

Border Bryologists 2007

2007 blew in with persistently unsettled weather, but gales and rain abated in time for our January meeting, and we made the most of a calm day in bright sunshine at Burfa Camp (SO 2760) just west of Presteigne, Radnorshire. We were hoping to refind *Buxbaumia aphylla* where it appeared in 1999 on soil in a gully by rock at the top of the hill, but the 'bug on a stick' proved shy and elusive 8 years later. However, Lorna Fraser found some fine colonies of *Rhodobryum roseum* in shallow soil on the lip of the outcrop, and *Pterogonium gracile* grew on the rock itself.

After sandwiches on the sunny embankment, we drove round to the base-rich igneous rocks at Stanner (SO 2658), a couple of miles south west, where the beautiful Radnor Lily (*Gagea bohemica*) was at the peak of its beauty, and Ray Woods showed us the rare *Riccia beyrichiana* and *R. nigrella* with *R. subbifurca* on shallow soil alongside, and *Targionia hypophylla* on ledges above. We paid homage to a colony of *Bartramia stricta*,

and also found *Grimmia montana* amongst many impressively large colonies of *G. decipiens*, *G. longirostris* and *G. ovalis*. *G. montana* is known from Old Radnor Hill on the other side of the road, but its presence at Stanner had been regarded as enigmatic, old collections from yesteryear proving on re-examination to be *G. trichophylla*. The predilection of scarce Grimmiids for base-rich, igneous rocks intrigues grimmidologists, and restoration of *G. montana* to Stanner's impressive roll-call of uncommon plants further enhances the reputation of this National Nature Reserve and its unique assemblage of rare plants.

Good fortune with the weather also blessed our meeting in February, when Sam Bosanquet led us at Wentwood (ST 4293) in Monmouthshire. We spent the morning around Nant y Pridd (ST 4394), where softwood plantations mixed with

△ The 'Border Bryologists' head up a lane at Bica Common, passing a clump of *Dicranum scoparium*, during the February meeting. Ian Atherton

secondary woodland produced an unexpectedly diverse epiflora, with the liverworts *Cololejeunea minutissima*, *Metzgeria temperata* and *Microlejeunea ulicina*, and the mosses *Orthotrichum lyellii*, *O. pulchellum*, *O. stramineum* (distinguished from the somewhat smaller *O. pulchellum* by its straight leaves and a lack of purple spots around the fringe of its calyptra), *O. striatum* and *O. tenellum*, as well as the commoner *O. affine* and *O. diaphanum*. *Leucobryum juniperoideum* grew over the side of a rotten stump, and *Heterocladium heteropterum* on stone nearby. Fine colonies of *Calliergonella lindbergii* were a feature of gravel at the side of several forestry tracks as we made our way to Bica Common (ST 4494) at the edge of the forest, where a lane-side bank considerably supplemented our list of species, and damp tarmac on the lane gave us an opportunity to compare and contrast the straight, wide-tipped leaves of *Didymodon nicholsonii* with the stubbier leaves of *D. luridus* (intermediate

between those of *D. nicholsonii* and *D. rigidulus*) and the narrower leaves of *D. rigidulus*, whose upper parts consist almost entirely of nerve.

Unlike our meeting planned for the previous March, snow fell the night after rather than the night before we met at Loton Park, Alberbury, in west Shropshire (SJ 3513/3613), and although a strong, cold, north-west wind buffeted us, sun-shine ensured good light in which to search for bryophytes. We met at the village hall, and then drove to the nearby deer park, where *Grimmia orbicularis* occupied a considerable expanse of an outcrop of calcareous sandstone, outperforming the normally much commoner *G. pulvinata*. *Didymodon acutus* and *Tortula lanceola* appeared on shallow soil over the outcrop's lip, but we failed to relocate *Pterygoneurum ovatum* found there in 2006.

We explored other small outcrops and their environs where the track runs through a cutting at the southern end of the deer park, and then two



△ *Calliergonella lindbergii* at the side of a forestry track at Nant y Pridd in February. Ian Atherton

◁ *Eurhynchium schleicheri* at Croes Robert Wood. Jonathan Sleath

▷ Members of the Border bryology group comparing *Didymodon nicholsonii* and *D. luridus* on a tarmac lane at Bica Common. Ian Atherton

small quarries on the eastern side of the park, where *Entodon concinnus*, fruiting *Pseudocrossidium hornschurchianum*, *Rhynchostegium murale*, *Riccia sorocarpa* and *Trichostomum brachydontium* were added to the list.

To end the day (and escape the wind) we briefly explored part of the large quarry immediately east of the wall bounding the deer park, where shaded, sheltered conditions suit other calcicoles such as *Didymodon tophaceus*, *Eucladium verticillatum* and *Rhynchostegiella tenella*.

Loton Park's calcareous rock and soil, with woody plants and rank herbs checked by deer, rabbit and sheep provide varied conditions for several uncommon bryophytes, and I shall be very interested to see what else members discover when they visit during the BBS's 2008 Autumn Meeting (see p. 44 for details).

After our summer recess, six Border Bryologists met on a delightfully sunny October day at Fishpool

Valley (SO 4565/4566), near Croft Castle in north Herefordshire, where we aimed to try out the key for the BBS *Field Guide*, and take photographs of species for which the guide either lacks images or needs better ones. In addition, we came by 90 species in only half a mile's ramble – or the bryologists' frequently prostrate equivalent of a ramble!

Woodland by the stream was sufficiently humid for *Microlejeunea ulicina* to abound, along with 16 other species of liverwort. Of mosses, *Dicranum montanum* and the new 'Midland Menace' – *Platygyrium repens* – numbered among the varied epiflora on tree trunks. Colonies of *Platygyrium* can often be suspected from several feet away because of their darker green hue.

Base-rich rock and shallow soil in a long-abandoned quarry held *Brachythecium glareosum*, *Campylophyllum calcareum*, *Rhynchostegiella pumila* and *Taxiphyllum wissgrillii*. Beside the track, the tiny *Fissidens exilis* grew on disturbed soil.

In addition, Joy Ricketts identified a pale myxomycete growing on a fallen, decorticated tree trunk as *Trichia varia*, with purple *Ascocoryne sarcoides* and yellow *Calocera viscosa* nearby, and a funnel-shaped fungus called *Cuphophyllus subradiatus* in grassland on Bircher Common above the wood.

November's meeting found us joining the Worcestershire Moss Group at Wilden Marsh (SO 8273), a Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Reserve near Stourport-on-Severn, where 11 of us explored wet pasture, disused sugar beet beds, and the banks of the River Stour. *Aphanorhegma patens* flourished on wet soil beside a pool (the first vouched record for Worcestershire since before 1950), and a small, orange-tinged acrocarp with blunt leaf tips, wide laminal cells and somewhat incrassate marginal cells proved to be *Syntrichia (Tortula) amplexa* – the second occasion on which this rare moss has appeared in the West Midlands in the last 12 months (see *Field Bryology* **91**, 8–11). However, this was the first time that *S. amplexa* has been found out of a worked clay pit or sand pit on this side of the Atlantic. At Wilden, *S. amplexa* grows where the River Stour undercuts its bank of bare,





◁ The habitat of *Syntrichia amplexa* at Wilden Marsh where the River Stour undercuts the bank of bare, sandy soil. Dr Ann Hill

sandy soil. This naturally rejuvenates the habitat and reduces competition from other bryophytes and ranker vegetation, enabling *S. amplexa* to thrive. Discovery of *S. amplexa* on a riverbank calls to mind *Hennediella stanfordensis* – another acrocarp that bears rhizoidal tubers and has successfully spread along several rivers in the West Midlands and Welsh Marches in recent years. Will *S. amplexa* behave in similar fashion, now that it has escaped from its pits?

Jonathan Sleath arranged our December meeting at White Rocks on Garway Hill (SO 4324) in southern Herefordshire on a morning of bright sunshine that mocked the wimps who had declined to join us. Admittedly, driving rain fell on much of the surrounding ground, and we had to be insane to have ventured out in face of the forecast, but all went well for the five intrepid spirits who did so.

Parts of White Rocks are base-rich sandstone, and we soon found and admired *Pterogonium gracile* (looking very lush in ‘patent mode’ after overnight rain), with the somewhat similar but plicate *Leucodon sciuroides* also on one nearby rock. *Grimmia decipiens* and *Heterocladium heteropterum* and were also present, the *Grimmia* being a first vouched record for Herefordshire since before 1950. Basiphiles included *Encalypta vulgaris* (its shortly excurrent nerve smooth on the abaxial surface) and *E. streptocarpa*, *Eurhynchium*

crassinervium, *Pseudocrossidium revolutum* and *Rhynchostegiella pumila*, with *Pottia davalliana*, *Tortula marginata*, *Weissia controversa*, *W. brachycarpa* var. *obliqua* and *W. longifolia* var. *longifolia* on soil, and *Cryphaea heteromalla*, *Syntrichia laevipila* and *S. papillosa* on tree trunks. *Tortella bambergeri* occupied numerous crevices of rock, and *T. tortuosa* obligingly disported nearby for ease of comparison. *T. bambergeri* typically forms small, firm cushions, whereas those of *T. tortuosa* tend to be larger and softer to the touch. However, when *T. bambergeri* grows on shaded stone in or near water, it may lose the characteristic yellow of its genus, and become dull green, more like a *Trichostomum*.

In the afternoon we drove round to The Jockies (SO 4425), a Woodland Trust reserve with rather more acidic substrates, yet just sufficiently base-rich in one place for *Eucladium verticillatum* to be producing setae and one or two immature capsules on an outcrop of rock in woodland. A few shoots of *Plagiomnium cuspidatum* grew on a stone by the path, and below the wood a pasture with ant hills and a spring and rivulet held *Palustriella falcata*, *Fossombronia pusilla* and *Jungermannia atrovirens*. But wind and rain had caught up with us at last, and we could feel a cup of tea coming on.

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