

THE MOSSES AND LIVERWORTS OF PEMBROKESHIRE

By Sam Bosanquet

Published by Sam Bosanquet, Brechfa, Carmarthenshire (2010)

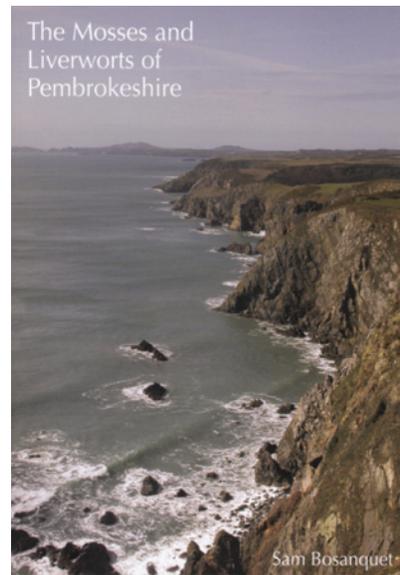
£20.00 (£15.00 for BBS members) + £5.50 p&p, pp. 313, ISBN 978-0-9552022-1-6

County bryophyte floras have come a long way in the last 40 or so years. The relatively brief, annotated checklists of the 1960s have given way to larger, digitally mapped floras; much more background information is now provided, and the increasing sophistication of publishing technology has allowed for the inclusion of photographs, many now in colour. Sam Bosanquet's fine new Pembrokeshire flora is a worthy addition to the genre and has, I feel, broken a considerable amount of new ground.

To a part-time, amateur recorder like myself, the sheer amount of relevant detail in the book seems incredible. Almost 54,000 records are included, most of them made within the last 20 years. Sam has, of course, the advantage of being based locally and of actually working as a bryologist, but in any event the amount of work he has done deserves great credit. Apart from other things, his great knowledge of and interest in Pembrokeshire has helped to make the book readable, which is not always the case in many serious scientific works.

As is customary in modern floras, the book contains the usual introductory chapters on climate, geology and soils. There is also a history of recording in the county, a very useful description of the broad habitat types with the characteristic and/or rare species of each, a chapter on the county's bryophyte biogeography and another detailing the changes in its bryoflora.

With some exceptions the species order, taxonomy and names follow the latest *Census Catalogue* (Hill *et al.*, 2008), with cross-references to Blockeel & Long's 1998 edition where necessary. Species accounts are rather fuller than those in many other similar floras. Almost all of them include maps, which show records



on a tetrad (2x2 km square) basis; full record details are given for all taxa with fewer than five occurrences. Most include very detailed habitat information, including notes on the usual associates (this latter feature has already proved useful to me while checking a puzzling *Dicranella* specimen from Devon). Host trees are listed for epiphytic species. A most helpful feature is the very detailed information on fruiting times; not only the months of fruiting, but those in which the different stages of fruiting have been noted, are shown. In addition, Sam has included an altitude table for each species, an innovative addition to the accounts.

The 64 colour photographs are another useful asset; half of them show examples of habitats, while the rest consist of close-ups of individual species. Every reader will have his or her own favourite shot; my own is that of *Pogonatum nanum* (Photo 45), which shows the distinctive capsules to perfection.

For a work of this quality and scope, the price, kept down by grants from Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre, is unbelievable, and the discount to BBS members could well produce a few new recruits!

As Sam is only human it is almost inevitable that the book will contain a few errors, but despite owning a copy since it was published I have as yet been unable to find any. The meticulous care taken in pre-publication checking deserves a lot of praise (and would do well to be adopted by certain large, general publishers!).

The Mosses and Liverworts of Pembrokeshire is a book

I can recommend unreservedly. It fulfils its function admirably as a local bryophyte flora, while the amount of detailed information in the species descriptions, coupled with the reasonable price and its readability, makes it valuable to anyone interested in the flora of the British Isles in general.

ATLAS OF THE BRYOPHYTES OF SOUTH HAMPSHIRE

By R. C. Stern

Published by Pisces Publications (2010)

£9.95, pp. 140, ISBN 978-1-874357-41-4

South Hampshire can effectively be divided into three areas: the Tertiary clays and gravels of the Hampshire Basin and coast, the chalk ridge of the western end of the South Downs and part of the downlands to the north; and to the south-west the New Forest, southern Avon valley and part of the modern county of Dorset across to Bournemouth. The key location in the region is, of course, the New Forest, with its extensive areas of semi-natural habitat and, not surprisingly, many of the more interesting records, such as *Plagiochila bifaria*, *Frullania fragilifolia*, *Splachnum ampullaceum*, *Zygodon forsteri* and *Hyocomium armoricum*, come from its ancient woodlands, mires and heaths. The chalk downs also provide some excitement, with good floras at such locations as Butser Hill (which also has an excellent example of the rare southern hepatic mat). The lack of hard strata and extensive sand-dune systems along the coast means that it is relatively poor for bryophytes. The *Atlas* describes 108 liverworts and 338 mosses, which is on a par with the taxa recorded in the neighbouring coastal counties of West Sussex and Dorset.

This *Atlas* has two main parts. The second half is a reprint of Jean Paton's *Flora* of the vice-county published in 1961, which includes records up to 1960, and at the time set new standards for such floras. This section includes a description of the geology, topography and history of recording in the area. The first half of the *Atlas* brings this information

up to date, following a systematic survey at a 5 km-square basis, principally made by Rod Stern from 2000 to 2006, with important additional records up to 2008 from other workers. Unfortunately, the maps do not differentiate between pre-1960 records and more recent ones, although the accompanying text does indicate generally which records are from Jean Paton's work.

Reference

Hill, M.O., Blackstock, T.H., Long, D.G. & Rothero, G.P. (2008). *A Checklist and Census Catalogue of British and Irish Bryophytes: Updated 2008*. Middlewich: BBS.

The original intention when the project was started was to produce a new flora for the whole of Hampshire, but work is still ongoing for the north part of the county (v.-c. 12). So the current publication is, in a way, a work in progress, and indeed the new material, including the maps, covers only 39 pages. It does, however, provide a sound basis for further work in the county. Rod Stern is to be congratulated on the sterling work he has done in mapping the vice-county and, indeed, in encouraging others in the area to record bryophytes, mainly through meetings of the BBS Southern Group. The *Atlas* has an attractive front cover depicting *Zygodon forsteri* and the colour photographs of a selection of typical species by Peter Creed are excellent, although it would have been nice to have included some illustrations of classic localities. It is also a shame that the new introduction does not take the opportunity to say more about some of the more interesting species of the county and their localities, as this might have stimulated more people to visit the area. Also, it seems rather an omission that the index refers only to the new section of the *Atlas*, making cross-referencing to Paton's *Flora* more difficult than necessary. However, if you want the latest information, this is the publication to buy and at £9.95 it is very reasonably priced.

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