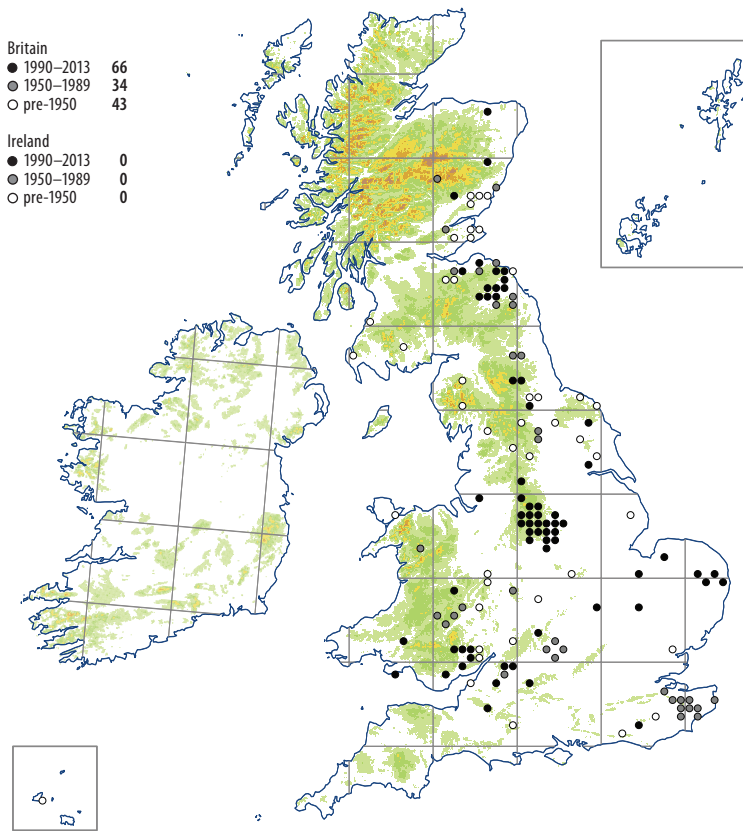


## *Pylaisia polyantha*



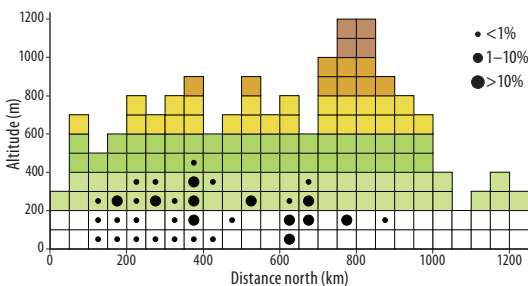
An epiphyte on the trunks and branches of a range of broadleaved trees and shrubs by roadsides, in hedgerows and orchards, in open woodland and scrub, on river banks and near quarries. It sometimes persists on stumps and logs. It is found on a very wide range of trees, including apple, ash, elder, elm, sallow, sycamore and willow, occurring on twigs as well as on the trunks and larger branches. In the Peak District and perhaps elsewhere it occurs in great abundance on trees near limestone quarries, and it may benefit from the deposition of dust and particles. Its British range, especially its absence from Ireland and western Scotland, reflects the continental tendencies shown by its distribution in Europe. Although it has recently been found at several sites in S Wales on a wide range of hedgerow shrubs, most of these are in the least oceanic areas there. Altitudinal range: 0–380 m.

Following a decline caused by the wholesale destruction of hedgerows, loss of elms due to Dutch Elm Disease, and bark acidification due to air pollution, *Pylaisia polyantha* has increased in recent decades. In Derbyshire, where it persisted near limestone quarries, it has spread to numerous new sites, and many new populations have been found in other parts of Britain.

Autoicous; capsules are usually abundant, maturing from autumn to winter; two or even three generations of sporophyte are often present on the same plant.

Although readily recognised by its abundant capsules, it may be overlooked because of its similarity to *Hypnum cupressiforme*, especially var. *resupinatum*. Confusion with the latter has led to several erroneous records, especially in Ireland, where its presence is unconfirmed. The large number of recent records from Derbyshire and S Wales, where the local recorders are familiar with it, suggests that it may be under-recorded in other counties.

Circumpolar Temperate. Widespread in Europe, not in Iceland, but not uncommon through most of Scandinavia and reaching Arctic Russia, rare in the south and the Mediterranean region, extending to Sicily. Macaronesia (Canary Islands), Algeria (doubtfully). Turkey, Caucasus, Iran. Temperate and boreal Asia. N America south to Mexico.



*F.J. Rumsey, rev. T.L. Blockeel*