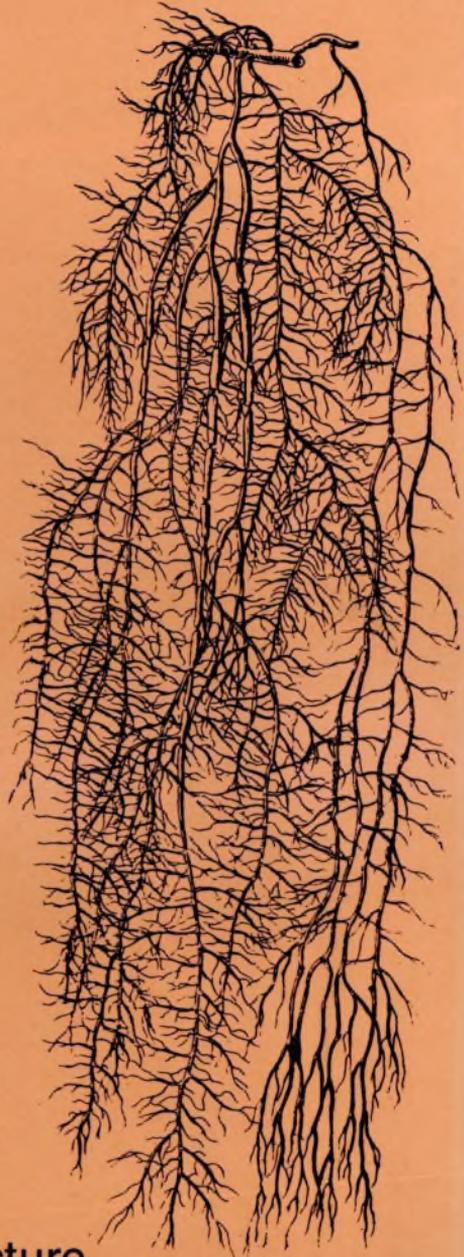


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Your idea of a regular feature in the Bulletin is an excellent one, and the editor agrees. I believe he has found someone (one of the culprits) to prepare the feature, which will start following the publication of the new Flora, in which many of the recent changes will be made clear.

Yours,

Auntie Nora (Syn. Aunt Nora, non Uncle Norman)

TWO NEW BOOKS ON POLAR CRYPTOGRAMS

Cambridge University Press have recently published two new books on polar cryptogams. This note is not a review, it is merely intended to bring them to the attention of Bulletin readers.

Biology of Polar Bryophytes and Lichens by R.E. Longton 1988 (£55 pp.391). This book comprehensively reviews the biology of bryophytes and lichens in the polar tundra. Adaptions to the severe environment in terms of growth form, physiology and reproduction are investigated, most points being backed up by numerous graphs and tables. The two groups are in the main treated separately, for example, an outline classification of vegetation in the cold and frigid arctic contains 29 subformations; 6 composed of lichens, 19 of bryophytes, 2 of algae and 2 of angiosperms. Whether the groups keep as apart as this or if it is an artifact resulting from specialisation among scientists is not clear. The book is not about floristics, for example you will not find much detail on the spectacular flora of bird perching sites in polar regions; it covers instead broad topics such as pattern, process, physiology, nutrient cycling and energy flow.

The second book Microbial Ecosystems of Antarctic by W.F.Vincent (£37.50 pp.304), provides an account of the full range of environments in the continent and of the microbial communities that live

within them. Lichens occurring on the surface of rocks are not considered, but it does cover the cryptoendolithic lichens which live beneath the surface of coarse grained sandstone rocks. The other saxicolous habitat considered is vertical cracks in marble which are heavily colonised by free living micro-algae which I suppose just might be the precursors of lichens.

FLORA ABBEY GROVENSIS

I came to live at Abbey Grove Cattery in March 1988. This animal boarding house, situated at Hockley, South Essex (51/850939, VC 18) is in a rural situation, but close to densely urbanized areas. Over the last year I have had ample opportunity to study the lichens within the grounds of the Cattery which extends over one acre.

In all, I found some 64 lichen taxa growing on a variety of substrates. Many of these, especially on lignum and trees, are small young thalli which have recently colonized, being typical of the marked increase of lichens in South Essex generally. The single richest substrate is lignum with 33 lichen species present. Among the most interesting of these are Bacidia caligans, B. chlorotricula, Lecanora saligna, L.stenotropa, L.symmicta, Lecidea fuscoatra and Thelocarpon laureri. Another noteworthy substrate consists of a pile of siliceous roofing tiles on the ground; lichen species present here include Bacidia arnoldiana (fertile), B.caligans, B.egenula, B.saxenii, Micarea denigrata, M.lithinella and Trapelia placodioides. Among the 21 species present on trees are Bacidia arnoldiana, Candelariella reflexa, Evernia prunastri (small young thalli), Lecania cyrtella, Ramalina farinacea (small young thalli) and Xanthoria polycarpa. One particularly interesting record is Bacidia arnoldiana on soil (5 small thalli with pycnidia, directly on soil over an uprooted stump - but not on the stump itself). Bacidia arnoldiana is one of the major success stories of South Essex.