

along the path, trees near the river offered the epiphytes *Cryphaea heteromalla* and *Platygyrium repens*, with *Taxiphyllum wissgrillii* on a boulder.

In November, our last outing of the year began in the churchyard at **Grosmont** (SO4024) in north-east Monmouthshire, where Sam Bosanquet soon found *Orthotrichum cupulatum*, a rare moss on the eastern side of the county. *Dialytrichia mucronata* growing on the sloping bottom of the church also drew comment, for it usually favours the flood-zones of watercourses. Perhaps the wall's gradient retained sufficient water to suit this moss.

A heavy downpour hurried us back to the cars, but fortunately abated as we arrived at the southern side of **Graig Syfyrrdin** (SO4021 and SO4022), which formed the main interest of the day. No startling discoveries came to light, but the wooded slopes, outcrops of calcareous or

basic sandstone and forestry tracks yielded well over 100 species, with plenty for elementary bryologists to study. Some stones and boulders in the wood supported *Heterocladium heteropterum* var. *flaccidum* and *Seligeria recurvata*, and the face of a small quarry gave us *Aloina aloides*, *Eurhynchium crassinervium*, *Rhynchostegium murale* and *Tortula subulata*. We took advantage of opportunities to compare and contrast several species in the same genera, with *Plagiothecium curvifolium* (cells too narrow to easily distinguish using a lens) alongside *P. nemorale* (cells in rows), *P. succulentum* and *P. undulatum*. The sides of a forestry track carried *Poblia annotina*, *P. lutescens*, *P. melanodon* and *P. wahlenbergii*. *Fissidens pusillus* went in the notebook along with *F. bryoides*, *F. taxifolius* and *F. viridulus*, and Sam and Graham Motley found *Racomitrium ericoides*, *R. heterostichum* and *R. lanuginosum* by a track at the top of the wood. But enough – it was time to go into the tilling-fields again, and work.

SBAL training day in Kent, 19 October 2003

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On a cool windy day during the great drought of 2003, a party of eight BBS members met to apply the methods of the Survey of Bryophytes of Arable Land (SBAL) to fields in Kent. Roy Hurr had arranged for us to visit a randomly selected tetrad in the Isle of Grain (v.-c. 16). He warned us against the desert-like conditions, but we proceeded anyway, accompanied by two anthropologists from Lancaster University who have been studying our culture and behaviour.

The two randomly selected fields were near St Mary Hoo, about 9 km south of Canvey Island. The first field was wheat stubble and had a notably acid soil (pH 5.6). The few bryophytes were poorly grown and very droughted, with the only appreciable cover on the north side of a stand of trees at the edge of the field. We found



SBAL in Kent: not many mosses on the ground during the drought.

Barbula unguiculata, *Bryum argenteum*, *B. bicolor* (with tubers as well as bulbils), *B. klinggraeffii*, *B. rubens*, *B. subapiculatum*, *B. violaceum*, *Dicranella schreberiana*, *D. staphylina*, *Ditrichum cylindricum* and *Tortula acaulon*. The next field, sloping down towards the marshes of the Thames estuary, was also in wheat stubble with an acid soil (pH 5.1). At first we thought it might have no mosses at all, but after an intense search, Fred Rumsey found scraps of *Barbula unguiculata*, *Dicranella staphylina* and *Tortula acaulon* at the very edge. We went to look at a dried-up pond on the marshes,

whose mud had no bryophytes at all. So ended the least productive day (in terms of mosses found) that any of us had ever experienced; but the SBAL methodology was successfully demonstrated and we enjoyed ourselves after a fashion. What a contrast between these random fields and those examined for the SBAL meeting in November 2002 (*Bulletin* 80: 27-29)! It now seems likely that in the south-east of England, the winter of 2003/04 will be a poor one for arable bryophytes, whereas last winter was notably good.

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Bedelands Farm Nature Reserve (v.-c. 14), 2 November 2002

This was inspected at the request of the Friends of Bedelands Farm Nature Reserve, who do much of the management for the owner (Mid-Sussex District Council). The Reserve is at the north end of the town of Burgess Hill.

Roy Ticehurst, the very enthusiastic leader of the Friends' team of workers, accompanied us. The site was unknown bryologically but looked promising with meadows and ancient woodland. However, it turned out to be on Weald Clay at its least interesting, and our survey was not helped by rain, which led to the abandonment of the visit in the early afternoon. The meadows were almost devoid of bryophytes and we were able to find only 30 common species in the woodlands. Malcolm McFarlane subsequently made a few return visits and was able to add some species to the list. However, Roy Ticehurst was very pleased with our visit, because the Friends are publishing a list of all the plants and animals that have been recorded in the Reserve.

Woolbeding Common (v.-c. 15), 24 November 2002

This is a National Trust property, and the leader of the excursion was Katherine Hearn. The site comprises heathland with mostly secondary woodland and a few boggy areas. The woodland had *Dicranum tauricum* and the two *Leucobryum* species as well as *Brachythecium velutinum*, which seems to be less common than it used to be in southern England. The boggy areas had *Aulacomnium palustre*, *Calliergon stramineum* and nine species of *Sphagnum*. The weather deteriorated during the day and we finished in steady rain.

Ringwood Forest (east) (v.-c. 11), 19 January 2003

This was one of the best-attended excursions, led by Rod Stern. The day was mostly fine but there had previously been heavy rain and some parts of the site were flooded. A wide range of acid-loving species was seen. The best of these were *Lophozia ventricosa* (found by Bryan Edwards), which is rare in Hampshire, and