

BSBI eNews – February 2019

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

New Year Plant Hunt 2018-9

BSBI's eighth [New Year Plant Hunt](#) (NYPH) ran from 29th December 2018 to 1st January 2019, and was our most successful yet in terms of participation (1,471 people took part), number of unique records submitted (>14K) and number of species seen in bloom across Britain and Ireland (627). Thank you to everyone who took part!

Kevin Walker, BSBI Head of Science, analysed the results, looking at whether plants recorded were 'autumn stragglers', 'spring specialists' or 'all-year-rounders'. [Download his analysis](#). A summary of the results is available on our [NYPH press release](#) and on [this blogpost](#), where you can also see links to media coverage of the NYPH, including an interview on BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

[Louise Marsh](#) BSBI Comms Officer/ New Year Plant Hunt Co-ordinator

Winter botanising

How many recorders go out in December - March each winter? For several years, in preparation for the new Cornish flora, we have been recording more or less every week, principally, where possible, bringing monads up to the 200 mark, or in poorer areas to 150. Of course, we appreciate that [Cornwall](#) is probably milder than elsewhere, but as 95% of the records that we make are of vegetative plants, this must be much the same elsewhere. If a monad already has only 130 to 150, especially in an area where others are over 200, that invariably indicates that it is worthwhile re-visiting. Granted that it is easier to achieve the 200 goal in December and January than in February and March, and granted too that really hard frosts make things more taxing, yet it still seems worthwhile, and the *Vegetative Key* really comes into its own! Another advantage, of course, is that few others are outside, giving more freedom to roam!

It is hard to generalise, but most monads have been yielding 70 to 120 extra species, and not surprisingly, far more around villages and towns than in heavily improved farmland. Another advantage of Cornwall might be that much of the stubble is left until spring, allowing plenty of scope for arable weeds. For instance, last week (Jan 11th), we were able to add many from a field near St Germans, in VC2, on the River Lynher estuary, including giant specimens of *Euphorbia exigua*, easily a foot across and as high.

Ian Bennallick & David Pearman, East Cornwall, VC2.

Atlas 2020 monad and tetrad coverage maps

A huge number of records have been added to the DDb since Andy Amphlett last updated the tetrad coverage maps by VC for GB and for Ireland back at the end of November. He has just updated them again, using all the latest data available on the BSBI Distribution Database (DDb). The maps are in the same Google Drive folders as previously – so if you have saved the address as a favourite just click on the link. Otherwise click [GB coverage maps](#) or [Irish Coverage maps](#). Thank you, Andy!

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

MapMate Maintenance

It is easy to take MapMate for granted. But it does need a little bit of tender loving care from time to time. So, would all MapMate users please follow these three points, please?

1. MapMate Patches

Would everyone please check that they are fully up to date with all relevant MapMate Patches – remembering to go through the View > My Configuration wizard afterwards. If you need any help with this, remember that there are short YouTube videos on these topics (and much else) on the [BSBI MapMate Support](#) website. Look at the “Updating software and downloading patches” and “Using My Configuration” on the [Set up and maintenance](#) page. It is useful during the My Configuration procedure to select your VC and all adjacent VCs, as that makes it easier to find records that may have been accidentally assigned to a neighbouring VC if you use MapMate’s short cut method of creating sites. BSBI County Recorders should select “Vascular Plants (microspecies) and charophytes” as their species group.

2. MapMate Filters

Before you sync records always check that you have set your filters for that MapMate synch partner. Otherwise you risk sending loads of records for species groups or vice counties that are of no interest to your partner. So, to check that the filters have indeed been set, with that partner selected: Replication > Special > Set Filters. Generally, **records** should be set to “All Records”, **sites** to the relevant Vice-County and **taxa** to “Vascular Plants (microspecies) and charophytes”.

3. Reset Synch

It is good practice to periodically Reset Synch with key partners such as the hub / DDb. With the correct synch partner CUK selected and shown along the top of the Replicator Window, simply go to the replicator's 'Special' menu and choose 'Reset Sync Record'. You will see a message saying “This will reset the synchronisation record with centre CUK to its ‘start of life’ state. ALL your data will be re-sent to Centre CUK. OK to Reset?” Click on OK, and then click on the Synchronise button to generate a sync file in the normal way. This file will contain all the records that are due to go to your partner, regardless of whether they've been sent before (if the partner already has the records they will be ignored, this process doesn't duplicate records at the receiving end). Then **remember** to send (upload) the synch file!

Specifically, we'd like all recorders to reset sync with their hub/ddb partner now. We will ask you to do it again just before the Atlas deadline on the 31st December 2019.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Access to the BSBI Database

Any actively recording members are very welcome to access the Database. County Recorders should send them the [registration](#) link and ask the member to mention them as sponsor. This is an excellent way to encourage and reward botanical recording and to inspire the next generation of potential recorders. Of course, we would be delighted if BSBI Referees would also use the BSBI Database. If you are not already registered to use it, please click [here](#).

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Importing Records into MapMate

Importing records into MapMate is a really useful feature – particularly where you get big datasets in spreadsheets. The import procedure (File > Import > Data from Tab Text files...) highlights all the taxa, Recorders, Sites, etc not already in your MapMate. Before you can successfully import all the records you must change all the rejected taxon names to precisely the format in your MapMate species dictionary. This tedious step can be avoided by encouraging regular contributors to use spreadsheets that only allow the use of MapMate's species dictionary nomenclature, like Andy Amphlett's MapMate Importing Sheets at the bottom of the [Resources page](#). Or Phil Brown's excellent List Input form – which mirrors the customised recording card for your VC (available on request from me.)

However, for the avoidance of doubt, you do NOT need to create new recorders and new sites to match those you are about to import. MapMate will automatically do this for you. (Though it does NOT check that Sites' grid references correlate to the stated VC.) Of course, you might like to minimise the number of variations of Recorder, Method, Site, etc terms that you have in your MapMate, by trying to use only those that are already there, wherever possible. A final step, which is easy to forget, is to amend the Reference from the automatically generated one (such as "Centre 5tg, 2016, Data Import by Centre 5tg on 30/12/2016 Jim McIntosh") to something that is more meaningful e.g. "Watts, S., 2016, Vegetation survey, Ben Lawers 2016".

In conclusion, generally it is only worth importing big spreadsheets, otherwise it is best to enter records directly into MapMate, so you don't bypass MapMate's validation procedures.

For large sets of records that are already held in a database (e.g. data from Recorder 6 or Biobase) it's usually better to import the data directly into the DDb rather than using MapMate. If you are planning a large import then please contact us to discuss options.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Vice-County Annual Reports

With 153 Vice-counties it is no mean feat to collate Vice-County questionnaire survey responses and Annual Reports. So, this year we are trialling the use of Survey Monkey to automatically collect and collate these responses and reports. Currently we are asking all (main) recorders in Wales & Scotland to respond and we are about to extend the invitation to English & Irish recorders.

Wales & Scotland: Thank you to all those who have completed their returns. Would any main recorders please let me know if they have not received an email about this, as a few have ended up in Junk mailboxes? We look forward to receiving the remaining reports over the next week or so.

Ireland & England: You will shortly receive emails with instructions and a link to the survey from Maria & Pete. Please follow the instructions carefully, noting the word limit (200-250) and the required format of *Scientific name* (Common Name) – and checking against Stage 3.

Here are last year's reports for inspiration: [England](#), [Wales](#), [Ireland](#) & [Scotland](#). I'm sure you will agree - a truly fascinating account of botanical endeavour by BSBI Recorders and members across Britain and Ireland.

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

***Drosera* (Sundews)**

Andy Amphlett has prepared a very useful powerpoint presentation on [Drosera Identification & Recording](#). It is posted on the right-hand side of the [Identification](#) page. It includes photos from Pete Stroh and an earlier draft was seen by the BSBI referee for the genus, Alastair Culham, who commented that he thought *Drosera intermedia* was over-recorded in Scotland. Well worth a look!

[Jim McIntosh](#), BSBI Scottish Officer

Field Meetings

The 2019 Yearbook (just out!) lists all the meetings for this year received by the deadline and has reports on many of the meetings held in 2018. The planned field meetings are already on the [meetings page](#) and bookings are coming in. If there are any changes to the meetings, we can publicise this on the page, and can also give details of any meetings that were too late to be included in the Yearbook. It is not too late to offer!

Meetings and Communications Committee is making the annual review of the Guidance we provide for organisers of field meetings, and for participants in them. These are available on the [meetings page](#), and I would welcome any comments or suggestions for additional material to include. The documents are designed to be dipped into rather than read from cover to cover. Items that I would particularly like potential meetings organisers to glance at are the health and safety guidance, the suggestions about meeting adverts and the suggestions about meeting reports.

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

Malham Tarn Annual Summer Meeting

BOOK NOW for the [Annual Summer Meeting](#) at Malham Tarn. We are using a Google form to collect the information we need. In the first instance we are only taking residential bookings for those who want to stay at Malham Tarn for the full week, along with bookings for day visitors.

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

Grants from BSBI and others

Applications are flooding in for BSBI Training Grants, which opened on 1st January, so if you want to apply for up to £250 towards the cost of a short training course, or if you know somebody who might benefit from such a grant, now is the time to submit an application.

Applications are coming in more slowly for Plant Study Grants (for which there is no set deadline) and for Science & Research Grants (deadline 28th February) so please spread the word to any researchers you think might benefit.

Full details of all these BSBI grants, how to apply, and the criteria to be met, are available on our new [Grants page](#) which has an alphabetical list of all the grants for botanists of which we are aware, including from the Wild Flower Society and the Botanical Research Fund. If you know of any others, please let us know.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Comms Officer

New Gentian Handbook

Tim Rich and Andy McVeigh are currently working on a new handbook on Gentians. Tim writes 'The handbook is due in summer. The text and illustrations are just about finished (though some reviewing and editing is needed!) and some help with [pre/post 1987 10-km gentian distribution maps](#) for the handbook is required. I wonder if County Recorders might check them and let me know of any additions or corrections to dot status or dateclass? Responses direct to me (tim_rich@sky.com) by mid-February, please.'

[Tim Rich](#)

New on the website in January

- Dates and booking details for this year's FISCs (Field Identification Skills Certificates) are now available from the [FISC page](#).
- County pages for Breconshire, Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, Kent, Derbyshire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Somerset, Sussex, Kirkcudbrightshire, Easter Ross and Cos. Down and Antrim have all been updated with progress reports on local recording, county newsletters or details of this year's field meetings, as well as new contact details for County Recorders. Head over to the [Local Botany page](#) to find links to all county webpages.
- The [Field Meetings](#), [Meetings Diary](#), [Training](#), [News](#), [Publicity](#), [Identification](#) and [New Year Plant Hunt pages](#) have all been updated (see above).
- The [Ireland](#) page has been updated with a note that John Faulkner, County Recorder for Co. Armagh and BSBI President 2015-7, was awarded a British Empire Medal in the New Year's honours list.
- 12 new obituaries have been uploaded to the [Obituaries page](#).
- The [Governance page](#) has been updated to include changes in committee composition and the separate Governance website (members only, password-protected) has been updated with minutes of recent meetings.
- Updates have started to the BSBI website to ensure that the site remains as user-friendly as possible to all users, both newcomers and long-term members. Tom Humphrey, Kevin Walker and I will be carrying out more updates throughout February and apologise for any temporary disruption while we are doing this but don't forget, the [A-Z site map](#) will always provide a quick and easy route to finding the page you want.

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

On the News & Views blog in January

Our New Year's Day blogpost was a [report on the fourth and final day of the New Year Plant Hunt](#) and a look ahead to what botanists could enjoy in 2019, especially if just starting out on their botanical journey; our monthly blogpost about the botanicals used in Byron's Gin focused on [blaeberry](#); we [summarised New Year Plant Hunt results](#) and gave links to media coverage (see above); we offered a [sneak preview of the forthcoming issue of BSBI News](#), which is being mailed out to BSBI members this week; we reminded plant-lovers at all skill levels about the various [training and research grants available](#) from BSBI and other organisations; and we told you about one of the [winners in BSBI's prize-draw](#), selected at random from the many people who completed a Direct Debit mandate to pay their annual membership fee – a quick reminder here that you won't receive your copy of *BSBI News* if you haven't renewed your membership [here](#)!

[Louise Marsh](#), BSBI Communications Officer

BSBI eNews

BSBI *eNews* is aimed at all BSBI recorders, referees and members involved with recording. 278 BSBI members have now opted in to receive this monthly news email. 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