

Rockers' Workshop

21st May – 4th June 2005 [revised March 2023]

The idea for a workshop for Lichen Apprentices on montane lichens (a Rockers' Workshop) was prompted by the awareness of a desperate need in the UK for young, active lichenologists to gain experience of montane lichens. Part of the grant from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to the BLS was to be used in training lichenologists, so this seemed an obvious project. Planning started a year in advance, and Michigan State University agreed to Alan Fryday coming to Scotland to be co-leader of the Workshop with Brian Coppins. And it was great!! It was great for training, great for the camaraderie amongst participants, and great for lichens.

What was achieved? Overall, the preliminary results have produced over 400 new records for the 10 km squares visited. The benefit to the Lichen Apprentices was generally acknowledged by all who took part, and John Douglass has produced his personal Diary of the Workshop (elsewhere in this edition of the Bulletin). Alan Fryday has set up a Rockers' website, where detailed species lists of the sites visited can be seen, together with some of the photographs taken during the fortnight. The BLS have re-instated the Rockers' website that Alan Fryday set up with MSU, where he included detailed species lists of the sites visited, together with some of the photographs taken during the fortnight.

<https://britishlichensociety.org.uk/the-society/partnerships/scottish-lichen-apprenticeship-scheme/rockers>

The workshop was operated from National Trust for Scotland (NTS) Base Camps at Mar Lodge and Kintail, both providing excellent accommodation (with good drying facilities). The last week of May and the first week of June were selected as (supposedly) this is the period when Scotland enjoys the lowest rainfall and greatest run of sunny days. Also, midges are supposed to be only just emerging, bracken a manageable impediment, and snow patches are still lying in sheltered corries. Sounded delightful, but don't believe all you read.... The weather for the first week was cool and damp, with fresh snow on the Cairngorms, but on the second week it rained most of the time.

We aimed to cover Scottish montane sites in the Eastern Highlands (Cairngorm Mountains), and Western Oceanic Highlands (Kintail, and the Trotternish Ridge on the Isle of Skye). In week one, around Braemar, we saw lichens growing on a variety of rock substrata, including limestones, slates and schists in the southern half of our area, but mostly nutrient depleted, neutral rocks such as siliceous schist and granites in the northern half, and including the Cairngorm Granite which is well exposed in the corries and boulder fields east of Beinn a' Bhuid.

The second week, in Kintail, was badly hampered by the rain, but the work continued on montane sites and included a long walk into Coire an Sgairne. A churchyard and an old copper prospect were also visited, together with a short look for lichens growing on an ultrabasic rock, exposed in the Glen More River at Glen Elg. The Ratagan Granite was not examined as it is now very heavily forested. The wet weather did have the advantage, though, of enabling more microscope work to be undertaken. This was an important part of the workshop, that material could be

identified as well as collected, and participants were able to take advantage of available expert tuition.

To 'break the ice' and encourage participants to relax and all feel silly together, it was decided that everyone could have a special black Rockers' t-shirt. Alan Orange provided a 'spore design' to go on the front; then Joe Hope used his expertise to put the complete front and back design together and go to a splendid t-shirt printer in Edinburgh. All 22 members of the Workshop were photographed wearing their *Rockers' Workshop Scotland 2005* t-shirts for a press release to the quaintly named local paper the *Deeside Piper and Herald*. We also made page 3 of the *Aberdeenshire Press & Journal* ("the Voice of the North") and at 7.15 a.m. on Saturday morning 28th May, Ray Woods gave a superb live radio broadcast via a telephone link to Radio Scotland's *Out of Doors* programme.

We operated on a self-catering basis which worked amazingly well, providing a lively topic for speculation each evening, but led one participant to remark that he had no idea it was to be a gourmet event for food as well as lichens!

That the Workshop was a success is due in no small part to the contributions made by everyone who took part. Alan Orange and Alan Fryday both provided preliminary keys to genera (*Lecidea*, *Porpidia*, *Rhizocarpon* and pyrenocarpous species). Brian Coppins provided several microscopes, chemicals and other necessary equipment, courtesy of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. Alan Orange also brought along a mobile TLC kit, so was able to demonstrate the value of TLC in naming some difficult species. Brian also brought along an ancient (but very serviceable) grinding wheel, which was bolted onto a table and wound into action each night to sharpen blunted chisels.

Chris Ellis was volunteered to drive the mini-bus, with help from Andy Cross. For the first week, Andrea Britton had use of a long-wheel base Landrover, courtesy of the Macaulay Institute, and this proved valuable logistic support for approaching the northern corries on the Invercauld Estate side of Beinn a'Bhuird. A preliminary list of potential sites was drawn up by Brian and Alan Fryday, and Anna Griffith (while still with SNH) provided all necessary details about land-ownership and access contacts.

The workshop was partly funded by the BLS through a grant from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Sponsorship also came from the National Trust for Scotland through generous concessions over the cost of accommodation at Mar Lodge, together with providing transport part-way up onto the high ground. Invited members who were not Lichen Apprentices paid £300 each to attend: these included Frank Bungartz (Munich), Jutta Buschbom (Düsseldorf), Steve Chambers (Wales), Tassilo Feuerer (Hamburg), Vince Giavarini (Dorset), Katie Glew (Washington), Alan Orange (NMW, Cardiff), Peter Scholz (Schkeuditz) and Ray Woods (CCW). The 11 Lichen Apprentices are: Andy Acton, Peder Aspen (geologist), Andrea Britton, Andy Cross, John Douglass, Chris Ellis, Anna Griffith, Richard Hewison, Nick Hodgetts (bryologist), Joe Hope and Louise Olley. The party was completed by Alan Fryday and Brian Coppins, with Sandy Coppins acting as overall organiser ('Commandant'), making 23 participants overall.

Our special thanks go to Peter Holden, Alistair Clunas, Sandra Dempster and other NTS staff at Mar Lodge, for the huge amount of help and assistance they provided, making our stay very successful and comfortable.

Peder Aspen & Sandy Coppins



24th May 2005 – at 8.07am – The Rockers assembled in front of Mar Lodge (photo Sandy Coppins)

Back rows, from left – Alan Fryday, Tassilo Feuerer, Louise Olley, Nick Hodgetts, Jutta Buschbom, Frank Bungartz, Andy Cross, Peter Scholz, Chris Ellis, Steve Chambers, Alan Orange, Brian Coppins, Katie Glew, Richard Hewison,;
Front row kneeling – Andrea Britton, Joe Hope, Vince Giavarini, Peder Aspen, Ray Woods, John douglass, Anna Griffith, Andy Acton. Two dogs: Jack and Sally