

Cambridgeshire Bryophyte Group

2 January 2025: Brampton Wood

Present: Astrid Biddle, Rachel Carter, Dermot Cooper, Helen Harwood, Mark Hill, Jonny Hughes, Nick Jardine, Chris Preston, Jeff Scott, Jonathan Shanklin, Pete Stroh, John Walton, Monica Walton.

Our first excursion for 2025 involved a short hop across the border into Huntingdonshire (VC31) to Brampton Wood near Huntingdon. A bright but frosty day provided some respite from the stormy weather of the previous few days. So stormy, in fact, it seemed that a couple of migratory bryologists (Monica and John Walton) from Warwickshire had been blown off course and ended up with our Cambridgeshire flock. It was relief to learn that they had travelled by car.

Brampton Wood is ancient woodland on underlying Oxford Clay with a complex of soils offering varying pH levels. It is an SSSI managed by the Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve. Recording of bryophytes in the wood began in earnest in 1986 and has been surveyed several times since. The last visit by our group was in 2010. 103 species have been recorded (15 liverworts, 88 mosses).



Hoar-frosted *Hylocomiadelphus triquetrus* looking spikier than usual. *Chris Preston*

As soon as the imaginary line had been crossed into the first monad and the customary cry of ‘*Hypnum cupressiforme*’ had gone up, a few colonies of *Platygyrium repens* were spotted amongst it. This epiphyte, whilst not common, has been steadily extending its range over recent years (it was only recognised as a British species in 1962), so finding it was an auspicious start to the day.



Left: *Platygyrium repens* showing ‘axillary propaguliferous branchlets’ (spiky branch tips). *Jeff Scott*

Right: *Dicranum tauricum*. *Jonny Hughes*

Some diligent scouring of tree trunks and branches for other epiphytes soon turned up *Orthotrichum stramineum*, *O. tenellum* and *Lewinskya striata* – all three of which were new to the list for Brampton Wood. Having found those rarer species, it would have been unusual not to have found *Lewinskya affinis*, normally common but formerly regarded as scarce on this site. Thankfully, it was found and normal order was restored. Another pleasing ancient woodland species, *Dicranum tauricum*, was found by Jonny on an oak stump.

Lunch was taken on some conveniently arranged logs. On leaving, Mark spotted that the comfortable *Hypnum* cushions were, in fact, *Hypnum jutlandicum*, now squashed and not looking their most photogenic. The moral of the story being: ‘Always check your lunch log *before* sitting on it’.



Just after lunch, a chance grab at a muddy green patch on the path in a gap between tree roots turned up a liverwort. There was short discussion about whether it could be *Calypogeia fissa* or *Chiloscyphus pallescens*. This was soon settled when Mark reminded us that *C. fissa* has an incubous leaf insertion pattern (roof tiles arranged so that the rain would come *in*) and that *C. pallescens* has a succubous one. Discussion over, as the imaginary notches in some leaves faded away to mere indentations.



Chiloscyphus pallescens. Jonny Hughes

Astrid found a small acrocarp with long, slightly curved leaves which Mark thought was *Pleuridium* sp. Later, Mark and Chris were able to determine it to be *P. acuminatum*, based on the lack of any bud-like male branches in the axils of the leaf stems which would have indicated *P. subulatum*. Curiously, Mark also found *Bryum violaceum* lurking in amongst it; curious, as this species is more at home in an arable field or disturbed ground than ancient woodland.

Overall, a total of 48 mosses and 10 liverworts were recorded in just the two monads surveyed (TL1870 and TL1770) of which 5 mosses (*Orthotrichum stramineum*, *O. tenellum*, *Lewinskya striata*, *Bryum violaceum* and *Syntrichia papillosa*) and 1 liverwort (*Myriocoleopsis minutissima*) were new to the list.

Finally, it is appropriate here to thank Mick Burton for all the excellent work he has done over the past 12 years as Regional Recorder for Huntingdonshire. Mick has decided to call it a day and I have agreed to take over from him. Mick has left us with meticulous records of the bryophyte flora of the county and without them I would not have been able to write this report. If I can do half as good a job as he has then I will have done well.

Jeff Scott 9 January 2025