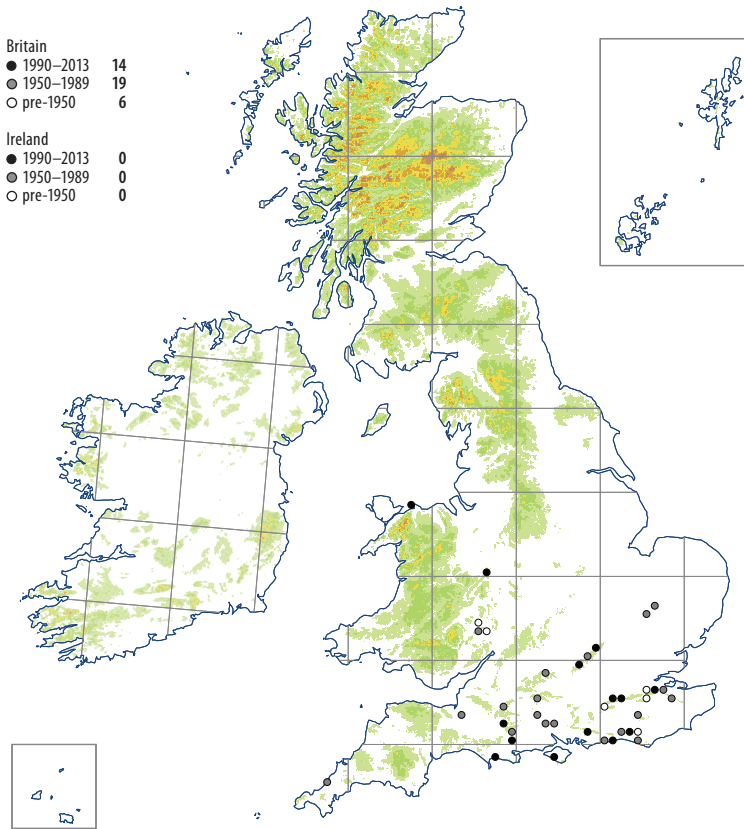


Pottiopsis caespitosa



This ephemeral moss is primarily a plant of chalk grassland on downland and ancient earthworks, where it grows on bare soil (especially on steep banks), on trampled ground along trackways and on the edge of sea cliffs; it is also found in disused chalk pits. At the western edge of its British range it is recorded from calcareous sand on the coast of N Cornwall, on bare Jurassic limestone banks in Herefordshire, on old quarry banks on Wenlock limestone in Shropshire, and on thin soil among Carboniferous Limestone rocks on a steep south-facing slope on Great Orme's Head in N Wales. Its associates may include various other species of bare calcareous ground, such as *Didymodon ferrugineus*, *Ditrichum gracile* and *Microbryum curvicolium*. Altitudinal range: 40–220 m.

This distinctive species is apparently sporadic in its appearance. The low proportion of recent records suggests

a decline but it is unclear to what extent this is genuinely indicative of long-term loss. Its ecology would merit further study. At some of its sites it has only been recorded once or at long intervals. It was, for example, plentiful when discovered in Herefordshire on Common Hill, Fownhope, by the Rev. A. Ley in 1875, and again present in 1877; Ley was unable to refind it in subsequent years, but it was rediscovered there in 1932 and 1968. It is presumably able to persist as dormant spores.

Autoicous; capsules are frequent, maturing from December to April.

European Temperate. Formerly considered endemic to Europe, but Ros & Werner (2007) concluded that it is not distinct from *Weissia triumphans* (De Not.) M.O. Hill and related taxa. Thus defined, it is widespread in the Mediterranean region and C Europe, north to Belgium, the Czech Republic and Romania. Macaronesia, N Africa. Near East, Iran.

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