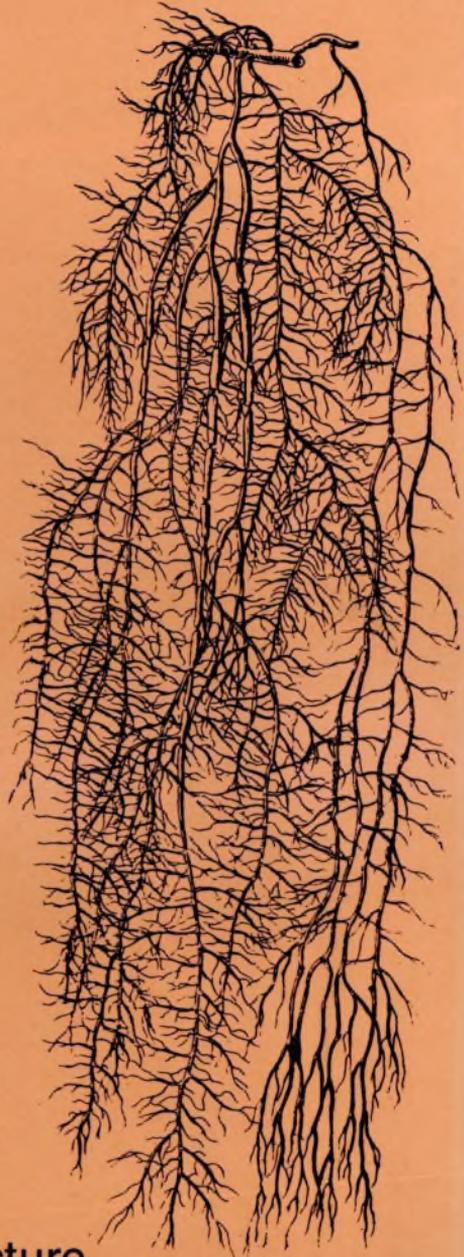


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regarded as subspecies or varieties. But this is a limited (or should I say elitist, or even Linnaean ?) point of view; I was surprised to find that Mason Hale in his latest monograph recognises 38 species on the world scale!

CUDBEAR

COUNTRY DIARY - NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE

A phone call from Edinburgh revealed our President spending his winter evenings grappling with the intricacies of the new flora. He was writing the descriptions for Protoparmelia - yet another new genus. Old, familiar Lecanora badia is now Protoparmelia badia; and worse still, there is now also P. picea and P. montynii to contend with - the latter two distinguished by their narrower spores ('pointed sausages rather than pointed lemons') and different chemistry as revealed by tlc. Tremendous field characteristics - no wonder they're rare! Still, P. montynii only grows on coastal rocks in the S W - so no need to worry about that up here - and P. picea has a darker thallus - which is something; providing the two are considerate enough to grow together of course! Anyway, Brian had a challenge for me. He only had two records of P. picea; one from Braemar, and the other from the summit of Roseberry Topping - about 10 miles down the road from me. William Mudd had found it there in the middle of the last century, could I go and see if it was still around?

William Mudd is someone I identify with rather strongly. He worked much the same area as I do today and I have a photograph of him over my desk, inspiring me on to greater discoveries. It shows a face framed by a longish, straggling beard and a battered top hat whose owner appears to be in the process of being arrested for being drunk and disorderly. It's actually part of a group photograph taken during his time as curator of the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, but the image of the 'illiterate Scotchman who smoked very strong tobacco and smelt strongly of whisky' shines through.

Anyway, the mention of his name was enough to ensure that the next morning found me staring up at 700 ft of mud (no pun intended) known as Roseberry Topping. The only difference from previous visits was that this time it was covered with snow! Was it worth the climb? Would I be able to find anything when I got up there? It takes a real enthusiast (other terms suggest themselves) to search for lichens when you have to scrape the snow off the rocks first. Still, Mudd would have done it. The man who carried an 8 stone sack of specimens up and down 1800 ft, 10 miles across the Northern Pennines from Teesdale to Appleby wouldn't have been put off by a little bit of snow. Besides, it's a bright, sunny day and there's a good view from the top....

I set out along the farm track leading to the bottom of the hill. The snow is starting to melt and the muddy path is even more treacherous than usual. No inclination to look at fence posts, all my attention is concentrated on keeping my feet dry. I stop briefly to inspect a dull green crust at the base of a tree which is probably Micarea prasina, but I can't get excited about it. Fortunately this is a well trodden path in summer and the National Trust - who own the site - have provided steps up the initial stages. Usually I disapprove of such luxuries but today they are more than welcome. It gives me the opportunity to stop paying all my attention to where I'm putting my feet and start looking for some lichens. This is Porpidia country - P. macrocarpa is everywhere on the rocks and stones - along with P. crustulata and P. tuberculosa. I know from experience that beneath the snow, on the ground and in rock crevices, lurk numerous, stunted Cladonias, but today I can ignore them with a clear conscience. This is not a day for making lists.

The top of the hill has been quarried in the past so that huge boulders litter the slopes. This looks more promising, so I leave the security of the path and contour across 50 ft of virgin snow.

towards them. Here the flora is different, Lecanora gangaleoides is the dominant species with Fuscidea cyathoides, Rhizocarpon geographicum and R. obscuratum; but no Protoparmelia. Perhaps it's under the snow. Perhaps it's not here at all! This is not easy terrain. The tops of the boulders (which slope at all angles) are free of snow, but between them it has drifted so as to obscure any gaps, making crossing from one to the other a hazardous business. After sinking in above my knees for the third time I decide that Protoparmelia is not to be found around here and make for the summit.

The south side is a sheer cliff, totally devoid of lichens - not even Micarea bauschiana in the underhangs, so I head to the right and start up the path to that side. This winds its way between huge slabs of stone and suddenly, in the centre of a vertical rock surface, is the unmistakable, dark-brown thallus of Protoparmelia. It must be more than coincidence that the best specimens always grow in the centre of a rock, perhaps it's an evolutionary defence mechanism against chisels. Anyway there is no way I can collect a decent sized specimen without leaving an unsightly scar on the rock, so I look around and notice a few other plants, but none better situated for collecting. They all appear to be the same colour so I scrape off a few fruits from a couple of them and press on. Over the next few minutes I encounter the same situation three or four times until I have half a dozen packets containing Protoparmelia fruits.

On towards the summit. So far I haven't seen another soul since leaving my car about two hours ago and the prospect of having the summit to myself for the first time ever is particularly pleasing. However, as I crest the final rise I see a figure standing by the trig. point and my heart sinks slightly. Fortunately he appears to be about as sociable as I am at the moment and heads off in the

opposite direction as I approach. The view is spectacular! Thirty miles away across a white landscape, the Pennines rise out of the mist, while to the north Teesside forms an impressive spectacle against the backdrop of the sea. Behind me the North York Moors are dark and brooding in the fading light, reminding me that this is December and I can't linger long. But I can stay a few minutes to soak up the atmosphere and reflect on the day. It has certainly been an interesting one, and enjoyable; but have I been successful? Have I found P.picea? You'll have to wait for the flora.

Alan Fryday

SOME RETROSPECTIVE WAFFLE

Please don't blame me - blame the Editor - he egged me on, though it was so long ago he has probably forgotten that he wanted me to write some account of how I became interested in lichens, and, though he was too polite to put it that way, how on earth I ever became president of the BLS!

Well! it was twenty years ago, but when I contemplate the eminence of the lichenologists who nowadays occupy that position the somewhat rugose octogenarian countenance tends towards the rufescent, if not rufous. Apart from running a pioneer nursery course at BANGOR I have contributed precisely nil to the knowledge of lichens, and never could identify more than the commonest ones. It was their symbiotic nature that fascinated me, at a time when the Establishment was distinctly non compos mentis and even lecturing about mycorrhizas was considered to smack too much of the deadly (to careers) 'muck and magic' school.

Of course, it was not as a sub-lichenologist that I was so generously allowed to preside (jointly) at that first, historic, combined symposium of the British Mycological and Lichen Societies