

# Richard de Gylpyn Benson's '*British Mosses*'

Mark Lawley's recent article on de Gylpyn Benson (Lawley, 2009) reminded **Martin Godfrey** of the bound set of bryophyte exsiccatae which he found in 2006 in the herbarium of the Potteries Museum in Stoke. The purpose of this article is to give details of this book and its specimens and illuminate a poorly known corner of the history of bryology.

**R**ichard de Gylpyn Benson (1856–1904) was a 19th century solicitor and amateur botanist from Pulverbach, Shropshire. Unfortunately, he was forced to retire from legal practice because of ill health and turned his attentions to the study of plants in order to occupy himself. His first love was mosses, and he wrote one of the first accounts of these plants in Shropshire and accumulated a large bryophyte herbarium now housed in the Natural History Museum, London. His higher plant herbarium is an altogether smaller affair and is in Shrewsbury Museum.

Unlike the average gentleman naturalist, however, Benson may have supplemented his income by preparing botanical material for sale and I have recently discovered evidence for this in a

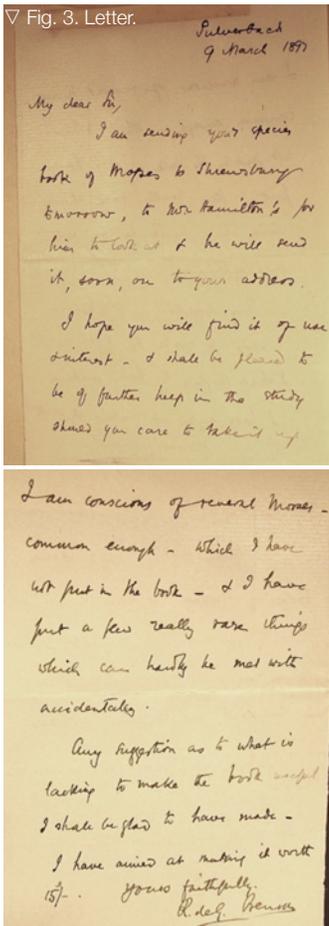
neatly prepared collection of mosses in the Potteries Museum herbarium in Stoke on Trent. This collection came to the museum as part of the very extensive herbarium of E.S. Eedes, for many years the Staffordshire vascular plant county recorder and author of the only complete Flora of the county.

This collection consists of 32 numbered pages of specimens together with a title and contents page and three blank pages at the end. Bound in blue cloth, it is titled in gold *British Mosses* and ascribed to R. de G. Benson, Pulverbach, Salop, Feb. 1897 (Fig. 1). Each page has a number of pressed moss specimens with identifications and, in some cases, a location (Fig. 2). The specimens are arranged according to the order in the then standard beginner's bryophyte text – the first edition of Dixon's *Students Handbook of British Mosses*. The collection is accompanied by a letter to the intended recipient of the book, unfortunately not named (Fig. 3).

△ Fig. 1. (top). Title page.

△ Fig. 2. (bottom). Example of a specimen page (p. 10).

▽ Fig. 3. Letter.



**Transcript of the letter**

Pulverbach 9 March 1897

My dear Sir,

I am sending your species book of Mosses to Shrewsbury tomorrow, to Mr Hamilton's, for him to look at and he will send it, soon, on to your address. I hope you will find it of use and interest. I should be pleased to be of further help in the study should you care to take it up.

I am conscious of several mosses common enough – which I have put in the book – and I have put in a few really rare things which can hardly be met with accidentally.

Any suggestion as to what is lacking to make the book useful I shall be glad to have made – I have aimed at making it worth 15/-.

Yours faithfully

R de G Benson

The included species are listed below in the order they are arranged in the book together with the current name where this is different. They are all in very good condition and none could be described as really rare, although at least some would not be found in Shropshire. *Bryum filiforme* var. *juliforme*, allegedly found only at Carbis Bay, Cornwall, has long been subsumed under *Anomobryum julaceum*. Given the rarity of the book, I have not felt able to remove material for microscopic examination so some of the modern identifications remain tentative.

Species	Current name (if different)	Location	Notes
<i>Sphagnum cymbifolium</i>	<i>Sphagnum palustre</i>	Long Mynd	
<i>Sphagnum papillosum</i>		Bomere	
<i>Sphagnum subsecundum</i> var. <i>contortum</i>	<i>Sphagnum inundatum</i>	Long Mynd	
<i>Sphagnum acutifolium</i>	<i>Sphagnum capillifolium</i>	Stapeley Hill	With capsules
<i>Sphagnum intermedium</i>	<i>Sphagnum recurvum</i> agg.	Long Mynd	
<i>Sphagnum cuspidatum</i>		Long Mynd	
<i>Andrea rothii</i>		Llanberis	With capsules
<i>Tetraphis pellucida</i>		Broomhill	With capsules
<i>Polytrichum alpinum</i>		Snowdon	With capsules
<i>Polytrichum aloides</i>	<i>Pogonatum aloides</i>		With capsules
<i>Catharina undulata</i>	<i>Atrichum undulatum</i>		With capsules
<i>Polytrichum formosum</i>		Pulverbach	With capsules
<i>Polytrichum piliferum</i>		Pulverbach	With capsules
<i>Polytrichum commune</i>		Long Mynd	With capsules
<i>Pleridium subulatum</i>			With capsules
<i>Ceratodon purpureus</i>			With capsules

<i>Dichodontium pellucidum</i>		Skin Mill Salop Oct 1892	With capsules
<i>Dicranella heteromalla</i>		Pulverbach	With capsules
<i>Dicranella cerviculata</i>		Whixall Moss	With capsules
<i>Dicranella squarrosa</i>	<i>Dichodontium palustre</i>	Long Mynd	
<i>Campylopus flexuosus</i>		Yessons Coppice, Salop	With capsules
<i>Campylopus pyriformis</i>		Bomere	With capsules
<i>Campylopus atrovirens</i>		Tregos Moor, Cornwall	
<i>Dicranoweisia cirrata</i>		Pontesford Hill	With capsules
<i>Dicranodontium longirostre</i>	<i>Dicranodontium denudatum</i>	Trentham Part, Staffs	With capsules
<i>Dicranum scoparium</i>			With capsules
<i>Dicranum bonjeanii</i>		Long Mynd	
<i>Fissidens adianthoides</i>		Pulverbach	
<i>Fissidens bryoides</i>			With capsules
<i>Grimmia trychophylla</i>		Longden Salop May 1893	With capsules
<i>Grimmia apocarpa</i>	<i>Schistidium apocarpa</i>	Wrekin	With capsules
			Probably <i>S. crassipilum</i>
<i>Grimmia pulvinata</i>			With capsules
<i>Racomitrium lanuginosum</i>	<i>Racomitrium lanuginosum</i>		
<i>Racomitrium heterostichum</i>	<i>Racomitrium heterostichum</i>		With capsules
<i>Racomitrium fasciculare</i>	<i>Racomitrium fasciculare</i>	Wrekin	With capsules
<i>Ptychomitrium polyphyllum</i>		Long Mynd	With capsules
<i>Pottia truncata</i>	<i>Tortula truncata</i>		With capsules
<i>Pottia intermedia</i>	<i>Tortula modica</i>		With capsules
<i>Tortula muralis</i>			With capsules
<i>Tortula subulata</i>			With capsules
<i>Tortula intermedia</i>	<i>Syntrichia intermedia</i>	Pontesford Hill	With capsules
<i>Barbula rubella</i>	<i>Bryoerythrophyllum recurvirostrum</i>	Pulverbach	With capsules
<i>Barbula tophacea</i>	<i>Didymodon tophaceus</i>	Snailbeach	With capsules
<i>Barbula convoluta</i>		Pulverbach	With capsules
<i>Barbula unguiculata</i>		Pulverbach	With capsules
<i>Weisia viridula</i>	<i>Weissia controversa</i>		With capsules
<i>Weisia verticillata</i>	<i>Eucladium verticillatum</i>	Hope Gutter, Ludlow	With capsules
<i>Trichostomum tortuosum</i>	<i>Tortella tortuosa</i>	Lake Vrynwy	
<i>Anoetangium compactum</i>	<i>Anoetangium aestivum</i>	Gt Orme	
<i>Zygodon viridissimus</i>		Killarney – C.H. Binstead	
<i>Orthotrichum affine</i>			With capsules
<i>Orthotrichum anomalum</i>		Gt Orme	With capsules
<i>Orthotrichum diaphanum</i>			With capsules
<i>Tetraplodon angustatus</i>		Ben Eay Ross, Aug 1896	With capsules
<i>Funaria hygrometrica</i>			With capsules
<i>Aulacomnium androgynum</i>		Bomere	
<i>Aulacomnium palustre</i>		Shomere Moss	
<i>Bartramia pomiformis</i>			With capsules
<i>Philonotis fontana</i>			With capsules
<i>Webera nutans</i>	<i>Poblia nutans</i>	Whixall Moss	With capsules
<i>Bryum filiforme</i> var. <i>juliforme</i>	<i>Anomobryum julaceum</i>	Carbis Bay, Cornwall	Annotated – <i>The only British locality</i> <i>Collected by Mrs(?) R Fox Jan 7 1897</i>
<i>Bryum bimum</i>		Lincroft Pool May 1892	With capsules
<i>Bryum caespiticum</i>		Pulverbach	With capsules also with male plants
<i>Bryum alpinum</i>			
<i>Bryum argenteum</i>		Pulverbach	With capsules
<i>Bryum roseum</i>	<i>Rhodobryum roseum</i>	Pontesford Hill Jan 1897	

Bygone Bryologists – Gylpyn-Benson's mosses

<i>Mnium hornum</i>		Oaks Wood	With capsules
<i>Mnium undulatum</i>	<i>Plagiomnium undulatum</i>	Oaks Wood Aug 1894	With capsules
<i>Mnium rostratum</i>	<i>Plagiomnium rostratum</i>	Lydd Hole May	With capsules
<i>Fontinalis squamosa</i>		Snowdon Jan 1893	
<i>Neckera crispa</i>		Skin Mill	
<i>Neckera complanata</i>			
<i>Fontanelis antipyretica</i>			
<i>Porotrichum alopecurum</i>	<i>Thamnobryum alopecurum</i>		
<i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i>			
<i>Isothecium myurium</i>	<i>Isothecium alopecuroides</i>	Oaks Wood	With capsules
<i>Climacium dendroides</i>		Broomhill	
<i>Pleuropus sericens</i>	<i>Homalothecium sericeum</i>		With capsules
<i>Camptothecium lutescens</i>	<i>Homalothecium lutescens</i>	Pulverbach	
<i>Brachythecium purum</i>	<i>Pseudoscleropodium purum</i>	Pulverbach Feb 1897	With capsules
<i>Brachythecium rutabulum</i>		Pulverbach	With capsules
<i>Brachythecium velutinum</i>		Pulverbach	With capsules
<i>Eurhynchium piliferum</i>	<i>Cirriphyllum piliferum</i>	Pulverbach	
<i>Eurhynchium praelongum</i>			With capsules
<i>Eurhynchium myosuroides</i>	<i>Isothecium myosuroides</i>	Oaks Wood	With capsules
<i>E. rusciforme</i>	<i>Platyhypnidium riparioides</i>	Lydd Hole	With capsules
<i>Eur. confertum</i>	<i>Rhynchostegium confertum</i>		With capsules
<i>Eurhynchium striatum</i>		Pulverbach	With capsules
<i>Plagiothecium depressum</i>	<i>Taxiphyllum wissgrillii</i>	Lydd Hole, Salop	Named by W.P. Hamilton
<i>Plagiothecium denticulatum</i>			
<i>Plagiothecium undulatum</i>		Oaks Wood	With capsules
<i>Amblystegium serpens</i>			With capsules
<i>Amblystegium filicinum</i>	<i>Cratoneuron filicinum</i>	Long Mynd	With capsules
<i>Hypnum riparium</i>	<i>Leptodictyum riparium</i>	Lincroft Pool	With capsules
<i>Hypnum stellatum</i>	<i>Campylium stellatum</i>	Long Mynd	
<i>Hypnum exannulatum</i>	<i>Warnstorfia exannulata</i>	Long Mynd	
<i>Hypnum intermedium</i>	<i>Scorpidium cossonii</i>	Long Mynd	Most likely <i>S. revolvens</i> or possibly <i>Hamatocaulis vernicosus</i>
<i>Hypnum commutatum</i>	<i>Palustriella commutata</i>	Lydd Hole	
<i>Hypnum cupresseforme</i> (forms)			With capsules. Six specimens on p. 28.
var. <i>elatum</i> / var. <i>filiforme</i>			
<i>Hypnum imponens</i>		Kynance cove, Cornwall Sep 1896. Dr Gowers	Named by H.N. Dixon
<i>Hypnum callichroum</i>		Westmorland C.H. Binstead	With capsules
<i>Hypnum molluscum</i>	<i>Ctenidium molluscum</i>	Barmouth	With capsules
<i>Hypnum scorpioides</i>	<i>Scorpidium scorpioides</i>	Long Mynd	
<i>Hypnum stramineum</i>	<i>Straminergon stramineum</i>	Long Mynd	
<i>Hypnum cuspidatum</i>	<i>Calliergonella cuspidata</i>	Lincroft Pool, Salop	With capsules
<i>Hypnum schreberi</i>	<i>Pleurozium schreberi</i>		
<i>Hylocomium splendens</i>		Broomhill, Salop May 1896	With capsules
<i>Hylocomium loreum</i>	<i>Rhytidiadelphus loreus</i>		With capsules
<i>Hylocomium squarrosum</i>	<i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>	Broomhill	With capsules
<i>Hylocomium triquetrum</i>	<i>Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus</i>	Broomhill	With capsules

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**Reference**

Lawley, M. (2009). Richard de Gylpyn Benson (1856–1904). *Field Bryology* 99, 30–33.