

Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland

Scottish VCR Newsletter, Spring 2014



Scottish Recorders

It is sad to report that Catriona Murray died at the end of April. Catriona was the BSBI Recorder for Skye, Raasay & the Small Isles for 40 years and retired in April 2006 when she handed over to Stephen Bungard. Subsequently she was appointed as Vice-county Recorder Emeritus in recognition of her huge contribution to the BSBI. Stephen is working with John Birks on an obituary which will appear in due course on the BSBI website and in the 2015 Yearbook. I'm sure they would appreciate any contributions, perhaps personal reminiscences or anecdotes involving Catriona.

You will have noticed from BSBI News, that Jeff Waddell has been appointed as Junior Recorder for Selkirk & Roxburgh to help Senior Recorder, Rod Corner, who is currently recovering from his knee operation. Meanwhile Jeff has just left his job with Forest Enterprise Scotland as Open Habitats Ecologist, to become RSPB Head of Reserves Ecology, Scotland. We wish him well with both his new appointments.

You may have spotted that we are advertising for an [Atlas 2020 Recorder for Jura](#) on the BSBI website, to assist Malcolm Ogilvie in South Ebeudes. Please encourage friends or colleagues who may be interested and suitably qualified to respond.

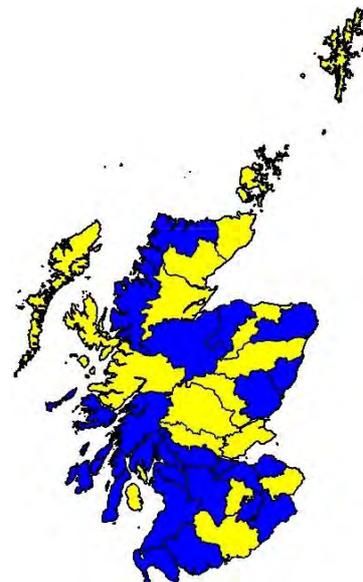
Email addresses

Thank you to everyone who agreed to have their email addresses on the BSBI website. The BSBI main and Scottish websites have been updated with that information, allowing folk to get in touch directly, rather than having to go through me and Alex. Do let me know if your contact details change so we can update our records (and the website).

Scottish Vice-county webpages

On the right you can see the latest map of VCs with BSBI web-pages. Since my last newsletter there has been a significant increase in the number of these in Scotland.

As I mentioned then, they are great for communicating local news and events with local and visiting botanists. They can be used to encourage submission of records, giving background botanical information about your VC, linking to publications such as local floras, checklists and RPRs to local botanical and partner organisations. In fact you can pretty much do whatever you like on your webpage. Take a look at the wide range of different approaches already online.



It costs nothing and is simple to set up – just send Alex Lockton (alex.lockton@bsbi.org) text, photos and any documents you'd like to upload, and he'll do all the technical stuff.

BSBI Scottish Officer

Its ten years since my appointment as Scottish Officer. Although I'm employed by the BSBI, they only fund 50% of the project costs. The balance comes largely from SNH. A small but significant contribution comes from RBGE by way of the provision of subsidised office facilities. SNH grants generally only have three year terms and the current grant expires in mid-November 2014. We are currently speaking to SNH and an outline bid for renewed funding is in draft.

Site Condition Monitoring

I am planning to continue to include a small annual programme of Vascular Plant Site Condition Monitoring in the grant bid, as this helps to make a *really* persuasive case. The *quid pro quo* for the BSBI is that we get funding for other BSBI activities such as recorder support – which is the main strand of the grant bid – and we can influence management of sites and gather much valuable data on rare and scarce plants in the process. I'd like to thank all the volunteers who have helped with SCM over the years. And I hope they will continue to support the Scottish Officer project in this way.

We do between 4 and 6 six sites annually – and this year we have agreed to undertake Arthur's Seat (vc83), Craighall (vc89), Derskelpin Moss (vc74), Glen Strathfarrar (vc96) and Milton Wood (vc89). I've also been asked if I might help Area Staff resurvey Ben Lui. Just so you are aware, SNH have let a national commercial contract to Theo Loizou to undertake SCM in Ben More Assynt (vc106-8), Beinn A' Ghlo (vc89), Culbin Sands, Culbin Forest and Findhorn Bay SSSI (vc95), Glen Fender Meadows (vc89), Morrone Hill (vc92), Tweedsmuir Hills (vc78) and Tulach Hill (vc88).

BSBI Scottish Website

If you'd like to read more about what I've been doing, take a look at my 2013/4 Scottish Officer Report which I've recently posted on the [BSBI Scottish website](#). By the way, the site has rarely been so full of up to date news and events. Check it out, particularly if you haven't taken a look at it recently.

Local Recording Groups

Local botanists are a much under-utilised resource that can help enormously with local recording, e.g. for Atlas 2020 or when trying to relocate old records. BSBI Recorders have close ties to several organisations such as [Inverness Botany Group](#) and [Perthshire Society of Natural Science](#) and regularly use those groups to help with recording. Several BSBI Recorders organise their own local groups – like Stephen Bungard on Skye, Ian Green in Moray, John Crossley on Orkney and Gill Smart in Ayrshire.



David Hawker recently set up a local Kirkcudbright group. Fourteen folk participated in their inaugural meeting and afterwards he reported that had he known it was going to be so popular and productive he would have started the group years ago!

I would encourage others to consider setting up local groups. It is good to be clear about the objectives of these groups and their field meetings. For example Stephen's group is to help with local recording and mutual learning, which sums it up pretty neatly. I have added a few paragraphs to the [Field Meetings](#) page of the BSBI Scottish webpages to publicise local groups. Let me know if it needs updating.

Support for Recorders in North-East Scotland

Andy Amphlett has very kindly volunteered to work for the BSBI for a total of 45 days in 2014. A work program and budget has been agreed. He is mainly providing recorder support in the north-east of Scotland, more specifically in Kincardine, North & South Aberdeen, Moray, Banff and Easternness. This is the sort of work I aim to do across Scotland – but struggle because of the enormity of the task. The support will be both on technical matters, such as MapMate and the BSBI DDb, and help with recording under-recorded areas, such as Easternness.

Another major strand is developing BSBI DDb guidance. One of his first successes has been securing £2k of funding from the Cairngorm National Park for BSBI recorders' travel expenses to record in remote areas of the park.

The BSBI Database (DDb)

If you haven't already registered to use the [BSBI DDb](#), I can't recommend it highly enough. It is very simple to use and truly amazing. Give it a go! Also take a look at DDb Message Board (for which you don't need to be registered and logged-in to read). There are some really interesting discussions going on there, for example, a discussion initiated by Angus Hannah on Centroid Grid references. And some great tips – like that on how to find earliest and latest VC records.

BSBI Data Entry Guidelines

We have also just posted new draft BSBI Data Entry Guidelines on the DDb Message Board [here](#) and hope that recorders will find them useful. It was originally drafted with MapMate in mind but the same principles apply to any system.

One of the most important points is that (in general) higher resolution grid references should NOT be included in the Comments fields - otherwise you (and ultimately all other DDb users) will lose the ability to map and analyse at that higher resolution. Grid refs should go in the grid ref field!

We would welcome your comments and feedback on the draft – which is why we posted them on the Message Board – so you can see other folk's comments.

Atlas 2020 Coverage

After reading Kevin Walker and Paul Smith's article in BSBI News on recording for Atlas 2020, Andy Amphlett created an Excel spreadsheet to assess how well recorded his VC is tetrad by tetrad and with a hectad summary and posted it on the Message Board [here](#).

Specifically it calculates the percentage of taxa recorded since 2000 against all taxa ever recorded for each hectad. Full instructions with links to the DDb queries are included and I'd encourage you to try it out. It is excellent for identifying where the hectad and tetrad gaps are in your VC.

How important is it to avoid repetitive recording? (A question from a Scottish recorder)

Not at all! As a general principle you would of course avoid re-recording the same area. Vice-counties are generally big enough that you don't *have* to record the same squares repeatedly! However, if you follow the best practice guidance of visiting lowland squares twice (in different seasons) or go back to the same square for another specific reason, you'd probably end up re-recording at least some of the same species twice.

It is certainly not worth while cross checking to see whether a species has been recorded before recording again. Far better to have species recorded twice than not at all. Incidentally it is always better to make separate lists or cards for each site visit, as it simplifies data entry.

Similarly with data entry - there is so little additional effort involved when digitising lists that it's not worth while trying to avoid duplicates. Computers can handle duplicates (or near duplicates) with ease, and they don't show up on maps, so don't worry about them. (You may however want to try to avoid duplicate site names when entering data - but that's a different matter.)

2014 BSBI Annual Summer Meeting

It is still not too late to book on the 2014 Annual Summer Meeting – but you will have to be quick! The event is in two weeks time - on Wednesday 4th to Saturday 7th June in Birnam, near Dunkeld. We commence with dinner on Wednesday and a full day of interesting talks on Thursday - including one on the results of the repeat survey of Mcvean & Ratcliffe plots by Dr Louise Ross, John Hutton Institute and another on *30 Years of monitoring rare plants on Ben Lawers* by Dan Watson, NTS.

There will then be two days of field meetings on Friday 5th and Saturday 6th. Local recorders with help from Nick Stewart and Les Tucker will lead field meetings to the very best Perthshire botanical sites. Full details on the BSBI website [here](#).

Finally...

As always, if you are visiting Edinburgh do call in and see me.
Have a great field season!

Jim McIntosh, BSBI Scottish Officer,
May 2014 jim.mcintosh@bsbi.org