

epiphytes. Trunk and branches had fine colonies of the liverworts *Cololejeunea minutissima*, *Metzgeria fruticulosa* and *M. furcata*, and several tufts of *Orthotrichum tenellum*. The churchyard in the village had a gravestone with a good covering of *Hygrohypnum luridum*, which had been found by Rod Stern on a previous visit, and other headstones possessed tufts of *Orthotrichum anomalum*. On damp tarmac grew an extensive colony of *Didymodon nicholsonii*.

As the day drew to a close, the party split into two groups. Neil Sanderson and Andy Cross

ventured into chalk grassland where they discovered *Abietinella abietinum* var. *histrucosa* (*Thuidium abietinum* subsp. *hystricosum*), *Ditrichum gracile*, and a candidate for *D. flexicaule* that is still awaiting confirmation.

We approached the cars in gathering dusk and those of us of a more nervous disposition, myself included, remembering the conversation of the morning, glanced apprehensively over our shoulders but the apparition that approached out of the gloom was only our kindly leader, Rod Stern.

Recording and conservation

Submitting new vice-county records

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Background

It has been some time since the last description of the process of submitting a new vice-county record, and there are a number of new recorders who are unsure how the system works. This article describes both the current process and the changes that we plan to make in 2005 as well as offering advice on packeting and labelling vouchers.

This may sound rather a chore but it does mean that the maximum amount of information is transferred from you to the BBS herbarium (BBSUK) and to the Biological Records Centre (BRC), and it makes the Recorders' lives a bit easier! Comments would be welcome.

The current system

All new and post-1950 records must be supported by a voucher. Usually the voucher will be a recently collected specimen that is sent, often via the appropriate referee, to the Recorder for Mosses or Hepatics for verification. It is the usual, and the most sensible, practice for the collector to retain a duplicate of the voucher. If the voucher is accepted, the record will be added to the list for that year and published in *Field Bryology* in the following year.

The voucher then normally goes to BBSUK, which is stored alongside the main cryptogamic herbarium at the National Museum & Gallery in

Cardiff. It is important for those sending in records to be aware that the only information that goes with the voucher to BBSUK is what is written on the packet. The Recorders often receive interesting letters about the specimens in the packets but these letters are not normally kept with the voucher! Very occasionally, collectors may wish to retain the voucher or deposit it in another herbarium; this information will usually appear with the record in *Field Bryology*. It is worth emphasising the value of sets of vouchers in BBSUK from vice-counties throughout Britain and Ireland. As well as direct evidence for individual records, they provide an extremely useful source of specimens, from a wide geographical range, that can be used for future taxonomic revisions. They may also prove to be of value for tissue analysis and perhaps other unforeseen purposes.

When Floras are being compiled, new vice-county records may turn up as herbarium specimens are examined, and species revisions may necessitate a complete change of the vice-county records. In this case, the appropriate Recorder is usually notified of these records and they will be published in *Field Bryology* with the location of the vouchers. When examination of published vouchers for vice-county records reveals that an error in identification or locality has been made, the appropriate Recorder should be informed and a deletion will be published in *Field Bryology*.

Changes planned for 2005

New vice-county records are currently entered into a database that is used to compile the list that is published annually in *Field Bryology* and sent to BRC for incorporation in their database. What is now proposed is an intermediate stage in this process. The database of new records will be made available as a spreadsheet on the BBS website so that those of you who have submitted records can check that the information has been entered correctly into the database. An unacceptable number of errors

creep into the data at various stages of the process, and at the moment these are only picked up after the records have been published in *Field Bryology*, necessitating the publishing of corrections. This extra stage should mean that more errors are found before publication, and that these can be corrected on both the database and the packet if necessary.

One corollary of this additional stage is that full grid references will now be published on the website and in *Field Bryology* rather than just the hectad reference. If you think that there are sound reasons of conservation or confidentiality for not publishing the full grid reference of a record, you must make that plain in a covering letter with the voucher. The full grid reference will always go to BRC.

Herbarium packets

Many recorders have their own herbarium with an established system of recording and storing information and specimens but there are a growing number of bryologists who are submitting vice-county records for the first time, and so it seems worthwhile to offer some advice and preferred options for voucher packets.

The only information that goes with the voucher is what is written on the packet, and so the packet should be of a reasonable size. The most usual size is an A4 sheet folded approximately into thirds with large flaps at the side. Please, please, PLEASE do not use envelopes, particularly gummed envelopes! The essential information that must be on the packet is: species name, habitat (with altitude if possible), site name or location, as accurate a grid reference as possible (preferably derived from a Global Positioning System (GPS)), vice-county number, date of collection, collector, determiner (if appropriate), and collection/herbarium number (if appropriate). The only real justification for collecting plants from the wild, some of which are extremely uncommon, is the information that such a collection can provide.

An ideal packet is shown below:

BRYOPHYTES OF ENGLAND

Sphagnum inundatum Russow

WORCESTERSHIRE: Dowles Brook valley, Wyre Forest

Margin of *Quercus* woodland; in boggy hollow by track

Grid: SO 7474 7622

v.-c. 37

Alt. c. 70m

2 April 2004

D.G. LONG

No. 33093

This packet is printed but hand-written packets are fine as long as the writing is clear. A lot of the information on the packet can be unscrambled from poor handwriting but not the locality or the grid reference for which local knowledge is needed; this is the source of most errors in the database.

Where the plant in the packet is very small, it is sensible to put it into a separate 'mini-packet'; it is a time-consuming task for the Recorders to recapture small plants that have made a bid for freedom. If it is a mixed gathering, please separate out those plants on which you have based your identification and put them in a 'mini-packet'. For critical species it is important

that there is sufficient material on which to base a determination and which is adequate as a voucher that may need to be re-examined in the future. It is very helpful if reproductive structures, which are often required for reliable determinations, are put in a 'mini-packet'. Please use the BBS referee system for the more difficult groups of species.

When sending vouchers to referees or Recorders, please be careful to protect them in appropriate packaging so that damage is minimised in transit. Dry soil has a habit of escaping from loose packages, sometimes dispersing bits and pieces of precious bryophyte that are difficult to retrieve when opened by the recipient.