



Figure 3. *Lepidozja cypressina* in Cwm Rheidol. Photo: Jonathan Sleath.

Reports of local meetings

South-East Group

Roy Hurr

6, The Woodlands, Orpington, Kent, BR6 6HL

Ranscombe Farm, Cuxton and chalk pit, North Halling (v.-c. 16), 14 November 2004

This excursion was led by Jeff Duckett. In the morning, the group explored Ranscombe Farm, on the south-facing chalk slope of the North Downs. Ranscombe is known to botanists as a site where (by arrangement with Plantlife) one field has not been treated with weed-killer and has a rich flowering plant flora. Several years ago this field was deep-ploughed. Presumably as a

result, buried seeds of Corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*) were brought to the surface and in 2004 some hundreds of them flowered and seeded profusely. Hanbury and Marshall in 1899 comment that Corncockle 'could be found in every district' but it is now rare; Philp (1982) in the *Atlas of the Kent Flora* reported that the plant had not been seen in Kent since 1946.

It was in high expectation of bryophyte glories that the group descended on the Corncockle

field. They were to be disappointed. Despite fervent search, the field yielded only a limited range of mosses: *Barbula convoluta*, *B. unguiculata*, *Bryum dichotomum* (*B. bicolor*), *Dicranella varia*, *Homalothecium lutescens*, *Microbryum floerkeanum*, *Oxyrrhynchium* (*Eurhynchium*) *bians*, *Phascum cuspidatum* (*Tortula acaulon*), *Pottia davalliana* (*Microbryum davallianum*), *Pseudoscleropodium* (*Scleropodium*) *purum* and *Tortula truncata*. Most of these are typical arable field species; *Homalothecium* and *Pseudoscleropodium* are common on chalk downs.

An adjacent field had apparently been heavily fertilised, but its bryoflora was not very different. Additional species recorded here included *Bryum kellingraeffii*.

A Sweet Chestnut coppice above these fields yielded fairly typical species, such as *Porella platyphylla*, *Aulacomnium androgynum*, *Dicranum tauricum*, *Orthodontium lineare* and *Plagiothecium nemorale*.

The plan had been to explore an abandoned chalk pit at Wouldham, but access proved to be too difficult. The North Halling pit is fenced but access was possible. It is a remarkable feature, perhaps 200 m in diameter, with sheer sides almost as high. In this small area we recorded 28 mosses and five liverworts, including *Abietinella abietina* var. *histricola* (*Thuidium abietinum* subsp. *hystricosum*), *Bryum kellingraeffii*, *Campyliadelphus chrysophyllus*, *Cryphaea heteromalla*, *Orthotrichum byellii*, *Seligeria calycina* and *Syntrichia laevipila*. None of these taxa are particularly rare, but the sheer exuberance with which some of them occurred was remarkable. In particular, the branches of some of the trees in the pit bottom were dressed with *Cryphaea* to an extent not often seen in Kent, and it was difficult to avoid one's

footsteps crushing the *Abietinella* (normally seen in Kent as an uncommon constituent of chalk downland turf) which was carpeting the floor of the pit.

Crookhorn Wood (v.-c. 16), 12 December 2004

Jan Hendey led our excursion to Crookhorn Wood on the south slope of the North Downs. A total of 37 mosses and five liverworts were recorded here. Among them were *Aloina aloides*, *Encalypta streptocarpa* and *Weissia longifolia* var. *angustifolia* on the root plate of a fallen Beech tree. Other species recorded included *Frullania dilatata*, *Metzgeria temperata* (the first record in v.-c. 16 for over 50 years), *Microbryum rectum* and *Seligeria calycina*.

Rusthall Common and Rocks (v.-c. 16), 15 January 2005

In the Tunbridge Wells area there are several sites of exposed sandrocks with a good bryophyte flora. Most are within West Sussex (v.-c. 14) but Rusthall Common is (just) in West Kent (v.-c. 16). The sandrocks here were known to be generally less damaged by recreational climbing than other local exposures. They include several that are eroded into shapes reminding popular imagination of a crouching lion, parson's nose and a toad.

Within the total of 38 mosses and 17 liverworts we recorded *Calyptogeia arguta*, *Gymnocolea inflata*, *Lepidozia reptans*, *Lophozia ventricosa*, *Dicranella cerviculata*, *Ditrichum heteromallum*, *Pohlia annotina*, *Tetraphis pellucida* and *Zygodon conoideus*.

The excursion was led by Jan Hendey with Joyce Pitt acting as a guide to the site.