

# Reports of BBS meetings

Throughout the following accounts of BBS meetings, new vice-county records are indicated by an asterisk (\*). Nomenclature follows Blockeel & Long (1998), *A check-list and census catalogue of British and Irish bryophytes*, with subsequent amendments.

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## Summer field meeting 2002, Carmarthenshire: corrections

There are two corrections to the account of this meeting in *Bulletin* 80, pp 7-16. The record of '*Grimmia lisa*' from Llangynog on 30 June is incorrect. A specimen of '*Philonotis arnellii*', recorded from the Afon Clydach valley on 4 July, has been redetermined as *P. caespitosa* (the first record from v.-c. 44).

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## Spring field meeting 2003, Norfolk/Suffolk borders

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### Introduction

Some difficulty had been encountered in deciding upon a centre for this meeting because of cost but the eventual choice, the Half Moon at Rushall, proved to be a friendly and comfortable pub and the food was more than adequate. With its low rainfall, East Anglia may not be the most exciting area for bryophytes but the programme was planned to take members to a variety of interesting habitats. In the event, six new vice-county records were found (exceeding expectations) and there were numerous new site records. The localities visited during the course of the week were variously in v.-c. 25 (East Suffolk), v.-c. 26 (West Suffolk), v.-c. 27 (East Norfolk) and v.-c. 28 (West Norfolk).

During part of the meeting our antics were closely observed by socio-biologists Rebecca Ellis and Claire Waterton. It was difficult to know quite what they made of us, but it cannot

have been too bad because they have both joined the BBS.

Those who attended at least part of the meeting were Ken Adams, John Blackburn, Tom Blockeel, Sam Bosanquet, Tessa Carrick, Jeff Duckett, Jenny Duckworth, Bryan Edwards, Bob Ellis, Rebecca Ellis, Amy Eycott, Richard Fisk, Jonathan Graham, Mary Ghullam, Mark Hill, Roy Hurr, Frank Lammiman, Mark Lawley, David Long, Malcolm McFarlane, John Mott, Pat Negal, Angela Newton, Seán O'Leary, Mark Pool, Ron Porley, Silvia Pressel, Chris Preston, Joy Ricketts, Christine Rieser, Fred Rumsey, David Rycroft, Gill Stevens, Robin Stevenson, Johnny Turner, Mike Walton, Claire Waterton, Martin Wigginton and Marcus Yeo.

### Thursday 10 April

Only small pockets now remain of the extensive Little Ouse valley fens that once provided peat

for fuel, sedge for thatching, and trees for timber-framed buildings. They contain two Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens Special Area of Conservation. Helen Smith, a member of the group that is working to conserve these fens, joined us for most of the day.

Early arrivals at **Blo' Norton Fen** (v.-c. 28) made a good start with a group of elders by the edge of the road where *Cryphaea heteromalla*, *Orthotrichum hyellii* and *O. pulchellum* were recorded. We had hardly moved more than a few yards into the fen itself before black clouds brought a burst of very heavy and cold rain. However, this did ensure that the bryophytes were looking very fresh, particularly a large tuft of *Syntrichia papillosa* that was much admired. Nearby, Mark Hill discovered *Sanionia uncinata*\*, *Orthotrichum tenellum* (second Norfolk record) and more *O. pulchellum* on an adjacent branch. *Radula complanata*, *Eurhynchium speciosum* and *Syntrichia virescens* were also noted.

Shortly after moving across the river into **Thelnetham Fen** (v.-c. 26) a quantity of frog spawn was noted on the branch of a large sallow some two metres above ground. After some humorous exchanges about tree frogs in Suffolk, Bob Ellis's suggestion that this was the result of a spawning frog being taken by a heron was accepted. More *Orthotrichum pulchellum* and *O. tenellum* were seen here, together with a fine patch of *Radula complanata*. In the fen proper, *Chiloscyphus pallescens*, *Bryum pseudotriquetrum*, *Campylium stellatum* var. *stellatum* and var. *protensum*, *Ctenidium molluscum* and *Plagiomnium elatum* were all noted. After a chilly lunch peppered with hail we took a quick look at nearby **Hinderclay Fen** (v.-c. 26). This proved to be less interesting, although *Dicranella cerviculata* was seen.

We retraced our steps and moved on to **Market Weston Fen** (v.-c. 26), which is probably the best of the fens in this group. *Brachythecium mildeanum* was found on the path leading to the

entrance to the fen, and a fine tuft of *Amblystegium humile* c.fr. was found on the edge of a dyke. *Drepanocladus cossonii* was plentiful in a mown area, together with *Aneura pinguis* c.fr., *Moerckia hibernica*, *Riccardia chamedryfolia*, *Calliergon giganteum*, *Campyliadelphus elodes* and *Palustriella commutata* var. *falcata*. Numerous epiphytes were found in the south-east corner of the fen, including *Metzgeria fruticulosa*, *Cryphaea heteromalla*, *Ulota phyllantha* and *Zygodon conoideus*. In the farthest part of the fen *Plagiomnium elatum* was abundant in large pure stands up to 50 cm in diameter. Mark Hill and Chris Preston 'SBALed' the stubble field opposite to where we had parked our cars and recorded 13 species, the average for fields in East Anglia.

### Friday 11 April

The day dawned with an obvious change in the weather and from now on the meeting was blessed with fine, sunny and at times very warm days. En route to the coast some members stopped in Halesworth to photograph the house, and its commemorative plaques, in which William Hooker lived for a while and where Joseph Hooker was born. Early arrivals at the National Trust car park at **Dunwich Heath** (v.-c. 25) were able to admire the view across the expanse of reed beds that form the RSPB Minsmere reserve, with the dramatic dome of Sizewell B nuclear power station in the background. A Marsh Harrier performing its display flight could be seen in the distance.

On the way across the heath a brief stop was made to admire *Lophozia bicrenata* in an area shortly to be roped off to protect a colony of Ant Lions. The large array of rotting logs in **Scottshall Coverts** (v.-c. 25) soon began to reveal items of interest: *Cephalozia lunulifolia*, *Lepidozia reptans*, *Dicranum fuscescens*, *D. majus*, *D. montanum* c.fr., *D. scoparium*, *D. tauricum* c.fr., *Hypnum andoi* and *Tetraphis pellucida* c.fr. *Nowellia curvifolia* and *Odontoschisma denudatum*, for which this area is particularly noted, were also recorded. Several fine colonies of fruiting

*Herzogiella seligeri* were seen, and Mark Hill discovered *Sphagnum angustifolium*\*. On the way back to the car park along Docwra's dyke *Frullania dilatata* and *Aulacomnium palustre* were added to the list, and on an adjacent bank *Lophocolea semiteres* attracted much attention.

*Hypnum andoi* and *Rhizomnium pseudopunctatum* were refound at **Fen Covert** (v.-c. 25) and more *Cephalozia lunulifolia* was discovered. Some of the party had to leave early in order to return to Dickleburgh for a Conservation and Recording Committee meeting. Once they were out of the way Mark Lawley turned up *Cryptoballus mirabilis*\*, which must be the star find of the week, and Mary Ghullam found *Hookeria lucens*\* c.fr. *Cephalozia connivens*, *Leucobryum glaucum* and *Tetraphis pellucida* were also recorded, and there was some discussion about a large form of *Aneura pinguis* with a crispate thallus, reminiscent of the continental *A. maxima*.



*Cryptoballus mirabilis* at Fen Covert. Photo: Sam Bosanquet.

## Saturday 12 April

Although unknown bryologically, Gittin and Stubbings Woods are renowned for being two of the main sites in Britain for Suffolk Lungwort (*Pulmonaria obscura*). In **Gittin Wood** (v.-c. 25) some nice plants in flower were admired and photographed. Most of the species typical of Suffolk boulder clay woods were seen, including *Metzgeria furcata*, *Porella platyphylla*, *Radula*

*complanata*, *Anomodon viticulosus*, *Cirriphyllum piliferum*, *Eurhynchium pumilum*, *E. striatum* and *Fissidens exilis*. Fruiting *Neckera complanata* was found, the first recent record in the county of this species with capsules. Sam Bosanquet found *Orthotrichum stramineum* on the trunk of an ash tree. *Frullania dilatata*, *Cryphaea heteromalla*, *Homalia trichomanoides*, *Orthotrichum hyellii*, *O. tenellum* and *Ulota phyllantha* were also recorded, contributing to a very respectable list of 66 species. *Brachythecium mildeanum* was seen in some quantity on the track leading to **Stubbings Wood** (v.-c. 25), where a shorter list was compiled due to the call of lunch, which was taken in a grassy clearing surrounded by primroses. *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* and *R. triquetrus* were the only species seen that were not recorded in Gittin Wood.

After lunch the party broke up. Some people went to **Roydon Fen** (v.-c. 27) and found another Norfolk record of *Orthotrichum tenellum*. Others went to **Wortham Ling** (v.-c. 25) to look for *Leptodontium gemmascens*; a few plants were found but it has decreased in recent years. The latter party then moved on to **Redgrave/Lopham Fen** (v.-c. 27) in the hope of seeing the Great Raft Spider but, alas, were some months too early. A quick walk around Middle Fen produced *Bryum pallens* and *Calliergon cordifolium* in a rather short list, so a decision was made to return to the visitor centre to take tea where most of the Roydon Fen party were already enjoying themselves.

In the evening a Special General Meeting was held to officially adopt the Society's revised rules. This was followed by a Council Meeting.

## Sunday 13 April

Sunday began with another fine morning on what turned out to be a memorable day at the **Ted Ellis Reserve, Wheatfen Broad** (v.-c. 27). After an hospitable reception the party was organised into groups to take boat trips to view *Timmia megapolitana*, which was found here, new

to Britain, just over two years ago. Everyone was entranced by the tranquillity and beauty of the reserve, and a gentle cruise through the reed beds in perfect weather to see the *Timmia* was idyllic bryologising. Two further patches of *Timmia* were found in Home Marsh. The rest of the reserve was not to be outdone. The sallow carr was awash with *Orthotrichum pulchellum*, and among other goodies were *Cryphaea heteromalla*, *Plagiomnium cuspidatum* and *Radula complanata* with abundant dehisced capsules. New records for the reserve were *Pylaisia polyantha*, which was found in at least three places, *Amblystegium humile* and *Ulota phyllantha*; *Orthotrichum byellii* was refound. After lunch a small group left to visit **Scarning Fen** (v.-c. 28) to look for *Leiocolea rutheana* while the rest of us continued to enjoy our visit to the reserve, even he who 'missed the boat' while stepping onto it and got rather wet and muddy. Jeff Duckett stopped at **Grime's Graves** (v.-c. 28) on his way home and found *Fissidens gracilifolius* growing under artificial light along the tunnels.

### Monday 14 April

After the previous day we came down to earth quite literally with a SBAL session on arable fields close to the **Half Moon** (v.-c. 27). Conditions were very dry but everyone quickly got involved, and at the first site, a 2-3 year set-a-side field, Seán O'Leary found *Weissia longifolia* var. *longifolia*\* among more usual things, including *Fissidens taxifolius* with tubers. The second field on the other side of the road was even drier but an area farthest from the road revealed *Riccia sorocarpa* and *Tortula truncata*.

We then moved on to **Flordon Common** (v.-c. 27), an area of wet grazing marsh with a long reputation of botanical interest. A complete survey of the site is being carried out to replicate that done in 1910, so we recorded all we could find. Some fine *Bryum pallens* was found at the edge of a bonfire site, and things got more interesting as we moved into the wetter areas with *Moerckia hibernica*, *Bryum laevifilum* (on top of

a *Schoenus nigricans* tussock), *B. pseudotriquetrum*, *Calliergon cordifolium*, *Campyllum stellatum*, *Drepanocladus cossonii* and *Scorpidium scorpioides*. After lunch, one group went off to look for *Leiocolea rutheana* at **Scarning Fen** (v.-c. 28), while the remainder continued with the survey at Flordon. A small sand pit nearby was visited but had little to offer except *Dicranella varia* and *Homalothecium lutescens*. *Syntrichia virescens* was recorded from an elder by the stream.

On the way back to base a visit was made to **Tyrrel's Wood** (v.-c. 27), a Woodland Trust reserve that the local bryological group had visited earlier in the year. Chris Preston found *Herzogiella seligeri* c.fr. on a rotting log, and much to the surprise of herself and everyone else Mary Ghullam found a small patch of *Sphagnum palustre*. A damper area with some ash was eventually reached, where *Frullania dilatata*, *Metzgeria fruticulosa*, *Radula complanata* and *Ulota bruchii* were recorded.

### Tuesday 15 April

Frank Lammiman and Christine Rieser went off to view *Rhytidium rugosum* at Icklingham, while the remaining twelve members of the party gathered at **Thetford Warren** (v.-c. 26). An area of lichen heath with *Racomitrium canescens* was examined first. The known colonies seemed to be doing well and a large new colony was discovered nearby. Mary Ghullam also found a small patch in the adjoining tetrad. The other main attraction here was abundant *Ptilidium ciliare*. In the adjacent **Risbeth Wood** (v.-c. 26) almost every bit of rotting wood had tufts of *Herzogiella seligeri* with abundant capsules. *Dicranum majus* and *Rhytidiadelphus loreus*, each at their only known sites in West Suffolk, were refound, and Seán O'Leary discovered *Nowellia curvifolia*\* on the decorticated trunk of a fallen larch. There were plenty of other suitable logs around but a quick search did not reveal any more *Nowellia*. However, during this search Bob Ellis came across *Aulacomnium palustre*, which was something of a surprise.

It was decided to make a quick call at **Barnhamcross Common** (v.-c. 26) to look at *Leptodontium gemmascens*. Conditions were very dry and the first arrivals could not find it but Fred Rumsey, who has studied the area, showed us some good patches.

Despite howls of protest it was decided to postpone lunch until we arrived at **Cranberry Rough** (v.-c. 28) where we picnicked on the edge of the old railway cutting. While we refuelled, Amy Eycott gave us a brief history of Breckland and helped get us moving by pushing Robin off his stool. Cranberry Rough is the site of an old lake basin, Hockham Mere, which is famous in Quaternary circles because analysis of the pollen present in the sediments demonstrates key changes in vegetation during Neolithic times. The lake was drained rather unsuccessfully, leaving the present mire, consisting of a rather dull marsh and areas of sallow carr. For the effort required to plough through this rough terrain rewards were slight: *Frullania dilatata*, *Calliogon cordifolium* c.fr. and *Orthotrichum pulchellum* topped the list. We were joined by Nick Gibbons and Jonathan Spencer English from Forest Enterprise. Some time was spent discussing the possible future management of the site, including the introduction of large mammals to clear some of the scrub. The general feeling was that, bryologically speaking,

they could do what they liked, with little loss. Since there was some danger of losing the entire party in the mire a tactical retreat was made. On regaining the relative safety of the marsh a large Grass Snake was observed. This moved off towards the mire and took refuge in a hawthorn bush where it draped itself rather decorously around the trunk and lower branches and remained motionless while attempts were made to photograph it.

The meeting then broke up. One party went off in search of Stone Curlews (successful) at Weeting Heath and *Rhytidium rugosum* (unsuccessful) at Grime's Graves where they encountered a frosty reception. Others went home and the residue headed for the Half Moon and welcome refreshment. Since the bottle of wine that had been on offer for the rediscovery of *Orthotrichum obtusifolium* was still unclaimed, it (by now bottles of red and white) was shared by those at dinner.

#### Acknowledgements

The local secretary would like to thank all who contributed to an enjoyable meeting, particularly the various landowners and organisations who allowed us access to their property, and Bob Ellis for organising such a memorable day at Wheatfen.

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## Summer field meeting 2003, East Perthshire (first week)

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#### Introduction

The first week of the summer field meeting was based at Kindrogan Field Centre near Pitlochry, which is now being managed by the Field Studies Council. The meeting was unusual insofar as the first three days were taken up by a

workshop on the genus *Schistidium*, led by Dr Hans Blom. Other features of the meeting were the availability of a laboratory, which meant that specimens could be examined in the evenings, and the presence of a four-strong Czech contingent. Participants staying at the Centre were John Blackburn (Wednesday-Thursday),