

# SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP

Recording all plants growing wild in Somerset, not just the rarities



2013 Newsletter

Issue no. 14

Editor Liz McDonnell

## Introduction

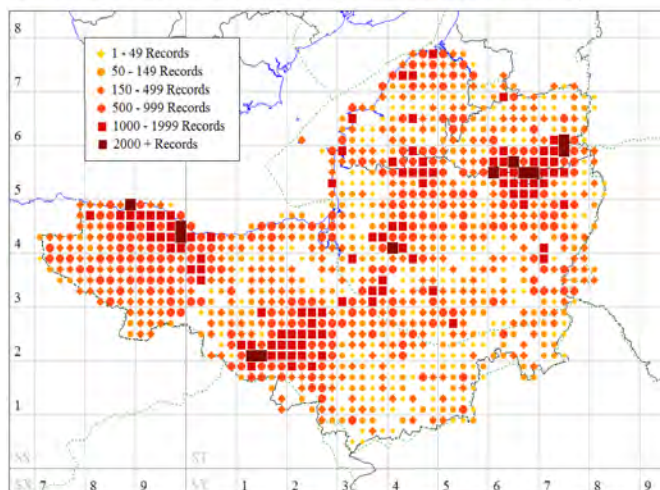
The SRPG is a strong thriving group, with membership currently standing at 73. We are always looking for people to take an active part in the group and to lead or help lead meetings. For information on subscriptions and membership see the Membership section in the back of the newsletter.

Visit [www.somsetrareplantsgroup.org.uk](http://www.somsetrareplantsgroup.org.uk) to see the current year's meetings programme, Somerset Rare Plant Register - list of species, criteria for inclusion and written accounts, newsletter archive and information on SRPG recording. Members can also leave comments and news of recent plant finds.

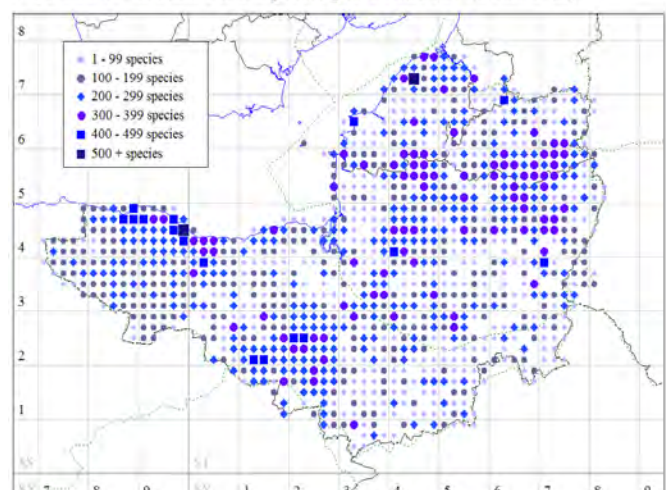
This is the first of our new style Newsletter which is distributed to members on-line. A few are printed for those members who are not computer users and who wish to read a paper version. We are introducing colour photos for the first time, which was not possible before due to high printing costs. In 2013 we had a full programme of meetings, starting in February with our rescheduled Annual Members Meeting and AGM which was cancelled in January due to heavy falls of snow. We had 17 field meetings in a wide variety of habitats that we have in Somerset, including coastland, reservoirs, limestone grassland, fens, mires, forestry tracks and urban areas. We had meetings to find and monitor rare and scarce species and general recording meetings, filling in some of the under-recorded areas of the two vice-counties (VC5 South Somerset & VC6 North Somerset).

We are keen to encourage members to 'adopt' a species or a suite of species (especially those in our Rare Plant Register) and/or record in their chosen area, whether it is a patch, parish or tetrad, as we need good coverage of the county. Members of the SRPG currently record at a scale of monad (1km square) level or finer. Six, eight or ten figure grid references are routinely recorded for rarer species. The Mapping programme MapMate is used by the Somerset Vice-County Recorders to store, analyse and share data, all records being passed to the BSBI (Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland). MapMate has only been routinely used for Somerset Plant records since the late 1990's and many historical records have yet to be added. The following maps generated from MapMate indicate the density of post -2000 records in our database and the number of recorded species on a tetrad (2km) level. These show very clearly the areas of the county that are poorly covered and we are keen to find members who are willing to record in these areas. The 2014 programme of field meetings will provide opportunities to survey and monitor some of our rare and scarce species, and will also take us to under-recorded parts of Somerset.

VC5 and 6 Vascular Plant Records per Tetrad (2000 onwards)



VC5 and 6 Vascular Plant Species per Tetrad (2000 onwards)



# Reports of Meetings

## Annual Members Meeting and AGM

Saturday 23rd February 2013

Report by Simon Leach

Our AGM and bring-and-share lunch was postponed from its usual January slot due to bad weather. Caroline Giddens stepped down as editor of the newsletter. She was presented with a 'hamper' of goodies and thanked for all her hard work on the newsletter over the years.

Members particularly value this annual write-up



Liz McDonnell presenting Caroline Giddens with her hamper © EJMCD

of the group's meetings and adventures. Liz McDonnell volunteered to take on the role of editor for the next newsletter. There was much discussion at the AGM about the question of insurance, and we had some helpful advice from Clive Lovatt on this matter. After much deliberation it was agreed that we should go ahead with purchasing insurance for the group.

We were reminded that anyone wishing to attend a field meeting should try to contact the leader to let them know they are coming. Given escalating fuel costs and lack of car-parking spaces at many of our meeting places, members should car-share as much as possible. Leaders are now expected to keep a register of attendees, including mobile telephone numbers and 'buddy' contact numbers in case of emergency. Leaders should also carry a first-aid kit. Ideally, it would be good to have two leaders per meeting, with one at the front and the other bringing up the rear to ensure no-one gets lost or left behind. An appeal was made for volunteers to lead or co-lead field meetings. There are some leaders, no-

tably Helena Crouch and Steve Parker, who take on more than their fair share, and it would be good to spread the load. Organising a field meeting doesn't need to be onerous, and can actually be great fun!

It emerged that only one of those present at the AGM was a fully trained first-aider. It was suggested that we might hold a basic first-aid training event as an indoor meeting next winter.

Christine Loudon gave us an update on the website, including some imminent changes to its layout and content. The possibility of having a "members' zone" and "message board" on the website was discussed. Christine was thanked for her continuing work on the website, which is a fantastic resource and much used by members and non-members alike.

Following the 'formal' part of the AGM, Helena gave us her customary romp through the botanical highlights of the last year, including many exciting records, e.g. Slender Club-rush (*Isolepis cernua*) at Walton-in-Gordano, Wall Bedstraw (*Galium parisiense*) outside Taunton railway station, and Maple-leaved Goosefoot (*Chenopodium hybridum*) in a garden in Bath. As usual, Helena's enthusiasm was plain for all to see, making us impatient to get out and start recording again!

## Recording your Local Patch

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Report by Liz McDonnell

This meeting was well attended, with 23 members and guests meeting at the Avalon Marshes Centre at Westhay. After the usual coffee, chat and notices, Steve Parker started proceedings by giving the talk that he had planned to present at the February recording meeting, which he was not able to attend. His illustrated talk was titled 'Natural History and the World Wide Web'. He gave us examples of how technology was influencing the way that we undertake our plant recording projects. Much has changed since Paul and Ian Green took over being BSBI VC recorders for North and South Somerset from Capt. Roe in 1993. Before that time all botanical records were held on recording cards, card indexes and paper files and correspondence. We even used to write letters to each other, telling of exciting botanical finds! Capt Roe's archive of letters is a valuable

data source which is frequently used by Helena Crouch, the current holder and joint Recorder for VC6 (North Somerset). Now e-mail has largely taken the place of hand-written letters and most information exchange is now electronic. Many of us have been using the MapMate recording system for years, and share records with each other and with central recording schemes such as BSBI. There are many online natural history recording schemes such as the *BTO bird Atlas*, *Somerset Moth Group* and the Woodland Trust's *Nature's Calendar* (where you can record and view seasonal events that show the impact of climate change on wildlife). Apps are currently being developed that enable a recorder to record directly into a small hand-held computer in the field, and this is the method that many of us will be using to record in the near future. Steve talked about blogs, tweets, discussion forums, bioblitz recording and social networks. Much interest was shown in iSpot, a website aimed at helping anyone identify anything in nature. He outlined both the advantages of using the web: wide range of resources; easy to get help from others; up-to-date information; ability to add data rapidly to national databases; encourages budding new naturalists, and the disadvantages: initial cost of computers and associated devices; many people are not connected; don't believe all you read, as there are many errors!

Christine Loudon presented her Langford Heathfield Project. This is a local recording scheme aimed at involving local people in their local Nature Reserve near Wellington and to help with some of the difficulties that have arisen in the community over its use and management. Langford Heathfield is a SSSI owned by Somerset Wildlife Trust. It has open access, varied and rich habitats and interesting and important species. The aims of the project are:

- The collection of valid data for the Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC)
- The involvement of as many people as possible
- The increase in ID skills and enjoyment of participants
- The trial of a very simple digital recording method with practical applications

Christine selected the species and with the help of about 20 volunteers, recorded each at a 10m resolution with a GPS. With help from SERC, the

10-figure grid references were used to produce detailed and accurate distribution maps of some of the key species that occur at Langford Heathfield. Christine hopes to continue again this year and to expand the species selection to include more notables and ancient woodland indicators.

After lunch, the summer field meetings programme was discussed and a plea sent out for suitable locations (especially with car parking facilities) and more leaders and co-leaders.

Simon Leach gave a presentation on the Taunton flora, a project that he started in 1996, but first gave his reasons for lack of recent progress! Simon's many interests include not only active involvement with SRPG and SANHS, but Brambles, plant galls, 'first-flowering-dates', counting birds, plotting the addresses of Taunton's sparrows and swifts, '1000 for 1ksq' (counting as many species as possible [all taxa] in a 1km square), completing the 'weather tree', researching John Morris (palaeontologist) and of course cricket! Simon showed distribution maps of several species, all mapped at a 'quartad' 500m x 500m resolution and welcomed more help with recording the 664 quartads in his Taunton Flora area.

Margarete Earle showed pictures of her 2012 trip to the Russian Caucasus with Greentours Natural History Holidays. As well as seeing Margarete's beautiful photos of Campanulas, Anemones, Gentians, mountain pastures, sink holes and ice patches we heard about machete-wielding men demanding money by a waterfall, bleak hotels where the lifts and heating didn't work and a spot of trouble when border guards objected to Margarete photographing an Ostrich Fern!

## **Weston-super-Mare Sea Lawns and Ellenborough Park West SSSI (VC6)**

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2013**

**Leaders: Steve Parker & Karen Pollock**

**Report by Karen Pollock**

There was a terrific turnout for the first outdoor meeting of the year. More than 20 members and a dog met on the sea lawns on a chilly dull day with a blustery wind blowing in from the estuary. The weather had been so cold that it was too early in the season for finding plants in flower, but patches of Suffocated Clover (*Trifolium suffo-*

*catum*), Toothed Medick (*Medicago polymorpha*) and Sea Stork's-bill (*Erodium maritimum*) were soon being closely examined in the short grass. Bermuda-grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) was found along the edges of the paths.

Following Steve into Ellenborough Park, we spread out in a long line and searched for plants of Smooth Rupturewort (*Herniaria glabra*) found in the sparsely vegetated areas of this sandy school playing field, but unfortunately we did not find them in as great numbers as previously recorded. There was an abundance of Branched Horsetail (*Equisetum ramosissimum*) all along the southern boundary, spreading in to where the scrub had been cleared. These two species have no other sites in Somerset.

There was a little weak sunshine as we continued our search of the sea lawns and worked our way north towards the big wheel, finding Slender Trefoil (*Trifolium micranthum*), Woolly Clover (*T. tomentosum*), and Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*). Woolly Clover was new to many members and it is the first record for this 1km square, as was the Slender Trefoil. It was good to see so many *Trifolium* species – we found Rough Clover (*T. scabrum*) in Ellenborough Park too. Disappointingly, some of the sea lawns had been re-seeded, much of the growth being Perennial Ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*). However, a surprising find was a few very small plants of Corn Parsley (*Petroselinum segetum*), new to Weston-super-Mare.

After lunch, we walked along the planted raised banks, where we found Springbeauty (*Claytonia perfoliata*). Crested Hair-grass (*Koeleria macrantha*) was also a good find, both plants being new to the 1km square.

A few hardy members were still searching for the annual Early Meadow-grass (*Poa infirma*), previously recorded here, as we approached the picket fence at the corner by the station. Looking over the fence, Paul Green spotted three plants of this tiny grass, which added a late bonus to the day.

Suffocated Clover, Toothed Medick, Bermuda-grass, Smooth Rupturewort and Branched Horsetail were already quite well recorded, but it was great for everyone to see these species. The last two have no other sites in Somerset. Woolly Clo-

ver was new to many members and we found it in a new 1km square (previously it has always been found south of there, near the railway track). It was good to see so many species of Clover on the Sea Lawns.

## **Blue Anchor Cliffs (VC5)**

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2013.**

**Leaders: Jeanne Webb & Steve Parker.**

**Report by Jeanne Webb**

It was warm and sunny and Blue Anchor was truly blue. Nine members made their way uphill, recording along the roadside and into the wood, to be met with a snowy landscape of Ramsoms (*Allium ursinum*). A chance discovery of three Greater Butterfly-orchids (*Platanthera chlorantha*) was a good start to the day and recording continued into the set-aside field where Small-flowered Buttercup (*Ranunculus parviflorus*) and Dwarf Spurge (*Euphorbia exigua*) were both flowering well alongside other arable weeds and a foreign-looking Bird's-foot Trefoil.

After health and safety reminders, Tim produced a rope, which aided a controlled slide into the lower wood where Chris Gladman had located many specimens of Bird's-nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*). We counted over 20 of these strange colourless orchids and found three plants of Common Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*). A slower climb back up the rope and recording continued along the cliff edges and into a second fallow field. Here over 50 orchid rosettes were found, identified from the leaves as the Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). With great care we looked over the cliff edge to where a recent



*Slumped cliffs at Blue Anchor where Fly Orchids grew— are they still there? © EJMCD*

landslip had wiped out a large population of Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*). A sad occurrence, but part of nature, and hopefully the seed may be spread for future germination. The meeting ended at the Driftwood Cafe – on the sea front at Blue Anchor, the sun, sea and cake combining to make a perfect SRPG meeting.

## **Britty Common, Blackdown Hills (VC5)**

**Saturday 1st June 2013**

**Leaders Liz Biron & Steve Parker**

**Report by Steve Parker**

Ten members gathered on a bright and sunny day to survey Britty Common. Members of SRPG have visited the site occasionally over the past ten years to record changes to the flora following a major restoration project. The mires of Britty were once very species-rich, but much of this interest was lost due to the planting of conifers in the 1970s. The Neroche Project which started in 2005 has removed many of these conifers and introduced cattle grazing to the area. The English Longhorn cattle appear to be doing an excellent job munching away at tree seedlings and brambles, however, it is a very large area so there is much for them to do, as many seedling conifers are starting to re-establish themselves. We found a range of mires and Liz Biron directed us to a very wet area dominated by the beautiful Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) which was in full flower. Large tussocks of Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) surrounded this mire, with other species of interest including Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*), Marsh Willowherb (*Epilobium palustre*) and Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*).

Returning to drier ground we found extensive stands of Wood Horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*) growing along the woodland edge. Moving further in to the site Smooth-stalked Sedge (*Carex laevigata*), Marsh St. John's-wort (*Hypericum elodes*), Bristle Club-rush (*Isolepis setacea*) and Bog Pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*) were recorded.

Overall the site was doing well. We recorded many of the mire species which were expected, but failed to locate Pale Butterwort (*Pinguicula lusitanica*), our target species for the day. Last seen in September 2009, this tiny plant is dependant on the cattle doing their job. We will revisit in a few year's time to check on progress.

## **Cadbury Camp, Tickenham (VC6)**

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Leader and report by Ellie Phillips**

This was a joint meeting with Bristol Naturalists' Society. There were 15 of us in total and the weather was hot and sunny; a welcome end to an extremely cold and very drawn out spring! From our meeting point we took a public footpath towards Cadbury Camp, skirting along the edge of the woodland of the lower slopes of Tickenham Hill. Here we found Spurge-laurel (*Daphne laureola*) and Goldilocks Buttercup (*Ranunculus auricomus*) along with brimstone butterfly.

Following belated elevenses at the foot of the Camp, we set about exploring the unimproved calcareous grassland. Once part of the Clevedon Court estate belonging to the Elton family, Cadbury Camp is now owned and managed by the National Trust. The Camp itself is an Iron Age hill fort, constructed and occupied from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC to the mid-1st century AD.

On and around the Camp we found over 18 species of grass, including some good calcicoles such as Quaking-grass (*Briza media*), Upright Brome (*Bromopsis erecta*), Tor-grass (*Brachypodium rupstre*), Crested Hair-grass (*Koeleria macrantha*) and Hairy Oat-grass (*Avenula pratensis*). We found the grassland on the flat centre of the fort to be rather rank, but the ramparts and the field to the west of the Camp had a good variety of calcareous grassland herbs, including Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*), Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Common Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Hop Trefoil (*Trifolium campestre*), Salad Burnet (*Poterium sanguisorba*), Spring-sedge (*Carex caryophyllea*), Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*), Stemless Thistle (*Cirsium acaule*), Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*), Mouse-ear Hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), Marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*) and Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*). Common Gromwell (*Lithospermum officinale*) was frequent but sadly the Horseshoe Vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*) and Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) promised on the National Trust's information board were nowhere to be seen!

We admired the architecture of the Woolly This-

tle (*Cirsium eriophorum*), puzzled over a weakly glandular Rose (*Rosa micrantha hybrid?*) and recorded Rough Clover (*Trifolium scabrum*), noting the recurved veins of its leaves compared to those of Knotted Clover (*Trifolium striatum*). Having lunched along the edges of the ramparts, which offered some shelter from the breeze and also turned up Hairy Rock-cress (*Arabis hirsuta*), we set off back towards our meeting point, choosing a gravel track as an alternative route to the fields. This track added a number of species to our list, such as Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Brome Fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*), Flattened Meadow-grass (*Poa compressa*) and Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), which explained our earlier sighting of the brimstone butterfly!

On our way back to our meeting point we took a detour to meet with Keith Giles, the warden for Avon Wildlife Trust's Tickenham Hill reserve. Keith had very kindly agreed to show us round the Reserve, and went well beyond the call of duty by inviting the group into his garden to refuel with tea and cake (a welcome offer to a group of parched botanists!). Keith took us through the woodland, where we were delighted to see Greater Butterfly-orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*), a Rare Plant Register plant. Keith showed us the fantastic views across the Gordano Valley before moving on to the grassland of the reserve, where we met the small herd of Dexters which were grazing the reserve and also encountered Southern Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*). We were shown the scrub management work which has been undertaken over successive years and were amazed at how quickly the grassland sward has recovered. We were also pleased to add the second Rare Plant Register plant of the day to the list: Hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*). Having said goodbye to the Dexters and given our thanks to Keith we set off for home. Final highlights on the way included Common Broomrape (*Orobancha minor*) ...and discovering that we weren't lost after all and had found the footpath back to the car!

## Milbourne Wick, South Somerset (VC5)

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2013**

**Leaders David Reid and Steve Parker**

**Report by Steve Parker**

Six members of the SRPG went looking for Frog

orchids. However the Frog Orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*) is small, green flowered and very difficult to find. Of course the heavy rain shower that greeted us also made the searching difficult but in the end we found 57 Frog Orchids. David Reid had found the plants on the site in the 1980s and in the archives at SERC there is a beautifully drawn map showing the site. This was the first record for this species in VC5 since the publication of the Atlas Flora of Somerset. In an email following the field meeting Helena Crouch suggests that David's discovery of the site in the 1988 was possibly at the same place as Templecombe in the Flora of Somerset by Murray 1896.



Frog Orchid near Milbourne Wick ©HJC

The site is a steep hillside that was very species rich neutral grassland with Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*) and Spiny Restharrow (*Ononis spinosa*). On the many anthills Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and Wild Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*) were in full flower. Other orchids included Common Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*), Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and Chalk Fragrant-orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*). The hill also produced a first 10km record for Flea sedge (*Carex pulicaris*).

After lunch we made our way through the woods to a second site, this was a very steep hill above Milbourne Port. This area of open grassland was significantly different in character from the Frog orchid site but still of botanical interest, with Upright Brome (*Bromopsis erecta*) the dominant species. Other plants included many fine examples of Woolly Thistle (*Cirsium eriophorum*). There was a large specimen London Plane (*Platanus x hispanica*) growing at the bottom of

the slope; this tree must have been planted many years ago, perhaps part of a parkland landscape that has now all but disappeared. To delight the non-botanist, clouds of Six-spot Burnet moth (*Zygaena filipendulae*) were on the wing. We returned to our cars have enjoyed a great day studying the natural history of this under recorded part of Somerset.

### **Wimbleball Lake Exmoor/Brendon Hills (VC5)**

**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Leader Steve Parker**

**Report by Steve Parker**

On this field meeting we were joined by some new members, Graham Lavender from Exmoor Natural History Society and a local land owner Mr R Wright and his very knowledgeable daughter. The Somerset Rare Plants Group have been lucky enough to have been invited by Ellen McDouall to survey a number of the reservoirs in Somerset. At Wimbleball we did find the expected carpet of New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) dominating the draw down zone but we also found a carpet of Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*). More unexpected was a large population of Corn Spurrey (*Spergula arvensis*). By Bessom Bridge Clive Lovatt found Onion Couch (*Arrhenatherum elatius var. bulbosum*). We presume this is common in Somerset but there are very few records on our Mapmate database.

Lunch was spent sitting on the shore of the reservoir watching the fishermen on the lake. Then we headed towards Hurscombe plantation to search for Greater Broomrape (*Orobanche rapumgenistae*). This plant was last recorded from this location by Mr Wright in 1981 and he has looked frequently for this plant here, but with no success. Sadly we had the same result with no sign of the broomrape, however we did find a small patch of Bird's-foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*).

### **Catcott Fen, Somerset Levels (VC6)**

**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013**

**Leader Steve Parker**

**Report by Steve Parker**

During 2013 Natural England carried out monitoring at Catcott, Edington and Chilton Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Somerset Rare Plants Group was asked by Natural England to help with monitoring the rare plants

of the mires and fens within the SSSI.

Starting in the Old Reserve, the members of group started recording in the area the dominated by Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Of great interest was Milk-parsley (*Peucedanum palustre*), which appears to be doing well in the reserve. More surprising was the discovery of a few seed heads of Fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*). These plants must have been planted on the site a few years ago, but why it was planted is unknown. In my view the deliberate introduction of non-natives has no clear purpose and should be discouraged.

Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) dominated fen woodland supports Narrow Buckler-Fern (*Dryopteris carthusiana*) while in the scrubby areas there are large stands of Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*). This plant has a restricted distribution in Somerset and in VC6 the plant is restricted to nature reserves in the Brue valley. The presence of Bog-myrtle in the reserves gives the reserve managers something of a problem; if left un-managed this uncommon species forms impenetrable thickets excluding many other interesting species. Active Bog-myrtle cutting is carried out both by Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) and Natural England. Further in to the reserve, we recorded around the experimental pits. These long establish pits support excellent specimens of Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*), Marsh Fern (*Thelypteris palustris*) and Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*).

After lunch the group visited the Great Fen, where in recent years SWT have spent considerable time and effort restoring a large peat void. In restoring this site the SWT have created a series of open water bodies surrounded by reed-beds. It is hoped that a fen vegetation will develop on the site within the next twenty years of so. At the site entrance to the fen a few plants of Golden Dock (*Rumex maritimus*) were found. In 2012 there were many Golden Dock plants along this edge of the site; however this annual species has declined as the site has become dominated by perennial vegetation. Much of the site has developed rapidly with tall grasses and rushes making access difficult. More interesting species included Common Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*) and few scattered plants of Milk-parsley which has already managed to establish a foothold in the area.

## Charmy Down, Bath (VC6)

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Leaders and report by Ellie Phillips & Ellen McDouall

One of the first really hot days of the summer and we met to do some highly overdue general recording around the southern part of Charmy Down. The walk covered two 1km squares, neither of which has had any botanical records submitted since The Flora of the Bristol Region in 1911.

The Down is part of the southern edge of the Cotswold escarpment, three miles north of Bath and on the northern edge of VC6. The flat top once had a line of long barrows but these were flattened at the start of the second world war to make an RAF airfield. Buildings, runways & tracks and pill-boxes are some structures that still exist. The geology of area is mostly Jurassic limestones but the scarp slope exposes a complex geology which is rich in springs and has long served as a source of water for Bath; virtually all the land covered by the walk is still protected & used for this purpose, meaning no use of pesticides and minimal fertilizer applications.

Starting at the bottom of the southern slope of the Down gave ample scope for getting stuck before we began on the newish road verges, built as part of the Batheaston by-pass in the late 1990s. A good calcareous flora was found but the legitimacy of the Kidney Vetch in this location first gave rise to the suspicion that we were not looking at an entirely native community. However, there was a good-sized group of Common Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). An *Agrostis* that had the flower of *A. capillaris* but also distinct ligules proved problematical. It is possible that this may have been Highland Bent (*A. castellana*) which is a very common component of wild flower seed mixes.

The relatively dull flora of the lane up to the Down produced Hedge Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*) and we discussed the difference between this native bindweed and the introduced Large Bindweed (*C. silvatica*). The rest of the morning was spent making a gentle progress up the hill through a field of old pasture. This is a lovely calcareous grassland community including Common Rock-rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*),

Crested Hair-grass (*Koeleria macrantha*), Downy Oat-grass (*Avenula pubescens*), Small Scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria*), Hoary Plantain (*Plantago media*) etc. There were plenty of Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), Common Spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) and a solitary Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*). Woolly Thistle (*Cirsium eriophorum*) was frequent and striking. Scrub, wood margins and seepages diversified the list, notably adding Thin-spiked Wood-sedge (*Carex strigosa*).

By lunch time we were nearly at the top of the hill and glad to sit down in the shade. The afternoon took us onto the open flat top of the Down to follow two of the former airfield runways across grasslands of varying qualities. The airstrips and trackways with very shallow soil were very species rich and it was there we found Squirrel-tail Fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*) and Small Toadflax (*Chaenorhinum minus*). Having roasted in the sun and explored the grassy heads of the pillboxes (disappointingly dull) we turned back south but were diverted by splurge of purple opium poppies on a large heap of soil and stone spoil from a farmhouse renovation where we found Black Mustard (*Brassica nigra*) and Dotted Loosestrife (*Lysimachia punctata*) as well.



Opium poppies and Black mustard on farmhouse spoil heap at Charmy Down © E McDouall

We had two alternative routes to get back down the hill - the group voted for the extreme option



and were rewarded for the very steep and overgrown path by a lovely little outcrop of limestone grassland over a nearly sheer drop, yellow with abundant Common Rock-rose.

No rarities were found but we still made some important records:

- Red Goosefoot (*Chenopodium rubrum*) was first post-Flora record for the 10km square
- Thin-spiked Wood-sedge was the first post-2000 record for the 10km square
- Rat's-tail Fescue (*Vulpia myuros*) ditto

## Cross Plain and Bourton Combe (part of Crook Peak) Mendip Hills (VC6) Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Leaders Liz McDonnell & Anne Bodley

Report by Liz McDonnell & Libby Houston

On one of the hottest days of the year, 11 members met at the Shute Shelve National Trust car park to explore a less well know part of the Crook Peak SSSI. We walked up through the shade of King's Wood and into the intense heat on the open hillside. We found abundant Pill Sedge (*Carex pilulifera*) with its tufted growth, pale green foliage and distinctive almost prostrate long arching fruiting stems along the footpath above Bourton Combe and we compared the ligules and panicles of Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) and Brown Bent (*Agrostis vinealis*). There was much discussion about small depauperate plants of a *Senecio* – were they Common Grousel (*Senecio vulgaris*) or Heath Grousel (*Senecio sylvaticus*)? The presence of glandular hairs and the shape of the involucre indicated that Heath groundsel was present in this heathy habitat, where Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) and Slender St John's-wort (*Hypericum pulchrum*) are common. Occasional tufts of Small Wood-reed (*Calamagrostis epigejos*) were sprouting high above the gorse and heathy vegetation and Torgrass (*Brachypodium rupestre*) was frequent along the path. We made our way towards a small limestone cliff and rock outcrops and found yew trees to shelter for a lunch break.

Libby Houston went off to sample the group of Whitebeams found around the low, broken NE/E-facing crag where we stopped for lunch. They seemed to show characteristics of polyploid, i.e. rare, taxa, rather than those of simple diploid Common Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*) - but alas not

those of the more obvious or long-known species such as English Whitebeam (*Sorbus anglica*), Round-leaved Whitebeam (*Sorbus eminens*) or Grey-leaved Whitebeam (*Sorbus porrigentiformis* s.s.). Libby recorded details and took samples from 12 of them: three trees on and below the rocks, six saplings along the top and three larger trees of up to 88cm cbh (circumference @ 1.33m) on the westward slopes. The first, a big (c.5m) tree at the N end of the outcrop, seemed similar to a triploid group near the top of Burrington Combe with leaves somewhere between those of *S. porrigentiformis* and Leigh Woods Whitebeam (*S. leighensis*). If, at a conservative estimate, five may perhaps turn out to be *S. aria* after all, the samples from four more of them suggest either the Burrington triploid - or the hybrid Avon Whitebeam (*S. x avonensis*); and two the new local endemic Cheddar Whitebeam (*S. cheddarensis*). The unrelenting high temperature was scarcely conducive to clear *Sorbus* thinking at the time, and more work needs to be done! To summarize so far: at least some, if not all, the *Whitebeams* in this area are 'rare' apomicts belonging to at least two, possibly three, taxa, all within the *S. aria* aggregate. The samples need comparing with herbarium specimens from Burrington, Cheddar and Avon Gorge, and the site needs revisiting in September, with luck a less stressfully scorching time, to gather ripe fruits. At least this seems to be a very good fruiting year



Clive Lovatt and Libby Houston discussing Whitebeams at Wavering Down © Margaret Webster

The rock outcrops were rich here, with Horse-shoe Vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*), Wall Lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*), Squinancywory (*Asperula cy-*

*nanchica*) and Small-flowered Sweet-briar (*Rosa micrantha*). Several of our intrepid members ventured onto the baked open hillside in soaring temperatures to try to re-find Honewort (*Trinia glauca*) where it was last recorded by Ro FitzGerald in 1989. They were thrilled to report that hundreds of plants were found, as well as several plants of Somerset Hair-grass (*Koeleria vallesiana*) in open rocky grassland. Most of the party were too overwhelmed by the heat to continue and walked wearily back to the car park, but three of our hardy members went on to Cross Plain to search for Dwarf Sedge (*Carex humilis*), but failed to find it, despite a thorough search of the 100 x100m square. However, they found Honewort which gives an extra 1km post-2000 spot on the map. Honewort was last seen on Wavering Down in 1989, by Ro FitzGerald.

## **Goblin Combe (VC6)**

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

**Leaders Helena Crouch & Margaret Webster**

**Report by Helena Crouch**

Four dedicated rare plant hunters turned out on a swelteringly hot day to seek the native and introduced rare plants of Goblin Combe. Heading for the Iron Age hill fort at Cleeve Toot, we encountered splendid spikes of Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*), which is Scarce in VC5 but not VC6. As a landscape feature, the hill fort is disappointing, being badly overgrown, but we were pleased to see Common Gromwell (*Lithospermum officinale*) and Vervain (*Verbena officinalis*). A gentle shady walk through woodland eventually brought us to the top of the cliffs, where we emerged into blazing sunshine and oppressive heat. The vegetation here was badly scorched and we were grateful for the shade of some pines for our lunch stop.

While the leaders rested and admired a splendid *Hieracium* (Hawkweed), intrepid companions went in search of the University of Bristol's rare plant introduction site. In 1955, seven rare species of the Avon Gorge and Mendip limestone were planted/sown here (see BSBI News 47: 22-23.) On a steep south-facing slope, Bloody Crane's-bill (*Geranium sanguineum*) was blooming in abundance and we counted 40 clumps. A rock outcrop still supports Somerset Hair-grass (*Koeleria vallesiana*) clearly thriving in its

adopted home because around 100 plants were seen. We also found vegetative shoots of Spiked Speedwell (*Veronica spicata*) however the site is now unsuitable for Honewort (*Trinia glauca*), seen here in its thousands in 1987 and still thriving in 2002. Two Evergreen Oaks threaten to shade the site, which is clearly unmanaged. We were too late to search for White Rock-rose (*Helianthemum apenninum*) or its hybrid with Common Rock-rose (*H. nummularium*) since all rock-roses had been burnt to a crisp in the recent hot dry weather. The hybrid, *H. x sulphureum* arose here spontaneously, but has not been seen recently. The other two introduced species Goldilocks Aster (*Aster linosyris*) and Bristol Rock-cress (*Arabis scabra*), are not believed to have persisted here. Although this introduction experiment may be considered controversial, those species still present have been established for nearly 60 years and their continued monitoring is important.

A more exciting discovery on cliffs nearby was two trees thought to be Round-leaved Whitebeam (*Sorbus eminens*). Specimens were collected for further study and a return visit is planned at fruiting time. This Endangered and Nationally Rare species has its main area of distribution in VC6 (North Somerset). One tree was found at Goblin Combe earlier this year; these would be the second and third trees at this new site.

Descending to the cool of the combe, we spent the afternoon searching for three ferns, all Rare Plant Register species. Brittle Bladder-fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*) had been recorded here by SRPG in 1998, but we failed to find it on this occasion. Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*) is the logo of the Goblin Combe Environment Centre and given prominence on the interpretation boards; however there is usually a very small number of plants and we failed to find any. We spent longest searching for Limestone Fern (*Gymnocarpium robertianum*), mentioned as here in White's 1912 flora and, like Moonwort, included on the SSSI Citation. Although in 2009 sixty fronds were recorded on lightly-shaded scree, we failed to find any. Hopefully this was only due to the effect of extreme heat on weary botanists! As a finale, we recorded 3 plants of Stinking Hellebore (*Helleborus foetidus*) growing

some distance up a scree slope. Although so often found as a garden escape, this species is believed to be native here. This was a good walk, but more species would have been seen a few weeks earlier, before exposed vegetation was scorched to a crispy state.

## **Street Heath SSSI , Somerset Levels (VC6) Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

**Leaders Karen Pollock & Anne Bodley**

**Report by Karen Pollock**

Seven of our members visited Street Heath on a hot and sunny morning. Iberian marsh frogs croaked in welcome as we walked along the drove by a recently flooded area. This site has many old turbarry pits, where the peat was dug by hand for fuel. These and more recently dug ditches contain the wetland interest, water levels being maintained by a newly installed wind pump. The removal of the trees that used to cover half of the site has also improved the water level management and the introduction of ponies is limiting the fast growing vegetation from overwhelming the pits.

We mainly recorded in the part of the reserve north of the drove where Marsh Fern (*Thelypteris palustris*) grows prolifically along the edges of some of the pits and an exciting find of Slender sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*) in association with Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) and Soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) was found in a ditch on the south side of this area. Meandering among the pits we recorded patches of Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), much of it in flower, growing amongst *Sphagnum* species and a small area of Creeping Willow (*Salix repens*). There were many more large Royal Fern clumps and these three records, together with the Marsh Fern are all Somerset Rare Plant Register Species. Sadly, though we looked very carefully we did not find Pale Butterwort (*Pinguicula lusitanica*).

Cotton grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) grew in a few pits and Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*) and Frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) were found in a couple of pools. Many-stalked Spike-rush (*Eleocharis multicaulis*) is also a recent find. On the heath the hot sun brought out the scent of the abundant Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*) as we brushed through the plants

along the rough pony tracks. Here there was Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*) and the seed heads of Southern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) with Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*). Also we recorded a very splendid Hawkweed (*Hieracium umbellatum*). Common Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis tetrahit*) and Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*) were found in the cleared western section, though we did not spend much time there.

A quick visit to the southern part of the reserve produced another record for Slender Sedge in a couple of shallow pits, but the area is very overgrown with Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). After lunch we looked in some deeper water with abundant Ivy-leaved Pondweed (*Lemna trisulca*) and Rigid Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*). Then the clouds rolled in and the heavens opened so we all went for a cup of tea and cake at the Peat Moors Centre! It was a good day.



Anne Bodley, Karen Pollock, Margarete Earle & Steve Parker at Street Heath © HJC

## **Rams Combe, Quantock Hills (VC5) Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2013**

**Leaders: Steve Parker**

**Report by Steve Parker**

The aim of this meeting was to gather records for an area the SRPG or other recorders had not visited since publication of the Atlas Flora of Somerset in 1997. The area consists of ancient woodland that has been turned in to a conifer plantation consisting mainly of Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*). Seedlings of Douglas fir and Western Red-cedar (*Thuja plicata*) were found naturalising in the

woodland. Records from the Atlas indicate that Cornish Moneywort (*Sibthorpia europaea*) was recorded from this area, but despite careful searching in the damp areas, this plant was not found during our meeting.

A large patch of Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*) was doing very well on a recently cleared bank. The flowers of Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) were attracting many butterflies including many individuals of Silver-washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*). Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Sharp-flowered Rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) were abundant in a large grassy glade. Along the edge of a small stream we found Smooth-stalked Sedge (*Carex laevigata*). The edges of the track up the Quantock Combe were botanically rich and included Trailing St John's-wort (*Hypericum humifusum*). At the top of the combe at Hart Hill we found Hybrid Woundwort (*Stachys x ambigua*) a frequent hybrid in Somerset which is easily overlooked. The day produced no 'rare' plants but did fill in a large gap in our records for the area with a total of 199 species recorded before heavy rain made the group hurry back to their cars.

## Ham Hill, Stoke sub Hamdon (VC5)

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> August

Leader Simon Leach

Report by Simon Leach

Our leader had never been to this site before – not a good start! – and then set off without his distance spectacles; meaning that the whole day, for him at any rate, went by in something of a blur. The chief aim of the visit was, on the face of it, simple enough: to satisfy ourselves that Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) was still extant at this, one of its very few post-1987 sites in VC5. We knew it had gone from most or all of its other stations in VC5, around Exmoor, so its foothold in VC5 (in contrast with VC6) had become a precarious one indeed. Also, if we could find it, this would give us an opportunity to establish which subspecies was present at Ham Hill: was it the widespread subsp. *rotundifolia* or the much scarcer (and more westerly) subsp. *montana*? One of the unexpected benefits of only having reading glasses is that you are forced to concen-

trate on the things closest to your nose; certainly, admiring the view is a non-starter... And so it was that some of us, not least the leader, got repeatedly and predictably side-tracked by plant galls. And what a day we had, including two in the flower-heads of Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*) caused by the gall-midges *Kiefferia pericarpiicola* and *Lasioptera carophila* – both of which proved to be 'firsts' for VC5. We also saw galls on Salad-burnet (*Poterium sanguisorba*) caused by the mite *Aceria sanguisorbae*, only otherwise known in VC5 from Thurlbear Quarrylands.

With James McGill also in the party it was inevitable that we'd delve briefly into the murky world of leaf mines. And so we admired brown patches on Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) leaves, these being blotch mines caused by the common micro-moth *Epermenia chaerophyllela*. And later in the day we digressed onto hoverflies too, noting a particularly fine *Myathropa florea* on bramble flowers beside the footpath on our way back to the car-park.

Oh yes. We did find Harebell, but worryingly there wasn't much of it, and it seemed to us to be 'hanging on' in an area of rather rank grassland surrounded by trees and scrub and close to the lane across the top of the hill. We admired its flowers, took GPS readings, and ascertained that the Ham Hill plants were indeed the more widespread of the two subspecies, subsp. *rotundifolia*.



*Campanula rotundifolia* subsp. *rotundifolia* at Ham Hill ©SJL

In our two target 1-km squares (ST4716 and 4816) we recorded a total of 170 vascular plant species, including quite a few that we only occasionally come across in VC5, such as Fragrant

Agrimony (*Agrimonia procera*), Bugloss (*Anchusa arvensis*), and the Near Threatened and not-so-common Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*). The last of these we found in open gravelly areas around the Lime Kiln car-park – several thousand plants in all, and the first record of this species, apparently, from 10-km square ST41.

Apart from one shower early on, the weather had treated us kindly. Some of us ended the day by visiting an ice-cream van and sitting for a while to take in the view. By this time the leader had, thankfully, been reunited with his distance glasses.

## **Westhay Moor, Somerset Levels (VC6)**

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2013**

**Leader Steve Parker**

**Report by Steve Parker**

Westhay Moor mire restoration has been underway for well over ten years. The mire was very badly damaged due to draining caused by peat cutting in the 1970s and 1980s. Restoration has involved clearing the secondary woodland that developed, introduction of grazing and pumping water on to the site from the adjacent lake. Natural England requested help from SRPG in updating records of plants for the site.

Recording along the track to the north of the mire our first stop was to look at the few remaining *Sarracenia* plants. It is thought that seed of this North American Pitcher-plant was deliberately scattered on part of the mire either in 2007 or 2008 by a member of the public. From this a range of *Sarracenia* species germinated. The Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) in consultation with Natural England decided they would remove these non-native plants as they may become a problem and encourage other people to plant non-natives on the site.

Moving in the main part of the mire, many group members commented on the excellent work the SWT had carried out in removing the scrub from the site. Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) had previously almost covered the site, but this was now much reduced in area. The other immediately obvious difference was the increase in the amount of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*).

Walking across the site it was apparent that the cover of Molinia (*Molinia caerulea*) had declined

while *Sphagnum* was increasing. This is a really positive sign. Fred Rumsey collected and identified six *Sphagnum* species. The two areas of 'bog' created by SWT some years ago was still looking very good with many flowering plants of Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). Marsh Willowherb (*Epilobium palustre*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) are all doing well in the wettest part of this bog. Royal Fern (*Osmunda regalis*) continues to do well on the site. Changes in grazing and water levels were once thought to be a threat to this magnificent fern, however these fears appear to be unfounded.

The ditch network that is fed by the new wind pump has a large population of Frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) and other ditch plants common across the rest of the Somerset levels. However the rarest species we recorded was not a vascular plant but Veilwort (*Pallavicinia lyellii*) growing on the bare peat. This is a rare liverwort that has been known on the site for many years and continues to be thriving as the mire restoration continues.



SRPG members admiring increase of Heather at Westhay © Dee Holladay

## **Sutton Bingham Reservoir, Yeovil (VC5)**

**Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013**

**Leader Ellen McDouall**

**Report by Ellen McDouall**

I had plans for the SRPG visit to Sutton Bingham reservoir. First I wanted to look for eight plant species of conservation importance not recorded by Wessex Water surveyors since 1998 – this included Round-fruited Rush (*Juncus compressus*);

next I hoped to have some help in counting the Meadow Saffron (*Colchicum autumnale*) plants in meadows on the west side; finally, if all else failed I knew that you could always count on a good reservoir draw-down zone to keep a bunch of botanists happy.

The best-laid plans! A pre-visit visit showed that the only rush that might be round-fruited had had all its flowers eaten; the late seasons through the year had affected the Meadow Saffron and only twelve flowers were showing – within even my arithmetical abilities to count; lastly, major re-building of the water treatment works meant that no water had been taken all summer and water was still up to the banks – no draw-down zone at all.

However, luckily Steve Parker had an agenda too – to record squares ST 5511, ST 5510 and ST5410 on the east side of the reservoir; an area closed to the public except for fishing and squares that had not previously been recorded individually. This sounds a lot to aim for but the reservoir manages to spread itself across a total of six 1km squares in two counties. We made a cracking start just in front of the fishing lodge where we recorded 50 species in a just a few metres of a narrow unmown strip on the water's edge with nice-to-have marginals like Large Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and Gypsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*). The rest of the morning took us round the bottom right-hand part of the hammer head shape at the at the north end of the reservoir. This is more or less equally mown grassland and ornamental plantation copses, though the latter included an old hedge bank which brought in some woodland flora.

Better woodland came after lunch through a narrow strip of woodland associated with an old boundary bank where we found several quite impressive Hazel and Field Maple trees. The end of the wood and into the last square (ST5410) by late afternoon just left time to look at the next patch of grassland to the south, where a nice little of colony of Pepper-saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*) was found – one of my target species not recorded since 1998.

More species of conservation interest were found than I had expected given that most of the grassland we looked at is not primarily managed

for its flora. These included Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), Betony (*Betonica officinalis*), Stone Parsley (*Sison amomum*) and Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*). The range of species found reflects a geology with narrow exposures of acid and calcareous rocks within a fifty metre wide band.

This field meeting was very successful, not only in gathering general records for under-recorded 1km squares, but finding new species - Pepper-saxifrage and Saw-wort (*Serratula tictoria*) for this site.

## **Durleigh Reservoir, Bridgwater (VC6)**

**Thursday 19th September**

**Leader Ellen McDouall**

**Report by Liz McDonnell**

This meeting was an extra one slipped into the programme by Ellen who reported that due to the prolonged summer drought the water level of the reservoir was very low, creating a wide drawdown zone and an excellent opportunity for botanical survey. A small number of members met for this mid-week afternoon meeting and after sheltering briefly in the fishermen's hut from the driving rain we explored the sandy soils which are usually beneath the water. By the reservoir dam we found abundant Red Goosefoot (*Chenopodium rubrum*), many plants flowering and fruiting whilst only a few centimetres high. Cockspur (*Echinochloa crus-galli*) was frequent amongst other vegetation in the draw-down zone. We were pleased to find many plants of Round-fruited rush (*Juncus compressus*) at the upper reaches of the draw-down zone on the northern shore and two plants of Northern Yellow-cress (*Rorippa islandica*).



Northern Yellow-cress at Durleigh Reservoir © Graham Lavender

All the Somerset reservoirs have similar a basic draw-down plant community but each has its own variation on the theme. At Durleigh this is a dominance of Pink Water-speedwell (*Veronica catenata*) which forms a thick carpet towards the west end of the reservoir – an abundance not seen before by any of the botanists present. Another feature was an intriguing collection of aliens: Wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), Oat (*Avena sativa*), Maize (*Zea mays*), Flax (*Linum usitatissimum*) Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) and even a very pretty flowering specimen of Safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*), all between the high and low water marks. A fishing member enlightened us – components of bait thrown to attract carp.



SRPG Botanists on the wide draw-down zone at Durleigh Reservoir  
© Ellen McDouall

At the western end we waded through tall lush vegetation dominated by Purple-loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) with willow seedlings and both Trifid and Nodding bur-marigolds (*Bidens tripartita* and *B. cernua*) replete with sharp burred seedheads, to reach an area of woodland usually inaccessible unless the water levels are very low. Here was a strange mangrove-like landscape with exposed roots of White Willow (*Salix alba*) and probably Crack Willow (*S. fragilis*). The ground flora is patchy and reflects the usual inundation levels; nearest the reservoir the ground is bare or supports just the annuals of the draw-down zone.

Further west the land is slightly higher and Common Reed, (*Phragmites australis*), Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and Greater Pond-sedge (*Carex riparia*) were found in quite dense

stands. We found one of the few plants of Common Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*) that persist here and a surprising find was one plant of White Ramping-fumitory (*Fumaria capreolata*).

Emerging from the woodland with its many trip hazards, out on to the south side of the reservoir once more, we searched the exposed draw-down zone and found a few plants of Orange Foxtail (*Alopecurus aequalis*), completing, with the Northern Yellow-cress and Compact Rush, the trio of typical Somerset Reservoir draw-down rarities. This was a good day's recording, with over 170 taxa recorded over two 1km squares. It also turned out to be beautiful evening.

## Wells (VC6)

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2013

Leaders Helena Crouch & Anne Cole

Report by Helena Crouch

A large party of seventeen assembled in Wells for the penultimate walk of the season. As we waited in the Market Place, we puzzled over a small succulent growing between cobbles. Larger plants were growing in tubs nearby; after much research they were found to be a cultivar of Reflexed Stonecrop (*Sedum rupestre*).

We set off through the Bishop's Eye and ambled slowly alongside the moat, admiring Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum capillus-veneris*) festooning down the walls of the Bishop's Palace gardens. The moat itself is dominated by Intermediate Water-starwort (*Callitriche brutia* subsp. *hammulata*); the surrounding wall yielded more species of interest, albeit non-natives. Indian-rhubarb (*Darmera peltata*), self-sown at the water's edge,



Fred Rumsey giving a *Polypodium id* session © EJMCD

was new to many. Italian Alder (*Alnus cordata*), Western Red-cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) were all self-sown on the wall. A large clump of Southern Polypody (*Polypodium cambricum*) high in a sycamore provided an opportunity for a *Polypodium* masterclass.

After diversions to examine galls and a stop to admire some unusually flat Orange Peel Fungus (*Aleuria aurantia*), we reached Tor Hill. The grassland at the summit is sadly under-managed, but we still found Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*), Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and Betony (*Betonica officinalis*). It also provided an excellent picnic spot with far-reaching views. A clump of Knapweed in flower prompted shared concern about *Centaurea* identification. In his third edition, Stace now treats *C. nigra* and *C. debeauxii* as separate species; however he adds that intermediates may be hybrids, or may indicate that the species are not separable. The distribution of these two species is as yet unknown in Somerset. A hybrid dock proved much easier to identify! *Rumex x pratensis* (*R. crispus* x *obtusifolius*) is our commonest *Rumex* hybrid and much overlooked: this was the first record for the 10km square since before 2000.

Returning to residential streets, we recorded Garden Grape-hyacinth (*Muscari armeniacum*), Procumbent Yellow-sorrel (*Oxalis corniculata*) and Love-in-a-mist (*Nigella damascena*) at the edges of pavements. In Bath Road, a few plants of Fragrant Evening-primrose (*Oenothera stricta*) were a surprise and new to this 10km square. More exciting, however, was a splendid plant of Tree Spinach (*Chenopodium giganteum*) growing on the pavement in St Thomas Street. This had been found by two of the party a few weeks previously and was a new plant for many members and the first confirmed record for VC6. It is a striking plant, with shocking magenta splashes of colour in the shoots. The first record for VC5 was also made this year, in Yeovil; this species may become more commonly encountered since it is an increasingly popular salad crop.

In Miller's Gardens, a small *Lavandula angustifolia* (Garden Lavender) was found in the gutter; the same habitat yielded Caucasian-stonecrop

(*Sedum spurium*) in North Road. Just before several members departed, a small patch of Yellow-flowered Strawberry (*Potentilla indica*) was discovered on the verge. The yellow flowers and fat red strawberries were much admired and this was another species new to the 10km square. Ten members returned to the Market Place via the Vicars' Close, where a small specimen of Argentinian Vervain (*Verbena bonariensis*) was found between the cobbles: yet another new species for the 10km square. As promised, our urban botanical stroll ended with tea and cakes in the Market Place.



The shocking pink/purple glands on leaves of Tree Spinach in St Thomas Street © EJMCD

## Uphill, nr Weston-super-Mare (VC6)

**Saturday 28th December 2014**

**Report by Liz McDonnell**

Our December walk was well attended, and eleven members met near the marina eager to get out after the Christmas celebrations. The first destination was to see the Argentine Dock (*Rumex frutescens*) on sand-dunes at the entrance to the beach. This was first recorded here in 2008 and is still doing well, sending up many shoots from its far-reaching rootstock. From here we made our way southwards along the top of the beach towards the saltmarsh, noticing large deposits of duckweeds on the sand brought in by the tide from the nearby River Axe. We discussed whether they should be recorded and opinions were divided, as they were so obviously brought in by the sea and not in their own freshwater habitat.

We picked our way through the dinghies to the saltmarsh where we found Sea Club-rush



(*Bolboschoenus maritimus*) in the water-filled depressions and the remains of *Rumex crispus* subsp *uliginosus* in tall ungrazed vegetation, which was a new 10km square record. The limestone quarries are important for several rare species and as soon as we had eaten our lunch we clambered up to the stepped quarry walls and were pleased to see many small greyish finely dissected leaves of Honewort (*Trinia glauca*), which is doing well in this location where it has been recorded since Dillenius found it in 1726. We found many plants of Somerset Hair-grass (*Koeleria vallesiana*), with its distinctive felted lower sheaths, on bare rocky outcrops and were astonished to find a spike of French Oat-grass (*Gaudinia fragilis*) in full flower, near the long-established location of Goldilocks Aster (*Aster linosyris*).



SRPG members on the species-rich grassland at Uphill © SJL

The group made its way up the hill behind the quarries across the species-rich grassland towards the church at the top of the hill and after a leisurely amble round the old churchyard with its limestone walls and many gravestones, walked down to the road to find a clump of New Zealand Wind-grass (*Anemanthele lessoniana*) by the footpath - another 10km square record.

On the way to the Wharfside Tearooms near the boatyard, we peered over the roadside wall to see (and smell) several plants of Wild Celery (*Apium graveolens*) at the water's edge. This was an enjoyable winter walk, especially for those Wild Flower Society members amongst us who were recording the number of plants in flower for the 'Winter Month's Hunt' – the total for the day being 47 (compared with 65 on the equiva-

lent trip to Dunster in Dec 2012). We must not forget the plant gall hunters who saw several galls of interest including an ergot on *Spartina*, a leaf-roll gall on Red Valerian and who were very excited to find the hazel big-bud gall, which was the first record for Uphill.

## Botany Articles

### Is Small-leaved Sweet-briar (*Rosa agrestis*) a victim of climate change?

A report by Rob Randall

During 2013 I visited known colonies of *R.agrestis* in VC6 to ascertain their current status. Localities were all south-facing rocky positions on Carboniferous Limestone, or the Dolomitic Conglomerate derived from it. At inland sites *R.agrestis* was accompanied by *R.micrantha*, so the frequency of that species was also assessed, along with any evidence of hybridisation with that species and other taxa in the genus. The results of this survey were as follows: -

**Cross Common:** *R.agrestis* has not yet been recorded, although similar habitat is available to that found on Wavering Down nearby. On 10/6/2013, the slopes below Cross Plain were checked and 9 plants of *R.micrantha* were counted, mostly below Fore Cliff, with a probable hybrid with group Caninae. Fore Cliff itself was checked on 29/6/2013, but no Sweet Briars were present.

**Wavering Down:** This colony, the furthest inland, was visited on 10/6/2013 and 29/6/2013. On the first occasion, numerous Sweet Briar plants were seen on rocky ground above the small cliff. 21 plants could be identified as *R.micrantha*. Only a few were in flower, most specimens having only tight buds visible. One plant of *R.agrestis* was seen (retaining the previous season's fruit) and a number of non-flowering plants with narrow cuneate leaves. On the second visit, only 3 specimens of *R.agrestis* were flowering or in bud. In addition there were two specimens with narrow leaflets but hispid pedicels, which might indicate some hybridisation with *R.micrantha*. All Sweet Briars growing amongst the rocks appeared to be

under stress, with much dead wood and little evidence of new growth. In the more sheltered spots where the soil was deeper, plants of *R.micrantha* appeared quite healthy.

**Crook Peak:** Has similar habitat to Wavering Down, so a visit was made on 19/8/2013. There was no evidence of *R.agrestis*, but *R.micrantha* was abundant, especially in areas where hawthorn scrub had been cleared. 75 plants were counted but there were many more. In exposed places plants showed similar damage to that seen at Wavering Down.

**Brean Down:** South-facing ground near the summit was checked on 9/7/2013 and *R.agrestis* was only seen towards the landward end, where the ridge drops abruptly to a low cliff with ledges. One badly stressed plant with much dead wood was seen, with a patch of 7 or more healthier plants growing from a crevice in the rock nearby. *R.micrantha* was not seen, nor evidence of hybridisation.

**Middle Hope:** Visited on 3/7/2013 and extensive searching revealed two main colonies of *R.agrestis*: 12 plants on rocks and low cliff above the saltmarsh and 22 on dry grassy slopes south of the summit path. Most plants showed little evidence of new growth and many branches ended in lengths of dead wood. In the 1990s the latter colony was more extensive but misguided scrub-clearance resulted in plants being cut back to ground level, and the colony has never fully recovered. *R.micrantha* was not seen. Although *R.canina* and *R. x dumalis* were present, no evidence of hybridisation was detected.

**Walton Common Hill:** Visited on 1/7/2013. Although the soil is shallow on the south facing slope, the site is less rocky than the others. Two plants of *R.agrestis* were seen on the slope, one of which showed signs of die-back: the other was healthier. At this site, 3 plants of *R.agrestis* were also found on the flat hill top. *R.micrantha* was abundant and 58 scattered plants were counted. Only one possible hybrid was noted and that appeared to be a hybrid of *R.micrantha* with group Caninae. Currently there is no grazing on the common, and as a result the diversity of the vegetation is deteriorating quite rapidly, with bracken, rank grasses and herbs dominating.



*Small-leaved Sweet-briar Rosa agrestis (formerly Rosa sepium) from Sowerby's English Botany (1864)*

**Cadbury Camp, Tickenham:** Visited on 27/7/2013. Two plants of *R.micrantha*, and a hybrid with group Caninae were counted on the lower slope above the village and 8 plants of *R.micrantha* below the camp, some in scrub and others in a recently cleared rocky area with little soil. In the latter area there were at least 5 young Sweet Briar plants with narrow leaves, not yet flowering, but one looking strong enough to flower next year. Their glands had a subtly different smell from *R.micrantha* and they may be *R.agrestis*. In addition there was one plant which had glands with a resinous smell, suggesting a hybrid. A circuit of the inner wall of the camp was made and 3 plants of *R.micrantha* were counted on the south side, and one possible *R.agrestis*, with a large non-flowering hybrid of *R.agrestis* or *R.micrantha* with group Caninae. On the eastern ramparts was one plant of *R.micrantha* and two plants of *R.micrantha* x group Caninae. On the outer slope of the outer wall and in the ditch there were 5 non-flowering plants that might be *R.agrestis* and 9 plants of *R.micrantha*.

The failure of some plants of *R.agrestis* to flower

in 2013 suggests that either there was little new growth in 2012 or, what growth there had been was later damaged. If die-back had been restricted to coastal colonies, then salt spray might be the cause. Recent harsh winters might have caused some die-back, but last year's wet summer ought to have resulted in plenty of new growth. It may be that the combination of: sharp frosts, long dry periods and spells of heavy rain, have all had their effect. Unlike *R. micrantha*, which often grows in more sheltered locations, *R. agrestis* prefers situations where soils are shallow and quite often it can be found growing from cracks between rocks. The habitat on Wavering Down, where both species have suffered damage, is badly eroded and exposed to the elements. The recently cleared area at Cadbury Camp is also very rocky, as were all sites visited apart from Walton Common. The extreme weather of recent years is bound to have caused a lot of soil erosion, which may be a contributing factor to the poor state of health of our colonies.

## 2013 Plant Records

### Plant records compiled by Helena Crouch

This year there is only one New Somerset/Vice-County Record for a native plant. Although disappointing, this is an inevitable situation for a county as well-botanised as Somerset. There are, however, many important records for Rare Plant Register species listed in the third section. Thank you to everyone who has contributed records for this list and to all who have made records for the RPR, whether they appear here or not. All records below are for 2013 unless otherwise stated. Recorders whose names appear more than once have been abbreviated as follows:

BNS	Bristol Naturalists' Society
HJC	Helena Crouch
IPG	Ian Green
PRG	Paul Green
SJL	Simon Leach
CML	Clive Lovatt
EJMcD	Liz McDonnell
JMcG	James McGill
SJP	Stephen Parker

JP	John Poingdestre
TCGR	Tim Rich
FJR	Fred Rumsey
SRPG	Somerset Rare Plants Group
MAW	Margaret Webster

### NEW SOMERSET RECORDS

***Carex comans*** (New Zealand Hair-sedge) – Portishead (ST46907667 & ST46897665), 15 Sept, two self-sown bronze tufts in paved footpath from Harbour Road to Waitrose, CML & EJMcD (discovered previously by CML); also Uphill (ST321583), 13 Oct, self-seeded from dry garden on roundabout into crack in paving, CML & EJMcD, VC6.

***Chenopodium giganteum*** (Tree Spinach) - Park Lane, Yeovil (ST555161), 10 Jul, lots on small area of waste ground, PRG, VC5.

***Nassella tenuissima*** (Argentine Needle-grass) – Portishead Dock (ST47107682), 11 Aug, self-sown on path on edge of harbour, CML & EJMcD; also 15 Sept, a big tussock on harbour wall below where previously seen outside flower bed, CML & BNS, VC6.

***Raphanus raphanistrum*** subsp. *maritimus* × subsp. *raphanistrum* – Portishead (ST457768), 15 Oct, at foot of Fisherman's Steps with both parents, TCGR, VC6.

***Sasaella ramosa*** (Hairy Bamboo) – Camerton Batch (ST685581), 24 Apr, huge patch at NW corner of coal mining spoil heap, Cam Valley Wildlife Group (det. HJC), VC6.

***Silene italica*** (Italian Catchfly) – Wain's Hill, Clevedon (ST39237080), 26 Jun, two plants under trees alongside churchyard wall, in the Glebe Field nature reserve, HJC & Dee Holladay (discovered previously by DH, det. HJC), VC6.

### NEW VICE-COUNTY RECORDS

***Chenopodium giganteum*** (Tree Spinach) – Wells (ST55464612), 5 Oct, one plant on pavement against wall of 47 St Thomas Street, CML & EJMcD, VC6.

***Helleborus argutifolius*** (Corsican Hellebore) - Spring Gardens, Frome (ST77414982), 5 Apr, two small plants in edge of road, self-sown from adja-

cent garden, HJC & Gillian H. Read, VC6.

***Mauranthemum paludosum*** (Annual Marguerite) – Park Lane, Yeovil (ST555161), 10 Jul, one flowering on small area of waste ground, PRG, VC5.

***Verbena* × *hybrida*** – Chilton Polden (ST38004231), 2 Sept, on pile of dumped spoil, on track linking bend in Chilton Road to disused railway, HJC & Chris Lampshire, VC6.

#### OTHER INTERESTING SOMERSET RECORDS IN 2013

***Ailanthus altissima*** (Tree-of-heaven) – Iford (ST79855878), 6 Oct, suckering along verge of lane from tree in adjacent garden, HJC & FJR, VC6. Fifth record for VC6 and first for Somerset since pre-2000.

***Allium ampeloprasum* var. *ampeloprasum*** (Wild Leek) – Sand Bay (ST33086570), 5 Jun, one plant with a flower bud and three non-flowering shoots on dunes, later observed in flower, confirming it as var. *ampeloprasum*, MAW, VC6. New 10km square for Nationally Scarce species and the third site for VC6 and Somerset.

***Artemisia biennis*** (Slender Mugwort) – Taunton (ST21882632), 16 Sept, open ground in *Miscanthus* field E of Taunton Vale Sports Club / Gipsy Lane, JMcG, VC5. First record for VC5 since 1993.

***Atriplex portulacoides*** (Sea-purslane) – Clevedon (ST39607110), 6 Oct, one small plant below viewing point, CML & EJMCD, VC6. New 10km square for VC6 Scarce species

***Berberis glaucocarpa*** (Great Barberry) – Pennard Hill (ST570381), 9 Sept, S side of road, Edward Pratt, VC6. First record for VC6 since 1996 in only known site in VC6.

***Brassica oleracea*** (Wild Cabbage) – Kilve (ST1427644360), 12 May, one plant on low cliff, SJP (conf. TCGR from photo), VC5. Second record for VC5.

***Catapodium rigidum* subsp. *majus*** (Fern-grass) – Portishead (ST47527725), 15 Sept, in raised amenity flower bed near Harbourmaster's office, CML & BNS, VC6. First record for VC6 and Somerset since 1940.

***Chenopodium hybridum*** (Maple-leaved Goose-foot) – Cannington (ST259389), 3 Aug, one plant on verge of by-pass, CML & EJMCD; also Taunton (ST22342471), 18 Sept, one large plant in amenity flower bed in Clarence Street, a bird seed alien, JMcG, VC5. Third and fourth records for VC5.

***Coeloglossum viride*** (Frog Orchid) – Stout Hill (ST677207, ST677208, ST677209 and ST678209), 22 Jun, a total of 57 flowering plants scattered across the hill, SRPG, VC5. First record for VC5 since publication of Atlas Flora of Somerset at the only known site in VC5.

***Conyza bonariensis*** (Argentine Fleabane) – Portishead (ST46897664), 15 Sept, one plant in flower tub outside Waitrose, CML & EJMCD; also Saltford Lock (ST688669), 26 Sept, few plants around the lock, HJC & FJR, VC6. Third and fourth records for VC6 and first for VC6 and Somerset since 1992.

***Cuscuta europaea*** (Greater Dodder) – Muchelney (ST42812521), 2 Aug, on W side of Muchelney - Langport road, along 20m of roadside *Phragmites* and nettles, JP, VC5. First record for VC5 since 1963.

***Dryopteris cambrensis*** (Narrow Male-fern) – Great Gains Wood (ST67324579), 10 Jan, one plant on W side of track in wood, 30m S of car park, HJC & FJR, VC6. Second record for VC6.

***Eccremocarpus scaber*** (Chilean Glory-flower) – Taunton (ST23092480), 28 Jun, in pavement and base of wall in St Augustine Street, between Labyrinth Street and Stephen Street, SJL, VC5; Bath (ST749654), 12 Oct 2008, self-sown on steps of 9 Oxford Row, Lansdown Road, SRPG, VC6. Second record for each VC.

***Filago vulgaris*** (Common Cudweed) – Yeovil (ST5516), 3 Jul, one in pavement crack in Swallowcliffe Gardens, PRG; also Ham Hill (ST47991637, ST48011638 and ST48021638), 18 Aug, thousands of plants in gravel by Lime Kiln car park, SRPG, VC5. First record for Yeovil since 1896 and first record for ST41 for this Near Threatened species.

**Fumaria officinalis** subsp. **wirtgenii** (Common Fumitory) – Taunton (ST224245), 30 Dec, one plant on reseeded roadside bank, Castle Street, SJL, VC5. Second record for VC5.

**Galium parisiense** (Wall Bedstraw) – Wells (ST54774527), 27 Oct, two plants at edge of paving on N side of supermarket, HJC & FJR, VC6. Second confirmed record for VC6 and first since 1999.

**Galium ×pomeranicum** (**G. verum** ×**album**) – Dundry (ST55496654), 7 Jul, small patch on wall on west side of Downs Road, with both parents, HJC, Libby Houston, CML & MAW, VC6. First record for VC6 and Somerset since 2000.

**Gentianella anglica** (Early Gentian) – Hatch Hill (ST49973337 & ST49983336), 29 May, two plants in flower on SW-facing slope, below path along ridge, HJC, Paul Guest, EJMCD & SJP (found by Paul Guest a few days previously), VC6. First record for VC6 since 1992 and for Somerset since 1999.

**Hordeum marinum** (Sea Barley) - Watchet Harbour (ST070434), 30 Jun, hundreds of plants at west end of harbour behind the London Inn, CML & EJMCD, VC5. First record for this Vulnerable, Nationally Scarce species in this 10km square since 1973. Also M5, near Creech St Michael (ST2726), 17 Aug, on central reservation, PRG, VC5. First record in this 10km square and third inland record for this coastal species in VC5 (all of them from the M5).

**Hyoscyamus niger** (Henbane) – Porlock Weir (SS8647), 2012, in front of boat house, Nigel Phillips, VC5. New 10km square for this Vulnerable species.

**Juncus compressus** (Round-fruited Rush) – Kelston (ST69296647 & ST69306647), 26 Sept, several plants in fruit on S edge of long linear pond in field, HJC & FJR, VC6. First record for this Near Threatened species in this 10km square since 1965.

**Ludwigia grandiflora** subsp. **hexapetala** (Uruguayan Primrose-willow) – Pawlett Hams (ST27104264), 23 Sept, spreading along ditches, Ian Salmon, VC6. Third site for non-native inva-

sive *Ludwigia* in VC6 and Somerset. [Although previous records were for *Ludwigia peploides*, recent research showed that only *Ludwigia grandiflora* subsp. *hexapetala* is present in Britain.]

**Mimulus × hybridus** – Portishead (ST47197690), 15 Sept, self-sown on steps outside house by harbour, CML & BNS, VC6. Second record for VC6 and Somerset.

**Myosurus minimus** (Mousetail) – Othery (ST39083205), 29 Mar, 12 plants in gateway leading to Bennett's Farm, near gatepost, JP, VC6. New site for this Vulnerable species and only fourth site ever in VC6.

**Panicum capillare** (Witch-grass) – Wellington (ST13482063), 6 Oct, several plants in flower bed, probably birdseed alien, SJP, VC5. Second record for VC5.

**Persicaria capitata** (Pink-headed Persicaria) - Portishead Dock (ST47237695), 11 Aug, on harbour wall, CML & EJMCD, VC6. Second record for VC6.

**Physalis peruviana** (Cape-gooseberry) – Saltford (ST69586847), 31 Oct, six non-flowering plants on silt under alders on W bank of River Avon, HJC & FJR, VC6. Third record for VC6.

**Poa bulbosa** (Bulbous Meadow-grass) – Brean Down (ST29485888), 26 May, several plants on edge of gravelly pathway, SJL, VC6. New location for this Nationally Scarce species in VC6.

**Polypodium × mantoniae** (**P. vulgare** × **interjectum**) – Penselwood (ST75463138), 4 Apr, large patch on SW-facing bank of lane at SW edge of hamlet, HJC & FJR, VC6. Second record for VC6.

**Polypogon monspeliensis** (Annual Beard-grass) - Milborne Port (ST681189 & ST680190), 28 Jun, a few clumps as weed at Wheathill Garden Centre, PRG, VC5; also Wells (ST54764528), 27 Oct, one clump in shrubbery to NW of new pond by supermarket, HJC & FJR, VC6. New 10km squares for species which is Nationally Scarce as a native (although almost certainly introductions here).

**Potentilla argentea** (Hoary Cinquefoil) – Roughmoor (ST21272517), at the edge of a small pond, JMCG, VC5. Second record for VC5 and first since 1990.

***Ranunculus sardous*** (Hairy Buttercup) – Taunton (ST2124), 18 Sept, two plants in rough grassland (12 seen earlier in the year), JMcG, VC5. New 10km record for a locally Scarce species.

***Rorippa islandica*** (Northern Yellow-cress) – Durleigh Reservoir (ST27363613), two plants in drawdown zone, SRPG, VC5. A new locality for this Nationally Scarce species in VC5.

***Rubus cockburnianus*** (White-stemmed Bramble) – Bath Spa Station (ST75266434), 27 Jul, one plant on stonework of old steps beside the footbridge over the River Avon, HJC, VC6. Second record for VC6 and Somerset.

***Senecio inaequidens*** (Narrow-leaved Ragwort) – Yeovil (ST54991558), 26 Jun, three plants by fence at edge of waste ground on N side of West Hendford and a few further plants on the waste-ground, IPG, VC5. Second record for VC5 and first since 1961.

***Senecio vulgaris*** subsp. *vulgaris* var. *hibernicus* (Rayed Groundsel) – Redhill (ST498632 & ST498633), 8 May, lots on edge of pavement at junction of Church Road and A38, IPG & PRG, VC6. First record for Somerset since publication of recent floras.

***Spinacia oleracea*** (Spinach) – Pawlett (ST2942), 19 Aug, a couple of plants in weedy arable field, currently growing barley, near Brickyard Farm, EJMCD & Ro FitzGerald, VC6. Fourth record for VC6 and first since pre-2000.

***Viola canina*** subsp. *canina* (Heath Dog-violet) – Goblin Combe (ST477652), 8 May, many plants scattered in limestone heath grassland at top of N side of combe, HJC & PRG (conf. IPG), VC6. First record for VC6 and Somerset since 1995.

## Meetings

### Safety

We take the safety of SRPG members very seriously, but members and guests attend meetings at their own risk. The Field Meeting leaders will

carry a list of emergency phone numbers in case of illness or accident and a basic first aid kit will be provided on most field excursions, but please come equipped for your own personal safety. Although leaders will have all the mobile telephone numbers of SRPG members, please make sure that you take the mobile number of the meeting leader(s) in case of illness or getting separated from the rest of the party (as has happened on a few occasions). Most of our meetings will have two leaders, one of whom will follow up at the rear of the party.

### Code of Conduct

As field botanists, we must all be aware that there are wild plants that are protected by law and there are restrictions about collecting plants from the wild, even for identification purposes.

The full BSBI guidelines can be read here.

[http://www.bsbi.org.uk/Code\\_of\\_Conduct.pdf](http://www.bsbi.org.uk/Code_of_Conduct.pdf)

Collecting small amounts of plant material for private study and identification purposes is usually acceptable, except in the case of protected or Red Listed species, indeed collecting is often necessary if botanical expertise is to be developed. Unless you are authorized, do not collect if there is any suspicion that the plant is a Red Listed species or the population is very small and may suffer as a result. If a specimen is really needed, remove the minimum quantity of material, for instance, a leaf or a single flower. If a plant can be named in the field, take the field guide to it rather than vice versa.

## Membership

SRPG Subscription is £8 per year. This is due in January and can be paid at our indoor winter meetings by cash or cheque (payable to Somerset Rare Plants Group) or sent to the treasurer Dr Clive Lovatt, 57 Walton Road, Shirehampton, Bristol BS11 9TA.

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