

Orthotrichum consimile: another English record and a postscript

The recent discovery of a tuft of *Orthotrichum consimile* Mitt. in Derbyshire was reported in *Field Bryology* 94 (Blockeel, 2008). One of us (CW) has now found it at a second English locality, in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Details of the collection are:

On elder, edge of Avenue Wood, Sledmere Park, SE937638 (v.c. 61), Colin Wall, 1 May 2008 (BBSUK).

The elder on which *O. consimile* grew was part of 'copse' of around 15 well-grown specimens. Other species noted on these elders, though not necessarily closely associated with *O. consimile*, included *O. pulchellum* Brunt., which was quite common, *O. affine* Brid. and *Ulotia bruchii* Brid. *U. phyllantha* Brid., *Cryphaea heteromalla* Hedw.) D.Mohr and *Metzgeria fruticulosa* (Dicks.) A.Evans were present elsewhere in the Park.

The capsules of *O. consimile* were more clearly exerted than those of *O. pulchellum* and these drew attention to the plant as something that looked a bit different, although it was not recognized as *O. consimile* in the field. The setae measure about 3.5 mm, a little longer than those of the Derbyshire specimen. The identification of the new collection was confirmed by microscopic examination: the stomata are immersed and are

located in the lower to middle part of the urn. Having been collected earlier in the season, the capsules are at a different stage of maturity from the Derbyshire specimen; in fact two generations are present, senescent capsules for the previous year (2007), and immature ones for the new. The peristome and lids of the new season's capsules are not fully differentiated. In the previous season's capsules the outer peristome teeth are pale brown, somewhat darker than in the Derbyshire specimen, perhaps because of their age. On the basis of these capsules, two further observations can be made about the differences between *O. consimile* and *O. pulchellum*.

1. The ribs of the capsule are wider in *O. consimile* than in *O. pulchellum*. Vitt (1973) indicates that the ribs are 4 cells wide in *O. consimile*, 2–4 cells in *O. pulchellum*. However, in British specimens of *O. pulchellum* the ribs are normally only 2–3 cells wide. In the Yorkshire specimen of *O. consimile* they are (3-)4(-5) cells wide. This appears to be a good additional character separating the two species.

2. The calyptrae of the Yorkshire specimen more closely resemble those of typical *O. pulchellum* than those of the Derbyshire plant. They are loose fitting (perhaps because the capsules are not fully expanded), and some of them are coloured brown along the plications (which

Following publication of the article in FB94 reporting the discovery of *Orthotrichum consimile* in Derbyshire, Tom Blockeel and Colin Wall describe the latest developments concerning this species

are weak), giving them a striped appearance. In the Derbyshire specimen they were close fitting, and lacked any brown colouring. The calyptrae of *O. pulchellum* are campanulate, with a wide base, and therefore sit very loosely on the capsule; they regularly have characteristic brown stripes along the plications. Those of *O. consimile*, according to the literature, have a more oblong shape, and they extend further down the capsule. However, the loose fit and brown stripes of the Yorkshire specimen obscure these differences. Further observations are needed to confirm the constancy of the characters.

This second recent record of *O. consimile* demonstrates that last year's Derbyshire record was not a one-off occurrence. It will surely be found at further British sites.

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References

- Blockeel, T.L. (2008). *Orthotrichum consimile* in Derbyshire. *Field Bryology* 94, 23–26.
- Vitt, D.H. (1973). *A Revision of the Genus Orthotrichum in North America, North of Mexico*. Lehre: J. Cramer.

Alex Smith 1920–2007

Alex Smith died on 16 September 2007, aged 87. He was a member of the BBS for almost 25 years having joined in 1972. He served as referee for the Brachytheciaceae from 1990 and many members will remember the meticulous and detailed replies which he gave to their queries.

Alex was born in Glasgow in 1919 and after qualifying as a chartered accountant moved to London where he worked for Philips electrical, becoming chief internal auditor. He produced a text book on that subject and also wrote three detective novels (as Clark Smith) which, after appearing in hardback were published by Penguin in their distinctive green and white covers. One of them was made into a television play. His hero, an accountant of course, must be the only 'private eye' to note the flowers in hedgerows and gardens as he went about his 'business'. Alex acted as treasurer for the crime writers association for many years and was awarded their silver dagger for his services.

On retirement Alex moved to Suffolk, joined the BBS and began recording a then very underworked county. He found many new vice-county records and also added records to Argyll from specimens sent to him by his brother. His wife Mina, an accomplished botanical artist who wrote and illustrated books on flower arranging and house plants, pre-deceased him.

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