

Ten Border Bryologists met on a sunny January morning in the remote village of Llangattock Lingoed (SO3620) in north Monmouthshire, where Sam Bosanquet led us to explore the Full Brook valley. We spent our morning exploring about 200 m of the stream and its banks, discovering over 70 species of bryophyte. Exposures of Old Red Sandstone supported abundant *Thamnobryum alopecurum* and smaller quantities of *Hygroamblystegium tenax*, *Rhynchostegiella teneriffae*, *Sciuro-hypnum plumosum*, *Hygrohypnum luridum* and *Cinclidotus fontinaloides*. Several *Fissidens* species included *F. rufulus* at its fifth known locality in the county. A *Didymodon* from the bank of the stream proved on microscopical checking to be *D. insulanus* rather than *D. spadiceus*. Beginner and experienced bryologists alike admired fruiting *Pogonatum aloides* and smaller quantities of *Epipterygium tozeri*. Epiphytes included *Cryphaea heteromalla*

and *Zygodon viridissimus* s.s., as well as plentiful *Orthotrichum stramineum* (as expected on the edge of upland Monmouthshire), and Lalage Hampson found a colony of *O. lyellii*.

We picnicked in the churchyard, where Sam climbed a buttress and found *Grimmia ovalis* on sandstone tiles on the church roof. Some flat patches of putative *G. laevigata* lay frustratingly out of reach.

North-east of the village, the banks of a sunken lane were lined with astonishing amounts of *Oxyrrhynchium schleicheri* and the smaller *O. pumilum* (aka *Rhynchostegiella pumila*, aka *Eurhynchium pumilum*). Two patches of *Mnium stellare* betrayed slight base-enrichment, and the *Plagiochilas* graded from what seemed to be small *P. porelloides* at the exposed top of the lane (140 m altitude) to typically large *P. asplenioides* lower down at 110 m. Jonathan Sleath spotted *Bryum gemmiferum* growing on some hard cement on the



△ *Epipterygium tozeri*. David Holyoak



△ *Plagiochila asplenioides*. Des Callaghan



# Border Bryologists 2009

Mark Lawley presents his annual round-up of the activities of the Border Bryologists, a local group whose regular programme of winter meetings covers the England–Wales border country.

◁ *Thamnobryum alopecurum*. I. Atherton

top of a wall; perhaps it had been imported with sand. A wall beside the Offa's Dyke path was coated with *Porella platyphylla*, and back in the village the uncommon fungus Cobalt Crust (*Pulcherricium caeruleum*) grew on ivy stems beside the lane.

In February we met up with Worcestershire's bryological group under Ann Hill's leadership at Elmley Castle on the northern flank of Bredon Hill (SO9739/9840) in Worcestershire, and took full advantage of the mild temperature and sunshine, which were most pleasant after a prolonged cold snap. One couple were attending their first bryological meeting, and trialled a copy of the BBS's prototype *Field Guide*, successfully identifying numerous species as they encountered them for the first time. Moreover, they managed to do so without assistance from more experienced bryologists, which was an impressive endorsement not only of their enthusiasm, but also of the guide's success in helping novices to identify bryophytes.

Bredon is a northerly outlier of the Cotswold's Oolitic Limestone, so we expected to find calcicoles and were not disappointed. Parts of the

hill were clothed in sheets of *Neckera complanata* and *Porella platyphylla*, and we encountered prodigious quantities of *Didymodon sinuosus* on both shaded and unshaded stone. Some juvenile *D. sinuosus* temporarily brought *Leptobarbula berica* to mind, but we assuaged our disappointment with *Brachythecium glareosum*, *Campylophyllum calcareum* and *Seligeria pusilla*. Returning down the slopes towards Elmley Castle, *Brachythecium mildeanum* grew on a muddy path, and *Oxyrrhynchium schleicheri* appeared on a soil bank beside a sunken lane, which seems to be a favoured habitat for this species. *Orthotrichum lyellii* and *O. tenellum* numbered among the day's epiphytes, and *Cryphaea heteromalla* proved to be notably frequent.

A delightfully mild, sunny day in mid-March found us exploring The Batch (SO4495/4595) on the Long Mynd, west of All Stretton, Shropshire. Among the many common species that occupied attention for much of the day small, base-enriched flushes in the floor of the valley contained *Campylium stellatum*, *Climacium dendroides*, *Palustriella fal-*



*cata* and *Scorpidium cossonii*. In the afternoon we detoured to nearby Novers Hill (SO4595) to admire the rare liverwort *Jamesoniella undulifolia* growing in a patch of boggy ground beside a small pool. *J. undulifolia* looks very similar to the common *Odontoschisma sphagni*, with small unlobed lateral leaves and tiny underleaves, but each laminal cell has numerous oil bodies – more than in *O. sphagni*. With these two liverworts being so similar, one wonders whether the *Jamesoniella* might be more widespread than is currently known or suspected, for bryologists don't always go to the trouble of checking oil bodies in every patch of 'Odontoschisma' they encounter. However that may be, Novers Hill also has the scarce *Grimmia montana* growing on rock next to the common *G. trichophylla*, with *Schistostega pennata* lurking in a disused rabbit burrow.

Ten souls met up for our October meeting at Lower Thrift Farm (SO7158) on the Herefordshire border with Worcestershire, by kind invitation from Diane Richards, whose family runs the farm with wildlife and naturalists in mind. A combination of cider orchard, pasture, stream with tufa and sandstone, and acidic, deciduous woodland supplied us with 83 species to examine during the day. The stream and its banks occupied much of our attention, with the tufa a particular attraction where *Spirorbis* (Bishop's Frome) Limestone outcrops along the valley. There, *Didymodon tophaceus*, *Eucladium verticillatum*, *Leiocolea turbinata* and impressive sheets of *Palustriella commutata* kept us occupied until late morning, with several members trialling the prototype of the forthcoming BBS *Field Guide*, and muttering that they couldn't wait to get their hands on it permanently.

A little downstream, the sandstone into which the limestone had intruded held *Fissidens crassipes*, *F. pusillus* and *F. rivularis*, the latter species being the least common found during our visit.

For our final meeting of the year, Pete Martin led us to explore Court Wood (SO5615/5715) on



△ Ralph Martin studies the new BBS *Field Guide*.  
Xiaoqing Li

the Gloucestershire side of the River Wye downstream from Ross. The cliffs of Carboniferous Limestone provided a habitat suitable for a range of calcicoles, with many additional species on the rocks and stones of the woodland floor below the cliffs. Some of the pleurocarps proved challenging to identify, common species being supplemented by *Eurhynchium striatulum*, *Oxyrrhynchium schleicheri* and *Taxiphyllum wissgrillii*. *Mnium marginatum* likes greater base enrichment than the commoner *M. hornum*, and *Plagiochila britannica* also has calcicolous proclivities compared with its congeners, and may be distinguished from the latter by its much larger laminal cells. Stones in a small stream yielded *Fissidens rufulus* new to Gloucestershire, whose laminal cells are smaller than those of the very similar *F. crassipes*. The side of one boulder in the woodland was covered in *Leucobryum juniperoideum*, and the cliffs were home to prodigious quantities of *Marchesinia mackaii*, as well as numerous colonies of the disconcertingly variable moss *Trichostomum brachydontium*, colonies of which one member of the party resourcefully named 'var. *caphocarpum*'. We managed to explore only a small fraction of this huge site, and there must surely be much more to find there on future adventures.

◁ The Long Mynd, Shropshire. Xiaoqing Li

Mark Lawley (e m.lawley@virgin.net)