

# Reports of local meetings

## The Border Bryologists 2006

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In February, Sam Bosanquet led us to Cwm Nant Du (SO 2719), on the north side of The Sugar Loaf in Monmouthshire. Sam soon found *Pohlia lutescens* growing on shallow soil over a stone by the path. This little moss is most inconspicuous, and may therefore be overlooked and commoner than records indicate.

Having gained the cwm itself, we soon found ourselves confronted by the newly critical genus of *Conocephalum*, with *C. salebrosum* growing cheek by jowl with *C. conicum*. *C. conicum* has a shinier thallus with wider lobes, whereas *C. salebrosum*'s thalli are a dull green and rather more spindly. Unfortunately, though, a range of intermediate forms was also in evidence, and befogged our determination to follow the latest fashion in hepaticology.

Further upstream, *Marchantia polymorpha* ssp. *montivagans* on a wet stone was the cause of further caustic imprecations regarding criteria for recognising intraspecific as opposed to specific taxa. *M. polymorpha* ssp. *montivagans* grows in wet places, and has dark lines between but not along the middle of each lobe of the thallus, whereas *M. polymorpha* ssp. *polymorpha* has a continuous dark median line, and the median line of ssp. *ruderalis* may be indistinct, interrupted, or absent. Much more clear-cut in terms of identification, Lorna Fraser and Paul Hudson found beautifully delicate, pale patches of *Trichocolea tomentella* growing on wet soil beneath trees.

The underlying Old Red Sandstone of north Monmouthshire is quite base-rich, and flushes further up the northern slope of the Sugar Loaf hold *Drepanocladus cossonii* and *Plagiomnium elatum*, along with *Marchantia polymorpha* ssp. *polymorpha*. Sam also pointed out *Dicranum fuscescens* hiding between boulders near the summit.

A heavy fall of snow cancelled our March meeting with Ray Woods in Radnorshire - the first time the elements had deterred Border Bryologists from entering the field. But one weekend of snow did not prevent plenty of extra-curricular winter-time activity on the English side of the border, relentlessly redefining the frontiers of Salopian field-science. *Cololejeunea minutissima* entered the vice-comital list near the River Severn at Coalport (SJ 7001), and *Fossombronina incurva* turned up in a disused sand quarry near Cound (SJ 5505). *Conocephalum salebrosum* seems to be reasonably frequent in Shropshire, although perhaps not quite so common as *C. conicum*. Of mosses, an array of uncommon species turned up on or near outcrops of calcareous sandstone at Loton Park, Alberbury (SJ 3513/3613) - with *Didymodon acutus*, *Protobryum bryoides*, *Pterygoneurum ovatum* and *Tortula lanceola* on shallow, well-drained soil overtopping an outcrop of rock in an old quarry. Fine cushions of *Grimmia orbicularis* were on the exposed rock itself, and *Drepanocladus polygamus* on wet soil nearby. A couple of miles up the road at Wollaston (SJ 3212), a field of wheat-stubble held impressive quantities of *Weissia rostellata*

and *W. squarrosa*, and other man-made habitats yielded *Schistidium elegantulum* ssp. *elegantulum* (on a concrete post at the side of a lane at Llawnt (SJ 2431), *Syntrichia virescens* on a tarmac path at Lilleshall (SJ 7215), and *Grimmia laevigata* on sandstone roof-tiles at Stoke St. Milborough (SO 5682) and Ashford Carbonnell (SO 5270), as well as Lyonshall (SO 3356) and Brampton Abbots (SO 6026) in Herefordshire. In more natural surroundings, the aquatic *Fissidens rivularis* grows in Beech Dingle (SJ 3513) and *F. rufulus* in Wyre Forest (SO 7479), with *Rhynchostegiella curviseta* (from Danford, near Claverley, SO 8093) re-entering Shropshire's list for the first time since J.B. Duncan found it in the county almost a century ago.

Our autumn programme got underway in the yard at **Munslow Church** (SO 5277) in Corvedale, Shropshire, at the invitation of villagers who were keen to have records for the "Caring for God's Acre" project. One chap even provided a ladder so that we might investigate the bryoflora of the church roof, which unexpectedly proved to be home for substantial quantities of *Racomitrium affine*. Apart from that, the yard held few surprises. *Tortula modica* grew on the gravel path, with *Bryum moravicum* aka *B. laevifilum* aka *B. subelegans* aka *B. flaccidum* nearby. And it's surprising how often one can find *Cirriphyllum piliferum*, *Eurhynchium crassinervium* and *Rhynchostegiella tenella* in churchyards on the Welsh border. Attention also wandered to a fine colony of *Baeomyces rufus* on a tombstone; this lichen thinks it's a tiny toadstool, with its white stalk and red-brown cap. Fungi present included the waxcaps *Hygrocybe chlorophana* and *H. virginea*, a pretty little bonnet-cap *Mycena pterigena*, and the earth-tongue *Geoglossum cookeianum*. However, some

very determined rain started to fall at lunchtime, and we called it a day.

On our final meeting of the year, Jonathan Sleath led us over **Cefn Hill** (SO 2739/2738) in south-west Herefordshire. Falcate pleurocarps in flushes and on wet soil tested our abilities to distinguish species (and genera) in the field, with *Drepanocladus cossonii* and *D. revolvens*, *Sanionia uncinata*, *Warnstorfia exannulata* and *W. fluitans* all present, as well as *Palustriella commutata* and *P. falcata*. *Calliargon giganteum* also proved frequent in some of the wetter places. Patches of bare soil, poached by ponies, held *Archidium alternifolium*, *Ditrichum heteromallum* and *Ephemerum serratum* s.s.

Small outcrops of calcareous sandstone on Cefn Hill support *Tortella bambergeri* (a compact version of *T. tortuosa* which has fragile leaf-tips and papillae on the abaxial surface of the nerve near the tip), as do outcrops of similar rock in the Olchon valley, a mile or so west of Cefn Hill. The base-rich rock on Cefn Hill also holds *Schistidium apocarpum* s.s.

*Conocephalum conicum* and *C. salebrosum* came before us on different parts of the hill. Both these species seem frequent on the Welsh border, with *C. conicum* perhaps the commoner of the two. And Jonathan found *Riccia subbifurca* on shallow soil overlying an outcrop of sandstone, as well as a rosette of *R. glauca* growing over *R. sorocarpa*, which particularly interested those of us who had hitherto experienced difficulty in distinguishing these species, and reinforced how valuable the BBS Field-guide will be in enabling us to compare close-up photographs showing the distinguishing features of similar species.