

The Database of British and Irish Hills

Chis Crocker

Early last year we published the results of the November 2018 user survey. The time and thought given by respondents were gratifying. Clearly, many users care about the database. It was satisfying to get stuck into the analysis as it's a few years since I retired from my final job as a statistician in market research. As expected, there was a lot of polarisation of opinion, but the sample segmented readily and most readers will be able to identify a segment they belong to. The editorial team then met at Alston YH. The weather was too poor for the traditional hill survey, but that gave us more time to discuss the development of the database. Readers can access the results and a summary of our review on the DoBIH website at www.hills-database.co.uk/downloads.

As in the 2008 and 2010 user surveys, feedback was overwhelmingly positive. In fact several responses were along the lines of "don't fix something that isn't broken". Of the many suggestions for improvement, mobile friendliness stood out as being the most desirable. However, to make the necessary changes to the Hill Bagging site would be a very big task. We think an Android app is the right way to go, leaving the website in more or less its current form. Currently we don't have the programming skills in house, but Simon is looking at the possibility in the longer term. A good iOS app called Hill Lists is authored by Graham Haley, who scrupulously updates it after each release of the DoBIH, though it lacks the Tumps. Adam Coles' Android app, British Hills, is more basic and its data is more than three years old.

We added the Yeamans and Clems in response to the support for historically important lists. These lists were first requested more than 10 years ago and seem more deserving than some of the other suggestions, such as old lists of E&W 2000s for which there are modern equivalents. We've not ruled out further additions if demand is sufficient, but it's not our intention to make the DoBIH a repository for historical lists.

We've had to defer a structural change aimed at simplifying the presentation of hill names. The plan was to split the Hill Name field into two: one field containing a "preferred" name (by default the name currently given first), and the other field the alternative names. This has proved troublesome to program without compromising searchability. Parents are an issue, but not the only one. It remains an objective.

We've decided against giving locally known or historically correct hill names in the database. We were unable to secure the expert help that would be essential if we're to provide them with the degree of authority that we aim for with numerical data, and which our users are entitled to expect.

We continue to devote much effort to reviewing hill data, using online resources (principally LIDAR and OS Maps) that weren't available at the time of our full review in 2012-13. Currently the focus is on marginal Humps. Readers wanting a summary of changes to the main relative hill lists will find them on the DoBIH website in the Database Notes under "Change Registers". Users of the offline versions of the DoBIH will find the Revision History useful. A chronological list of classification changes for all lists can be obtained in the Change Log on the Hill Bagging site by selecting "Classification Changes" in the "Show requests for" box. This will include changes in the pipeline.