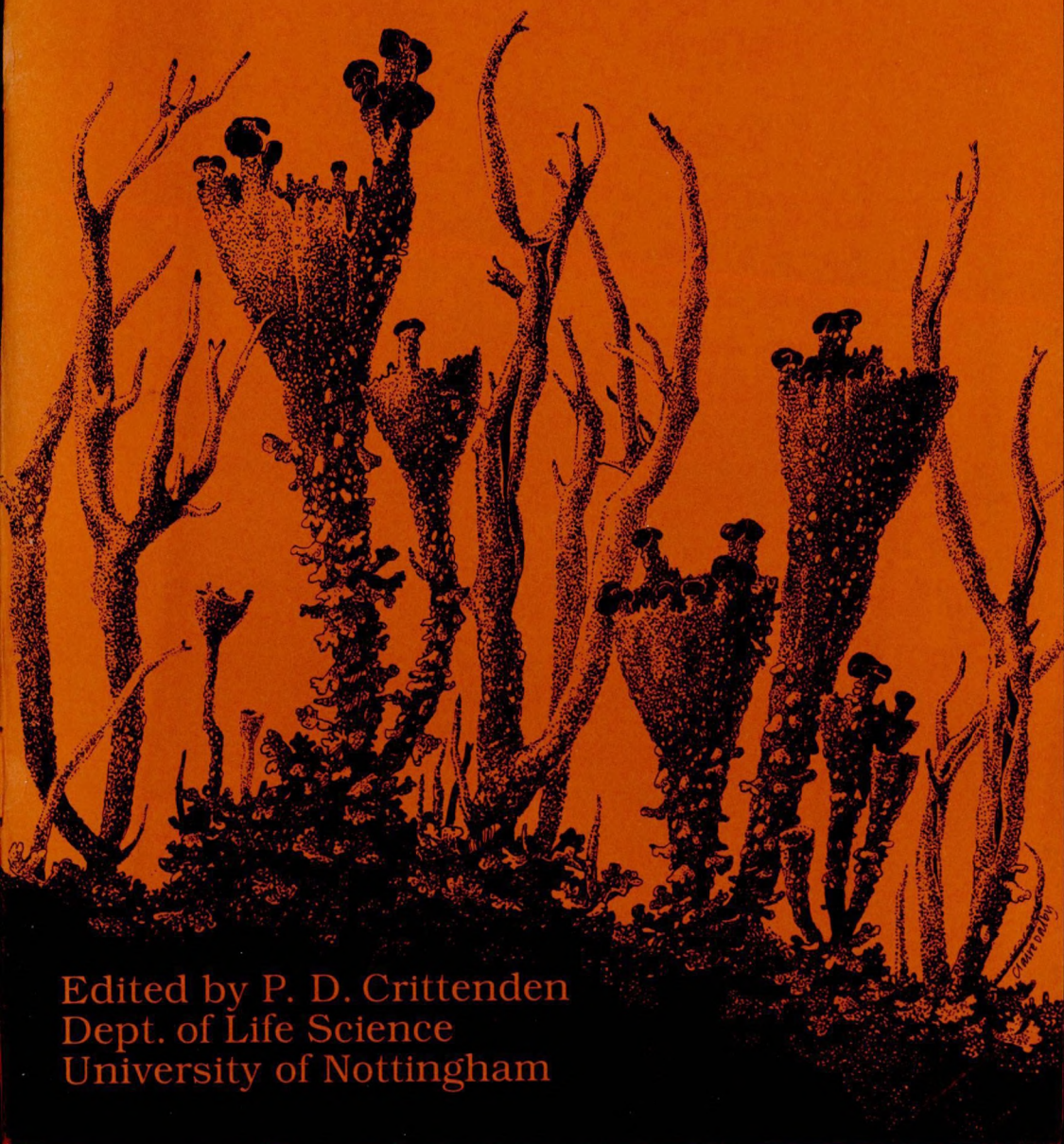


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URSULA DUNCAN IN THE NORTHERN ISLES

Ursula Duncan's field work on the remote island of Fair Isle is known to many of us through her paper in *The Lichenologist* 2: 171-8, 1963. Her visits to Orkney and Shetland Mainland in June 1959, and another to Shetland in 1961 are much less familiar because it seems that she published nothing on Orkney and no more than one very short paper on Shetland (*Lichenologist* 1: 267-8, 1961), perhaps in keeping with her reticence "about her many achievements" as noted by Peter James in his obituary for Ursula in *The Lichenologist* 18, 383-385, 1986.

Ursula Duncan's lichen herbarium

Her Orkney and Shetland lichen packets only very rarely give more than the month and year of collection, so it is not possible to reconstruct the order in which she visited her collecting sites. She also seemed more concerned to assemble sets of voucher material in the form of one packet per species from each island group, so we find few specimens to support additional records or to provide information on intra-specific variation. Site data is mostly scanty with no grid references and is usually of little help in locating precisely her collecting sites. In contrast her habitat descriptions, though brief, are in no way deficient in comparison with those of the majority of subsequent collectors in the Northern Isles. She was collecting and recording almost as a pioneer in what were, at the time, virtually unexplored territories (lichenologically speaking), and her approach consequently lacked some of the refinements now regarded as commonplace. See the *British Lichen Society Bulletin* 51: 11-13 (1982) for her own modest comments on "The Lean Years".

I was fortunate on one visit to the Edinburgh Botanic Garden to be able to go through her entire lichen collection bequeathed to E before the packets were incorporated into the general lichen herbarium. The following summaries are partially derived from this examination though, of course, I may have missed some specimens already received from her prior to that visit. Her handwriting is distinctive (especially her rendering of lower case "d") and her uniformly tidily prepared packets (many from mainland Scotland and elsewhere in Britain) are usually quite easy to pick out.

In addition, the Orkney Field Club were kind enough to permit me to borrow their lichen herbarium. I have searched through it for any Orkney specimens collected by her but it appears to contain none.

Ursula Duncan's lichen records from Orkney and Shetland

I have so far traced 30 species collected by Ursula from Orkney in E and 53 in

BM, whilst there are 34 species from Shetland in E and 42 in BM. Including records reported in the two publications cited above, she found a total of 74 species in Orkney and 150 species in Shetland (with Fair Isles), compared with the present standing totals (August 1996) of 255 and 447 respectively.

Collections of each of the following species are present in both BM and E (O: specimens from Orkney, S: from Shetland):

<i>Caloplaca cerina</i> O	<i>L. symmicta</i> O
<i>Hypogymnia physodes</i> S	<i>Pertusaria chiodectionoides</i> S
<i>Lecania cyrtella</i> O	<i>Protoblastenia rupestris</i> O
<i>Lecanora carpinea</i> S	<i>Pycnothelia papillaria</i> O
<i>L. rupicola</i> O	<i>Umbilicaria torrefacta</i> O

I see no pattern in the species listed; they vary from very abundant to quite rare. Duplicates sometimes followed from material being sent for verification to other lichenologists.

Orkney 1959

According to herbarium labels, she visited Orkney in June 1959, and (as most botanical visitors do) she crossed to Hoy, where she climbed Ward Hill, the highest point in Orkney. A few packets with this name lack confirmation that this site was in fact in Orkney (Ward Hill, or variants thereof, is a common place name in both Orkney and Shetland), but there can be little doubt that the specimens in question did originate in Hoy. On Orkney Mainland she collected from the following sites (in alphabetical order, with approximate 4-figure grid references):

Aiker Ness HY 3826	Mid Hill HY 3324
Bay of Skaill HY 2319	Ravie Hill HY 2525
Binscarth HY 3414	Ring of Brodgar HY 2913
Costa Hill HY 3129	Wasdale HY 3414
Hill of Midland HY 3204	Yesnaby HY 2215

I have not located the Mill Dam, Loch of Stenness with certainty, but I suspect it to be at HY 1021 (less likely, HY 2811).

Among her more interesting records are *Parmeliella jamesii*, *Porpidia flavicunda* (surely an error), and *Sarcogyne regularis*. Several very common shoreline species (and also *Parmelia saxatilis*) are lacking but most of her localities were away from the coast and she did not make any claim to comprehensiveness in such a short visit.

Shetland 1961

Herbarium labels show that she made a second visit to Shetland, albeit a brief one, in September 1961. This was noteworthy for her finding *Pertusaria chiodectonoides*, new to Shetland. Twelve of her gatherings come from Dunrossness, all from within 1 to 2 km walking distance (yes, *pace* PWJ, even in wellington boots; surely the best footwear for Shetland) of the Spiggie Hotel (GR HU 377172) where she presumably stayed; this was handy for the Fair Isles boat from Grutness, some 7 km away. A thirteenth collection (of *Lecanora varia*) is labelled as Island of Noss, 1961, but I think this must be a subsequent confusion of that island (where she had been in 1959) with a hill of the same name near Spiggie (which she certainly visited in 1961).

Shetland problem sites

A few of her 1959 sites have in fact proved either difficult or impossible to identify. "Flemington" proves to be an earlier name for the large house now known as Kergord House (GR HU 3954), and noteworthy for its extensive (by Shetland standards) tree plantations, including numerous exotics. Several Shetland rarities (*Dimerella*, *Normandina*, *Physconia*) occur in the Kergord estate, although she appears not to have seen them. More puzzling is "Crossgerd near Fladdabister". Walter Scott (a resident botanist with vast local knowledge) can say little more than pointing to an area with this name (GR HU 4226) about 6 km south of Fladdabister - though it is unlikely that anyone would link this place to Fladdabister when the settlements of Cunningsburgh and Mail lie much nearer.

Kery Dalby

GREAT WOOD, KESWICK : EPIPHYTIC LICHEN SURVEY

4-5 February 1996

Introduction

This survey was made in response to a request from the National Trust to assess the current status of the *Lobaria pulmonariae* in Great Wood, as serious concern has recently been expressed about the condition and viability of this ancient forest lichen community at this important woodland site (Hawksworth, 1995). In an account of a one day visit to the site in 1994, David Hawksworth described a marked decline in the community since 1969 when he witnessed, with Francis Rose and Brian Coppins "the best *Lobaria* communities we had seen anywhere in the British Isles or Brittany" (Rose *et al*, 1970).

Rose *et al* 's critical 1969 survey was the first systematic modern search for lichens at the site, but important early records of members of the *Lobaria*