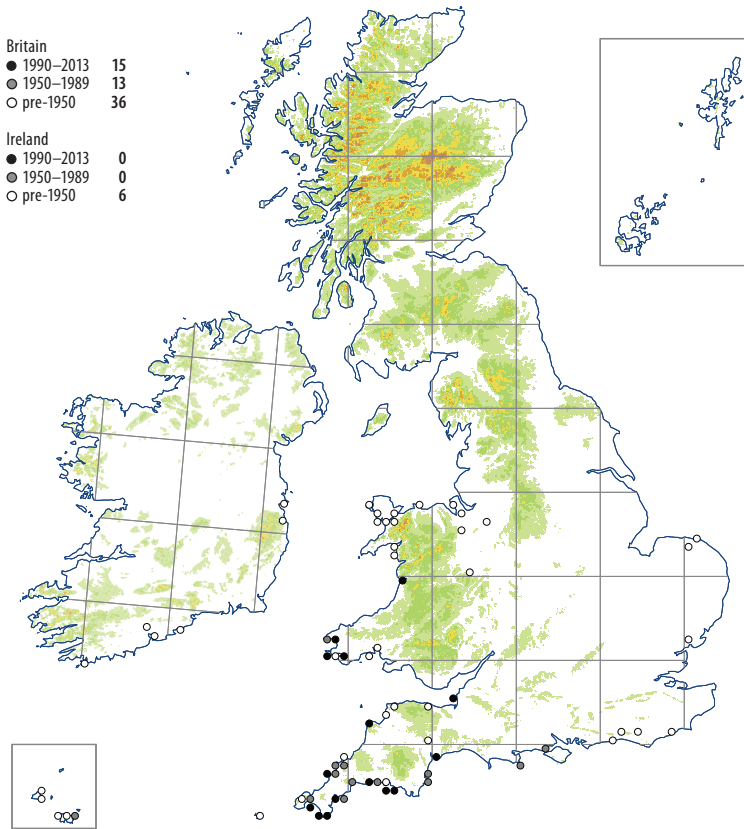


Tortula wilsonii



A moss of thin, well-drained soil in open habitats, often on sun-exposed slopes. All its recent sites and many of the older ones are on or near the coast, from soil over slate and sandstone on sea cliffs, at the edge of a pasture, and on an earthy cliff-top bank. Formerly it occurred in a much wider range of habitats, including Cornish hedges, pathsides, earthy wall tops, sandy banks and hedgebanks. Associates at a recent Cornish site included *Cephaloziella divaricata*, *Lophozia bicrenata*, *Archidium alternifolium*, *Bryum kunzei*, *Tortula viridifolia*, *T. canescens*, *Trichostomum brachydontium* and *Weissia controversa*. It is characteristic of moderately acid to mildly basic soils. Altitudinal range: 0–200 m.

It has suffered a severe decline, both over the long term since it was discovered by W. Wilson in Cheshire in 1828, and with further losses in recent decades: it is no longer

known in any inland sites and has apparently disappeared even from coastal localities within its core range. It has not been recorded in Ireland since 1934. The causes are unclear, but the cessation of grazing at many coastal sites, with consequent growth of coarse vegetation and scrub, must be a contributory factor.

Paroicous; capsules are abundant, maturing from January to May.

Mediterranean-Atlantic. Mediterranean Europe eastwards to Greece, including the eastern Aegean, extending north in the Atlantic zone to Brittany and the Faeroes (not in mainland Scandinavia); Romania. N Africa. A report from N America (British Columbia) has proved to be incorrect.

T.L. Blockeel

