to ensure continuity we would like to recruit new Referees for: *Ulex*, *Erodium*, *Circaea*, *Stellaria*, *Cerastium*, *Veronica hederifolia* agg., *Galeopsis tetrahit* agg. and *Juncus bulbosus* agg. Any offers or suggestions will be gratefully received!

[Jeremy Ison](#), BSBI Panel of Referees and Specialists

Field Meetings

It was good to meet quite a few people at the [Recorders Conference](#) and I hope to meet some more at the [Scottish Botanists' Conference](#) (see below). Offers of [field meetings](#) are coming in - thank you to all have sent in suggestions so far. If dates and places for others could come in the next fortnight or so it would make producing a poster for the [Exhibition Meeting](#) in Ormskirk a bit more relaxing! Final details can wait until later in November when I will need them for the Yearbook.

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

BSBI Annual Exhibition Meeting

This year's AEM takes place on 17th November at Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, Lancs. If you haven't yet booked to attend and/ or to exhibit, then please do so before 15th November by heading over to the [Exhibition Meeting webpage](#). We have a full programme of talks for you, exhibits (of course!),

Summerfield Books, an ID table and a chance to go behind the scenes for a guided tour of the newly opened Tech Hub with its state-of-the-art DNA, microbiology and cell culture facilities plus the recently developed plant physiology research lab; the Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) will also be up and running with some plant material available to view. If you really can't make it, you'll be able to follow the action on Twitter via the hashtag [#BSBIexhibitionMeeting](#).

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

VCR day in Ireland

This year's VCR day in Ireland will be a very focused affair, and hopefully very productive too. It will take place on Sat 8th December in the National Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin, and the entire focus will be on getting everyone's head around validation. VCRs will work in small groups, with varying levels of experience with both validation and DDb-use within each group. Leaders Jim McIntosh and Maria Long will be on hand to help, and topics and issues of broad relevance to the whole group will be pointed out and discussed as the day progresses. It will be a day focused on problem solving and action, and hopefully by the end of it, everyone will have a handle on the task at hand, the scale of it, how to approach it, and with any luck - might have a significant chunk of the validation work actually done!

[Maria Long](#), BSBI Irish Officer

Scottish Botanists' Conference 2018

We have a tremendous number booked on this year's Scottish meeting, now called the [Scottish Botanists' Conference](#), this Saturday (3rd November) at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. 175 folk have booked – the biggest number of botanists to meet up in Scotland – ever! We might have had more but closed bookings early because of fears that the venue might not be able to cope. We also have 50 booked for the Conference dinner, 27 for a Conference-eve dinner, 28 exhibits or posters, 9 speakers and 7 mini-workshops (repeated). It is going to be an action-packed day! Follow the action on [#ScotBotanistsConf](#).

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

BSBI Recorders' Conference

The conference was a huge success, with very high scores on feedback forms and lots of [complimentary comments on social media](#). You can read a [short report about the conference here](#) and pdfs of 11 of the talks have now been uploaded to the [Recorders' Conference webpage](#) and are available to download, along with some very useful workshop hand-outs from Tim Rich (on dandelions), Matt Parratt (firs), Mark Duffell (Alien aquatics) and Geoffrey Kitchener (docks). Many thanks to all the speakers, workshop leaders and delegates who contributed to the conference.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

New Flora of the British Isles

Quick reminder - the pre-publication offer for the fourth edition of the New Flora (saving £8) will expire at the end of January. Would-be purchasers who have lost the flyer which accompanied the September *BSBI News* should visit the website www.clivestace.com.

[Clive Stace](#)

British & Irish Botany

The new website for the long-awaited replacement for *New Journal of Botany* is now up and running and we are now open for submissions. The [website is here](#), with a link to it from the [Publications webpage](#), you can find out more about how to submit a paper or how to register as a reader [here](#) and you can download a PPT about *British & Irish Botany* by Editor-in-Chief Ian Denholm [here](#). We already have five submissions in the pipeline and hope to publish our first issue before Christmas.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

Twig Key: update

John Poland's *Field Key to Winter Twigs* is now expected to be published this month. If you took advantage of the pre-publication offer and ordered your copy earlier this year, you can expect to receive it in the middle of November. We'll post an alert on the [Twig Key webpage](#) when we hear that copies have been printed. Watch out also for a forthcoming interview with John Poland where we hope he will explain more about bundle scars, girdle scars, false terminal buds and diaphragmed pith.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

On the News & Views blog in October

We launched the BSBI Membership special offer – 15 months of benefits for the price of 12 months – with a [blogpost setting out all the benefits of membership](#); if you know somebody who might enjoy being a BSBI member, please feel free to send them the link. There's also a [report on the Recorders' Conference](#) (see above); an account of the [recent meeting of BSBI's Publications Committee](#) where we welcome three new committee members and say hail and farewell to three much-loved, long-serving members; and a peek [behind the scenes at Edge Hill University](#) and some of the treats we will see at the forthcoming Exhibition Meeting. This month's post about Byron's Gin includes a report on the recent meeting of BSBI's Training Committee and [how Byron's Gin helps support their work](#), and there's a [post about British & Irish Botany](#) (see above).

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

New on the website in October

- There is a new [Herbology Hunt webpage](#), aimed at getting young people started with plant ID and recording.
- The BSBI Annual Review for the year ending 31 March 2018 is now available to download from the [About BSBI page](#).
- In preparation for the forthcoming AGM on 17th November, the [AGM webpage](#) has been updated so you can download an agenda and read about trustees and committee members up for re-election.
- Webpages for BSBI meetings such as the Scottish Botanists' Conference, Exhibition Meeting and the main [Meetings page](#) have all been updated, as have the Recorders' Conference and Twig Key webpages (see above) and of course the [News page](#).
- The [Membership Subscriptions webpage](#) has been updated to reflect recent changes in the way BSBI is able to accept payment in Euros.
- County webpages for [Kirkcudbrightshire](#), [Montgomeryshire](#) and [Somerset](#) have been updated with reports of rare plants or field meetings in 2018.

- The [Governance webpage](#) has been updated to reflect recent changes in composition of some committees.
- The [BSBI Governance](#) website (members-only, password-protected) has also been updated with minutes from recent country and standing committees.

BSBI eNews

BSBI *eNews* is aimed at all BSBI recorders, referees and members involved with recording. 240 of the 306 regular BSBI *eNews* recipients have now opted in to continue to receive their monthly news email. This includes many who took the opportunity to update their email addresses. Thank you very much indeed. Remember you can update your contact details or unsubscribe at any time.

If you are reading this online, or perhaps because it was forwarded to you, and are one of the County Recorders or Referees who did not sign up - you can do so via a link on the [BSBI Publications](#) page at any time. I'd welcome short contributions from anyone on topics of interest to fellow readers. BSBI *eNews* is generally published on the 1st of each month so contributions should reach me by the 21st of the preceding month. I'd also be pleased to have feedback on any of the articles in BSBI *eNews*.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer