



△ David Chamberlain and Mary Ghullam inspect a slab of stone. Mark Pool

The Northern part of Banffshire was selected for no other reason than it was under-recorded. After a traumatic start, resulting from the loss of our driver 2 days before the start of the meeting, three stalwarts, David Chamberlain, Mary Ghullam and Mark Pool, considered that the honour of the Society had to be maintained and proceeded by bus from Edinburgh 1 day late, after an introductory excursion to East Lothian. Whatever else we all gained from our week of recording, we were certainly fitter as a result of a 4-km walk each way, between our cottage on the Forglan Estate and the nearest bus stop in Turriff! We were particularly grateful to Maria Chamberlain who drove up from Edinburgh to give us a little less than 2 days transport.

SUNDAY 6 JULY

We spent an intermittently wet day with David Long at Yester in East Lothian, an estate well-endowed with mixed woodland, with a few streams, on old red sandstone. While the bryoflora was in the main fairly mundane, several epiphytes were recorded, including *Nowellia curvifolia* and *Riccardia palmata*

Last year, the main part of the BBS Summer Field Meeting in Shetland (reported in the last issue of *Field Bryology*) was preceded by a few days recording in under-recorded v.-c. 94 (Banffshire). Only three members took part in this 'pre-meeting', but it was a worthwhile and fun venture, as **David Chamberlain** reports.

on rotten wood, and *Syntrichia laevipila* and *S. virescens** on mature tree trunks. *S. latifolia* was recorded on damp tarmac and *Conocephalum salebrosum* was seen on the masonry of a bridge.

MONDAY 7 JULY

The three stalwarts proceeded by bus to Turriff where we were met by the Estate Manager and transported to our commodious base on the Forglan Estate. On arrival we started recording on the estate, which proved to be fairly bryo-rich. Within 10 minutes Mary turned up the best find of the week, *Henediella macrophylla*, growing on fairly nondescript disturbed earth by a ditch, a species that turned up in several places around the estate. *Barbula convoluta* var. *sardoa* was seen on a wall, and *Fossombronina wondraczekii* was identified from gravel tracks in the walled garden.

TUESDAY 8 JULY

A bus journey took us north from Turriff to Banff where we spent a pleasant day around the valley of the River Deveron. *Bryum radiculosum** turned up on mortar outside the tourist office (where better?) and *Pseudocrossidium hornschurchianum* was seen on lime wash, between cobble stones. *Henediella macrophylla* occurred on disturbed soil near

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Duff House, and again in woodland by the River, leading to the speculation that its distribution here might be associated with the Deveron Catchment. *Syntrichia laevipila** and *Orthotrichum stramineum* were recorded from Sycamore trunks near Duff House, and *Syntrichia latifolia* was seen in tarmac on a road above the Deveron. *Orthodontium lineare** and *Plagiothecium curvifolium* were reported on rotting wood near the Bridge of Alvah, and *Ptychomitrium polyphyllum* was seen on a wall, also near the bridge. *Schistidium crassipilum** occurred in some quantity on the concrete cover to a water tank near the Deveron. *Syntrichia papillosa* was seen on sycamore in a wood above The Macduff Distillery.

WEDNESDAY 9 JULY

Again, we were dependent on buses for our journey from Turriff to Macduff, then eastwards towards Gardenstown, with a little explaining to do when we asked to be put down in the middle of nowhere. Progressing down the Den of Afforsk we came across *Racomitrium elongatum* in a grassy strip in the middle of the road. *Zygodon viridissimus* var. *stirtonii** was growing on the remains of a small building close to the sea. We found *Henediella heimii* in the lee of a boulder on a steep slope above



< Far left. An example of the 'find of the week' – *Henediella macrophylla*. Jonathan Sleath

< Left. The Bridge of Alvah. Mark Pool

the sea, and *Trichostomum brachydontium* (a consequential vice-county record as a result of the shift of cut-off date from 1950 to 1960) was seen on ground just above the high-tide mark. While the pickings were decidedly thin, the mid-summer sun managed to redeem the day.

THURSDAY 10 JULY

By now Maria had joined us with a car, so we decided to head westwards towards Dufftown. On arrival at Loch Park Woodland, on the Haggieshav Estate, we were moistened by persistent drizzle, but our enthusiasm was not too dampened as the ground looked promising. The effects of the limestone around Loch Park brought in *Calliergon giganteum*, *Palustriella commutata*, *Plagiomnium elatum* and *Sphagnum teres*. *Hypnum andoi** was seen on a tree trunk, *Rhynchostegium confertum** was recorded on a shaded boulder, and a putative record of *Dicranodontium denudatum* was made. Undoubtedly, the combination of steamed up lenses and glasses took its toll on our findings.

During the afternoon the drizzle eased, allowing a stop near Machatties Cairn. The more acid boggy

ground yielded *Sphagnum compactum*, *S. russowii* and *S. tenellum*, with *Myliola anomala* and *M. taylorii*. *S. teres* was again seen at edge of the bog.

FRIDAY 11 JULY

By now the weather had improved, so the party moved into South Aberdeenshire (v.-c. 92). Our first port of call was Harestone Moss, an area not improved by an old car dump and assorted scattered rubbish. A mire community supported *Calliergon giganteum* and *Straminiergon stramineum*, while the more acid dome of the raised bog supported nine species of *Sphagnum*, including *S. cuspidatum* and *S. russowii*.

After delivering Mary Ghullam to Aberdeen Airport for a flight to Shetland, Mark and David were dropped off at Balmeddie, adjacent to the Menie Estate that is soon to be 'improved' by Donald Trump. Maria then headed south back to Edinburgh.

The coastal sand dunes yielded up a consequential vice-county record for *Syntrichia ruraliformis*. *Pseudocrossidium hornsuschianum** was also recorded on the dunes, and *Orthotrichum diaplanum** was recorded as an epiphyte. As we

moved southwards the dunes became steadily grimmer, ultimately to be dominated by the huge Black Dog rubbish tip which I discovered later has become a major pollution hazard. It was therefore not altogether surprising that very little was recorded. While waiting for the bus for Aberdeen, on our way back to Turriff, *Fossombronina pusilla* was spotted in a flower bed, nobly grown on by Mark to confirm its identity. *Orthotrichum stramineum* was seen on elder. The invigorating walk back from Turriff brought us back close to dusk, but we still had time to stop on a track on the Forglan Estate and *Diplophyllum obtusifolium** was collected.

SATURDAY 12 JULY

What we suffered by way of precipitation on Thursday was reinforced several times over by a veritable deluge. So the Estate was given a second examination. *Henediella macrophylla** was again seen, on a damp sloping area of open earth. *Grimmia donniana* was recorded on a dry stone wall. The day finished off nicely as the rain eased with the discovery of *Pylaisia polyantha** on a moribund elm, *Scapania umbrosa* on the steps of

the Mausoleum, and *Sciuro-hypnum populeum** on a water feature in the walled garden.

Our Sunday return to Edinburgh by bus proved to be uneventful, after a fully laden march down to Turriff.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our advance expectations for the trip were not too great, especially as we were in lowland north-east Scotland. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that we were not disappointed. We managed to make significant contributions to five under-recorded hectads, with one or two significant new finds for v.-c.s 92 and 94.

For most of the excursion we were dependent on public transport, which proved to be an interesting and healthy experience, even if it was somewhat limiting. The participants were grateful for financial support from the BBS arranged through Chris Preston from a fund set aside to assist recording in under-worked hectads.

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