

Cambridgeshire Bryophyte Group
7 December 2024: Swavesey church and Fen Drayton Lakes

Present: Kate Fagin, Jonathan Graham, Mark Hill, Nick Jardine, Chris Preston, Pete Stroh.

This was the second excursion in succession to be targeted by a named storm, Storm Darragh. Rather like Storm Bert a fortnight ago, the forecast heavy rain did not materialise though the day was overcast and the winds strong. The day proved to be rather a short one, as the Cambridge contingent arriving by car got sucked onto a length of the A14 with few exits, and arrived late at the rendezvous, Swavesey church. At the other end of the day, at 2.46, an hour before sunset, we found that the light was already getting too poor for bryology.

We have two previous lists from Swavesey churchyard, from an excursion in 1987 and a visit by Jonathan Graham and me in 2006. On these lists are 32 species; we refound 25, failed to refind 7 and added 4. Just under half the species of the current total, 17 out of 36, were recorded on all three visits, a quarter (9) were recorded just once and the remainder (10) recorded in two of the three years. The additions this time included *Dicranoweisia cirrata* on a decaying wooden grave-marking cross and *Homalothecium lutescens* on chippings on a grave. As usual we looked carefully at the *Homalothecium* before convincing ourselves that it was different from the *H. sericeum* on the surrounding kerb. It's not unusual for us to find it in this habitat in the county. Quite how it has colonised these sites is unclear – in *The mosses and liverworts of Pembrokeshire* (2010) Sam Bosanquet has suggested that it is introduced with the limestone chippings on graves in his county, but I'm not sure that the same is true of the gravel chippings on which it grows here.



Syntrichia ruraliformis (left) and *Aloina aloides*, Fen Drayton Lakes. Chris Preston.

We went on to the Fen Drayton Lakes RSPB reserve. This is a group of disused gravel pits we first visited in 1998, again in 2004 and (after it became an RSPB reserve) in 2009 and 2014. This is a large site and we were only able to visit a small area, concentrating on open ground north of the car park. We were limited not only by time but also by flooding in the nearby scrub and by the strong winds which made it advisable not to venture far into mature willow woodland. In all we found 40 species, with just two additions to the site list (*Lophocolea bidentata*, *Microbryum davallianum*, the latter as var. *conicum*). The refinds included *Aloina*

aloides fruiting well. When we first visited the site (1998, 2004) we found only *A. ambigua*, but we found both species in 2014. As we only saw a single fruiting *Aloina* patch this time, we can't say whether *A. ambigua* is still present. We should make a further visit to the site when the conditions allow us to visit a greater range of habitats.

Chris Preston 14 December 2024



The open ground we visited at Fen Drayton Lakes. *Chris Preston*