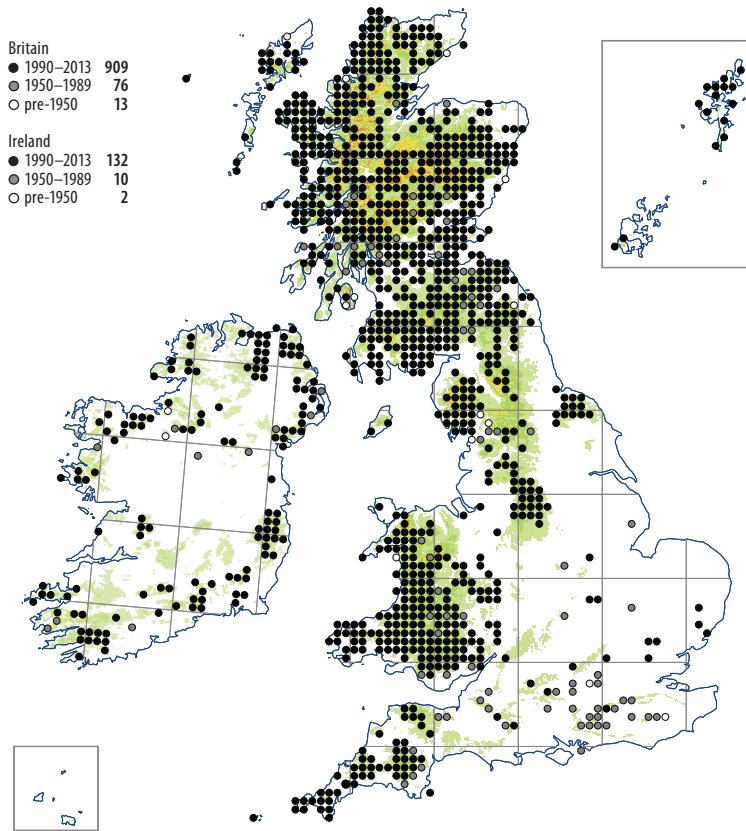


Racomitrium heterostichum



A common moss of dry acid to mildly basic rock surfaces, often abundant at moderate altitudes in exposed sites on cliffs, boulders and stone walls, mostly on flat or inclined surfaces. It occurs in boulder fields, on block litter below cliffs, on rocky stream banks and lake margins, as well as on isolated boulders on moorland and in rough pastures and in old quarries; it may colonise soil patches on exposed ground at high altitudes. It is tolerant of light shade and is found in open rocky woodland. Obtuse-leaved forms tend to occur in more sheltered habitats, as on the banks of wooded streams. Natural habitats in the lowlands are few, but include Sarsen stones; otherwise it is largely confined to roof tiles and old walls, and sporadically on industrial by-products such as slag and clinker. Common associates are *Marsupella emarginata*, *Andreaea rothii*, *A. rupestris*, *Grimmia trichophylla*, *Hedwigia stellata*, *Ptychomitrium polyphyllum*, *Racomitrium fasciculare*,

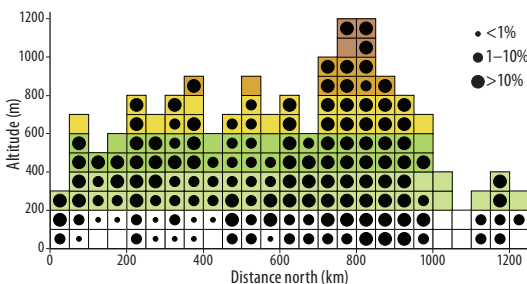
R. lanuginosum and in drier regions *Dicranoweisia cirrata*. Altitudinal range: 0–1200 m.

It became rare near industrial regions when levels of SO₂ pollution were high, but persisted as stunted plants on mortared walls. There may have been some losses in southern England, where suitable habitats are few, but there is little evidence of general decline.

Dioicous; capsules are occasional to frequent, mature in spring.

As mapped here, *R. heterostichum* includes plants with obtuse leaves that usually lack a hair-point. Frisvoll (1988) recognised such plants as *R. obtusum* (Brid.) Brid., but Blockeel (1991) found that apparently intermediate forms were difficult to separate consistently. The status of *R. obtusum* merits further investigation. Robust plants are occasionally mistaken for *R. aquaticum*, and it can be difficult to distinguish from *R. affine*. Consequently there are probably some inaccuracies on the map, although older records have been confirmed from herbarium specimens.

Suboceanic Boreo-temperate. W Europe including Iceland, north to northern Fennoscandia, with scattered localities in E Europe and mountains on the northern fringe of the Mediterranean region. Macaronesia. Near East. Western N America, including the Aleutian Islands. Records from elsewhere probably refer to the species in an aggregate sense.



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