



Welcome to our Newsletter. We start this year with news about our new Website being prepared by Christine Loudon. The following is her report on its progress and we thank her for all her hard work on this.

“At one of the winter SRPG meetings it was suggested that it would be nice to have a group website. It might attract new members, it would be a handy reference for the Rare Plants Register and the meetings programme, and a chance to relive past fun meetings (or at least be reminded of them by the Newsletter archive). Originally I had thought of using one of the free "community" sites, but when I spoke about it to Tony Price at SERC he offered to host a site as he does for the Exmoor Natural History Society. This has meant a whole new level of sophistication and no advertisements! In addition to hosting the site, he has also set it up using the computer facilities at the SERC office. It seems that part of their remit is to encourage independent voluntary groups, and SRPG are benefiting from this. I should say that Tony is always careful not to influence the content; the mistakes are mine. The content so far has come from meetings and emails - mostly from Liz, Helena, Steve and Simon. Similarly, with the design and general layout, although more of this has been necessarily my input, working with the template provided by the software.

“It can easily change! I hope to be reacting to comments from now on. And please do send a few of your favourite photos for inclusion - groups or close-ups seem to work best. The easiest way for me is if you can copy them to a CD. I could also scan in slides or prints, though this does take time. As much information about dates, IDs, locations etc as possible would be a help. I do feel that the more people that are represented the better the site will be. Meanwhile I'd like to thank all members for giving me the opportunity to take on such an exciting project.” The site address is: <http://www.somersetrareplantsgroup.org.uk>

REPORTS OF MEETINGS, 2008.

Indoor Winter Meetings 2008.

Seventeen members attended the AGM and members' meeting on Saturday, 12 January 2008 at Taunton Castle. Following a time of general discussion and a chance to look at some of the books in the Library, Steve Parker took the Chair for the AGM. We learned that the 18 field meetings in 2007 had been well attended and that membership is just over 50. In the absence of our Treasurer, Liz reported that the bank balance was £440 from which payment for duplicating/posting the Newsletter, which was distributed to those present, was to be deducted.

Helena gave a report on the progress she had made towards production of a Rare Plants Register for Somerset and her initial research has produced a list of c550 spp which should be included. Helena also showed sample pages she had prepared.

Libby Houston gave an account of her work on *Sorbus* spp. and was congratulated by all for finding new locations for existing species and we await confirmation of a possible new species she has discovered which may be named *S. houstoniana*.

After the business meeting there was the usual good spread of provisions for the 'bring and share' lunch followed by a Quiz with colour slides organised by Steve and then the raffle.

Eight members gathered at SANHS Library, Taunton Castle on Saturday, 8 March. This was

the final meeting to be held at this location before the library is put into store for three years during alterations to the museum. Our meeting provided a chance for members to show their own colour slides and first off was Margarete Earle with a very evocative collection of pictures taken during the first ten years of our Group's activities. Next to go was Anne Cole with a selection of slides showing plants and scenes encountered during a holiday in Tasmania. As may be imagined, many of these were very different to the European flora with which we are familiar. After a break for lunch Liz McDonnell showed some very interesting pictures taken on Stert 'Island' in Bridgwater Bay which was reached via a very muddy causeway. Liz concluded by showing slides taken during a visit to Holland during their Snowdrop Festival. Snowdrops by the thousand, wild, cultivated, narrow-leaved, broad-leaved, green spotted and even yellow!

Field Meetings

Ashbrittle Yew and Surrounds Saturday, 5 April 2008

On a bright spring day the group members collected together on the village green at Ashbrittle. We walked to the Churchyard to admire the veteran Yew tree (*Taxus baccata*). This tree is reputed to be 3000 years old and a mighty tree it is. While recording in the churchyard some of the members fell into

conversation with the local gravedigger, he informed us that he was encouraged to manage the churchyard for its wild flowers. There was a very good display of wild daffodils (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*) and other spring flowers. Leaving the Churchyard we wandered through the village recording - a good selection of garden escapes such as Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*), Californian Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) and Caper Spurge (*Euphorbia lathyris*) were discovered.

We crossed a rather species-poor field and made our way to the woodland with a tiny stream running through it, this stream marks the county boundary with Devon. The woodland was a white carpet of Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*) with Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) and Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*). Here we picnicked, some of the braver members (including Liz) even crossed the border into Devon.

Retracing our footsteps we walked past the Old Rectory to look again at the country boundary stream. A single plant of Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) was found. One plant that was not refound was Marsh Fern (*Thelypteris palustris*). A record for this was found on the SERC database, and although it may have once been there the habitat does not now look suitable for the survival of this plant. Again retracing our steps, we found a mass of Black Spleenwort (*Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*) growing on an old wall; this was photographed by many in the group. Other interesting ferns included Hard Shield-fern (*Polystichum aculeatum*).

On we pressed, recording as we went. A good number of Orange tip and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies were on the wing. We passed "Sunnyside" and in to "Dark Lane", this trackway was deeply rutted and much used by horses and quad bikes, so going underfoot was a bit difficult at times, but we did find several large patches of Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*). During the trip 212 species were recorded - not bad for one day's work.

Steve Parker

Shute Shelve Hill Sunday, 27 April 2008

The aim of the meeting was to record the exact locations of Purple Gromwell (*Lithospermum purpureocaeruleum*) in Rose Wood and undertake general recording on the limestone grassland and heath of Shute Shelve Hill. On a sunny morning, thirteen members met at King's Wood car park and crossed the A38 to climb Callow Drove to the north edge of Shute Shelve Hill. Near the start we examined a patch of native Bluebell

(*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and the hybrid with the Spanish Bluebell (*H. non-scripta* x *H. hispanica*). The wooded track provided records of Wood Millet (*Milium effusum*), Wood Small-reed (*Calamagrostis epigejos*), Adder's-tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*), of which there were dozens of tiny fronds just emerging, Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) and Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*). One plant of Lady's-mantle (*Alchemilla filicaulis* ssp. *vestita*) was found not far from the gate leading out onto Shute Shelve Hill.

Out on the open hillside, the grassland becomes mixed with a heathy habitat, with species such as Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Bitter-vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*), Betony (*Stachys officinalis*) and Brown Bent (*Agrostis vinealis*). The National Trust has made good efforts to clear some gorse and bracken to leave grassland areas with Dropwort (*Filipendula vulgaris*), Slender St. John's Wort (*Hypericum pulchrum*) Betony (*Stachys officinalis*), Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*) and Spring Sedge (*C. caryophyllea*). We found abundant stems of Purple Gromwell at the locations in Rose Wood reported by Bob Corns (Natural England), where he had located it a few days before. We made accurate grid references and location details for future reference. The woodland itself contained oaks, Small-leaved Lime, Beech, Ash, Field Maple, and a stand of Larch. After lunch in the woodland, we made our way out onto the mid slopes of the hill and visited the outlier site of Cheddar Pink (*Dianthus gratianopolitanus*) where it is found in small quantity in grassland and rock outcrops, also Somerset Hair-grass (*Koeleria vallesiana*). Although rain threatened, some of the group descended further down the slope to see Spring Cinquefoil (*Potentilla neumanniana*) and Sea Stork's-bill (*Erodium maritimum*) at one of its few inland sites in the county along with a good selection of the common Mendip limestone plants. As the rain descended in earnest, we hurried back to the cars, rather than continuing down to the Axbridge by-pass and back along the disused railway line as planned. Although wet through at the end of the day, we agreed that it had been a good day's plant recording in very species-rich habitats.

Liz McDonnell and Anne Cole

Blue Anchor to Dunster Sunday 18 May 2008.

This was, incredibly, "the meeting than led itself" - or rather, the one where the leader only discovered he was leading the walk after we'd finished it! It was a glorious spring day, a bit

breezy but plenty of sunshine encouraging us to believe – wrongly, as it happened – that a lovely summer was just around the corner.

The meeting was a ‘first’ in more ways than one, with ten of the 13 members attending it choosing to reach Blue Anchor by steam train from Bishops Lydeard. We decided to ‘limber up’ by making rapid species lists at each of the stations along the way. Steve showed us Small-flowered Buttercup (*Ranunculus parviflorus*) in the car park at Bishops Lydeard, and we were soon finding new 1km squares for even quite common species. Gill spotted Common Twayblade (*Listera ovata*) in a new locality soon after leaving Bishops Lydeard station, while at Crowcombe Heathfield we had records of Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*) and Green Alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*). At Williton we had six new 1km records including Rough Meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), Common Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) and False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) and at Doniford Halt we just had time to list 11 species, nine of which were new for the 1km square, including real gems like Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*)! Not bad, and a lesson to all of us that casual recording of even the commonest species can be worthwhile.

Our intention for the day was to make 1km species lists for four squares between Blue Anchor and Dunster – including ST0144, which lies almost entirely below High Water Mark – and to check these squares for populations of rare/scarce and Red-listed species for our Rare Plants Register. These walks always seem to start at a snail’s pace, and, true to form, it took us about twenty minutes to drag ourselves off the platform at Blue Anchor, where highlights included White Ramping-fumitory (*Fumaria capreolata* ssp. *babingtonii*) [ex-Nationally Scarce] – in flower and wonderfully photogenic – and Corn Parsley (*Petroselinum segetum*).

Working our way along the coast, we were pleased to see some large and extensive populations of Bulbous Foxtail (*Alopecurus bulbosus*) [Nationally Scarce], first in low-lying pasture behind the railway line at Ker Moor, and then again, a little further west, between the shingle ridge and the railway line. In this latter area, our leader – still blissfully unaware of his position – managed to head-butt an electric fence. There was much Marsh Foxtail (*A. geniculatus*) too, and we later wondered whether, without realising it, we may have seen *A. x pletkei*, the hybrid between the two.

On the little concrete bridge over the River Avill there were about 60 plants of Suffocated Clover (*Trifolium suffocatum*) [Nationally Scarce] and lots of Bulbous Meadow-grass (*Poa bulbosa*)

[Nationally Scarce]. Both these species were found to be abundant in car-parking areas and around beach-huts at Dunster, together with Mossy Stonecrop (*Crassula tillaea*) [Nationally Scarce], Bird’s-foot Clover (*Trifolium ornithopodioides*) and Sea Stork’s-bill (*Erodium maritimum*) [both ex-Nationally Scarce]. In sand dunes in front of Dunster’s ‘holiday village’ we saw Sand Sedge (*Carex arenaria*) and Hound’s-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) [both locally rare/scarce]. Even Marram grass (*Ammophila arenaria*), we reminded ourselves, is a real Somerset rarity, restricted to dune areas around Bridgwater Bay and between Minehead and Dunster, and therefore one of our ‘target’ species for the Rare Plants Register.

On the walk inland to Dunster station we saw Brackish Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus baudotii*) [ex-Nationally Scarce] in grazing marsh pools, while on our return journey – during a brief interlude at Blue Anchor station – we were delighted to find Dwarf Spurge (*Euphorbia exigua*) [Near Threatened] growing in flower-beds and in dry, open ground on the station platform. Back on the train our leader asked who had been leading the walk, and was duly embarrassed beyond measure. He resolved to do better next time, and said that the least he could do in the circumstances would be to write an account of the day for the newsletter... which is exactly what he did!

Simon Leach

East Harptree Woods

Saturday, 31 May 2008.

A large party of twenty members assembled on a fine morning to explore this interesting area. East Harptree Woods is a forestry plantation on the site of former extensive lead workings, with broad rides, open “gruffy ground,” slag heaps, streams and a pond. We split into two groups and set off to record in different 1km squares.

The target species was Prickly Sedge (*Carex muricata* subsp. *pairae*), recorded here by Ian Green in 1993 and not seen since. Helena’s group found several candidate clumps, but upon later examination, they all turned out to be *Carex spicata*. The specimens were immature though, so more were collected a month later, but these were definitely *Carex spicata*. Steve’s party were more convinced by plants they found, but further searches are needed.

The rides were particularly floriferous, with many species, including Slender St John’s-wort (*Hypericum pulchrum*), Common Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*), Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*) and splendid orchids. We saw Common Spotted-

orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Southern Marsh-orchid (*D. praetermissa*) and some tall hybrids (*D. x grandis*). In a wet flush we recorded Marsh Speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*). Ian had previously recorded Sea Campion (*Silene uniflora*) on a wall in the wood. We found the wall – a rather surreal stretch of wall standing purposeless by the path – with *Silene uniflora* still abundant on it. We also found an impressive patch of Brittle Bladder-fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*) on the back of the wall and more *Silene uniflora* on a slag heap at the edge of the wood.

The two groups met at the pond beside Smitham Chimney (a remnant of the lead industry). A patch of heathland beside the pond had Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Wavy Hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) and Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*). In the pond we recorded Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*) and Water Horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*). There were large patches of this horsetail on the verges of rides, looking quite different out of water, being much more branched. Both groups enjoyed their day. Steve's group had the added bonus of seeing a Slow-worm and an Adder.

Helena Crouch

Hardington Moor NNR

Saturday, 7 June 2008

SRPG seldom has meetings in South-east Somerset, so this was an opportunity to record in an under-recorded part of the county, and to visit an example of species-rich unimproved neutral grassland renowned for its variety of orchids and in particular for its abundance of Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*). Only five members met at the Royal Oak pub to walk up the green lanes to the three fields that comprise the NNR. The first find was Strawberry Clover (*Trifolium fragiferum*) in the mown grassland at the edge of the pub car park. In the green lane near the southern entrance to the NNR, French Oat-grass (*Gaudinia fragilis*) was growing around the wooden bench and in the road verge. This species was also frequent in all of the three fields amongst the wide variety of flowers, sedges and grasses. Dyer's Greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*) was flowering profusely. Several orchid species were recorded here: Green-winged orchid (*Orchis morio*) in fruit, Early Purple-orchid (*Orchis mascula*), Twayblade (*Listera ovata*), Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Southern Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*), a hybrid Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii x D. praetermissa*) and Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis*

pyramidalis). We also saw Adder's-tongue fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*).

The damp area in the central field had a different flora. Species here included Distant Sedge (*Carex distans*), Zigzag Clover (*Trifolium medium*), Saw-wort (*Serratula tictoria*) and Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*). Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*) was searched for, but not found. Brambles and scrub are encroaching into this damp area and appearing to reduce the area of good habitat. We found both Common and Spiny Restharrow (*Ononis repens* and *Ononis spinosa*) on the grassy slopes and walking back down the western edge of the NNR, recorded Purging Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*). We found most of the species that had been previously recorded in the Hardington Moor NNR and our count for the day in ST5112 was 213 taxa, so a very good recording day. We finished the hot sunny day with a cup of tea at the Royal Oak.

Liz McDonnell

Shapwick Heath

Saturday, 21 June 2008

This group visit was divided into two halves. At first we walked to Ashcott Plot. This was the second visit that the SRPG have made to this area of Shapwick Heath National Nature Reserve. Our first visit was in June 1999. Since then Natural England (and English Nature) has carried out a major restoration scheme. This work included the felling of much of the secondary woodland that had invaded the site since the Second World War and the introduction of grazing. Shetland sheep, goats and highland cattle have been introduced and are being used to restore this small patch of relic mire.

The purpose of the meeting was to search for Lesser Tussock-sedge (*Carex diandra*). In 1999 the SRPG located "2 clumps only in one location". My understanding is that this record was determined from vegetative material. In *The Flora of Somerset* (1981) Capt. Roe commented that *C. diandra* is "very rare and only on the peat moors where it is decreasing and its survival is threatened". The *Atlas Flora of Somerset* (1997) gave some additional details of *C. diandra*, stating that it was reported in 1906 by Miss Peck and Miss Livett when "it covered an area of approximately 1½ acres," while in 1991 it was found "in very small quantity". On this visit we could not find any plants of this very rare sedge. Part of the problem here may be in recognising the species or equally likely it has been lost! Further survey will be required to clarify the status of the plant.

Despite the apparent loss of the sedge, the Ashcott Plot was looking in good condition with a

number of local rarities present in good quantity - large patches of Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), Marsh Stitchwort (*Stellaria palustris*) and Floating Club-rush (*Eleogiton fluitans*) were seen in the cross ditches. The drier areas supported Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), Ivy-leaved Bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*) and many spikes of Lesser Butterfly-orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*).

In the afternoon the group was joined by members of the general public who had booked on a wildflower walk around Canada Farm. SRPG have also visited this part of the NNR in the past, notably in 2002 for NVC training. The meadows of the farm are very rich, supporting many neutral grassland indicator species. As leader I explained to the party the history of the farm and how Natural England manage the grasslands for the rich biodiversity. The herd of Red Devon cattle was seen being moved from one grazing area to another by the local farmer. Amongst the species of flowers seen were Common Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Tawny Sedge (*Carex hostiana*).

Steve Parker

Berrow Dunes

Sunday, 29 June 2008

The aim of this meeting was to record rare and scarce strandline and dune species, as these have not been recorded recently on the Burnham, Berrow and Brean coast. Twelve members met at the Local Nature Reserve car park and walking northwards, recorded in three 1km squares. The first species of interest, although not nationally or locally rare or scarce, was Hoary Mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*) growing around the car park. It has distinctive fruits which are bulbous at the end and closely adpressed to the stem. We were rather dismayed by the unsightly herbicide-burn of the vegetation and shrubs lining the public path to the sea – it looked a bad example of inappropriate management of this popular nature reserve.

A small diversion to the pond near the car park provided members with several species of interest, including Thread-leaved Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus trichophyllus*), Brookweed (*Samolus valerandi*), Gypsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) and Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*).

The dunes are dominated by dense stands of Sea Buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*), but on the seaward edge, Lyme-grass (*Leymus arenarius*) and Sea Couch (*Elytrigia atherica*) are the most abundant species. Sand Couch (*Elytrigia juncea*) was also present in places and we compared the inflorescences and leaf characteristics of this

species with those of Sea Couch. Sea Rocket (*Cakile maritima*) and Prickly Saltwort (*Salsola kali* ssp. *kali*) were frequent strandline species and we were delighted to find occasional plants of Frosted Orache (*Atriplex laciniata*), which is a rare plant in both vice-counties of Somerset.

While searching for a suitable place to sit for lunch, out of the wind, we found hundreds of plants of Springbeauty (*Claytonia perfoliata*), most of which had been closely grazed, presumably by rabbits. This is a rare introduction in Somerset found on sandy areas and road verges, generally near the coast. We recorded three Evening-primroses on the sand dunes – Large-flowered (*Oenothera glazioviana*), Small-flowered (*Oenothera cambrica*) and Fragrant (*Oenothera stricta*). Other species of interest found during the day from the dunes and along the roadside included Bur Parsley (*Anthriscus caucalis*), Cotton Thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*), Eastern Rocket (*Sisymbrium orientale*), White Ramping-fumitory (*Fumaria capreolata*) and Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron acer*). After the main meeting, a few members made a quick visit to the golf course to see the Lizard Orchids (*Himantoglossum hircinum*). They were doing well in long grass in several areas at the location where they have been recorded for many years. We counted about 50 spikes, most of which were past their best. However, the best find of the day was when Helena Crouch found Sea Bindweed (*Calystegia soldanella*) which is a very rare plant in Somerset, the dunes between Berrow and Brean being the only location where it has been recorded in recent years, and for which we had no recent records. This was growing in the golf course rough grassland very close to the Lizard Orchids, so has been passed countless times by botanists paying homage to one of Somerset's rare species, completely unaware that they were missing another!

Liz McDonnell

Langmead & Weston Level

Saturday, 12 July, 2008

In July 2007 Sarah Cross and I came across a small population of Greater Water-parsnip (*Sium latifolium*) on Weston Level. The purpose of this meeting was to revisit this area and carry out a more intensive search of the ditches. The Greater Water-parsnip seems to be doing well. This is probably the only surviving population of this plant in Somerset that is not within a SSSI. Growing alongside the Greater Water-parsnip is a colony of Water-soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*); this is one of the few locations in Somerset where this unusual water plant occurs. A non-native in the county, this plant is normally found in the wild as a result of people cleaning out garden ponds and

dumping the contents in the wild, or deliberate planting. This small colony should be monitored to make sure it does not start to become invasive and endanger the native flora and fauna. The rest of the day was spent in searching ditches and fields in the area. Weston Levels also supports a good colony of Marsh-mallow (*Althaea officinalis*), a good number of plants in full flower were found along both sides of a grassy drove. Nearing the end of the walk we moved off the flood plain and on to slightly higher ground; here a series of quite species-rich fields had a good range of uncommon species such as Corky-fruited Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*).

Steve Parker

Witham Park and Deerwood Common

Sunday, 27 July, 2008.

On the hottest day of the year so far, eight members met for a walk in coniferous woodlands at the eastern edge of Somerset ... and beyond. A band of Greensand runs down the boundary of VC6 from Gare Hill southwards and here VC6 bulges into Wiltshire, presumably for historic reasons. We recorded in Somerset before lunch, then crossed into Wiltshire for the afternoon.

On the rides, which must be regularly damp, we found Bristle Club-rush (*Isolepis setacea*), Water-purslane (*Lythrum portula*), Common Water-starwort (*Callitriche stagnalis*), Bog Stitchwort (*Stellaria uliginosa*), Slender Rush (*Juncus tenuis*) and three species of Sweet-grass: Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), Small Sweet-grass (*G. declinata*) and Plicate Sweet-grass (*G. notata*), which we were able to compare.

Alongside the rides, we found species typical of heathland, including Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Wavy Hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), Brown Bent (*Agrostis vinealis*) and Hard-fern (*Blechnum spicant*). Slender Parsley-piert (*Aphanes australis*), with its long, fingery stipule-teeth, was found in a few places. This species is scarce in VC6, being restricted to acidic substrates.

Ten species of Sedge (*Carex*) were recorded: Pendulous (*C. pendula*), Smooth-stalked (*C. laevigata*), Wood (*C. sylvatica*), Remote (*C. remota*), Grey (*C. divulsa* subsp. *divulsa*), Oval (*C. leporine*, formally *C. ovalis*), Star (*C. echinata*), Hairy (*C. hirta*), Green-ribbed (*C. binervis*) and Pill (*C. pilulifera*). *Carex laevigata* has only a few sites in VC6 away from this area. We found two clumps beside a newly constructed pond. *C. binervis* and *C. pilulifera* are also particularly found in this region, but are additionally found on the Mendips. We were able to compare three species of Wood-rush: Hairy

(*Luzula pilosa*), Great (*L. sylvatica*) and Heath (*L. multiflora*, present as subsp. *multiflora* and subsp. *congesta*).

Over lunch, we sat and keyed out a mysterious mint found beside a ride. It turned out to be Whorled Mint (*Mentha x verticillata*), which is the hybrid between Corn Mint and Water Mint. We later found a patch of Corn Mint (*Mentha arvensis*) by another forest track.

When pre-walking the end section of the walk, Lin and I found a few plants of Sand Spurrey (*Spergularia rubra*), which made a good "carrot" for those of us flagging with heat exhaustion. Sadly, there were no flowers, but a few plants were admired on gravelly ground at the junction of rides. There are no other recent records for this species in VC6, although it was formerly found on two coal batches and at Keynsham Humpy Tumps.

We recorded 182 species in the main 1km square that we targeted, and 201 species altogether, which seems a good number for what is predominantly coniferous plantation. Several members saw "new" species and all agreed that further exploration of this very different area would be desirable.

Helena Crouch

Joint SRPG & Wild Flower Society weekend meeting to Exmoor

Friday, 15 – Sunday, 17 August 2008

Our base for this weekend meeting was at the Pinkery Exploration Centre, residential accommodation owned by Exmoor National Park, which is more usually used by school and youth groups. The centre is a former farmhouse situated 5kms west of Simonsbath, in the wilds of Exmoor moorland and is very near the county boundary of Somerset & Devon. We gathered here in damp misty weather, typical of this part of Exmoor called The Chains. After settling in and lunch, we set off for a small lake known locally as Pinkery Pond. This was created in about 1830 by damming the headwaters of the River Barle and was thought to be part of an aborted engineering project involving canals and railways to carry iron ore from Exmoor to the coast. Neither the canal nor railway was ever built, but the resulting lake is a rich botanical habitat and has several uncommon species. On the moorland path to Pinkery Pond, we found several species of interest including Leafy Rush (*Juncus foliosus*), Water Purslane (*Lythrum portula*) and Round-leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus omiophyllus*). Small scraps of Stag's-horn Clubmoss (*Lycopodium clavatum*) were recorded from fairly open, mossy slopes near the dam. From the shallow waters at the southern end we pulled out Floating Club-rush (*Eleogoton fluitans*), which was abundant, and

delicate strands of Pedunculate Water-starwort (*Callitriche brutia*), which is a very rare plant in Somerset, recorded only from a few Exmoor sites. Ivy-leaved Bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*) was flowering and trailing through the damp vegetation at the water's edge, with Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*) and Bristle Club-rush (*Isolepis setacea*). At the north end of the lake, one of our party waded into the water deep enough to reach a flowering stem of a Bur-reed which had pale floating leaves. Three species of *Sparganium* have been recorded from Pinkery Pond and we assumed our sample to be Unbranched Bur-reed (*S. emersum*), but it didn't really fit the field identification keys and much time was spent trying to name it. Other species of interest at this location included Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*), Marsh Speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), Marsh Violet (*Viola palustris*), Lemon-scented Fern (*Oreopteris limbosperma*), Small Sweet-grass (*Glyceria declinata*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*). Matt Stribley showed us three subspecies of *Dryopteris affinis* (Scaly Male-fern) from the south end of Pinkery Pond, subspp. *affinis*, *borreri* and *cambrensis*. A small group walked west of the pond to Woodbarrow Gate to gather records for the two 1km squares that lie in the most westerly corner of the county, for which SRPG had no recent records.

The second day was unremittingly wet as we set off in waterproofs for a walk down the River Barle, from Simonsbath to Cow Castle. We looked for Brittle Bladder-fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*) on the walls of the Gents' loos in the car park, but failed to find it. Our first good find was to re-record Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) at the location some metres above the river bank where Jeanne and Tim Webb had first recorded it in 2006. Many of the common Exmoor species were recorded on our walk along the north-eastern side of the river towards Flexbarrow including Sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*), Brown Bent (*Agrostis vinealis*), Pill Sedge (*Carex pilulifera*) and Hard-fern (*Blechnum spicant*). We ate our lunch in the rain at Wheal Eliza (a disused iron mine), then had a discussion about whether to abandon the day's botanising because of the increasing rain; however, we continued to our destination at Cow Castle, some of us climbing to the top in triumph after our wet walk. We found Alternate Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum alterniflorum*) in the fast-flowing water of the River Barle. Back at the Pinkery Centre, we had an excellent roast beef and Yorkshire pudding supper whilst our waterproofs and boots dripped and steamed in the drying room.

Sunday was thankfully a fine day and a coastal walk had been planned centred around Porlock

Bay and Bossington Hill. Although she was not able to join us, Caroline Giddens met us all at the beginning of the day to meet old friends and to remind us to look out for several special plants along the way. Rye-brome (*Bromus secalinus*) was found at the edge of a field of wheat adjoining the lane to the sea. We made our way along the landward edge of the shingle bank to find several plants of the yellow form of White Mullein (*Verbascum lychnitis*), then continued along the developing saltmarsh where Sea Purslane (*Atriplex portulacoides*) was abundant in areas, which until a few years ago before the shingle beach was breached, were dry species-rich coastal grassland. We noticed that there were several small stands and scattered individual plants of Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*), which none of us could remember having seen here before. Our lunch was taken at the ruins on Porlock Marsh which is a long-known site for Wild Leek (*Allium ampeloprasum* var. *babingtonii*). Walking back to Bossington, there were several large clumps of Narrow-leaved Everlasting-pea (*Lathyrus sylvestris*) growing on the wide shingle ridge. The second part of the day was spent walking to Hurlstone Point along the edge of Bossington Hill. We found Dwarf Cherry (*Prunus cerasus*) in the hedge bordering old fields where Caroline had reminded us to look out for it, then continued on to Hurlstone Point to find Rock Sea-spurrey (*Spergula rupicola*) and Sea Pearlwort (*Sagina maritima*) at the coastguard lookout. We walked back across the steep slopes of Hurlstone Combe where Bristle Bent (*Agrostis curtisii*) was abundant. Some of us finished this joint SRPG/WFS meeting in style with tea and cake in the café at Bossington.

Liz McDonnell

The 'green lanes' of Curland and Bickenhall Plain

Sunday, 7 September 2008.

On a day that started drearily under thick cloud, four of us met to explore the countryside around Curland and Bickenhall. The purpose of our meeting was to 'bash' a few 1km squares in an area criss-crossed by an extensive network of droves and rutted trackways. We followed a clockwise route from our parking place in Curland at ST279180, up a track to the north-east corner of Middleroom Wood, then along the northern boundary of the wood (Middleroom Lane) and back to the village down the 'long straight drove' past Curland Common. We compiled species lists for four 1km squares straddling two tetrads (ST2716, 2717, 2816 & 2817).

We were surprised at the richness of the flora: our first 1km square, ST2817, produced a total of

207 taxa – not bad, considering the time of year and relatively limited array of habitats. These ‘green lanes’ are clearly now important refuges for a large number of species, especially grassland species, that seem to have been more or less eliminated from so much of the farmland through which they run. We saw several locally uncommon species, including Grass Vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*), Saw-wort (*Serratula tinctoria*) and Strawberry Clover (*Trifolium fragiferum*). The abundance of the clover, in particular, was impressive.

We located several arable fields with interesting weed floras, including good populations of Sharp- and Round-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia elatine* and *K. spuria*), and in one maize field a ‘gateway’ colony of Cockspur (*Echinochloa crus-galli*). The effects of the wet summer were to be seen everywhere – ruined crops left standing and, in fields where harvesting had been attempted, the ground badly churned up. One field, immediately north of Ball’s Copse (ST286172), was packed with interest: a thick ‘sward’ of *K. elatine* – as much as any of us had ever seen before – plus smaller amounts of *K. spuria* and Field Pepperwort (*Lepidium campestre*) and one or two plants of Lesser Centaury (*Centaureum pulchellum*) and the Nationally Scarce and Red-listed Rye Brome (*Bromus secalinus*).

In Middleroom Wood we searched briefly for one of our ‘target’ species, Chaffweed (*Anagallis minima*), for which there is an old (Atlas) record. We were really too late in the year, but the wood itself seemed to be quite the wrong habitat (too overgrown), while the track along the northern edge of the wood – Middleroom Lane – had been recently upgraded as part of the “Herepath Project” and now appeared equally unsuitable. As some compensation, we did find several Wild-service trees (*Sorbus torminalis*) and a profusion of woodland fungi.

Now in sunshine, on our ‘final leg’ back to Curland we were confronted, once again, by extensive colonies of *Trifolium fragiferum*, while the tall-grassland of the track verges held good populations of Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*), Bitter-vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*) and Saw-wort (*Serratula tinctoria*), all local rarities, within a colourful, herb-rich ‘calcareous clay’ community that included such species as Hairy St. John’s-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*), Square-stemmed St. John’s-wort (*H. tetrapterum*), Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Wild Basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*), Hoary Ragwort (*Senecio erucifolius*), Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Corky-fruited Water-Dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*) and Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*).

Our lengthy stroll had produced lists for four 1km squares, with well over 100 species per square, and close to 250 for the day.

Simon Leach

River Avon at Pill

Saturday, 20 September 2008

After a rather chaotic start to the meeting, eight members met near the little inlet to walk eastwards as close to the River Avon as possible to record in under-recorded squares in this northern edge of VC6. We started by examining the pavement weeds by the slipway where we found Guernsey Fleabane (*Conyza sumatrensis*), Hard-grass (*Parapholis strigosa*), Sea-beet (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *maritima*), Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*) and a few tiny leaves of English Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia anglica*). From Pill village we walked along the edge of a rough grassland field with a tall scrubby edge. Here we found a tall vigorous rose with abundant small hips in large clusters. This keyed out later to Many-flowered Rose (*Rosa multiflora*), a new VC6 record. It is unclear if this species was naturalised or planted, but it was probably the latter as we found plastic stem protectors on some of the shrubs further up the field. We made occasional detours into the narrow strip of woodland between the field and the steep river banks and it was here that Libby Houston found Wild Service-trees (*Sorbus torminalis*) in several places on steep slopes overhanging the river bank. Some of us climbed down precarious metal steps, which led to navigation lights at the river’s edge, to gain access to the narrow strip of saltmarsh below. Walking through the housing estate which is the site of the former Ham Green Hospital, we added many species to our lists, including Grass-leaved Orache (*Atriplex littoralis*) and Pale Willowherb (*Epilobium roseum*) found in a flower bed, Sweet Briar (*Rosa rubiginosa*) in a lane hedgerow, and Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*), 11 spikes of which were found inside the fence of Penny Brohn Cancer Centre. A site of an old rubbish dump gave us Argentinian Vervain (*Verbena bonariensis*) and Broomcorn Millet (*Panicum miliaceum*).

The upper reaches of the saltmarsh at the edge of the River Avon east of Chapel Pill Farm were dominated by dense stands of Sea Couch (*Elytrigia atherica*), with Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), Annual Sea-blight (*Suaeda maritima*) and Sea Arrow-grass (*Triglochin maritimum*) with its distinctive smell of coriander, but one of the best finds of the day was Sea Purslane (*Atriplex portulacoides*), found in large patches on rocky cliffs many metres above the boats and deep mud of the low-tide river. This is a rare plant in Somerset, occurring in only a few sites around the

coast and along tidal river banks of the Rivers Avon, Brue and Parrett and at Porlock Weir.

Liz McDonnell

Bath

Sunday, 12 October 2008

On a gloriously sunny autumn day, seven members met for the last walk of the year. We made our way slowly out of Royal Victoria Park, heading for the smartest parts of Bath. In a basement near the Royal Crescent, large plants of our first alien fern, Delta Maidenhair (*Adiantum raddianum*), were admired. After loitering in the Royal Crescent and The Circus, where it seems perfectly acceptable to peer into basements, we headed up Lansdown Road to see the next alien fern, Spider Brake (*Pteris multifida*), growing under a grille in the pavement. On the way, we found Chilean Glory-vine (*Eccremocarpus scaber*), which was new to some and a second record for VC6, and Water Bent (*Polypogon viridis*), a smart little grass which is spreading in Somerset. This was our first record for Water Bent in the eastern half of VC6.

After lunch in the Parade Gardens beside the River Avon, we crossed Pultney Bridge to Laura Place, to view a fine specimen of Ribbon Fern (*Pteris cretica*) in another basement. In a small muddy dock beside Pultney Bridge, Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Gypsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) and Fool's Water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*) were seen, together with saplings of Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum*), clearly the offspring of a nearby planted tree. This may be a new vice-county record. Surprisingly, Navelwort (*Umbilicus rupestris*) grows on the wall of the dock.

Three of our party walked back through Bath at this point, whilst the remaining four headed for the canal and Sydney Buildings. Sadly we failed to find the promised *Pteris cretica* 'Wimsettii', discovered in a basement in 2006. The basement looked freshly painted – builders and decorators are the greatest enemies of urban alien ferns! We consoled ourselves with ice creams, sitting in the sun by the Kennet and Avon Canal. An amazing lock gate with ledges supported a veritable hanging garden, including a mass of Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*) in full flower.

We left the canal and crossed busy roads to the Avon Walkway, passing a small plant thought to be Apple-of-Peru (*Nicandra physalodes*), but a bit small to be sure. Other aliens seen alongside the Avon included a Fuchsia (*Fuchsia magellanica*) on some wasteground, two Figs (*Ficus carica*) beside the river, a patch of Smoke-tree (*Cotinus coggygria*), Stag's-horn Sumach (*Rhus typhina*) and Canadian Fleabane (*Conyza canadensis*). A handsome brome arrested our progress and was

later identified as Rescue Brome (*Ceratochloa cathartica*), an introduced species native to Central and South America. Near this we admired a large patch of Toothed Medick (*Medicago polymorpha*), in full flower, with its lacinate stipules and coiled spiny fruits perfectly evident. Both these species can be wool-aliens, so it was interesting that we found them so close together. Further clumps of Rescue Brome were found nearby, on a grass bank beside the A4, as four weary botanists returned to their cars.

Helena Crouch

PLANT NOTES 2008

Bath Asparagus

During mid June a Mr & Mrs Armstrong of Brompton Ralph contacted me (via SERC). They had come across a rather unusual flowering plant growing on the bank of the Churchyard. This they had correctly identified as Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum pyrenaicum*). This I believe to be a new record for VC5. Given the distance from its known native population around Bath, I consider this to be a recent introduction. However it is difficult to see how such an introduction could have occurred, the Armstrong's look after the Churchyard and they are unaware of this plant in any local gardens.

Steve Parker

Azolla - now you see it now you don't!

In the summer of 2007 many ditches and rhines in the Somerset Levels and Moors were choked with a thick mat of *Azolla filiculoides*. The Internal Drainage Board's ecologist was very concerned with the effects this plant may be having on the watercourses. A survey showed the presence of a North American weevil *Stenopelmus rufinasus*, this insect is known to be a very effective control on Azolla. This year there has been only one record of the plant, clearly the weevil has done a great job.

Steve Parker

Greater Water-parsnip Reintroduction

Bristol Zoo, the Hawk & Owl Trust and Natural England have been working together on a proposed reintroduction of Greater Water-parsnip *Sium latifolium* at Shapwick Heath and Shapwick Moor. Seed collected in the autumn of 2007 from Southlake Moor SSSI (the largest known population in Somerset) has been grown by Bristol Zoo. In November of 2008 it is planned to plant out 400 plants on both the Hawk & Owl Trust reserve at Shapwick Moor and Shapwick Heath NNR. SRPG members have been actively involved with this project since it started in 2000. In 2009 the group will be involved in the monitoring of the introduction.

Steve Parker

Beginners' Luck ?

In June Kate Merry and James McGill discovered a new and very strong population of Greater Water-parsnip at the eastern end of Southlake Moor. It was their first week working for Natural England as botanical surveyors! They went on during the summer to discover many new populations of Marsh Stitchwort *Stellaria palustris* and other of the SRPG target species.

Steve Parker

Round-leaved Wintergreen(*Pyrola rotundifolia*) in Somerset

On 18th August 2002, Anne Cole discovered a patch of *Pyrola rotundifolia* growing beside the footpath through Ham Woods Quarry, which was an amazingly exciting find. The patch was about 1m across and in full flower. Originally the plants were identified as *Pyrola rotundifolia* subsp. *rotundifolia*. My first visit to the site was with Fred Rumsey (BSBI Referee for *Pyrola*), who was not happy with that determination. Unfortunately the flowers were barely out – they flower remarkably late.

This year, I revisited the site on 18th August and found the plants in full flower. The patch has grown to cover 2m x 3m and my daughter and I counted 475 flowering spikes. We took photographs and collected some specimens and sent observations and measurements to Fred. Our plants have been redetermined as *Pyrola rotundifolia* subsp. *maritima* because they have: scale leaves 5-6, pedicels mostly 5mm or less, sepals oblong-lanceolate and obtuse, anthers <2mm. Stace, in "The New Flora of the British Isles" (2nd ed. 1997), comments that "The 2 spp. are of doubtful value; all characters, except possibly those of the sepals, break down." The sepals of our plants are very clearly oblong and obtuse, so definitely fit best in subsp. *maritima* – for as long as two subspecies are recognised!

Helena Crouch

Sarracenia species (Pitcher Plants) at Westhay

On 30th August, four or five small *Sarracenia* plants were found at Westhay Moor by Robert Cropper. I have been to visit them twice and other members have seen them too. At the last count, there were 31 small plants, growing on bare peat at the side of a wide channel and on the vertical edge of a shallow trough cut into the peat. I am convinced that they have grown from seed sown *in situ* and that it was a packet of mixed *Sarracenia* seeds. Most of the little plants have prostrate red trumpets and are almost certainly *Sarracenia purpurea*, although some may be cultivars of this species. Eight plants, however, have upright trumpets, but these are too young to be identifiable yet. Possible candidates are *S.*

flava, *S. alata* and *S. minor*. All *Sarracenia* species are native to North America, but a few have become naturalised in Britain. Westhay Moor is a National Nature Reserve and an SSSI, so the growth of these introduced alien species will be carefully observed and if necessary they will have to be removed. For now though, they are interesting little novelties and an unexpected addition to the flora of Somerset.

Helena Crouch

NEW SOMERSET PLANT RECORDS

The following have been recorded new for Somerset during 2008 (or late 2007, in which case year is given):

Acer saccharinum (Silver Maple) – Bath (ST75246499), 12 October, five saplings in small dock beside River Avon, S of Pultney Bridge, seedlings of planted tree, Somerset Rare Plants Group, VC6.

Adiantum raddianum (Delta Maidenhair) – Bath (ST743654), 1 January, four plants on and beside steps of basement of 12 Marlborough Buildings, Mark A. Spencer, ID confirmed by Fred Rumsey, VC6. Known at this site by Ian P. Green since 19 October 1997, but previously thought to be *Adiantum capillus-veneris*. A retrospective first record for VC6.

Crocus speciosus (Bieberstein's Crocus) – Withy Mills, nr Paulton (ST66015759), 13 October, two plants in flower beside disused canal N of Withy Mills, c. 4m E of stile, Helena J. Crouch, det. Fred Rumsey, VC6.

Dryopteris x complexa nothosubsp. *complexa* (*D. filix-mas x affinis* subsp. *affinis*) Leigh Woods (ST55737314), 20 November 2007, one plant to S side of path, Matt J. Stribley, VC6.

Gazania rigens (Treasureflower) Watchet (ST07274336), 28 March, single plant self-sown on top of harbour wall, parent plant in nearby flower tub, Paul R. Green, VC5.

Lotus subbiflorus (Hairy Bird'sfoot-trefoil) Morlands Enterprise Park, Glastonbury (ST48683831), 28 September, several plants inside fence on L of approach road to sewage works and a few on verge outside fence, Helena J. Crouch and Liz McDonnell, VC6.

Nicotiana sylvestris – Bath (ST749648), 5 August, one plant beside the Mineral Water Hospital in Bridewell Lane, known here for at least two years, Rob D. Randall, VC6.

Pyrola rotundifolia subsp. *maritima* (Round-leaved Wintergreen) – see Plant Notes.

Ranunculus ficaria subsp. *ficariiformis* (Lesser Celandine) – Houndstone, Yeovil (ST52211629), 26 March, very large plants

with large leaves, flowers and bulbs in leaf axils, Paul R. Green, VC5.

Sarracenia purpurea (Pitcherplant) Westhay (ST45334393), 30 August, growing on recently disturbed peat, Robert S. Cropper, VC6. See also Plant Notes.

Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern, gametophyte) – Barle Valley (SS78833773), 16 August, a tiny amount in a crevice in the low cliff beside the Two Moors Way footpath alongside the River Barle, 2km SE of Simonsbath and 0.75km NW of Cow Castle, Matt J. Stribley, conf. Fred Rumsey, VC5.

NEW VICE-COUNTY RECORDS

The following are new to either VC5 or VC6:

Agrostis curtisii (Bristle Bent) – Black Down (ST469580), 21 September, few plants on E side of main path running parallel to Dolebury Warren, opposite oak tree, Liz McDonnell, VC6.

Dianthus deltoides (Maiden Pink) Balidon House, Yeovil (ST538145), 25 March, occasional in turf and on bank in front of derelict hospital, specimen taken and grown on, and identification confirmed when in flower, Helena J. Crouch and Paul R. Green, VC5.

Elytrigia x drucei (*E. repens* x *atherica*) – Walborough (ST3157), 21 May, along top of sea wall, the sterile seed heads still present long after flowering, Rev. Edward Pratt, VC6.

Geranium asphodeloides subsp. *asphodeloides* Clutton (ST62245893), 16 May, eleven plants in grass at edge of path, self-sown from nearby grave, Helena J. Crouch, conf. Andrew Norton, VC6.

Hieracium cardiophyllum (Hawkweed sp.) 10 September. Colony on north-facing bank by car park for Upton Church. (SS91612891) Jeanne Webb det. Mr Sell. VC5.

Ornithogalum pyrenaicum (Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem) Brompton Ralph (ST08513229), 20 June, in bank of churchyard just below war memorial, probably a garden escape, Mr and Mrs A. Armstong, VC5. (See also Plant Notes).

OTHER INTERESTING SOMERSET RECORDS IN 2008

Calystegia soldanella (Sea Bindweed) Berrow Dunes (ST29695158), 29 June, on golf course to N of footpath leading to sea, in a hollow E of the green below a large '3' sign, Somerset Rare Plants Group, VC6. First county record since 1992.

Conyza bilbaoana Morlands Enterprise Park, Glastonbury (ST48853840), 28 September, one plant beside service road, Helena J. Crouch and

Liz McDonnell, VC6. Second record for VC6 and third record for the county.

Cyperus eragrostis (Pale Galingale) Morlands Enterprise Park, Glastonbury (ST487383), 28 September, on wasteground beside derelict factory by stream, Helena J. Crouch and Liz McDonnell, det. Fred Rumsey, VC6. Fourth record for VC6.

Epipactis phyllanthes (Green-flowered Helleborine) Stowey (ST5960), 6 August, four flowering stems on bank of small stream in overgrown garden (NB private property), Howard Parsons, conf. John Spencer, VC6. Second record for VC6 and third record for the county.

Erophila majuscula (Hairy Whitlowgrass) Purn Hill, Bleadon, 12 April, one plant on a rock outcrop, seed quite distinctive when compared with *E. verna*, Robert S. Cropper, VC6. Originally thought to be first record for Somerset, yet on VCCC for both vice-counties.

Glaucium flavum (Yellow Horned-poppy) Sand Bay (ST3364 and ST3365), 30 July, twelve rosettes along strandline, Margaret Webster, VC6. On later visits, a total of 39 young plants were recorded, including 5 in ST3263. Also Berrow (ST2951), 8 September, one plant on strandline, Margaret Webster, VC6. First records for VC6 since 1992.

Isolepis cernua (Slender Club-rush) Berrow (ST29465247), 7 August, damp hollow in front of the church, Robert S. Cropper, VC6. Last seen at Berrow in 1945 by Mrs C.I. and N.Y. Sandwith and only ever recorded at two other sites in VC6.

Medicago minima (Bur Medick) Morlands Enterprise Park, Glastonbury (ST487382), 28 August, one plant on levelled ground near new roundabout, Helena J. Crouch and Fred Rumsey, VC6. First county record since 1977.

Oenothera x fallax (*O. glazioviana* x *biennis*) – Burnham-on-Sea (ST302500), 19 July, a few specimens on foredunes amongst scrub, specimen taken, Liz McDonnell, VC6. First record for VC6 and the county since 1883.

Pinguicula lusitanica (Pale Butterwort) Street Heath (ST46393944), 12 July, a single flowering plant, Robert S. Cropper, VC6. The only extant locality in VC6, last seen here in 2001 by Anne Bodley.

Polygomon monspeliensis (Annual Beard-grass) Morlands Enterprise Park, Glastonbury (ST487382), 28 August, hundreds of plants on levelled ground beside the new service roads, Helena J. Crouch and Fred Rumsey, VC6. First record for VC6 since 1999.

Poa infirma (Early Meadow-grass) Burnham-on-Sea (ST30424918), 10 April, blocking a length of gutter on a disused building and flowering profusely, Robert S. Cropper, VC6. Also Batheaston (ST77986800), 19 April, at side of

road in Catherine Way, growing on rough tarmac at top of sloping grass verge, Helena J. Crouch, Mark A.R. Kitchen and Clare Kitchen, VC6. Third and fourth records for VC6.

Rumex frutescens (Argentinian Dock) Uphill (ST311588), 1 August, in sand dunes at entrance to beach, Liz McDonnell, VC6. Second record for the county and for VC6, and first since 1935.

Silene armeria (Sweet-William Catchfly) Morlands Enterprise Park, Glastonbury (ST487384), 28 September, two plants beside small reservoir, Helena J. Crouch and Liz McDonnell, VC6. Third record for VC6 and fourth for the county.

Sutera cordata Wells (ST548456), 13 December 2007, one plant at edge of pavement, against wall of building in Broad Street, Helena J. Crouch, VC6. Second record for VC6.

Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern, gametophyte) Tarr Steps (SS86693221), 18 August, a couple of small fingernail-sized patches in a rocky crevice on the west side of the river, north of the steps, Matt J. Stribley, VC5. Second record for the county and for VC5.

Trifolium angustifolium (Narrow Clover) Morlands Enterprise Park, Glastonbury (ST48763842), 6 November, one plant just inside gate to small reservoir, Helena J. Crouch and Fred Rumsey, VC6. First record for VC6 since 1918 and only the second record for VC6 and county.

Trifolium resupinatum (Reversed Clover) Morlands Enterprise Park, Glastonbury (ST48763842), 28 September, one plant on steep grassy bank of small reservoir, beside steps, Helena J. Crouch and Liz McDonnell, VC6. First record for VC6 since 1928.

Records compiled by Helena Crouch

WOOL ALIENS AT GLASTONBURY

The list of new and interesting finds for 2008 in this newsletter includes seven species found at the same site. In the 1980s, the vast Morlands sheepskin factory at Glastonbury closed down, standing derelict and forlorn for some years, but in 2003 the whole area was levelled in preparation for the construction of Morlands Enterprise Park. Roads have been laid out but no buildings have sprung up yet – only weeds. Driving past the site one day, my passenger pointed out *Polypogon monspeliensis* (Annual Beard-grass), so of course we stopped. In a brief visit we soon found *Medicago polymorpha* (Toothed Medick) and *Medicago minima* (Bur Medick) too, and realised that this site was worthy of a return visit. All three of these species are documented wool aliens. They almost certainly arrived here in the fleeces of sheep long ago, probably ending up on a “wool

tip” with other impurities, where they have languished until now.

I returned one Sunday with Liz McDonnell and we recorded 215 species on the site, including several other wool aliens and one species new to Somerset! Since then, two more wool aliens have been added to the list. *Echinochloa crus-galli* (Cockspur) is increasingly found along roadsides now, but has been listed as a wool alien in the past, as was *Medicago arabica* (Spotted Medick). More exciting finds were *Cyperus eragrostis* (Pale Galingale), *Trifolium resupinatum* (Reversed Clover), *Trifolium angustifolium* (Narrow Clover) and *Trifolium subterraneum* (Subterranean Clover). The last is native but rare in North Somerset (VC6). These species are all adapted to dispersal by sheep, having seeds or seed pods which catch in the wool.

Other species have arrived here by different routes. Thus *Silene armeria* (Sweet-William Catchfly), *Verbena bonariensis* (Argentinian Vervain) and *Lobelia erinus* (Garden Lobelia) probably all arrived with imported garden soil. *Lycopersicon esculentum* (Tomato) and *Solanum tuberosum* (Potato) almost certainly arrived via the adjacent sewage works. Many others, for example three species of Fleabane (*Conyza canadensis*, *Conyza sumatrensis* and *Conyza bilbaoana*) are simply opportunists, which have blown in from elsewhere, seizing the chance to colonise this vast tract of disturbed ground.

Beside the approach road to the sewage works, we found our most exciting and puzzling species, *Lotus subbiflorus* (Hairy Bird’s-foot-trefoil), growing in grass either side of a new chain-link fence. The grass looks as if it has been seeded, perhaps a year or two ago. This species is new to Somerset and at a remarkable distance from its accepted native range. *L. subbiflorus* is native to dry grassy places by the sea, with a southwest distribution in England, stretching around the coast from North Devon to Hampshire. It was recently found in Sussex, where it was thought to have arrived with garden compost. I have found no mention of *L. subbiflorus* in lists of wool aliens and indeed the smooth seeds in smooth cylindrical pods are not adapted to this mode of transport. It seems unlikely to have arrived at Glastonbury via the sewage works or in imported soil. In New Zealand and Uruguay, *L. subbiflorus* has been used as a component of grassland seed mixes and at the moment this seems the most likely explanation for the arrival of this species in Somerset. It is surely an unusual component of seed mix in this country though.

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