

because parking and access had been arranged on land owned by Coillte, the forestry authority.

We were lucky to have a fine day which allowed extensive bryologising. Most of the known rarities were refound, including *Leiocolea fitzgeraldiae*, *Pedinophyllum interruptum*, *Scapania aequiloba*, *Amblyodon dealbatus*, *Didymodon maximus*, *Distichium inclinatum*, *Hymenostylium insigne*, *Mnium marginatum*, *M. thomsonii*, *Orthothecium rufescens*, *Seligeria pusilla*, *S. trifaria* agg. and *Timmia norvegica*. Few new finds were expected, but the rare *Bryum elegans** was added by Gordon (otherwise known in Ireland only in Co. Sligo) and *Jungermannia subelliptica** by Sam B. Several of the rare vascular plants known in the area were also seen, including Northern Rock-cress (*Arabis petraea*),

Chickweed Willowherb (*Epilobium alsinifolium*) and much Holly Fern (*Polytichum lonchitis*).

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Reports of local meetings

South-East Group

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Ham Fen (v.-c. 15), 3 December 2005

Beavers are the main point of interest in this Kent Wildlife Trust reserve near Sandwich. Cattle and sheep are used to graze the land and the beavers were introduced in 2003. From 1998 to 2003 the Heritage Lottery Fund enabled the removal of some areas of recent topsoil, exposing peat and alluvial layers. This provides more open water and good colonising sites. The reserve covers about a third of a square kilometre, just at the edge of the flat land associated with the Stour estuary, overlying the dipping chalk at the northern edge of the North Downs. It is mostly open grassland, fen and

ponds with an area of open woodland that includes alder carr. A natural stream runs through the site and it is cut into rectangular sections by a number of drainage channels.

We were asked to look for any bryological interest as a result of the management changes. Following a provisional visit in April, a group of four met Pete Forrest, the Trust area warden, to whom we extend our thanks. Pete showed us how to negotiate the electric fences and the highland cattle. The latter had refused, the previous week, to board the lorry intended to take them to another nearby reserve to continue their winter grazing duties, and were hungry. A

distracting bale of hay enabled unpestered access. The weather allowed good bryology until the middle of the day when rain caused a standing lunch under dripping trees. Its unexpected continuation meant that exploration of some of the open areas was replaced by an afternoon of learned discussions in a camper van!

One section of exposed clay had many mosses, noticeably patched with the pink of young plants of *Bryum pseudotriquetrum*, rare in Kent. Also here were *Bryum dichotomum* (*B. bicolor*), *Dicranella varia*, *Didymodon tophaceus* and *Funaria hygrometrica*. On the peat and pond edges *Physcomitrium pyriforme* was abundant, the massed capsules showing bright green patches in the spring, but somewhat 'washed-out' by December.

The main beaver-influence feature is a small lodge which they built in their first enclosure, essentially a pile of sticks and packed soil with about 10% moss cover at the time of visiting. This was mostly *Barbula convoluta* with small amounts of *Brachythecium rutabulum*, *Bryum rubens* and *Funaria hygrometrica*. A pond edge in this enclosure produced *Leptobryum pyriforme*, not often seen in the wild in this district. The beavers are currently living in a burrow, so apart from small man-made drainage channels cut recently to provide

extra water, there is little sign of any further direct influence. As yet, the cuttings have not attracted colonisation by bryophytes.

On the open fen are reed beds crossed by pathways in varying degrees of wetness. The dominant moss was *Brachythecium rutabulum*, added to at the river edges and in wetter parts by *B. rivulare*. The latter engages in its annoying lowland habit of merging into the former in its alar cell structure. *Kindbergia praelonga* (*Eurhynchium praelongum*), *Leptodictyum riparium*, and *Oxyrrhynchium* (*Eurhynchium*) *hians* were also common.

The woods were generally devoid of epiphytes, just a couple of samples of *Orthotrichum affine* being found. Tree bases in wetter, nicely mossy areas also had *Amblystegium serpens*, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Orthotrichum diaphanum* and *Rhynchostegium confertum*. The alder carr was much the same but with a little *Plagiothecium nemorale* and the exciting addition of *Oxyrrhynchium* (*Eurhynchium*) *speciosum*. A river bank under tree shade had a delightful sward containing *O. speciosum* abundantly in fruit, *Pellia endiviifolia* and the slender form of *Cratoneuron filicinum*. This was well worth the slightly intrepid effort needed to cross the river on a plank under a low overhanging tree!

The Border Bryologists, 2005

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Our year's meetings started in their traditional fashion, with an indoor workshop at Ludlow Museum for beginner-bryologists, so that they might learn how to prepare and examine bryophytes by using microscopes. After lunch we went web-browsing on the Museum's

computers, starting from and with the BBS's own site.

The Meteorological Office threatened us with freezing temperatures and a hard frost for our February meeting at **Cother Wood** (SO7546)