

We await the conclusions from the SBAL survey to see whether organic arable fields contain bryofloras which differ from those of 'inorganic' farms, but meanwhile feel satisfied with the bryodiversity we found at Pim Hill. The kindness of John Gwilliam, the farm manager, was very significant in the success of our afternoon, for he had considerably postponed ploughing the four fields which he made available to us.

Sunday 10 October

Spoil around abandoned lead mines provided a different kind of disturbed habitat for Sunday afternoon's excursions. Members explored three sites: **The Bog** (SO3597), **Gravels** (SJ3360) and **Snailbeach** (SJ3702). The Bog and Snailbeach are owned or managed by Shropshire County Council, and are open to the public. The Gravels was thrown open to us by kind permission of the owners, Mr and Mrs Gough.

The Snailbeach contingent found *Cephaloziella hampeana*, while spoil and other ground surrounding abandoned lead mines at Gravels

yielded *Barbilophozia barbata*, *B. floerkei*, *Archidium alternifolium*, *Bryum pallescens* and *Racomitrium elongatum* but none of the rarities that are restricted to substrates containing large amounts of lead.

By popular demand, an addendum to the weekend's *al fresco* activities became necessary following Dan Wrench's wonderful discovery of *Jamesoniella undulifolia* a couple of weeks previously on **Hopesay Hill** (SO3983), west of Craven Arms. This Red Data Book species is classified as Endangered in Britain, with only three other post-1970 records, so is a most welcome addition to Shropshire's bryoflora. Members met with mixed success in their attempts to relocate the colony of this liverwort, which looks much like *Odontoschisma sphagni* in the field, save perhaps for a touch more green to its leaves. But for those whose search was crowned with success, while a westering sun ensanguined the skies and cast long shadows over the hills around Hopesay, these few peaceful moments drew a veil of contentment over a weekend that had been full of bustle and interest.

SBAL meeting at Turriff, North Aberdeenshire, October 2004

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Eight bryologists converged on Turriff on 29-31 October 2004 for this special BBS meeting. In the current Survey of the Bryophytes of Arable Land (SBAL), 100 'random' tetrads have been selected for study in Britain, and our primary aim was to record two arable fields in each of the nine tetrads in north-east Scotland (v.-c. 90-94). We also hoped to survey as many other fields as possible, both for SBAL and to

complement the records from other habitats made on the summer meeting in v.-c. 93.

Mark Hill, Ron Porley and Chris Preston travelled to Turriff via Fife. When leaving Fife on Friday morning we were delayed by local flooding, following heavy overnight rain. As we drove north in a continued downpour our subconscious doubts about the wisdom of

holding an autumn meeting in Aberdeenshire began to surface. However, the rain stopped as we left the car for the first of the two Kincardineshire (v.-c. 91) tetrads. Ron collected a *Didymodon* in the first field at Chapelfield that turned out to be tuberous *D. insulanus* (see Figure 1); we later found the same plant in v.-c. 93 and v.-c. 94. The highlight of the remaining fields was a damp corner of a stubble field at Waterside of Phesdo (see Figure 2), where frequent fruiting plants of *Anthoceros agrestis* grew with *Blasia pusilla* amongst a sward of *Plantago major* subsp. *intermedia*. *Ditrichum pusillum* was detected in material from a second, setaside, field in this tetrad. David Chamberlain and Liz Kungu delayed their departure from Edinburgh because of the rain but nevertheless completed their allocated tetrad in Angus (v.-c. 90), finding *Riccia glauca* and *R. sorocarpa* in both fields. Phil Lambdon (from Brathens), Keith Watson (Glasgow) and Fred Rumsey (London) completed the group.

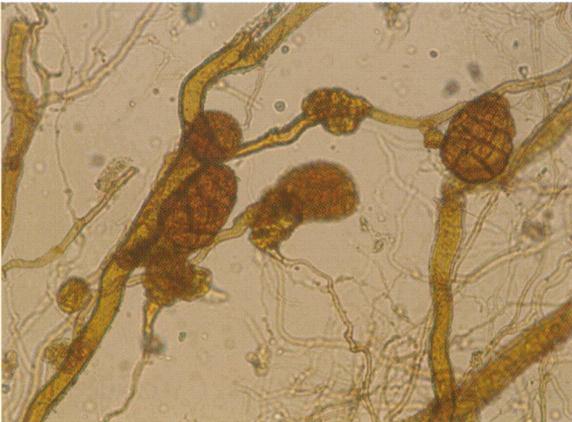


Figure 1. Tubers on *Didymodon insulanus*, collected by Ron Porley from a barley stubble field at Chapelfield, Kincardineshire, NO759675, on 29 October 2004. The tubers measure 81-130µm x 60-90µm. Photo: J. Rowntree (Kew).

For the weekend's fieldwork we split into three parties, radiating out from Turriff. We recorded 29 further fields, including 12 in the remaining random tetrads in v.-c. 92-94. Aberdeenshire and Banff are areas of mixed farming on undulating land. Calm, mild weather (very

overcast on Saturday, much brighter on Sunday), the autumn colours of the beech trees, and the calling skeins of geese that frequently flew high over the SBAL parties, made for very pleasant field conditions. In the early evenings, Mark and Phil took over the kitchen of our self-catering accommodation to make the 'mud pies' needed for pH measurements, before joining the rest of the group clustered round microscopes on the dining-room table.



Figure 2. Recording at Waterside of Phesdo, 29 October 2004. Photo: Ron Porley.

We found relatively little variation in the arable fields we recorded. The commonest crop was barley, and rape and potato fields were frequent; we also inspected fields of wheat, turnips and organic oats. Maize, such a frequent feature of mixed farmland in England, is not grown this far north. The soils were mainly loams or silts; almost all fields had a pH between 6 and 7. Many stubble fields were still unploughed, and so there was no difficulty finding fields 'in suitable condition' in the random tetrads. We recorded fields on a couple of organic farms, one found by chance and the other deliberately visited.

We listed 10-20 species in most fields studied. *Bryum rubens*, *Dicranella staphylina*, *Oxyrrhynchium (Eurhynchium) hians*, *Tortula truncata* and *Trichodon cylindricus (Ditrichum cylindricum)*, grew in almost all fields, and *Riccia sorocarpa*, *Barbula convoluta*, *Brachythecium rutabulum*, *Bryum subapiculatum*, *B. violaceum*, *Dicranella schreberiana*, *Kindbergia praelonga (Eurhynchium praelongum)*, *Phascum cuspidatum*

(*Tortula acaulon*), *Pohlia camptotrachelata* and *P. wahlenbergii* were in over a third of those we visited. Only three fields had fewer than 10 species, the worst being an organic potato field at Crichneyled (v.-c. 93), where Liz and Ron found only *Oxyrrhynchium hians*. Ironically, the next worst, with seven species, was at Mosshead in the village of Whitehouse (v.-c. 92); in this field, *Leptobryum pyriforme* grew as protonema with tubers but we did not find leafy shoots. Two barley stubble fields were outstanding. Fred, Mark and Phil found one at Cultercullen (v.-c. 92) with 29 taxa, including, remarkably, *Pogonatum urnigerum* and *Polytrichum commune*. At Cornhill (v.-c. 94), Chris, Fred and Phil recorded

34 taxa, including seven liverworts: *Blasia pusilla*, *Fossombronia wondraczekii*, *Lunularia cruciata*, *Marchantia polymorpha*, *Riccardia chamedryfolia*, *Riccia glauca* and *R. sorocarpa*. The Cultercullen field had a low, damp area which had flooded in the past, and at Cornhill the lowest part of the field (with locally abundant *Lunularia*) was in the flood zone of the Burn of Boyne.

The weekend was successful in gathering data for SBAL and produced over 30 candidate new vice-county records. Loud laughter round the breakfast table on the Monday morning suggested that the party were leaving north-east Scotland in good heart.

Rare and interesting bryophytes in Britain and Ireland

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Background

The 'rare and interesting' feature was initiated last year (*Field Bryology* 83: 45-47) to provide a forum for notable records that do not qualify for the BBS vice-county recording scheme. The following records continue the series. I am conscious that for this issue I did not write round to solicit records, so the number is down. Please send more such records to me; they are interesting and I hope they will not be rare.

Categories of interesting record

- A** *Altitude*. A record from an unusually high or low altitude.
- D** *Dispersing*. New records of a species that may be increasing in frequency.
- F** *Fruiting*. Fruiting material of a rarely fruiting species.

- G** *Gametangia*. Male or female organs present in a species in which sex organs are rarely found, or in which one sex is rarely found.
- H** *Habitat*. A record of a species in an unusual habitat.
- N** *National*. A new site for a nationally rare species.
- P** *Previously under-recorded*. A species that may be frequent but which appears to have been overlooked in the past.
- R** *Rare*. A second or occasionally a third or fourth record for a vice-county of a regionally rare species.
- S** *Status*. A status report for a Red Data Book or other notable species at a known site.
- V** *Vegetatively reproducing*. A record of tubers, gemmae, bulbils or protonema-gemmae on a species from which they have rarely been reported.