

## Galls on *Carex maritima* leaves

**Paul A. Smith**

S3RI, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1BJ.  
p.a.smith@soton.ac.uk

For a project on *Carex maritima* I visited the herbarium in the British Museum (BM) to examine the preserved specimens, with a list of things to look out for. There are 188 specimens of *C. maritima* in the British herbarium, though many are duplicates by the same collector on the same day, a side effect of the Botanical Exchange Clubs which operated in the late 19th century. I looked closely at all of these, and one specimen from Reay, Caithness (vc109), collected by E.F. Linton on 27 July 1888, had some galls in two places at the base of the leaves, where they join the sheath.

One of these leaves was extracted, and had four small, ovoid galls at the base of the blade (Fig. 1), two of them more or less overlapping in the specimen, but

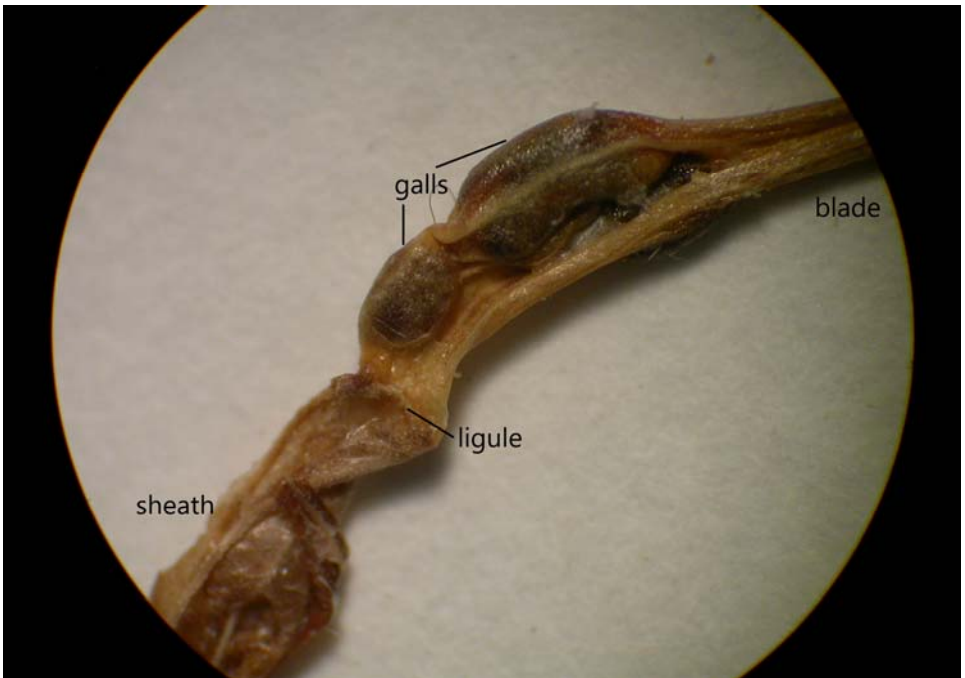


Figure 1: The galls at the base of the blade of *Carex maritima*, just above the ligule.

clearly distinct from each other with separate walls and not merged together (Fig. 2). Some of the galls were opened carefully, and contained a chamber with decaying material inside, but there were not obviously any larvae present (though after 135 years of desiccation it is maybe not so surprising that a mummified larva would not be discernible). Nevertheless, it seems that this is clearly one of the species of *Planetella* (Cecidomyiidae) which gall *Carex* (Roskam 2019; Redfern, Shirley & Bloxham 2023). But there

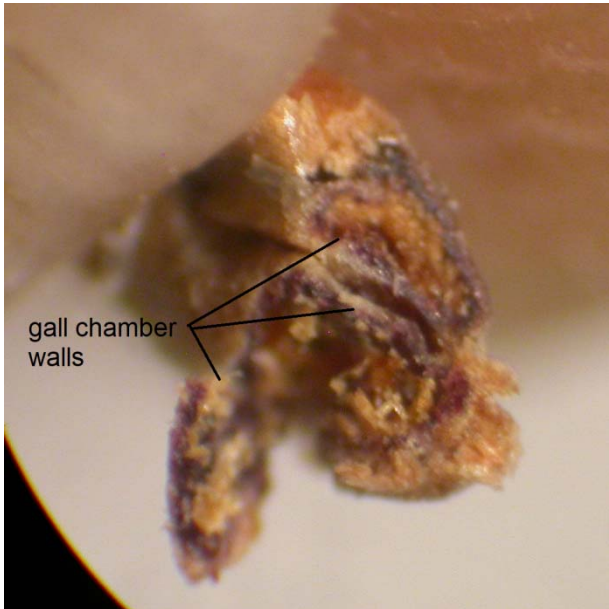


Figure 2: Cross-section showing two galls, with separate walls.

are several species to choose from (Skuhravá & Skuhravý 2021 give 15 species of *Planetella* on a variety of *Carex* host species, though not all of them form galls), and from the keys there seem to be rather few and indistinct characters in the galls to make a determination. Indeed more research on *Planetella* is needed to delimit the galling species and their hosts. So it seems safest to leave this as *Planetella* sp. until further specimens are discovered.

As far as I have discovered, this is the first report of a *Planetella* infecting *Carex maritima* anywhere. It is not so surprising that it comes from the 19th century, since that was a period when relatively many herbarium specimens were collected. Indeed there is only specimen from the 1960s and one from the 1970s among the specimens in BM, and none more recent. So there is not a sufficient sample of modern specimens from which a gall occurring at relatively low density could be found. Further searching in the field may be productive, but I have already looked at quite a lot of *Carex maritima* in several locations in the last two years, and no similar galls have been discovered.

### Acknowledgements

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## References

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