

Reports of local meetings

The Border Bryologists, 2004

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Our year's meetings began in usual fashion with an indoor meeting in January. However, for the first time this was held in the new Museum and Resource Centre at Ludlow, where a light and spacious Education Room on the top floor offers wonderful panoramic views over the roofs of the town to Shropshire's hills beyond. A dozen bryological beginners made full and free use of the Centre's pristine dissecting microscopes during the morning, and after lunch a bank of computers connected to the internet enabled us to spend a pleasant afternoon surfing the British Bryological Society's website and links therefrom.

February's meeting passed at **Roundton Hill** (SO2994 and SO2995) in south-east Montgomeryshire. Roundton is made of a basic igneous rock that supports a creditable range of calcicoles, while the day's warm sunshine equally favoured the bryologists. *Didymodon nicholsonii* on soil on the track by the car park was new to v.-c. 47, and this gathering subsequently passed through the pearly gates into BBSUK. But greatest bryological interest lay in the flora of the rocks and shallow soil up the slopes where we came upon *Aloina aloides*, *Ditrichum gracile*, *Pterogonium gracile*, *Rhodobryum roseum*, *Scleropodium tourettii*, *Tortula lanceola* and *T. modica*. Admittedly, all occurred in small quantities. Less base-rich rock carried *Hedwigia stellata* and *Orthotrichum rupestre*, while *Porella cordaeana* grew by the stream.

Luck with the weather deserted us for our meeting in March at **The Ring** (SO1283) in Radnorshire's upper Teme valley. Even the local

ravens were flying sideways in the driving wind and heavy rain. Steep, flushed soil draining over Wenlock Limestone suited *Jungermannia atrovirens*, *Leiocolea turbinata* (a rare liverwort in Radnorshire), *Didymodon spadiceus*, *D. tophaceus* and *Gymnostomum aeruginosum*.

A hummock of soil sprouted small quantities of *Acaulon muticum*, which is rare or under-recorded in the county. This moss is doubtless much overlooked because of its diminutive size, but subsequently turned up on several occasions along the Welsh border during the winter of 2004/05, which followed a much wetter autumn than that of 2003, causing one to wonder if *Acaulon* might be one of those species whose frequencies vary from year to year according to variations in rainfall. The annual *Pottia davalliana* (*Microbryum davallianum*) also appeared in several places along the Welsh border during the 2004/05 winter, your correspondent having failed to notice it for some considerable time before that. Similarly, the rare *Pottiopsis caespitosa* was present in impressive quantities at two sites near Ironbridge in Shropshire.

But the weather on our day in Radnorshire did not encourage us to dally while speculating about the climatic proclivities of these little weeds. The wind and an urgent need for shelter drove us into a small gorge, where *Neckera complanata* and *N. crispa* found conditions conducive on ledges of rock, alongside the liverworts *Lejeunea patens*, *Plagiochila spinulosa*, *Reboulia hemisphaerica*, *Saccogyna viticulosa* and *Scapania gracilis*. *Schistidium rivulare* grew by the stream.

In April, Tessa Carrick invited the BBS to join us for our week-long meeting in Worcestershire, and after the annual summer recess we reconvened in October at **The Brickyard** (SO6082) near Wheathill in south Shropshire. Now in the Countryside Stewardship scheme, two of the pastures on this smallholding were once dug for making clay pipes, creating an uneven surface to the ground and an array of microhabitats good for bryodiversity. Ann Hill came upon *Campyliadelphus chrysophyllus* flourishing where drainage, aeration, and erosion of the soil slopes increased, and *Acaulon muticum*, *Ctenidium molluscum* and *Fissidens dubius* also enjoyed nutritious soil. Lorna Fraser found *Dicranum tauricum* on the trunk of a willow tree, and disturbed soil in the back garden gave us *Bryum klinggraeffii* and *B. rubens*.

After lunching in comfort in the farmhouse, we crossed the road and dropped down to a stream in a wooded dingle known as **The Gore** (SO5982), where *Hygrohypnum luridum* grew on a boulder in the stream. On the bank nearby, an odd-looking *Plagiochila* with irregularly incised leaves drew comment, and Jean Paton subsequently very kindly determined it to be a form of *P. britannica*. Further along the track,

Bryum pallescens grew at the base of an outbuilding.

For our last meeting of the year, Sam Bosanquet met us at **Llanellen** (SO3010 and SO3110) near Abergavenny in Monmouthshire, where twelve of us explored the banks of the River Usk. Over 50 species went on the card, including *Anomodon viticulosus* from calcareous sandstone, *Henmediella stanfordensis*, *Orthotrichum rivulare*, *O. sprucei*, *Oxyrrhynchium* (*Eurhynchium*) *schleicheri*, *Plagiomnium cuspidatum*, *Rhynchostegiella pumila* (*Eurhynchium pumilum*) and *Scleropodium cespitans*. *Reboulia hemisphaerica* growing on a soil-covered ledge was also a pleasant surprise. Nearby, a rather odd *Mnium* with decurrent leaf bases was probably a form of *M. hornum* rather than *M. marginatum*.

After lunch we changed habitat, and drove up to the south-eastern flank of **The Blorange** (SO2711), where a cooling wind proved as invigorating as the range of calcicoles on shallow soil over outcrops and boulders of Carboniferous Limestone – *Acaulon muticum* (yet again), *Brachythecium glareosum*, *Racomitrium ericoides*, *Schistidium apocarpum* s.str., *Scleropodium tourettii*, *Thuidium assimile* (*T. philibertii*) and *Tortula lanceola*, along with a little *Lophozia excisa*.

Southern Group

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Strodgemoor Bottom and Vales Moor, New Forest (v.-c. 11), 24 September 2004

A visit to the New Forest is always eagerly anticipated by our local members for the bryological delights that await us. Today was not an exception, and we were astounded by the amount of *Splachnum ampullaceum* that we found over the limited area of the New Forest that we walked over. Those of us who know the Forest

well were of the same opinion: this was a magnificent display of an uncommon moss, not seen in such quantity previously.

The weedy and invasive *Campylopus introflexus* was present in vast amounts, as it is on all southern commons, but on this occasion much of it seemed to be of a different form and it wasn't until later in the day when looked at under the microscope that the penny finally dropped and I