

CAREX HOSTIANA IN BEDFORDSHIRE

By E. NELMES

The Hummocky Field, or, more officially, Cow Common, is now ploughed up and most of its age-long wealth of plant life gone. Cow Common, no longer appropriately named, lies near Totternhoe in Bedfordshire. I visited it in June 1952 because I suspected that *Carex hostiana* DC. grew there and it seemed desirable to record its presence—or absence—before the growing threat of ploughing became an actuality.

I went to find Cow Common with the help of a little pencil sketch made by a colleague. There were several meadows at the end of the route, a gate leading into the most likely looking one. I opened it, and my wife, who shared my day's exploration, stepped into the field. Before I could join her she tripped and fell, hurting her leg. This was certainly the Hummocky Field!

A tiny stream flowed through the middle of it, and by the water in its bed grew tufts of *Carex lepidocarpa* Tausch. Alongside the streamlet, clear of its banks, *C. distans* L. occurred plentifully. Still further from the stream my guess came true: I had found *C. hostiana* in the Hummocky Field! Not far from its somewhat larger relative, *C. distans*, this neat little sedge with the silvery-margined glumes occurred in patches for some distance parallel to the two other species.

At an earlier date Dr. John Dony, author of the *Flora of Bedfordshire*, had found somewhere here specimens of a sedge which were determined (not by me) as a hybrid between *C. distans* and *C. lepidocarpa*. As, however, this plant bears glumes which are awnless and often acute at the apex, as in *C. hostiana* but not characteristic of *C. distans*, it seems highly probable that *C. hostiana* is one of the parents. It is not in dispute that *C. lepidocarpa* is the other parent. Specimens have been placed in the Kew herbarium.

A description of the hybrid follows.

CAREX HOSTIANA × LEPIDOCARPA: *C. hornschuchiana* × *lepidocarpa* Hausskn. in *Mitt. Geogr. Ges. Thür.*, 2, 212 (1884): *C. × leutzii* Neucker in *Seub., Kleine Excursfl. Baden*, Ed. 5, 68 (1891).

Plant loosely tufted. Stems curved-erect, 30-40 cm. tall, 0.75-1 mm. thick below, smooth below but scaberulous on the acute angles of the rachis. Leaves much shorter than the stems, 2-3 mm. wide, flat or flattish, lower reduced to pale and almost bladeless sheaths. Spikes

3-4, usually 3, subdense-flowered, uppermost male, terminating the stem, slenderly cylindric, but somewhat tapering at each end, 2-2.5 cm. long, 2-2.75 mm. thick, lateral spikes female, more or less cylindric, base often slightly thicker, 1-1.6 cm. long, 4.5-5.5 mm. thick, upper subsessile or on shortly, lower on rather longly, exerted peduncles, upper at a node 2.5-4 cm. below the male spike, lower 4.5-13 cm. distant from the upper female spike. *Bracts* subfoliaceous, 4-8 cm. long, upper shortly lower longly sheathing; *sheaths* in front, at the mouth, prolonged into a short membranous tongue. *Female glumes* ovate, acuminate, flattish-cymbiform, apex acute to obtuse, 3-3.3 mm. long, 1.8-2 mm. wide, light castaneous, often whitish at the base and irregularly and widely so on the margins, midrib slender, from slightly failing to reach to forming a firm tip at the apex. *Utricles* shrunken and compressed, mostly broadly elliptic but a few obovate or ovate, 3.4-3.6 mm. long, 1.5-1.8 mm. broad, obscurely few-nerved to many-nerved, narrowly marginate, glabrous, straightish, slightly spreading, lowest few subpatent, greenish or yellowish-green above, white below or at the base, very shortly stipitate, mostly abruptly or subabruptly beaked; *beak* not or scarcely tapering, compressed, 1.4-1.6 mm. long, narrowly marginate, margins very sparsely to subdensely rough, pale below, castaneous above, bidentate; *teeth* somewhat diverging. *Achene* undeveloped.

V.c. 30, Bedfordshire; Totternhoe = The Litany = Hummocky Field, 1951, J. D. Dony, 1469 (Herb. Kew).