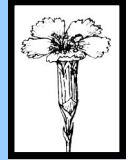


# SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP



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

**2016 Newsletter**

**Issue no. 17**

*Editor Liz McDonnell*

## Introduction

We welcome all our new members and hope that you will fully participate in our activities in the coming year. Visit [www.somersetrareplantsgroup.org.uk](http://www.somersetrareplantsgroup.org.uk) to see the current year's meetings programme, Somerset Rare Plant Register, Newsletter archive, information on SRPG recording in Somerset and much more.

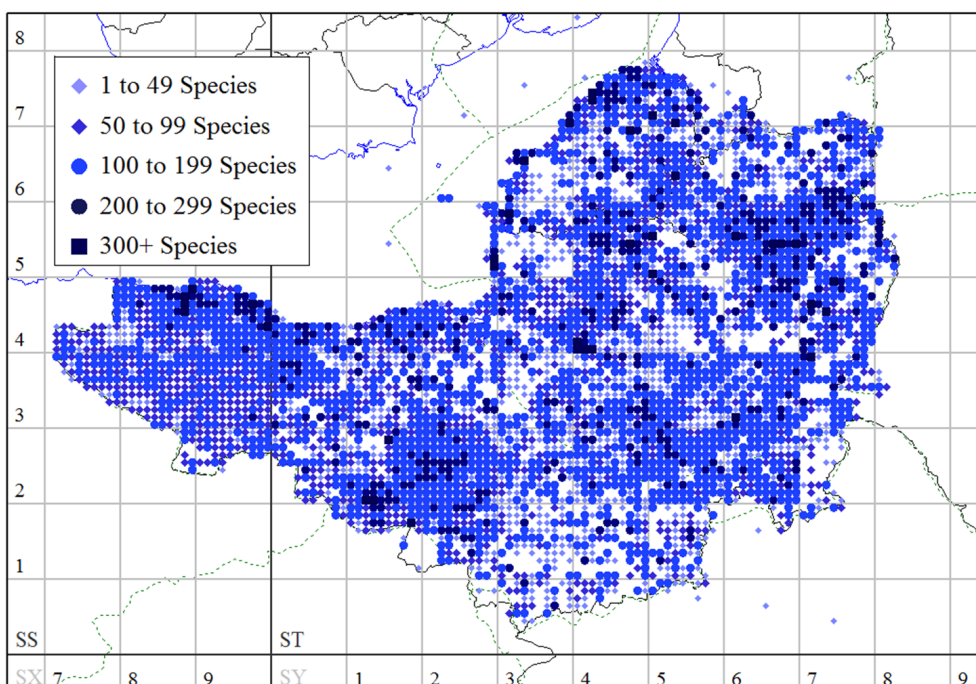
In 2016 we started the year by participating in the Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland (BSBI) New year Plant Hunt. This is now an annual event and is gaining popularity each year. We spent the allotted 3-hour period on the sand dunes, foreshore, road verges and hedgerows and recorded 65 species in flower. We had three indoor meetings and 19 field meetings, some of them jointly with other groups—including BSBI, the Wild Flower Society (WFS), Bristol Naturalists' Society (BNS) and Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (SANHS). Most of our meetings this year were for general recording, as all our Somerset records will go to the BSBI Atlas 2020 recording scheme, but individuals were also recording and monitoring our rare species for the ongoing Somerset Rare Plants Register. An important meeting this year was the Dandelion Weekend, a joint BSBI/SRPG venture which resulted in a large number of new county records—see the Field meeting reports and Plant Records later in this newsletter. We held one identification workshop (on the Daisy family) which was very successful, where SRPG members were helped to separate their Hawkbits from their Hawksbeards, and the other yellow and white daisies in this large complex family.

This year we have made a large number of botanical records, both on SRPG field meetings and by the efforts of individual members working in their own adopted areas. The map shown here is updated with all the recording done in 2016. If you compare it to the map in the 2015 Newsletter, you will see the huge effort that SRPG members have put into recording in 2016. Maps are regularly updated with all the current MapMate records and are available to view on the SRPG website on the 'Recording in

Somerset' page. There is even an animated map that shows the progress we have made since April 2016, so thanks to Val Graham for displaying the changes we have made so effectively.

If you would like to help to turn more of this map blue, contact Steve Parker for areas in VC5 or Helena Crouch for VC6 (see page 41) for contact details). We can provide you with updated SRPG Recording cards.

VC5 and 6 Total Species per Monad 2000 onwards



# Indoor Meetings

## **Annual Members Meeting and AGM Avalon Marshes Centre, Westhay Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2016**

**Report by Liz McDonnell**

Twenty eight members (including two new ones) met for our usual brief AGM and annual social event. We were delighted to welcome Roger Smith, recorder for South Devon VC3, and Ian Bennallick from East Cornwall VC2, as it is always good to hear what is happening on the botanical front in our neighbouring counties.

After coffee and chat, Steve Parker chaired the meeting, firstly introducing key members of the group, so that everyone knew who was who and then gave a brief review of SRPG activities in 2015 – 3 indoor meetings, 22 field meetings (one of them travelling to the site on the West Somerset Railway), extra VC5 recording days and two identification workshops (winter twigs and Willowherbs). He gave a report on VC5 recording, highlighting some of interesting plants and showing slides of some of them and the people who recorded them.

Helena gave us highlights of VC6 recording, with many of her beautiful photographs and a progress report on recording effort in Somerset as a whole during 2015 showing two 'Blue Maps' (total species per monad 2000 onwards), one dated the beginning of 2015 and the latest one of January 2016. It was clear that we had contributed a large number of records (80,000) from many of the under-recorded areas and the latest map was much bluer than the previous one. She also gave us an update on progress with the Rare Plants Register, reporting that she had added many accounts which are now available on the SRPG website. Cath Shellswell helped out this year by writing some of the accounts of the rare arable plants.

Liz McDonnell gave a presentation about the Somerset Herbarium Project and explained that she had applied to Somerset Archaeological Society (SANHS) for a grant of £450 for equipment that was needed for digitisation process. Clive Lovatt prepared the accounts. The current mem-

bership stands at 85 members and the annual subscription remains at £8 per year.

This year Ian Salmon organised a photo competition and Caroline Giddens kindly did the shortlisting of prizewinners. All the photos are available on the SRPG website. Roger Smith gave us a preview of the forthcoming Flora of Devon, which is soon to be published. After a splendid bring and share lunch, we divided into groups for Helena's 'baby' quiz. This was a competition to guess the names of baby SRPG members and baby plants. The star of the show was a photo of a very young John Poingdestre on his father's bike – looking very eager and determined. The quiz was great fun.



A very young John Poingdestre—budding botanist!

## **Plant Talks**

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

**Report by Liz McDonnell**

18 members met for the second indoor meeting of the year. Three members gave presentations on botanical matters pertinent to Somerset. Cath Shellswell is an adviser on Arable Plants for Plantlife (The Wildlife Conservation Charity). She showed photos and gave us some guidance on

differences between some difficult plants that are found on cultivated ground - some of the Chamomiles and Mayweeds are difficult to separate, especially Corn Chamomile (*Anthemis arvensis*) and Austrian Chamomile (*Anthemis austriaca*), which can only be positively separated by their mature seed heads. There are six buttercups which occur on arable land and seed shape and sculpturing is the important feature to look for. The blue form of Scarlet Pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis* subsp. *arvensis*) and Blue Pimpernel (*A. arvensis* subsp. *foemina*) are separated by the details of glandular hairs on the edge of their petals, so a hand lens is essential. There are three rare Cornsalads – Broad-fruited (*Valerianella rimosa*), Narrow-fruited (*V. dentata*) and Hairy-fruited (*V. eriocarpa*) and care must be taken when determining these arable weeds as they are separated on their fruit shape. Cath explained the work on arable plants that Plantlife undertake on their 'Back from the Brink' project.

Liz gave a short pictorial guide to St John's-worts and how to recognize *Hypericum* species in Somerset. She showed photos of shrubby and herbaceous plants and the identification features that separate them, including translucent and black glands, the number of stamen bundles, round, ridged or winged stems and leaf texture.

Helena gave us a very interesting talk about Eyebrights (*Euphrasia* sp.). She reported that only seven species had been recorded in Somerset recently, but they hybridise freely and the hybrids are fertile, so they are not an easy group to study. "Euphrasia is a genus which cannot be easily divided into well-behaved species" (Alan J Silverside) sums up the difficulties. Guidance was given on collecting specimens for study or for pressing – a minimum of five typical, undamaged plants. The important characters are as follows: Hairs on the leaves, glandular or eglandular; flower size (measured from tip of upper lip to base of tube), colour and shape; the node from which the first flower emerges (ignore the cotyledon scars and branches) – count up the main stem; branching characteristics – stiff, upright or flexuous; the relationship between internode and size of leaves (*E. arctica* has long internodes, *E. tetraquetra*, very short); capsule characteristics; leaf shape, size, colour and tothing; colour of flowers, stems and leaves can be helpful. Only

five species are common in Somerset (although no Eyebrights are really common), *Euphrasia nemorosa*, *E. confusa*, *E. officinalis* subsp. *anglica*, *E. tetraquetra* and *Euphrasia arctica* subsp. *borealis*. Eyebrights are currently very under-recorded in Somerset and the fact that they hybridise should not deter members from getting to grips with this interesting group of plants.

## **'Turning the map of Somerset Blue' - Updates on the Rare Plant Register and Atlas 2020 Recording**

**Saturday 19th March 2016**

**Report by Liz McDonnell**

Helena presented an update on our progress with the Somerset Rare Plant Register and recording for Atlas 2020. There are currently 546 extant and 96 extinct species on our RPR list: there are now species accounts for 69 extant and 81 extinct species uploaded to the website, so 150 out of 642 (23%) are written. Examples of these were shown.

Next Helena showed maps of selected RPR species which have apparently declined, or are perhaps recently under-recorded, and invited comment on these. Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), for example, has no post-2000 records for 8 out of 56 hectads in Somerset; if it is not found in those 8 hectads by 2020 the new Atlas will show a 14% loss of this species in terms of hectad spots (and a greater loss in terms of tetrad spots). For Autumn Lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*) there are no recent records in 16 out of 38 hectads (42%). Helena suggested that recording in the next few years should be targeting former sites of RPR species, not just concentrating on recording in "blank" monads. A targeted search for Greater Dodder (*Cuscuta europaea*) has resulted in records for all 3 hectads shown in the last Atlas, and indeed it will have a new "current" spot for a fourth hectad, having been re-found in Muchelney in 2013, fifty years after the last record for that area.

To finish, Helena compared maps of the number of species per monad in Feb 2015 and Feb 2016, flicking between them to demonstrate the huge recording efforts of members of SRPG over the last year.



# Field Meetings

## New Year Plant Hunt at Sand Bay (VC6) Saturday 2nd January 2016

Report: Liz McDonnell

17 members met at the municipal car park (where the huge puddles covered more space than dry land) at Sand Bay, to take part in the BSBI New Year Plant Hunt. This event was first started in 2012 by Tim Rich and is now an established annual BSBI-led event, with botanists from many areas of Britain and Ireland taking part. The rules are very simple – to record all plants in flower (these must have either anthers or stigmas clearly evident) in any three-hour period, between 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> January.

We started off in a straggling group on the roadside and adjacent sand dunes calling out the names of the flowering plants to Helena Crouch, our scribe for the day. Some of the first flowering species that we found on the roadside included: Smooth Hawksbeard (*Crepis capillaris*), Smooth Sowthistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), Groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*), Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*), Sweet Alison (*Alyssum maritimum*) and Sea Radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum* subsp. *maritimum*). The Sand dunes gave us Tree Mallow (*Malva arborea*) and Sea Spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*). A couple of members were invited into a back garden by a curious bystander – where they recorded Small Nettle (*Urtica urens*). Although this was not flowering, it was a species worth recording for our general Somerset recording database.

The group made its way northwards towards Sand Point and split into two, one party exploring the sand dunes and foreshore, the other making its way along the road verges and hedgerow. Here, Butcher's Broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*) was flowering beautifully near a large clump of Winter Heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*). We all met up at the base of the hill and the 3-hour clock was stopped whilst we ate our lunch sitting on the sea wall. We hoped for more flowering species as we climbed to the limestone grassland above. We were not disappointed and as we made our way to the western end of the head-



Flowers of *Ruscus aculeatus* on cladodes (modified branches) in a roadside hedgerow ©David Hawkins

land, found Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), Lesser Hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*), Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*), Common Rock-rose (*Helianthemum nummularium*) and a fresh flowering spike of Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederaceae*) – Helena's stunning photograph of this flowering specimen was displayed on the BSBI New Year's Hunt blog and later in BSBI News for April 2016. Our three hours was up while walking back to the cars and most of the group met up in the Sand Bay Café for the final count-up over a cup of tea. Between us, we had recorded 65 taxa in flower. Helena sent our results to BSBI to contribute to this nation-wide plant hunt. It was a good start to the SRPG year of field meetings and good fun too.

## Mendip Lodge Wood, Burrington (VC6) Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2016

Leaders: Liz McDonnell and Clive Lovatt

Report: Clive Lovatt

This joint meeting with the Bristol Naturalists' Society was attended by eighteen botanists with a wide range of ages, from the outwardly youthful to the merely young-at-heart. Indeed, being the first field meeting of the season for both groups, it was something of a social occasion and



half of us stayed on for tea and cake at the cafe afterwards. The route, rather ambitiously, took in five one km squares (monads). The Burrington Combe monad had a large number of species recorded on our database (224) but as J.W. White once wrote, finality in field botany is fortunately unattainable, and even as we began, it was possible to add at least a couple of species, the early flowering and rather ephemeral Thale Cress (*Arabidopsis thaliana*) and the rockery escape, Mexican Fleabane (*Erigeron karvinskianus*).



*Lathraea squamaria* at the base of Hazel coppice in Mendip Lodge Woods © Liz McDonnell

In our target square (ST4659) Toothwort, (*Lathraea squamaria*), parasitic on the bases of old coppice, gave particular pleasure and was a cue for photographs, thus explaining why several members appeared to be burying their mobile phones, or affording some rodent the opportunity to make a call. We found the less-common Hard Shield-fern (*Polystichum aculeatum*) as well as the Soft Shield-fern (*P. setiferum*) and strongly suspected that there were hybrids as well and Helena Crouch took material for checking. Meanwhile Jean Oliver identified for us the cause of a bluish-green stain in broken branches

as the fungus *Chlorociboria*. Ultimately we increased the recorded species from 39 to 110 in this square without even looking at other promising habitats—the road verges around the A368, farms, footpaths and a promising sounding industrial estate. “Another day”, the leaders agreed.

## Taraxacum Weekend

**Friday 15th—Monday 18th April 2016**

**Brief report by Liz McDonnell (but see the full report and Taraxacum records on page 32)**

This was a joint meeting with BSBI and Simon Leach (SRPG) spent a huge amount of time preparing for this important meeting. He found suitable sites in both VC5 & VC6 that would provide plenty of opportunity for finding a wide range of Taraxacum species from different habitats. Our comfortable base for the weekend was the newly refurbished Society of Friends Meeting House in Taunton where we met for a welcoming evening meal provided by Vicky Fairfax-Ross and friends. Here, throughout the weekend, we had introductory lectures and presentations, examined and pressed our specimens, chatted about the challenges of Dandelion taxonomy, drank tea and ate cake provided by SRPG members.

It was an intense and action-packed weekend lead by the national Taraxacum expert and referee Professor John Richards and we were accompanied by other BSBI members who were very experienced taraxacologists. Simon arranged meetings in ruderal habitats (road verges and car parks were especially fruitful), ancient woodland, species-rich acid, neutral and calcareous grassland, rock outcrops and coastal dune grassland



John Richards pointing out important Dandelion features on Middle Hope © Ro FitzGerald

from Dunster Beach and Blue Anchor, the Black-down Hills, Ash Priors Common, to Sand Bay and Middle Hope. Dandelions are nationally a very under-recorded group and the recording done on this weekend added hugely to our understanding of this difficult group and provided a large number of *Taraxacum* county records for Somerset.

## Wind Down, Quantocks (VC 5)

Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Leaders: Steve Parker & Simon Leach

Report: Simon Leach

This was our first meeting following the Dandelion Workshop, so it was hardly surprising that one or two of our number were dandelion-obsessed – while a few others had clearly been scarred by the whole experience, and so ignored all yellow composites almost as a matter of principle!

It was a (mainly) sunny day and the meeting was well attended, including several new members. Our aim was to make species lists for two under-recorded monads, ST2233 and ST2234, so we decided at the start of the day to split into two recording groups. Much of the time was spent walking footpaths, tracks and woodland rides within the (mainly conifer) FC plantations. One or two recently cleared areas held remnant heathland – with Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) hanging on – and apart from all the conifers there were also some ‘avenues’ and stands of deciduous trees too, including a few large track-side Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). The ground flora, though, was generally a bit disappointing.

The group working the more northerly square, ST2234, recorded some 147 species within the woodland area, plus a further 30 species in road verges and hedge-banks to the north-west – including the lane down to Blaxhold Farm and an adjoining sunken bridleway. Highlights of the day included two plants of False Oxlip (*Primula x polyantha*), one with orange flowers, and an open grassy area with eleven Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apifera*). Outside the FC land we enjoyed finding lane-side populations of Crosswort (*Cruciata laevipes*) [Near Threatened on the England Red List], Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*) and Southern Wood-rush (*Luzula forsteri*) – the last very much a VC5 speciality.



Young inflorescences of *Luzula forsteri* at Wind Down © Helena Crouch

The dandelions were good too: *Taraxacum an-cistrolobum*, *T. bracteatum*, *T. subbracteatum* and *T. subhamatum* were collected from grassy verges along the woodland tracks; plus *T. oxoni-ense* (a dainty little ‘erythrosperm’) in ‘bee orchid glade’, and *T. nigridentatum* on the muddy side of a lane bank close to Blaxhold Farm. This last species is probably endemic to western England and Wales and seems to have a particular fondness for roadside hedge-banks, since we had found it in identical habitat at Thurlbear on the first day of the Dandelion Workshop. It is a most distinctive plant, the leaves deeply lobed, the lobes with many black teeth, and the ‘interlobes’ with dark blotches. All our *Taraxacum* records were based on specimens collected during the meeting and subsequently determined by A.J. Richards.

## Carymoor Environmental Centre (VC 6)

7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2016

Leaders: David Reid, Steve Parker & Simon Leach

Report: Simon Leach

This was a joint meeting organised by the Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society, and an opportunity to gain access to a number of areas within and adjoining the Carymoor landfill site that are usually ‘out of bounds’ without hi-vis jackets and hard hats. SANHS had organised a similar weekend in August 2015, and it was such a success it was decided to hold a repeat visit earlier in the year.

The nature reserve area, created on an area of former landfill, is surprisingly rich in wildlife,



plants included. Many species have been introduced, of course, but a wealth of additional plants and animals have now found their own way there, and the results are frankly jaw-dropping. Last August, for instance, we saw Brown Hairstreaks, Wasp Spiders, Roesel's Bush-crickets, and a gall on Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*) flower-heads caused by a tiny fruit fly with a very long name, *Myopites inulaedyssentericae*. The fruit fly was a 'first' for Somerset.



Hummingbird Hawkmoth on Purple Loosestrife at Carymoor © Chris Griffin

In all, our August visit produced a list of some 245 vascular plant species. This second visit added at least another 30, plus lots more galls and insects for those interested in such things. On the Saturday night we ran moth traps, so our first job on Sunday morning was to sort through the catch. Numbers weren't particularly high (it had been a cold night), but we had some beautifully marked species with equally lovely names: 'Powdered Quaker', 'Red Twin-spot Carpet', 'Water Carpet' and 'The Streamer' – to name but four.

Behind the main buildings of the Carymoor Environmental Centre there is a 'garden' where a number of rare plants are displayed – including Dittander (*Lepidium latifolium*) and Babington's Leek (*Allium ampeloprasum* var *babingtonii*). Originally these were confined to containers made from old tractor tyres, but a few adven-

turous species have since escaped into more natural – or maybe one should say 'less unnatural' – places nearby. Quite a few of the 'wild' plants elsewhere on the reserve were originally introduced too, of which Kidney-vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), Horseshoe vetch (*Hippocrepis comosa*) and Small Scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria*) spring to mind. There are also some alien species (possibly garden cast-outs from landfill days) that are now well-established in the wild, including large patches of a lovely maroon- or chocolate-leaved Cypress Spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias* 'Fen's Ruby').

Our meeting ended with two challenges: a bat and a dandelion. The bat was a Brown Long-eared which someone had found locally, on the ground and possibly injured, and had brought in to the Centre for treatment. The *Taraxacum* was probably a Beautiful-leaved Dandelion *T. pulchri-folium*, but we'll have to get more material next year to be sure. If it is, it would be a 'first' for VC6.

Our thanks to all those who attended, and to Rupert Farthing and his co-workers and volunteers for their warm welcome and infectious enthusiasm for the place. They are doing some fantastic work at the Centre; long may it continue.

## Claverham, Cleve (VC6)

**Sunday 15 May 2016**

**Leaders and report: Margaret Webster & Helena Crouch**

Twelve members met in sunshine at Claverham Village Hall to record in an area with no post-2000 records. We split into two groups, one concentrating on the village monad, the other exploring a more rural monad.

The Gutter Crew took an hour to get out of sight of the car park, scrutinising walls, pavements and the edges of roads, to the bafflement of passers-by. Around a car park we found a distinctive tall spurge in full flower: Balkan Spurge (*Euphorbia oblongata*). This rapidly spreading neophyte, which was new to the hectad, was also seen south of the village hall, in an adjacent monad. In the last BSBI Atlas it had one spot in VC6: it is now known from ten hectads. Growing in the road, we found one small plant of Knotted Hedge





*Euphorbia oblongata* as a pavement weed at Claverham © Helena Crouch

-parsley (*Torilis nodosa*), the first record for the hectad since pre-2000. Eventually reaching the edge of the village, we crossed a pretty meadow where Clive Lovatt kindly gave Paul Green's masterclass on identifying *Rumex x pratensis* vegetatively. Leaves are intermediate in shape between the broad leaves of Broad-leaved Dock (*R. obtusifolius*) and the narrow leaves with undulate margins of Curled Dock (*R. crispus*). The midrib on the underside of the leaf of *R. obtusifolius* is papillose-scabrid, that is, it has pointed protrusions. These are absent in *R. crispus*, but the hybrid has short, truncated papillae.

A lunch stop was declared in the corner of a field which appeared to be an overgrown market garden. It yielded several weeds of cultivation, including Scented Mayweed (*Matricaria chamomilla*), Scarlet Pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis* subsp. *arvensis*) and a Common Fumitory which was keyed out to *Fumaria officinalis* subsp. *officinalis* (the common one). Continuing north from the village, we were surprised to find Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) in a hedge. Our most interesting stop was in the churchyard of St Barnabas, where the small lawn had Quaking-grass (*Briza*

*media*), abundant Lesser Hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*), Hoary Plantain (*Plantago media*) and Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), and we found hundreds of diminutive plants of Fern-grass (*Catapodium rigidum*) in a border. In a shady corner behind the church were many plants of Pale Corydalis (*Pseudofumaria alba*), growing from the stonework of the church and path. This was only the fourth post-2000 record for VC6 and a new hectad for this species. Altogether we recorded 222 taxa for this monad.

On the map the rural monad looked very promising: a network of footpaths over fields, rural lanes, streams, two ponds and even a churchyard and a small part of the A370. We found only one arable field, planted with a cereal but peppered in places with small plants of Turnip (*Brassica rapa* subsp. *rapa*), probably a previous crop. The other fields were mainly grazed with the greatest wealth of species along the margins by the hedges. An exception was the field surrounding Littlewood Pool: this was much more diverse with meadow plants such as Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) and Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) throughout the field. In the wet margins of the pool was Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), and on the barer edges some Toad Rush (*Juncus bufonius*). Two species of *Glyceria* were found in the water, the very common Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*) and the greyer-leaved Small Sweet-grass (*Glyceria declinata*). On the surface but out of reach were large patches of a *Callitriche* sp. Most of the pond was barren, being shaded by trees - (perhaps the name Littlewood Pool should have given us a clue). It was a pleasant spot for lunch before exploring further.

Some streams and ditches had small stretches with a variety of water-loving plants such as Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) and Fool's-water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*), but many were dominated by large stands of Hemlock Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*) and/or Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*). The second pond was also heavily shaded but a single stand of Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) could just be seen through the vegetation. Hedges were quite diverse; two of them appeared to have been planted within the last twenty years or so and had what looked

like a planned hedgerow mix of shrubs and trees such as Spindle (*Euonymus europea*), Wayfaring-tree (*Viburnum lantana*), Guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) and Apple (*Malus pumila*).

Only the western part of the churchyard was in our monad, but the area yielded some additional species such as the many plants of Great Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) in the car park, and Danish Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia danica*), and Shining Crane's-bill (*Geranium lucidum*) on the roadside. Altogether we recorded 152 species.

Walking back along the pavement through an adjacent monad we came across a colourful and diverse bank with many clumps of Balkan Spurge (*Euphorbia oblongata*). It was growing with wild species such as Keeled-fruited Cornsalad (*Valerianella carinata*), but also with garden species such as Love-in-a-mist (*Nigella damascena*) and Pot Marigold (*Calendula officinalis*) so we considered that the bank had probably been deliberately planted at some time in the past. Nonetheless we did wish that it had been in our recording area!

## Wambrook, Chard (VC9)

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016

Leaders: Conrad Barrowclough and Ian Salmon

Report: Graham Lavender & Conrad Barrowclough

This meeting was in one of those small areas along the border that are in administrative Somerset, but in another Vice County (Dorset in this case), and as a result, very under-recorded, as these areas tend to be rather neglected by botanists in either county. We met at The Cotley Inn at Wambrook which was also very handy for the post-recording get together. Conrad had obtained permission for us to survey an Estate which contained a large area of mixed woodland, heath and mires. Just seven of us met and decided to break into two groups to cover maximum ground. The A team of Ian Salmon, Fiona Wood and myself quickly found ourselves in sedge territory and recorded Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*), Common Yellow-sedge (*Carex demissa*), Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and the 'front of card' Star sedge (*Carex echinata*). I think the total at the end of the day was eight sedges. Although this is all one private

Estate, we did come across a remote cottage hidden on the edge of woodland and a very kind lady, who was clearly justifiably proud of her wild flower meadow, showed us Common Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*). After some discussion we decided not to record the meadow but skirted round to a mire area. Probably the find of the day was Marsh St John's-wort (*Hypericum elodes*). As we recorded in a meadow close to the end of the session, we had the opportunity to key out a vegetative Corky-fruited Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*).



*Hypericum elodes* in a species-rich mire at Wambrook © Graham Lavender

The B team comprising Conrad Barrowclough, Christy Tolliday, Ann Fells and Alistair Blake headed south through a typically sodden Blackdowns valley bottom woodland, recording impressively large clumps of Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) and Black Currant (*Ribes nigrum*) amongst towering Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) coppice stools with the nice surprise of the odd Heath Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza maculata*) in sunny clearings. Moving up the valley side into drier hazel coppice, a number of ancient woodland species were recorded, including Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Moschatel (*Adoxa moscatellina*) and Pignut (*Conopodium majus*). We finally emerged from the woodland into beautiful unimproved grassland, recording Quaking-grass (*Briza media*), Betony (*Betonica officinalis*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Burnet Saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*) and Cowslip (*Primula*



veris) before heading back to the Cotley Inn to meet up with the other group for welcome refreshments. Given the general richness of the flora in this area, only a small part of the much wider estate was covered, and further recording in the area would surely reward us with new notable records.

## Evercreech (VC6)

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

**Leaders: Gill Read & Liz McDonnell**

**Report: Gill Read**

On a typically drizzly summer's day ten members met in Evercreech to record in squares that had no recent records. We split into two groups to cover more ground. One group to record in the village and one to roam further afield.

Four of us set off to the cemetery! A tidily kept area where we found Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*). The cemetery yews provided good shelter from a rain storm. The footpath produced a few more species and we were able to record 144 species in this monad

Moving on to the next square which brought us into Stony Stratton, we recorded more of the usual plants found by lane and roadsides. A strategically placed bench in the centre of the village gave us a good excuse for a lunch stop. The concrete footpath running alongside a small stream produced a greater variety of plants. Surprisingly Thin-spiked Wood-sedge (*Carex strigosa*) was found, but just one plant. A small patch of Spear Mint (*Mentha spicata*) was growing between the footpath and the stream and a large patch of Jap-



Three weary botanists at Stony Stratton—Gill Read, Anne Cole and Margaret Webster © Helena Crouch. **Winner of 2016 Photographic Competition 'non plant' category**

anese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)!

Garden escapes Garden Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*), Californian Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), Aubretia (*Aubretia deltoidea*) were also recorded. It was good to find Fern-grass (*Catapodium rigidum*) and Rue-leaved saxifrage (*Saxifraga tridactylites*) growing on top of a stone wall. So a total of 193 was recorded here. Sorry that we didn't find seven more, which would have tipped it over the magic 200 species per monad!

## Fairfield Estate, Stogursey (VC5)

**Saturday 18th June 2016**

**Leaders: Ro FitzGerald & Liz McDonnell**

**Report: Ro FitzGerald**

This meeting had been planned, with the kind cooperation of Lady Gass, to look at some of her woodlands which are not readily accessible by footpath, being near the house or set in tenanted farm land. Given quite sodden June weather, this day was a lucky one, staying dry and turning sunny. 10 members joined the leaders, so we were able to cover a good amount of ground.

The Stogursey area is where the coastal lias merges into more acid land. The woods have some open rides, as a pheasant shoot operates, but otherwise have a low level of management, and some are of considerable age. A great attraction of the day was the chance to see the house (mostly 16C as currently visible) with its splendid vernacular farm buildings and courtyard with a curious pigeon loft over a medieval stable arch, and to record in the shrubbery garden. This has great displays of naturalised Fritillary (*Fritillaria meleagris*) in spring, and many fine and unusual trees and shrubs, including the fascinating 'graft chimaera' combining a hawthorn and a medlar (a bizarre horticultural challenge popular in the 19C). After the shrubbery, the morning walk focused on the nearby wood called Brambles Pit. Traces of woodland flora including Early-purple – Orchids (*Orchis mascula*) were found, the wood pool had several duckweeds, and of course there were galls to discuss !

Lunchtime involved a pleasant sunny picnic on the lawn, looking out on cattle grazing under the park trees. I thought of Parson Holland (usually quick to criticise) coming to dine here in 1802



and actually reporting 'a very handsome dinner ... all things conducted in an elegant and magnificent style', and although our sandwiches were hardly up to that standard, the 'elegant' surroundings certainly added enjoyment.

In the afternoon most of party recorded near the former Carriage Drive, now a field track, which runs through arable fields towards Nether Stowey. The remainder approached Fairfield Wood past the ruined Wood Barn (once in the edge of the wood itself), finding pleasing arable species in the edges of the cereal fields where we had to 'walk corners' to get to the wood. Abundant Corn Spurrey (*Spergula arvensis*) and occasional immature Fluellen (*Kickxia*) plants made up for quite trying walking conditions with dense long grass pressed close to the crop. Fairfield Wood has a long history, and we did find a reasonable number of indicator species such as Wood Anemones (*Anemone nemorosa*), Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Wood Millet (*Milium effusum*). The two sides of the wood



*Scrophularia nodosa* flowers at Fairfield © Cath Shellswell

differ, the north side, nearest the lias, having characteristic calcareous hedge plants like Field Maple (*Acer campestre*) and Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) while the south edge suddenly features Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*). The most exciting find was in a strip of unmanaged wet grassland adjoining the wood, which had a large population of a big sedge with notably sharp leaf edges, which

proved to be Lesser Pond-sedge (*Carex acutiformis*). This is by no means common in the northern parts of VC5, and here it is a post-2000 hectad record.

There were some tired botanists by the end of the afternoon but it was a real privilege to have such a constructive day while feeling welcome in these historic surroundings.

## **Durborough Farm, The Quantocks VC5 Sunday 19th June 2016**

**Leaders: Graham Lavender & Ian Salmon**

**Report: Graham Lavender & Ro FitzGerald**

Durborough Farm, at Aisholt on the Quantocks, is a hill farm which the owner manages with environmentally friendly methods for which she has won a number of awards. The farm is a centre for organised fungi forays and regular guided walks by the Quantock Rangers to see the traditional Hay Meadows. Eight members ventured out on a damp/drizzly day and given size of the farm and the fact that the two most promising sites were at opposite ends of the farm, we split into two recording groups. The hay meadow group had a relatively short walk and took a circular route within monad ST1935, which meant walking transects in several of the hayfields for which the farm is famous in the Quantock area. The mire group had a longer walk and recorded in three monads, although the main focus was the area at the far end of the farm where a small stream and mire run through a steep wet pasture.

The hay meadow team walked along lanes from Tuck's Barn through Aisholt and back to the farm, recording in a wide variety of habitats including old hedge lines with mature trees, the surroundings of an old lime kiln, the churchyard, the narrow strip of alder carr beside the stream below the church and several fragments of disturbed ground with garden escapes. The meadows were of consistently good quality, and with consistent plant communities. The ground must be on the acid side of neutral, so they are not particularly species-rich, but they are quite an outstanding example of management for productive farming without using herbicides and with low fertilizer input. The dominant grasses are Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and Crested Dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), with abundant Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and yellow

composites including Cat's-ear (*Hypochoeris radicata*), Smooth Hawk's-beard (*Crepis capillaris*) and, more rarely, Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*). Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) is a major element in the higher fields at least, with the bright heads of real old-fashioned Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*), while small understory herbs include the eyebright *Euphrasia officinalis* subsp. *anglica* and Changing Forget-me-not (*Myosotis discolor*) – always a surprise in long grass, but curiously typical in this habitat (I've seen it so from Co Cork to a Baltic island!).

At the time of this visit, orchids made a spectacular addition in several compartments, with big spreads of purple Southern Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) with more variously



Hybrid between Common Spotted-orchid and Southern Marsh-orchid, *Dactylorhiza x grandis* at Durborough Farm  
© Chris Loudon

coloured Common Spotted-orchid (*D. fuchsii*) nearby, and in one area some very striking tall groups of the hybrid *D. x grandis*.

In spite of the sodden conditions, Meadow Brown butterflies were trying to fly and the habitat must be superb for invertebrates. The grass was also noticeably clear of 'bad' weeds. A very occasional dock stood out visible from far away and there was almost no Ragwort or Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). This must surely be the happy result of years of intensive labour by the owner's family, topping or pulling by hand every enemy species.

The churchyard is also potentially a corner of rich habitat. We didn't see it at its best season (Spring) and some grass had recently been cut to prepare for a local event, but management is clearly sensitive enough to preserve a good flora. A tantalising notice in the porch showed the flowers of a Star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum* sp.) and Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*). While we could still see numerous Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) plants, the old yews had produced saplings in a few places and a bank by the lower gate had the pretty heads of Southern Woodrush (*Luzula forsteri*), which droop gracefully to the side. This plant occurs round the fringes of the Quantocks, but is by no means common across VC5.

Wet we did get, but it was a real privilege to be able to explore this remote-feeling valley. Memories of reading the rather choleric diaries of Parson Holland, Rector of Over Stowey at the beginning of the 19C, came evocatively as we sat resting for a few minutes in the church porch. He preached here regularly, riding up on his 'great horse' through flooded lanes and in snowy weather, complaining often about a churchwarden who always sang most tunelessly, beating time on his own chest, or on his neighbours' shoulders!

The owner's daughter led the mire group to the most botanically interesting areas at the far end of the farm holding. The first monad ST1835 was damp pasture and given the continuous rain and that this was not our target area, we hurried through recording 58 species. In the second monad ST1834, we were directed to where Lady's mantle (*Alchemilla filicaulis* subsp. *vestita*) is



known to grow and we were able to record Ivy-leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus hederaceus*) and Lemon-scented Fern (*Oreopteris limbosperma*) where a small stream added to the interest. Climbing Corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*) was frequently encountered and brought our total for the monad to 74. The rain continued but we had found the mire and it had been wonderfully managed with vegetation kept short by grazing cattle. We found Blinks and subsequent determination by BSBI referee Mike Wilcox proved that it was *Montia fontana* subsp. *variabilis*, a new hectad record and according to MapMate, only the fourth ever recorded from VC5. Southern Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*), Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*) and Fen Bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*) were easily found. Where a path crossed the mire and the ground was particularly stony, there were many plants of Leafy Rush (*Juncus foliosus*) another 'front of card' record. The grand total for the monad was 138.

Although the owner came to this valley from farms as far apart as Cheviot and New Zealand, her farming methods here now make a fascinating link into the land use history of Durborough, as well as an outstanding contribution to the biodiversity of the Quantocks. At the conclusion we encountered Quantock hospitality and we were all invited in the farmhouse for tea and biscuits. A complete record of our recording was subsequently sent to the owner and her daughter with our thanks. It's certainly a meeting worth repeating in the future.

### **St George's Flower Bank LNR, Portbury (VC6)**

**Tuesday evening 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016**

**Leader: Bob Buck (BNS)**

**Report: Clive Lovatt**

This was a joint meeting with the Bristol Naturalists' Society. As promised, and following on from his lecture to the BNS Botany Section in February, Bob led a dozen of us carefully along 'his' linear roadside reserve, which surely has given passing pleasure to thousands of motorists and their passengers, briefly glimpsing the seasonal display of Primroses, Cowslips and Orchids. This is a Local Nature Reserve on either side of the A369, approaching the Gordano Service station at Junc-

tion 19 of the M5 motorway, which was created when the road was cut to bypass Pill. It is a series of species-rich road verge where no seed has been planted and where the rich flora developed gradually on poor soils following the road excavation. The calcareous grassland habitat here supports species such as Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), Carline Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*), Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), and Ploughman's-spikenard (*Inula conyzae*). The bank is much loved by local people for the abundance of orchids, and on this occasion we recorded Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*), Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) and two huge plants of *Dactylorhiza x grandis*, the hybrid between Common Spotted-orchid and Southern Marsh-orchid. We recorded two grasses (which also occur close to the motorway exit on the Avonmouth side of the river) that had not been recorded here before, Compact Brome (*Anisantha madritensis*) and Sea Fern-grass (*Catapodium marinum*). It was good to see that the diversity of the bank had been achieved entirely through good management, over a quarter of a century.



The hazards of roadside recording. St George's Flower Bank  
© Clive Lovatt

### **Clatworthy Reservoir (VC5)**

**3<sup>rd</sup> July 2016**

**Leaders: Graham Lavender & Ellen McDouall**

**Report: Ellen McDouall & Liz McDonnell**

The area around Clatworthy reservoir in the Brendon hills of west Somerset has been rather unevenly covered by survey in the past. The



west side of the reservoir has good post-2000 records for most monads but the east side has minimal records. Seven members assembled in the reservoir car park and we split into two small groups to cover the monads ST0431 and ST0432.

An uncharacteristically warm, dry, calm & sunny day for mid-summer and the weather set the tone for the day. While the northern group headed off with a fisheries ranger to hitch a ride on a boat to the north end of the reservoir, those of us who had opted for the dam area stayed in the car park area with about 2ha of grassland to cover. Here we collected a good suite of species for weakly acid grassland that included both Greater and Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus* and *L. corniculatus*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Trailing Tormentil (*Potentilla anglica*), Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) and an eye-bright collected for later determination. Although usually kept mown, this year the grassy sward has been allowed to go to flower, making the task so much easier. We noted patches of a blond variant to the normal purplish Creeping Soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*) flowers.

From the car park we went east to an area of unmanaged bracken and grass behind the loos. Here we added a few more herbs to the list such as Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and Common Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) as well as common ferns and trees from an old wood bank. Having decided against a direct route to land below the reservoir down a steep wooded slope through six foot high bracken and booby-trapped with badger



The draw-down zone of Clatworthy Reservoir completely dominated by *Crassula helmsii* ©Liz McDonnell

holes, we went back to a less demanding route across the dam, picking up useful records all the way such as Wavy Hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), Perforate St John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), a good range of ferns including Lady-fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) and Male-fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*). Squirreltail Fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*), Fern-grass (*Catapodium rigidum*) and Marsh Yellow-cress (*Rorippa palustris*) were growing as weeds on the concrete of the dam.

The track down to the foot of the dam ran through the edge of Clatworthy Wood and enabled us to record many of the species found there: Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) with a sparse grassy ground flora of Rough Meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*) and Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*). We also found Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and a small group of very late Celandine (*Ficaria verna* subsp. *fertilis*).

At the base of the dam there is a 3.8 ha block of level ground used by Wessex Water as a fish farm and to which we had been given access. This is mostly damp to marshy grassland but is diversified by steep banks, fishponds and the young River Tone running out of the reservoir & starting on its way to Taunton. We spent the afternoon here in great content, finding an exceptional population of Long-stalked Cranesbill (*Geranium columbinum*) and a little Sheep's-bit (*Jasione montana*) on the banks along with plenty of a Hawkweed (*Hieracium* sp.), but this was not yet in flower so not identified to species. The presence of Heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*), Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) and an abundance of Oval Sedge (*Carex leporina*) confirmed the high quality of the grassland. At the east end there was a good-sized area of mire dominated by Meadow-sweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) where we also found Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) and Smooth-stalked Sedge (*Carex laevigata*). At various points the draw-down zone of the lake seemed tantalisingly close but access was not possible. However, the disturbed areas of the fish farm enabled us to cross off typical bare ground species like Marsh Cudweed (*Gnaphalium uliginosum*) and Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*).

The boat party landed on the slopes of the reservoir below Stolford Wood, where the draw-down zone was dominated by New Zealand Pygmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*). This was an all too familiar feature all round the reservoir. The recording here was started in the woodland and the group made its way along the high water line. Here was a small 1m high cliff, and in places sup-



Ian Salmon & Liz McDonnell on the way to the northern part of the reservoir © Graham Lavender **Runner-up in the 2016 Photographic Competition 'non plant' category**

ported species-rich grassland with Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Spring Sedge (*Carex caryophylla*). Further round, a rich mire area was found, at the point where the River Tone entered the north end of the reservoir. Here was a tall herb community with Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) and Hemlock Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*) and the marshy drawdown zone had a rich community with Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), Marsh Speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*) and Orange Foxtail (*Alopecurus aequalis*). Continuing further around the north end of the reservoir, the group dipped into an overgrown pond where Rigid Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*) and Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*) were pulled out with a grapnel.

The group made its way back to the dam where a specimen of what was thought to be Sea Fern-grass (*Catapodium marinum*) was found growing in the concrete cracks of the roadway over the dam. This seemed an unlikely place for a coastal plant and a sample was sent to Kew, where Dr

Tom Cope confirmed it. This was a 10km record and only the third inland record in VC5.

## **Roughmoor and Long Run Meadow, Taunton (VC 5)**

**9<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

**Leaders: Keith Gould (SANHS) & Simon Leach**

**Report: Simon Leach**

A joint meeting with the Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society, the aim of the day being to check up on a number of rare/scarce and threatened plant species while investigating various other aspects of the area's natural history, especially the dragonflies and butterflies, for which Keith Gould is an acknowledged local expert.

Our area straddled two monads (ST2025 & ST2125) on either side of the river Tone, including Roughmoor Pond – constructed at the same time as the Silk Mills park-and-ride car park – and a large area of floodplain grassland on former arable land, created a few years ago principally for flood alleviation purposes, but also as an open space for the people of Taunton.

We assembled at the park-and-ride car park, where we noted some quite species-rich grassland and associated scrubby banks. The highlight, however, was a single flowering plant of Hairy Buttercup (*Ranunculus sardous*) in the car-park paving – a species with a mainly coastal distribution in Somerset. In paved areas and kerbsides on the south side of the car park we also admired the large population of Wall Bedstraw (*Galium parisiense*) [Vulnerable on the GB and



Roughmoor Pond © Simon Leach



England Red Lists]. First found here in 2015, it is a rare species in Somerset; its only other known site in VC5 is on a roadside bank and verges on the south side of Taunton railway station.



Fruits of *Galium parisiense* at the Silk Mills Park & Ride © Simon Leach [this appears to be the smooth-fruited variety leiocarpum (see BSBI News January 2016) - Ed.]

Having spent too long in the car park, we then headed down towards Roughmoor Pond. The grassland here was created at the same time as the pond, and presumably most of its constituent species arrived courtesy of the original seed-mix. These, perhaps surprisingly, include Hoary Plantain (*Plantago media*) [Near Threatened on the England Red List], and Tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*). Anyone doubting the noteworthiness of the latter should look at its tetrad distribution map which shows a big 'hole' around Taunton.

Wetland species at the pond include White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*), Gypsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), Cypress Sedge (*Carex pseudocyperus*), Great Water-dock (*Rumex hydrolapathum*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) [Near Threatened on the England Red List]. The wetland habitats here are starting to feel very 'natural': the reed-beds and fringing lines of Alders (*Alnus glutinosa*) support breeding Reed Warblers and Reed Buntings, while there is a good range of dragonflies and damselflies – we saw a pair of mating Emperors, which was a real treat. It is now almost impossible to distinguish between plants that were originally introduced and those arriving more recently under their own steam.

In Long Run Meadow we saw Corky-fruited Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*), Velvet Bent (*Agrostis vinealis*) and some large scattered stands of Ragged Robin (*Silene flos-cuculi*) [Near Threatened on the England Red List]. However, the star plant seen in these grasslands was probably Hoary Cinquefoil (*Potentilla argentea*) [Near Threatened on both the GB and England Red Lists], first found here in 2013 by James McGill. In all likelihood another seed-mix introduction, this species of dry sandy heaths and open waste ground looks a bit out of place, yet seems to be thriving with its population now probably exceeding a hundred plants. This is still, as far as we know, its only site in VC5.

At least eleven butterfly species were seen, including both Small and Large Skippers and Marbled White. We also recorded a surprisingly wide range of plant galls, but I'll spare you the details...

## Long Ashton (VC6)

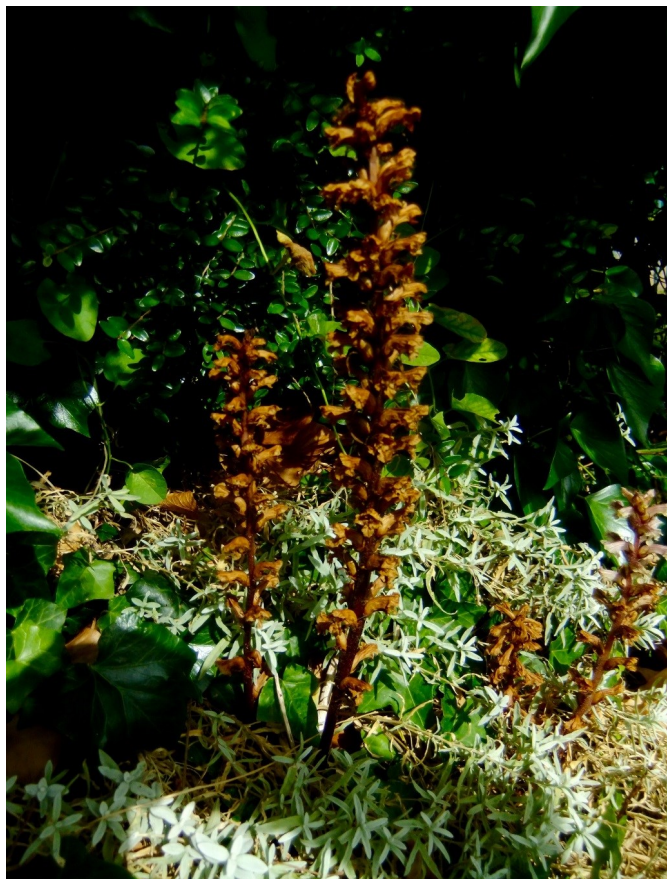
Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2016

Leaders: Pam Millman & Dee Holladay

Report: Liz McDonnell

This was a joint meeting with Bristol Naturalists' Society, the purpose of which was to record in a relatively under-recorded part of the Bristol area. Thirteen members and guests met at the Long Ashton Community Centre and as nearly half of the botanists were either new members or fairly inexperienced, it was decided that this meeting would be a training session as well as a recording meeting. As usual with a group of field botanists, we spent time in the car park before setting off on our planned route. Amongst the typical ruderals like Thale-cress (*Arabidopsis thaliana*), Swine-cress (*Lepidium didymus*) and Fern-grass (*Catapodium rigidum*), were a few plants of Pale Willowherb (*Epilobium roseum*). This is an under-recorded species in Somerset, but more occurrences are now being recorded since the SRPG Willowherb Workshop last year. Pam & Dee took us through the streets towards Keed's Lane and up to the broadleaved woodland in the hills above the town. Bearded Couch (*Elymus caninus*) was recorded in the shaded green lane and in the woodland of 'The Brake' and we discussed the differences between this species and the awned variety of common Couch (*Elytrigia repens* subsp. *repens* f. *aristata*). We had our lunch





*Orobanche hederace* in Providence Lane, Long Ashton © Liz McDonnell

in a grassy area that once was part of the grounds of Long Ashton Research Station and then searched the rough grassy edges amongst the planted shrubs and trees, recording several interesting grasses including Canary-grass (*Phalaris canariensis*), Rats-tail Fescue (*Vulpia myuros*), Giant Brome (*Anisantha diandra*) and Rye Brome (*Bromus secalinus*). The woodland ground flora in 'The Brake' was species-poor and dominated by ivy, but a few ancient woodland indicators were recorded, including Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Giant Fescue (*Schedonorus giganteus*), Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*) and Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*).

Pam and Dee led us to a species-rich, but ungrazed, grassy slope where Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*), and Hairy St John's-wort (*Hypericum hirsutum*) were frequent. We went briefly to an old quarry where we recorded one plant of Sainfoin (*Onobrychis viciifolia*) on the cliff face. At the end of the meeting, we stopped off at the Miners Arms for a cold drink, as it was a hot sunny day. Several of us continued to record on the way back to the cars adding Ivy Broom-

rape (*Orobanche hederace*), Green Field-speedwell (*Veronica agrestis*) and more Pale Willowherb. Many good records were made today in this previously under-recorded area and we increased the number of taxa in this monad to more than 300.

## Brent Knoll (VC6)

Saturday 30th July 2016

Leaders and report: Liz McDonnell & Helena Crouch

The traffic on this Bank Holiday weekend was very heavy and several members were held up on the M5 motorway and congested roads. We lingered at the churchyard, near the meeting place and took the opportunity to go through the distinguishing features of the yellow composites in the grassland there - Lesser Hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*), Autumn Hawkbit (*Scorzoneroides autumnalis*), Smooth Hawk's-beard (*Crepis capillaris*) and Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*). When all the latecomers had arrived, we made our way slowly up the footpath to the top of Brent Knoll, recording all the way. The steep upper slopes of the knoll, just below the summit plateau have a rich flora, with species including Wild Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*), Hoary Plantain (*Plantago media*), Burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), Fairy Flax (*Linum catharticum*) and Knotted Hedge-parsley (*Torilis nodosa*).



*Torilis nodosa* on the steep upper slopes of Brent Knoll © Helena Crouch. **Winner of the 2016 Photographic Competition 'plant category'**





*Catapodium rigidum* subsp. *majus* in the churchyard at Brent Knoll © Helena Crouch **Runner-up in 2016 Photographic Competition 'plant' category**

From our lunch stop on the summit, we could see the motorway below, with slow-moving cars glistening in the hot sun, nose to tail in both directions. After lunch we split into two groups, Helena taking one group to record below the hill and Liz moving into the adjacent monad to the west. We had permission from a landowner to survey one of the Private Nature Reserves and found that Jointed Rush (*Juncus articulatus*) and a small clump of Stonewort were present in a tiny pond at the bottom of the slope. Several plants of Spurge-laurel (*Daphne laureola*) were found on the footpath where it runs through scrubby woodland at the top of a west-facing very steep slope.

Meanwhile the other group returned to continue recording in the village, stopping to admire a strange oak in a field, later found to be *Quercus robur* 'Cristata', then heading southwest out of the village along a drove. Five duckweeds were seen in ditches either side: Fat Duckweed (*Lemna gibba*), Ivy-leaved Duckweed (*L. trisulca*), Common Duckweed (*L. minor*), Least Duckweed (*L. minuta*) and Greater Duckweed (*Spirodela polyrhiza*). Water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) was flowering along the ditch edges and some ditch-dabbling revealed Small Pondweed (*Potamogeton berchtoldii*), the first record

for this hectad since pre-2000. Along the north bank of Brent Broad Rhyne, we were pleased to find Corn Parsley (*Petroselinum segetum*) and Brookweed (*Samolus valerandi*). Returning to the village, Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) was seen in a splendid old Poplar. We waited in the churchyard for the others who, on arrival, pointed out that we had been sitting close to a substantial patch of the large subspecies of Fern-grass (*Catapodium rigidum* subsp. *majus*). This was a new subspecies for the hectad which, together with tea and chocolate cake, was an excellent way to end the meeting.

## 'Get to Grips with Daisies' – Composite Workshop

**Earth Science Centre, Stoke St Michael  
Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2016**

**Leaders: Liz McDonnell & Simon Leach**

**Report: Liz McDonnell**

18 members and 2 non-members attended this workshop, which was held in the excellent educational facility at the Earth Science Centre, at Moon's Hill Quarry, to help members with some of the difficult yellow and white daisies, especially the Hawkbits, Hawksbeards, Cat's-ears, Mayweeds, and Chamomiles.

Liz gave a short presentation on the features of the Asteraceae and the terminology needed to use the identification keys, and then with Simon's help, the whole group went through the compositae key in John Hayward's 'A New Key to Wild Flowers' (an excellent illustrated key for be-



Getting to grips with all those yellow and white daisies using a variety of identification guides © Ian Salmon. **Runner-up in 2016 Photographic Competition 'non-plant' category**



ginners), with several of many specimens that had been collected by the leaders and colleagues for the workshop. After lunch we went through some of the difficult groups – the Sow-thistles (*Sonchus*) and Hawkbits (*Leontodon* and *Scorzoneroides*) and members did their own identification using the different identification books available.

We ate Cath Shellswell's delicious carrot cake and finished the workshop with a quiz set by Simon, who had taken numerous photos in preparation for this workshop. Amazingly, all three teams reached the same 75½ points, so we were all winners.

### **‘Botanising on the Edge’ Malago Vale, Bristol (VC6)**

**Sunday afternoon 21<sup>st</sup> August 2016**

**Report: Liz McDonnell**

This was a joint meeting with Bristol Naturalists' Society to record around the boundary between VC6 North Somerset and VC34 West Gloucestershire. 12 members of both groups met at the bottom of Nover's Hill and started by exploring some waste ground which was botanically very productive. At the entrance we found Small-flowered Crane's-bill (*Geranium pusillum*) and then further in, a large patch of Large Bindweed (*Calystegia silvatica* subsp. *disjuncta* var. *zonata*), which has large flowers with pink stripes on the outside of the corolla. Here also we found both forms of Prickly Lettuce (*Lactuca serriola* f. *integerrifolia* and *L. serriola* f. *serriola*). We then split into two groups, each recording in our separate sides of the boundary. The very overgrown Malago Stream forms the boundary between the two Vice Counties. Amongst the brambles, plastic bottles and bags of rubbish, remnants of an aquatic flora were present, including Water-cress (*Nasturtium officinale* agg.), Fool's-water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Water-Starwort (*Callitriche* sp.) and Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*).

We recorded along the streets to where the two groups had arranged to meet - at the little triangle of wood and scrub around the Malago Stream at the junction of Bedminster Road and St John's Lane. We found a young tree of Single-leaved Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior* f. *diversifolia*) with abundant galls *Aceria fraxinivorus* forming brown cauliflower-like growths amongst the keys. We re-

turned through the park dipping in periodically to the edge of the stream to record all the aquatic edges and bank species, including Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and Stinking Tutsan (*Hypericum hircinum*). The afternoon ended with drizzling rain, but we had recorded 162 taxa on the Somerset side (VC6) and 142 in VC34, so a very good recording day in urban Bristol. Helena stayed on a little later and recorded Common Rest-harrow (*Ononis repens*) and other good grassland species on Nover's Hill, which will be the venue for a BNS meeting in 2017.



Single-leaved Ash on the Somerset side (just) of the boundary between the two Vice-Counties, with a mite gall *Aceria fraxinivorus* on the Ash keys. © Liz McDonnell

### **North Petherton (VC 5)**

**27<sup>th</sup> August 2016**

**Leaders: Steve Parker & Simon Leach**

**Report by Simon Leach**

Another 'meet and scatter' meeting, this time concentrating on a single tetrad centred on North Petherton with its four woefully under-recorded monads, ST2832, 2833, 2932 and 2933. There were about a dozen of us, so we split into four groups, each group tackling one monad.

Despite the general lack of high-quality habitat, it proved to be a hugely productive day, with an average of just over 200 taxa per monad and a total for the tetrad of 360 taxa. Of that total, only 90 (25%) were recorded in all four monads, while 132 (37%) were seen by only one of the four groups, i.e. in just one monad. Many of



Helena Crouch and Jeanne Webb in a field of *Phacelia tanacetifolia* at North Petherton © Gill Read

these 'single-monad' plants were aliens (often garden escapes) such as Pale Galingale (*Cyperus eragrostis*), Blue Globe-thistle (*Echinops bannaticus*), Salsify (*Tragopogon porrifolius*) and Argentinian Vervain (*Verbena bonariensis*). But common natives also featured prominently in the list of 'single-monad' species, probably being under recorded/overlooked due to our visit being so late in the season. This would explain why there were only single records of Bulbous Buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*) and Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), for example. And it would also be the reason for some species, like Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*) and Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*), being missed entirely. A few grasses were almost certainly under-recorded too: the usually ubiquitous Rough-stalked Meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), for example, was only spotted in a single monad.

What we learn from all of this, of course, is that the business of 'doing a square' is not something that can be wrapped up in a single visit. For a square to be done properly it really needs two or three visits at different times of year. Easier said than done, especially as most of us have an understandable tendency to want to make a bee-line for the most poorly recorded squares, rather than spend valuable time trying to 'gold-plate' those that we assume have already been done pretty well. No wonder Lesser Celandine looks so thin on the ground in terms of monad records...

We did, however, have some excellent finds. The 'arable archaeophyte' flora in this part of the county is locally still quite rich: we had Small-

flowered Crane's-bill (*Geranium pusillum*) in three monads, Corn Spurrey (*Spergularia arvensis*) [Vulnerable on GB and England Red Lists] in two, and Grey Field-speedwell (*Veronica agrestis*) and Henbit Dead-nettle (*Lamium amplexicaule*) both in one. The star plant of the day though was, arguably, *Calystegia silvatica* subsp *silvatica* (a subspecies of Large Bindweed) – a rare and/or much overlooked taxon in Somerset, and as far as we can tell a 'first' for VC5.



The stunning flowering spikes of *Sparganium erectum* in North Petherton © Ian Salmon **Runner –up in 2016 Photographic Competition 'plant' category**

## Waterow, nr Wiviliscombe Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2016

**Leaders: Graham Lavender & Ian Salmon  
Report: Graham Lavender**

Five of us met at the layby on the busy B3227 and it was soon clear that some limited botanising could be safely undertaken on the roadside, so we stepped out for the footpath further along the road that ran down to 'Bovey Bottom' which was to be the main focus of our recording effort. We recorded the usual hedgerow species until



we soon found Bovey Bottom woodland which enveloped a small stream. Jeanne Webb was able to confirm *Salix x rubra* a large shrub and show us the recurved margins of one parent - Osier (*Salix viminalis*) and the green leaf under-surface of its other parent Purple Willow (*S. purpurea*). This was followed by *Salix x reichardtii* the hybrid between Goat willow (*S. caprea*) and Grey Willow (*S. cinerea*) which is characterised by a the soft leaf underside of *S. caprea* and the striae inside the twig bark of *S. cinerea*.



The diminutive *Euphorbia exigua* near Bovey Bottom, Waterrow © Graham Lavender

Bovey Bottom has an absence of footpath signs and this encouraged us to explore the area more fully. This led us to take a wrong turn that resulted in exiting the woodland on the wrong side of a hedge. This was in fact a fortunate error as we came across Corn Spurrey (*Spergula arvensis*) growing prolifically in corner of a disturbed field. This was quickly followed by Field Woundwort (*Stachys arvensis*) and Sharp-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia elatine*), together with more common arable weeds such as Field pansy (*Viola arvensis*). A Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis* sp.) was very carefully keyed out in the same area and identified as Bifid Hemp-nettle (*Galeopsis bifida*) with its notched lower lip as one of the identifying features.

Following this excitement, lunch was taken at the top of field overlooking the farmhouse and barns. The footpath took us through the farmyard and more Field Woundwort was found where land had been disturbed for a new barn. Ro FitzGerald's sharp eyes found a single plant of Dwarf Spurge (*Euphorbia exigua*) in the farmyard. Returning to the stream it was a little disappointing

that the lack of grazing had probably diminished what once was a good damp habitat. We found remnants of past glories including Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) and Oval Sedge (*Carex leporina*). The presence of Hard Rush (*Juncus inflexus*) and Soft-rush (*J. effusus*) together raised the possibility of recording the hybrid between them, but none could be found. The grand total for the day was 215 taxa together with a few new hectad records. I think everyone went home with very satisfied feeling of a job well done.

## Clapton Moor (VC6)

Sunday 11th September 2016

Report: Clive Lovatt

This was a BNS meeting to which SRPG members were invited and although a route had been planned over ground familiar from a recording visit by two SRPG members last year (ST4673, 236 taxa in 2015) Helena Crouch suggested that we should start with the adjacent monad ST4573 (136 taxa last recorded 2010 or earlier). This also included the known sites for re-introductions (from East Anglian seed) of Greater Waterparsnip (*Sium latifolium*) where it had been known to J. W. White a century ago but not seen for many years.

After a hasty call to the Avon Wildlife Trust for approval of the new off-path route we were able to wander freely. We puzzled over aquatic and young-growth forms of Bulbous Rush (*Juncus*



David Hawkins at a ditch on Clapton Moor dominated by *Hydrocharis morsus-ranae* © Clive Lovatt

*bulbosus*), noting how much easier it is to identify when growing upright in mud. An open rhyme was delightfully full of the distinctive leaves of Frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) and we dipped and came up with Small Pondweed (*Potamogeton berchtoldii*).

Helena recorded seven distinct groupings of *Sium latifolium*, two with 'many' plants and the others with no more than a few. Clive Lovatt, straying back into ST4673 found the *Sium* 50 metres into the square, "just where I saw it whilst I was doing the recce" said David Hawkins, as both of us admitted we hadn't known the plant before – except that we recognised it as something we didn't know!

At the end of the day we recorded 129 species, with 21 species new on MapMate for ST4573 – mostly non-specialist species other than the aforementioned Bulbous Rush. But we didn't find Bladderwort (*Utricularia australis*), Lesser Water-plantain (*Baldellia ranunculoides*), Opposite-leaved Pondweed (*Groenlandia densa*) or Horned Pondweed (*Zannichellia palustris*) and over 80 other species previously recorded, some for seasonal reasons, some due to only recording within the reserve and some we must surely have overlooked. But it was a gloriously sunny day, and we all went away well pleased.

## Castle Cary (VC6)

**Sunday 28th September 2016**

**Leaders & report: Helena Crouch & Liz McDonnell**

Eight members met in Catherine's Close car park and split into two groups for recording in different monads. Helena's group remained in ST6432 and began recording immediately, so took a while to leave the car park. Skulking around an estate, we were asked what we were doing, then interrogated about why the Council had sprayed flower beds with weedkiller! Beside a footpath we found a huge Niger (*Guizotia abyssinica*) plant, 1.5m tall, new to the hectad. The castle ramparts were mostly improved grassland, although on steeper parts we found Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Spring-sedge (*Carex caryophyllea*) and Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*). Park Pond was also disappointing as we couldn't get to it; however we could see Mare's-tail (*Hippuris vulgaris*) on its surface. Returning

to the castle, we found a sheltered spot for lunch, then headed up Ansford Road, recording Russian Vine (*Fallopia baldschuanica*), Chinese Bramble (*Rubus tricolor*), Love-in-a-Mist (*Nigella damascena*) and other garden escapes. We left the town, exploring Solomon's Lane and returning along Wyke Road, recording seven fern species. At the corner of Wyke Road, growing on the edge of the pavement against a cottage, we were astonished to find a large clump of Lace Aloe (*Aloe aristata*). Our interest attracted the occupant of the house, who came out and told us she had not planted it, but did grow it on a windowsill indoors and imagined a plantlet had fallen out and become established. It had clearly been there for several years and had flowered well



*Aloe aristata* as a pavement weed in Castle Cary © Helena Crouch

(and is visible on Google Earth!) This was new to Somerset and only the second record for Britain. Returning down North Street, we found a large plant of the less common subspecies of Fern-grass (*Catapodium rigidum* subsp. *majus*) on a raised verge, with Rat's-tail Fescue (*Vulpia myuros*). Altogether we recorded 214 species in the monad.

Liz's group walked northwest along the edge of the playing fields and bowling green towards St Andrew's Church, Ansford. We were questioned several times about what we were doing and suspected of mischief-making in the narrow back streets and alleyways! We found the usual pavement weeds such Argentinian Vervain (*Verbena bonariensis*), Love-in-a-mist (*Nigella damascena*) and Cockspur (*Echinochloa crus-galli*). The



churchyard grassland and graves produced Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*), Lesser Hawkbit (*L. saxatilis*) and Spear-leaved Willowherb (*Epilobium lanceolatum*), but was disappointingly species-poor. The footpath to the industrial estate crossed un-grazed fields, where Lesser Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) was surviving amongst the tall tussocky grass and nettles. We had lunch by a damp ditch with Fool's-watercress (*Apium nodiflorum*) and Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) with Red Devon cattle not far away and then explored the edges of the industrial estate, peering through the railings at several Fleabanes: - Canadian (*Conyza canadensis*), Guernsey (*C. sumatrensis*) and Bilbao (*C. floribunda*). We turned around after recording a few species in a small reed-fringed lake with the aid of binoculars through another security fence and made our way back up through the streets of Castle Cary. Hairy Violet (*Viola hirta*) was an unexpected find, growing on a tightly mown road verge, but it was in good company with Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*). The two groups met up again at Liz's camper van, where tea and chocolate cake marked the end of the last pre-planned field meeting of 2016. We all agreed that it had been a good season of botanising and it was time to start thinking about ideas for next year's excursions.

## **Barford Park, Spaxton (VC5) Sunday 30th October 2016**

Report: Liz McDonnell & others

This was an unscheduled meeting, at the invitation of the owner, for members of various specialist groups from both SRPG & SANHS to record at Barford Park during the autumn. As well as plants, other groups that were recorded on this visit including fungi, birds, spiders, false scorpions and other invertebrates. We recorded from several different parts of the Barford Estate. A small team of three SRPG members undertook the botany survey and walked across the park grassland towards Enmore Lake. We were alarmed to see a local woman with her invalid carriage stuck at the boggy edge of a small stream, but she assured us that our assistance was not needed and that help was on its way.

We had our lunch by the lake and to our dismay found that New Zealand Pygmyweed (*Crassula*



Recording hybrid Poplar (*Populus x canadensis*) on the Barford Estate © Graham Lavender

*helmsii*) had made its way into the lake and was creeping amongst the horsetails (*Equisetum* sp.) and Gypsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*). We found nothing of particular note that day, but the large leaf found on knotweed stems at the edge of a wood that I took home for further investigation, was determined as Bohemian Knotweed (*Fallopia x bohémica*). We recorded in two monads and added 40+ taxa to the already well-recorded Barford square, confirming that multiple visits to an area are well justified and increase the knowledge of species in that locality.

Eve Tigwell recorded birds and covered the whole of Barford Park, paying particular attention to the woodland areas and hedgerows, but also getting close to all the larger trees and walking across the fields. Birds are recorded by sight and sound; birds that fly over the area are included. Any breeding behaviour (e.g. singing, nests, etc.) is also recorded. All data are submitted to the owner and the BTO (the latter will pass the data to Somerset Ornithological Society). The breeding highlight is shared between nesting Spotted Flycatchers and Tree Creepers, whilst winter records include Woodcock and five species of tit (Blue, Great, Coal, Marsh and Long-tailed).

Steve Parker & Simon Leach and other members of SANHS recorded fungi and a few plant galls. They found four species of waxcaps including Parrot waxcap (*Hygrocybe psittacina*) and other grassland species such Pointed Club (*Clavaria acuta*) and about 27 species of fungi associated with the trees and woodlands. One of the

strangest finds was *Puccinia oxalidis* this is a bright orange rust fungus found on the underside of garden Oxalis.



Parrot waxcaps in grassland at Barford Park © Steve Parker

## Botany Articles

### Exmoor recording 2016

#### Report: Graham Lavender

For 2016 on Exmoor, my recording plan was to work through some of the under-recorded taxa following the notes from the BSBI publication of autumn 2015; *BSBI Atlas 2020 Notes on identification works and some difficult under-recorded Taxa*. There was added enthusiasm since one of the authors, Dr Fred Rumsey, gave us a presentation at one of the SRPG 2015 winter meetings.

Dandelions (*Taraxacum*), Brambles (*Rubus*), Eyebrights (*Euphrasia*), Hawkweeds (*Hieracium*) and Whitebeams (*Sorbus*) have limited records on Exmoor and most of these are pre-2000. Opportunities arose in 2016 to make inroads into recording all five of these critical taxa.

The BSBI/SRPG Dandelion workshop in April provided an ideal opportunity to learn more about this critical group and I subsequently collected specimens for identification. Amongst the specimens confirmed by Prof J Richards (BSBI *Taraxacum* referee) were the first records for VC5 of Close-lobed Dandelion (*Taraxacum densilobum*) from Culbone Hill and Large Hook-lobed Dandelion (*T. subhamatum*) from Hawkcombe.

Brambles are perhaps a greater challenge than Dandelions, but Somerset has the great advantage of having Rob Randall as our resident Bramble expert. Whilst I had some limited success in photographing and collecting brambles for identification, Rob decided that if he came to the brambles rather than me sending them to him, we would be much more successful. We decided to meet at Simonsbath and together with Ian Salmon, we spent a full day covering three hectads, mostly working from the car and stopping at any opportunity when we spotted a roadside bramble. My notes revealed that we identified 17 new post-2000 hectad records and *Rubus scaber* was the second record for VC5.

Hawkweeds (*Hieracia*) are a taxonomic group that I have not recorded before and, with no current BSBI referee, it seemed unlikely I would do



*Taraxacum densilobum* from Culbone Hill ©Graham Lavender

so. However, in September, Dr Tim Rich came down for a day to identify some Whitebeams (*Sorbus*) at Culbone and was also looking to collect data on the Exmoor Hawkweed (*Hieracium eminentiforme*). This Exmoor endemic had not been recorded anywhere since the 1980s with the exception of one new site in Wales. Identification depends on differentiation from Autumn Hawkbit (*H. sabaudum*) which has narrower phyllaries (generally less than 1.5mm) compared to the wider, darker phyllaries of *H. eminentiforme*. Tim was able to identify *H. eminentiforme* in three monads and subsequently he was happy to confirm specimens I collected from another 5 monads. The exact distribution of *H. emi-*





*Hieracium eminentiforme* on roadside at Yenworthy © Graham Lavender

*mentiforme* on Exmoor will require more work in future years but for now this Rare Plant Register taxon can be recorded as “Not Scarce”.

The prime reason for Tim’s visit was to identify forty Whitebeams that I and Robin Offer (Exmoor National Park) had tagged in the summer of 2016. The coastal woodland at Culbone is owned by Exmoor National Park so it was good to have a representative on board. Following weekly visits in September, it was decided that the fruits were fully ripe in the last week of the month and Tim joined Robin and I for the day. We identified thirty Whitebeams in this relatively poorly recorded area. The greatest number of records was for Rock Whitebeam (*Sorbus rupicola*). Margaret’s Whitebeam (*S. margaretae*) was the next most common species, with nine records. We had five records for Bloody Whitebeam (*S. vexans*) and two for the Somerset endemic Somerset Whitebeam (*S. subcuneata*). The Somerset Whitbeams were only saplings but I went back the next day and collected specimens from four large trees which Tim was also able to confirm as *S. subcuneata*. Tim took specimens home for further study and, as I write this, is considering the possibility of a new taxa. Many trees had no fruit this year and could not be identified, but it is clear that a large number of trees are yet to be recorded and it is hoped to do this in the next few years.

A new taxon for Exmoor is always exciting and, as noted in BSBI News (September 2016), Mike Wilcox on a visit in the summer, identified Pale Forget-me-not (*Myosotis stolonifera*) in a flush on Dunkery. This had only previously been recorded in Northern England and Southern Scotland. The most frequently found Forget-me-not on Exmoor is Creeping Forget-me-not (*M. secunda*). Pale and Creeping Forget-me-nots are stoloniferous and both have calyces which are lobed to around the half way mark. Separation is difficult. Not only were both species present at the site, but there looked like the possibility of hybrids as well. The BSBI referee, Dr David Welch, was extremely helpful and spent considerable time looking at both dried and fresh specimens. His conclusion was that we should record them as *M. stolonifera* although he did note that the specimens, whilst clearly not *M. secunda*, did show some differences from the northern *M. stolonifera*. For me the easiest way to spot potential *M. stolonifera* for further examination was that they had much shorter leaves, rarely twice as long as wide, compared with the much longer leaves on *M. secunda*. This is clearly another taxon that needs more work to determine its exact distribution.

I am grateful to Mike Wilcox for identifying the hybrid between Soft-rush (*Juncus effusus*) and Compact Rush (*J. conglomeratus*) *J. x kernreichgeltii* and providing me with a voucher specimen to aid future searches. Although I can spot potential hybrids, when I have examined a cross section of stem at home, so far they have all shown signs of introgression and not been the hybrid. My thanks go to all the referees who, as always, gave invaluable help and were very patient. My work on the Exmoor Eyebrights is covered in a separate report—see page 27.

### **Discovery of *Phyla nodiflora* var. *minor* (syn. *P. canescens*/*P. filiformis*) in West Quantoxhead, ST14, (VC5).**

**Report: Rosemary FitzGerald**

Between 8 and 16 September 2016 I had been looking at monads ST1040 and ST1041, comprising sloping fields at the NW end of the Quantock ridge, and parts of West Quantoxhead (St Audries) village. The soils are neutral, but there proved to be some quite interesting arable as-

semblages on the edges of maize fields, and some reasonable hedges and road verges. Finishing one square-bash in monad ST1041 involved walking back to the car down Staple Lane which goes down to the A39 from the byroad running from the Windmill pub, past Weacombe to the A358 at Woolston Moor. Staple Lane is quite suburban, having detached houses with surrounding gardens. Most of the houses have garden fences adjoining the road but 'Shardloes' stands above the lane with a hedge half way up the slope, and below this a rough grass bank sloping down to the pavement. This must once have been considered part of the garden – there is a scrappy surviving plant of an ornamental winter heather – but it looks to have been long uncultivated.

I was interested to see this bank dotted with abundant little white flowers, the size of daisy heads, but being little umbels of tiny white florets, darkening to purple in the middle of the head. The leaves were simple, tapering to the base but not really with petioles, rather roughly hairy. About 3 x 2m of the grass was densely interwoven with its trailing stems, and among the flowers were very curious little brown heads, the dead flowers tightly clumped but with ragged projections (like a bad hair day). I collected some, took a couple of very feeble photos (the light was going), and continued back to the car quite pleased to have found something so energetically naturalised, and new to me.

At home my pleasure rapidly turned to shame and frustration - not only could I not name the plant, but I couldn't even put it in a family. I spent a depressing evening searching all my garden books as well as Stace, the aliens books, European and Mediterranean floras, everything on the shelves, and on-line with a few wild-guess groups – all without even finding a clue. However good fortune was near, because I was going out with Jeanne Webb in a few days' time, and was able show her a specimen of my nemesis. She got the family at once, *Verbenaceae*, because she recognised that the tiny flowers had the same construction as *Lantana*, the gross gaudy shrub familiar in Mediterranean hotels and parks. She then looked up some of the notebooks which she had kept on visits to Cyprus with Desmond Meikle, and from her notes she was able to go to the

genus *Phyla*, and indeed to the species *P.nodiflora*, which was later confirmed by Fred Rumsey.



*Phyla nodiflora* var. *minor* at West Quantoxhead showing the pale flowers the size of daisy heads © Ro FitzGerald

We were both thrilled, initially, but then some details seemed to make the identification questionable and scary. Firstly there were almost no records in UK sources. Clement & Foster's *Alien Plants* (1994) said 'Pre-1930 only' and cited specimens in OXF. It gave the synonyms *Lippia nodiflora* and *Verbena nodiflora*, and the curious English name 'Frogfruit' (this gets even madder in on-line sources which call this species 'Turkey Tangle Frogfruit'). The entry also said 'Widespread' which seemed contradictory, but means it's widely naturalised in other parts of the world. There was nothing else, no presence in Map-Mate, in DDB – nothing. It also turned out that the taxonomy of the genus is complicated, and has been argued over for years, and there were several closely similar plants in the group.

Desmond Meikle's *Flora of Cyprus* (1985) was spot on with appearance and habit, but describes what were then considered two separate species - *P. nodiflora*, found growing wild in moist and marshy places in Cyprus, and *P. filiformis* from more ruderal and disturbed habitats, sometimes used as a lawn grass substitute (as noted once from Jeanne and Tim's hotel!). The critical differences were minute, and we realised that we were unable to make a certain distinction. So after consulting Helena about how to handle this problem, which if we could solve it would be such a very big 'squeak', material was



sent to Fred Rumsey, with an extremely reassuring result.

He confirmed our plant as *P.nodiflora*. Helena had already pointed out that a number of taxonomic questions haunted the genus, and Fred referred to recent work at Missouri Botanic Gardens, and for the new *Flora Gallica*, which has lumped the two species we were struggling with, and named the plant ‘patchily naturalised in central and northern Europe’ as *P. nodiflora* var. *minor*. This is originally a garden escape, having rather showier flowers (in its tiny way) than the true species. It’s probably sterile, but as the West Quantoxhead population shows, it can spread vigorously by vegetative runners, and persist in quite thick grass. ‘It would seem likely that all British records are of var. *minor*’.

I don’t feel confident that any more ‘Frogfruit’ records will turn up in Somerset, but the search for a definite identification was quite an adventure, and hopefully the Staple Lane population will have many more years starring its grassy bank, and at least the voucher specimen is now in NHM to prove the plants post-1930 presence in Britain.

I’m very grateful indeed to Jeanne for her wonderful memory and determination skills, to Fred for filling in the final confirmation (in a way which excuses our uncertainties very nicely), and to Helena for so helping the process on its way.

## **Euphrasias of Exmoor.**

### **Report: Graham Lavender**

In the *Atlas Flora of Somerset* (1997, Paul R Green, Ian P Green and Geraldine A Crouch) Eyebrights were largely recorded as *Euphrasia* agg. A limited number of species were included where the identification was confirmed. The National *Euphrasia* study in 2015 by Alex Twyford, researcher at the University of Edinburgh, was an attempt to genetically sequence *Euphrasia* populations across the UK and further our knowledge of this group.

I was lucky enough to have specimens accepted that I collected in the autumn of 2015 on Exmoor and luckier still that Chris Metherell (BSBI *Euphrasia* referee) agreed to accept further specimens from me in the autumn of 2015 and 2016. In all I was able to submit just over fifty speci-



*Euphrasia arctica x nemorosa* at County Gate © Graham Lavender

mens from Exmoor and it’s with enormous thanks to Chris that the picture of *Euphrasia* distribution on Exmoor is becoming much clearer. I only collected specimens from where the population was at least fifty. Smaller populations I recorded as *Euphrasia* agg., but accompanied each record with an eight-figure grid reference in MapMate to facilitate collection from the same location at a later date if the population expanded.

Once I started getting back confirmed specimens from Chris, it was interesting to note that problems of identification were different to those I had anticipated. I tended to frequently suggest hybridity and not make adequate allowance for normal variation. Interestingly, the easiest specimens to identify came from the most remote locations, presumably where there were natural barriers between taxa. If you go beyond Pinkery Pond to the very border of VC5 you come to Ruckham Combe. Here it is very isolated and the Confused Eyebright (*Euphrasia confusa*) at this site keys out very easily with Helena Crouch’s Key to Somerset *Euphrasia* species (this will shortly be available on the Resources page of the SRPG website – Ed.). Returning to Pinkery, on the hillside in splendid isolation overlooking the pond, I found very typical specimens of English Eyebright (*E. anglica*) which also key out very easily. Coming back down the hill to the Pinkery Exploration Centre is where the trouble starts. The whole area is a mass of Eyebrights and few key out well. It’s a challenge to examine the features and make a determination from specimens

at this location. However, I collected specimens and sent them to Chris and he confirmed Common Eyebright (*E. nemorosa*), *E. nemorosa x confusa* and *E. arctica x confusa*. Chris calls it hybrid swarm territory and there are a number of sites where this occurs.

Of the hybrids, *E. nemorosa x confusa* seems to be the most common. I have found it in seven monads and it was considered absent from VC5 before this. The rarest taxon on Exmoor is probably *E. anglica x arctica* and is only recorded in a few sites in UK. This hybrid is found just a few fields over from Pinkery Exploration Centre. Challenges remain. Chris identified *E. confusa x*



*Euphrasia nemorosa* at Yenworthy/Broomstreet © Graham Lavender

*scottica* and whilst he was very happy with the ID if, as he said, "it was Orkney", he was concerned at finding it as far south as Exmoor. It was decided not to record this at present, but to see if DNA analysis can be undertaken in 2017. The other challenge is Slender Eyebright (*E. micrantha*), as although *E. anglica x micrantha* has been confirmed at a few sites on Exmoor, as yet no Slender Eyebright has been found here since 1999. This is another target for future work.

We now have a much better picture of the populations and distribution of *Euphrasia* on Exmoor, although much work remains.

## Taunton Herbarium – digitisation and other projects

Report: Liz McDonnell

In 2015 a small team of SRPG members and one non-member began the long process of digitising the Taunton herbarium. This is a large collection

of pressed plant specimens collected since the early 1820's mainly in Somerset, but with a smaller number collected in Europe and North America. It is owned by Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (SANHS) and is primarily the plant collection of Walter Watson, who was a schoolmaster at Taunton and later became President of the Botanical Section of SANHS. He was also Recorder for Somerset between 1933 and 1952. Not all the specimens were collected by Watson himself, but he acquired a large number through the Botanical Exchange Club. Most of the specimens are mounted and labeled and they are well housed in the Natural History store at the Somerset Heritage Centre (SHC).

The aim is to photograph each specimen and send all the images to Herbaria@Home (H@H), an on-line viewing portal, where they will all be available to anyone with a computer and an internet connection anywhere in the world. H@H is a citizen science project initiated by Tom Humphrey of the BSBI. Volunteers contribute by taking photos of dried plant collections in herbaria large and small throughout the British Isles and then help with cataloguing each specimen, so that there is a searchable on-line database. SHC are very keen to encourage greater use of the Taunton Herbarium and have assisted throughout with technical advice, the loan of equipment, providing archive-quality materials and space to work for our small team. To help with the digitising part of the project, they adapted a table for us by attaching an adjustable



Photographing each of the herbarium sheets in the Natural History store of the Somerset Heritage Centre © Liz McDonnell



stand on which to secure a digital camera (on loan from one of our team). They also provided photographic lights for our exclusive use in the Natural History Store. SANHS awarded us a grant to help with the purchase of specialist equipment - an angled viewfinder, remote shutter control, batteries, card reader and data storage.

Digitisation started in May 2015, when we set aside each Monday morning for the regular session at SHC, working our way systematically through the two Victorian wooden herbarium cupboards and the numerous cardboard archive boxes, photographing each of the 8000+ herbarium sheets. By the end of February 2017, the majority of the Walter Watson collection and several smaller separate collections had been photographed. We checked each image and any that were faulty were discarded and re-photographed. A duplicate set of the whole photographic collection was made ready to send to H@H.

During the long process of photographing the entire herbarium, it became clear that in addition to having the collection available on-line, it could be made even more useful for study and research if the whole collection was amalgamated and reorganised on a modern taxonomic arrangement. In conjunction with a searchable database of the specimens, this would facilitate those that wished to study the physical herbarium. Several years ago SHC had acquired several 'surplus-to-requirements' herbarium cupboards from the National Museum of Wales (NMW) with the aim of rehusing the Taunton herbarium. We calculated that their capacity is sufficient to hold the entire amalgamated herbarium, so that the two old wooden cupboards and numerous cardboard archive boxes that currently hold the mounted specimens could be dispensed with. We sought the advice of Dr. Tim Rich who came over from Cardiff to spend a day with us, to see the collection and to discuss the best way to reorganise the herbarium and manage it in a professional way.

It is essential to use acid-free archival quality materials in a herbarium and we have been very fortunate in obtaining a large amount of mounting card from the Natural History Museum (NHM) in London. SHC and SANHS have also provided us with suitable acid-free paper & cardboard to make species and genus folders for the forthcoming re-organisation process.

We extend our sincere thanks to those organisations for their help in setting us up with good quality archive materials for the herbarium. We are currently mounting the Dandelions that were collected during last year's BSBI/SRPG Taraxacum weekend and after these specimens have been photographed for H@H they will be incorporated into the general Taunton collection in due course. The reorganisation and re-housing part of the project will be undertaken during 2017.



Simon Leach & Jeanne Webb mounting Dandelions collected during the BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop. These will be amalgamated into the Taunton herbarium © Liz McDonnell

## **Copse-bindweed (*Fallopia dumetorum*) rediscovered in Somerset**

**Report: Clive Lovatt**

Copse-Bindweed is listed in the *Vascular Plant Red List for England* (2014) as Vulnerable. The *Scarce Plants in Britain* (1994) map shows it in 34 hectads post-1970, with 33 earlier dots on the map. Its core area of distribution is in the English counties of Berkshire, Hampshire, Surrey and (even though unreported before 1968) Oxfordshire. In 2015 it was once again found in Wales,

also new to Monmouthshire. The solitary records for Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, and Somerset all date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

On 7 September 1836 CC Babington was exploring the GWR construction works between Brislington and Saltford and found Copse-bindweed in plenty “on the bushy sides of a hollow through which the Western Railroad passes, about one mile from Keynsham towards Bristol, and near a bend in the river”. JW White wrote in his *Flora of Bristol* (1912) that he was unable to re-find the plant, although he understood that others had been more lucky. There is still no acceptable evidence of a later occurrence at Keynsham (or elsewhere in Somerset) and it should hardly be a surprise that White annotated a Babington sheet in his herbarium “N.B. For obvious reasons this specimen is of great interest to Bristol botanists.”

Copse-bindweed is an annual plant of woodland margins, open woodland, coppices and hedges on well-drained soils. Almost all correctly identified records relate to unquestionably native occurrences. It has always been not only local, but erratic in appearance, often turning up in quantity following coppicing and clearing or thinning of woodland and hedgerows: it appears to survive for decades in the seedbank. The Keynsham plants might have arisen as railway works cut through old woodland; in such circumstances the chances of recurrence would be much diminished.

On 30 August 2016 I was clearing my desk ready for my imminent retirement, and was in need of a break. Liz McDonnell and I met in an under-recorded area at Nailsea. We got off to a good start by unexpectedly parking under the true Black Poplar (*Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*) growing within the boundary walls of the Tithe Barn, a site apparently not previously formally recorded. After exploring the roadsides nearby we came upon a footpath which soon turned into an old green lane, fringing the south facing Pennant Sandstone escarpment to the south of Nailsea. Here we found two old gnarled Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) trees, which had formerly been laid as a traditional hedgerow.

As we reached the end of the green lane dusk was approaching and we needed to head back to the car, choosing to go straight on rather than

turn left and cross a botanically dull playing field. 25 metres further on, walking the narrow path, a brambly hedge to the left and a slope of bracken below, we had a “what’s that?” moment. Scrambling across the bracken it seemed to me like Russian-vine (*Fallopia baldschuanica*) only it was far too delicate. Nor did it look like the stiffer and shorter Black-bindweed (*F. convolvulus*) we normally encounter on bare soil. Neither of us had ever seen Copse-bindweed but Liz suspected that it might be this, having recently looked up its distinguishing features when faced with atypical growth of *F. convolvulus*. By then it was nearly dark and we were hungry, so we took some specimens away to check later.



*Fallopia dumetorum* at Nailsea, showing the broadly winged pale outer tepals gradually narrowing onto the pedicel © John Martin

In Copse-bindweed, the three broadly winged silvery-white outer tepals, enlarged in fruit to 8mm (5mm in Black-bindweed) are striking; closer inspection reveals that the wings are gradually narrowed onto the pedicel (rather than somewhat abruptly as in the narrower wings of the now rarely recorded *F. convolvulus* var. *subalatum*). Copse-bindweed has pedicels that are 5-8mm (not 1-3 mm) and reliably small glossy black nuts no more than 3mm (not 4-5mm, dull and finely dotted as in Black-bindweed). Soft attenuated leaves with shorter petioles and a round stem also separate Copse-bindweed.

Our specimens (which will be deposited in Taunton TTN Herbarium) were fertile and under a dissecting microscope Liz compared the nuts with



those of Black-bindweed from her allotment and concluded it really was Copse-bindweed we had found. The identity was later confirmed by Fred Rumsey and the still-fresh specimens were seen and approved by several botanists at the BSBI Recorders' Meeting in Shrewsbury the following weekend.

On 8 September I returned to see if there was any more Copse-bindweed on the extensive area of bracken slope (there wasn't) and to make notes about the habitat and population size. It was growing along 10 m of pathside at the sharp end of a sloping triangular clearing dominated by bracken. There were five patches of varying size, all within 50 cm to 5 metres below the path, twisted round stems of Nettles, Bracken, Bramble (*Rubus ulmifolius*) and occasional Hogweed. The path edge flora included an ascending Knotgrass, Greater Plantain, and Broad-leaved Dock. Above the path was secondary scrub fringed by Bramble and Rosebay Willowherb. Both sides of the path had clearly been cut back recently.

The nearby end of the green lane has a gate and the remains of various stone walls. There are open grown Oaks nearby. There is a path northwards and another green lane which drops down to run round the base of the bracken slope. It contains old Hazel, Holly and Field Maple, with intrusive Sycamore saplings and runs into a small strip of old Hazel coppice.

The habitat suggests that Copse-bindweed is native here and has been overlooked, appearing again after limited disturbance of a long-lived seedbank. Writing of a site in his own county of Surrey CE Salmon remarked that he saw it in one place in abundance in 1911, but in 1912 there was none. Highly floriferous as the photograph shows, and fertile, we look forward with some trepidation to see if Copse-bindweed appears again here in 2017.

## A spiny challenge!

### Report: Ro FitzGerald

My devotion to the Wild Flower Society competition known as the Winter Months Hunt (WMH) has been lifelong. I suspect my friends get pretty bored with this time-consuming obsession for peering at dull weeds when they are trying to enjoy a proper walk or get back to a car park before the meter runs out, and the plants found are

usually pretty unremarkable. However this winter has been serendipitous, and I was led to a find which is worthy of SRPG attention.

Near Dead Woman's Ditch on the Quantocks there's an informal pull-in used by walkers and bilberry pickers, which I've used for years when doing WFS seasonal hunts. Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), and Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) can often be found near there with a few flowers still hanging on out of season, so in December 2016 I stopped to look. The big winds and early frosts had browned off all the heathers, but there were a few gorse flowers, and they looked more like *U.gallii* than Common Gorse (*U. europaeus*), so I collected a few sprigs.



Hybrid gorse was frequent here at Dead Woman's Ditch amongst both Common & Western Gorse © Ro FitzGerald

I'm extremely lazy about plants which I think I know well. I've felt sure of what they are for a long lifetime, so never actually check the characters. Something quite unconscious must have started a hunch about this gorse. I thought I was just being dutiful – 'here's your chance Ro to look up what really divides these two gorses' – but afterwards I wondered why I'd bothered to do this instead of just smugly adding *U.gallii* to my WMH list. Anyway, back with Stace, the first thing I read was that there's a hybrid *U. x breoganii*. It's stated to 'occur rarely' but its 'precise range is unknown'. It's highly fertile and 'variously intermediate'. So just out of interest

(I'm challenging myself to become hybrid-aware) I then reached for the wonderful Stace, Preston & Pearman *Hybrid Flora*. This makes it clear that the hybrid is potential throughout the range of *U.gallii* (roughly SW England, Wales and across S Ireland), but that 'identification problems have precluded many recorders from assessing its frequency', though several authorities have suggested that it was 'probably frequent wherever the parents grow'.

By now I was really looking at my specimen, and wondering, but I stuck on the bracteole measurements (I couldn't even SEE one for sure), and Christmas shelved the question till I returned to the same spot on 10 January 2017. December is late for a Western Gorse flower, so when scattered flowers were still visible in January it was obvious that something was up, because they were growing on what looked like *gallii* not *europaeus*. Ordinary gorse flowers year round – 'when the gorse is out of blossom, kissing's out of fashion' which means never, but *gallii* has quite a strict July to early October season. It matches the Bell Heather flowering, giving Co Wexford its famous hurling colours 'the purple and the gold'. The *Atlas Flora of Somerset* (unusually) said nothing, but at this point the joy of being part of SRPG really kicked in. We are a GROUP, and can ask each other things and share skills! I don't 'do' MapMate, so I asked Liz McDonnell to check for records of the hybrid, which she kindly did. There are very few, four grid references in all, and all involved Jeanne and Tim Webb (Jeanne had been present for a SRPG meeting record). So the next step was to ask Jeanne (who has used her friendship with Desmond Meikle so well, and is already our willow guru), if she'd be willing to look at some gorse. She was, and I collected another scrap. We then had a concentrated session with lenses and tweezers, using an invaluable comparative table prepared by Jeanne with all the characters of both species extracted from all available literature. It worked ! The answer came out solidly and convincingly for our plant to be the hybrid. We had specimens of the two species - the *gallii* sprigs, with abundant dead flowers, collected from a place I'd photographed it near Crowcombe Gate last summer, and *europaeus* in flower from two 'lowland' roadsides – so we could make a proper controlled assessment with all the

key character parts laid out. This felt really pleasing – a little achievement at a low time of year, and potentially an interesting result with strong implications for wider county recording. It's clear from the literature that this hybrid could be widespread wherever the two species are present – which would include almost every hectad of our acid heathy areas and hills. Indeed Steve Parker went straight out onto the Blackdowns and found it, though cruelly a few yards into Devon! So the only question is how many botanists might really want to bother with such an obscure and prickly hybrid, which does take quite a bit of comparative work to confirm.

There are two things which Jeanne and I suggest should smooth the path. One is that the season for looking is naturally limited to November-January. The hybrid is reported to be autumn-winter flowering, so any bush with the small dark green spines and deep gold flower colour of *gallii* (where that species is present) which seems to have a few flowers out of season, could be a candidate. Measuring every gorse flower and spine in thousands of acres in July or August would clearly lead to madness, but restricting the challenge to winter would be practicable. More importantly, Jeanne has perfected her table, and anyone interested in this challenge can download it from the 'Resources' page of the SRPG website <http://www.somersetrareplantsgroup.org.uk/resources/presentations/>

*U. x breoganii* is reported to be fertile and produce lavish seed, so the potential range of intermediate variants is probably wide, but using the table, any plant with the majority of its measured and assessed characters falling between the actual species should be the hybrid.

GOOD HUNTING next winter !

## **Additions to the Dandelion Flora of Somerset**

**Report: Simon Leach, John Richards & Jeanne Webb**

In recent years the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) has held an annual 'Dandelion Workshop' somewhere in Britain, usually in a county where the *Taraxacum* flora is poorly known. In 2016 it was the turn of Somerset; the workshop, held 15-19 April, was based in Taunton and hosted by the Somerset Rare Plants



Group (SRPG). Places visited in S. Somerset (VC5) included Minehead, Dunster Beach, Ash Priors Common, Thurlbear Wood and several other sites along the northern fringes of the Blackdown Hills, and in N. Somerset (VC6) Middle Hope and Sand Point. The meeting was led by the national expert/referee for *Taraxacum*, John Richards, and was attended by many Somerset botanists along with a sprinkling of competent and enthusiastic ‘taraxacologists’ from further afield such as John Day, Leslie Tucker, Mark Lynes and Claudia Ferguson-Smyth.

Listed below, in alphabetical order, are first county/vice-county records of *Taraxacum* species made during the workshop, together with other county/vice-county ‘firsts’ collected either before or after that workshop. Also included are a few earlier (and hitherto unpublished) county/vice-county ‘firsts’ that have come to light since the workshop and were found to be missing from the national *Taraxacum* Database and/or BSBI Distribution Database.

Records with voucher specimens lodged in the SANHS herbarium are annotated **TTN**. This herbarium used to be stored at Taunton Castle, in the county museum (now Museum of Somerset), but is now at the Somerset Heritage Centre under the day-to-day care of the South West Heritage Trust. Specimens held in the herbarium can be examined by prior arrangement with the curator, Dennis Parsons.

A note on ‘recorders’: specimens from the workshop itself are shown merely as having been collected by ‘BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop’, rather than by any particular individual, as the original finder of a given specimen was usually unclear. For specimens gathered either before or after the workshop, names of recorders are either given in full or denoted by their initials as follows: RFitzG, Ro FitzGerald; GL, Graham Lavender; SJL, Simon Leach; JW, Jeanne Webb.

Apart from one record from VC6 (of *Taraxacum hamatum*), all records listed below are from material collected since 2000 and determined by John Richards (AJR). Some 26 of the 49 species catalogued here were collected for the first time in Somerset during 2016, of which 17 were gathered during the weekend of the workshop. All dates refer to records made in 2016 unless otherwise stated. As at 1 March 2017, the *Taraxa-*

*cum* flora of Somerset stands at 116 species, 89 in VC5 and 83 in VC6.

***Taraxacum acroglossum*** Cleeve Abbey, Washford (ST046407), 24 May, in short grass in car-park, JW, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum aequilobum*** Old Cleeve (ST041417), 7 Feb 2004, wall in driveway near Hybeck, JW, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum alatum*** Taunton (ST235244), 1 Mar, in flower-bed in front garden of 15 Trinity Street, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, second for Somerset.

***Taraxacum arenastrum*** Cleeve Hill, Watchet (ST05314292), 5 May 2004, in limestone grassland, JW, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, second for Somerset.

***Taraxacum argutum*** Thurlbear Quarrylands (ST273208), 5 May, in rabbit-grazed damp calcareous grassland, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum atactum*** Barford Park (ST2335), 13 Mar, in sheep-grazed neutral grassland, RFitzG, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5.

***Taraxacum cambricum*** Minehead, Marsh Common (SS97944576), 16 Apr, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum cophocentrum*** Ash Priors Common (ST15302894), 17 Apr, wooded road verge, S side of Donovan Lane, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, second for Somerset.

***Taraxacum corynodes*** Ash Priors Common (ST15222906), 17 Apr, road verge, Donovan Lane, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum curtifrons*** Sand Point (ST32786602), 18 Apr, in open species-rich glade on S side of ridge, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC6 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum degelii*** Weston-super-Mare (ST316600), 21 Apr 2013, in the sea lawns, C. Gait, det AJR, **NMW**; first record for VC6 and Somerset. Dunster beach (SS99914511), 16 Apr, in dune grassland in front of chalets, W of ash

trees, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, second for Somerset.

**Taraxacum densilobum** Culbone hill (SS83424757), 9 May, GL, det AJR; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

**Taraxacum dilaceratum** Sand Point (ST32956599), 18 Apr, beside path leading through woodland from car-park up to ridge, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC6 and Somerset.

**Taraxacum dilatatum** Hankridge retail park, Taunton (ST254254), 3 Mar, on grass verge outside B & Q, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, second (possibly third) for Somerset.

**Taraxacum edmondsonianum** Church Close, Old Cleeve (ST041417), 10 Apr 2006, on grassy bank, JW, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

**Taraxacum fulviforme** Dragons Cross (ST043418), 31 Mar 2007, roadside bank, JW, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5.

**Taraxacum glauciniforme** Blue Anchor (ST02164348), 16 Apr, on edge of pavement at W end of seafront, near Driftwood Cafe and Blue Anchor station, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5.

**Taraxacum hamatulum** Backwell Down (ST4967), 10 May 1984, in pasture on limestone ridge, RFitzG, det C.C. Haworth; first record for VC6 and Somerset, pre-dating VC6 records already on the BSBI Distribution Database. Curland (ST285176), 1 Apr, in verge of green lane, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5.

**Taraxacum hamiferum** Thurlbear Wood (ST27052082), 15 Apr, woodland glade in species-rich calcareous grassland, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR 2016, **TTN**; first record for VC5.

**Taraxacum horridifrons** Minehead, Marsh Common (SS97944575), 16 Apr, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

**Taraxacum lacerifolium** Minehead, Marsh Common (SS97964579), 16 Apr, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, second for Somerset.

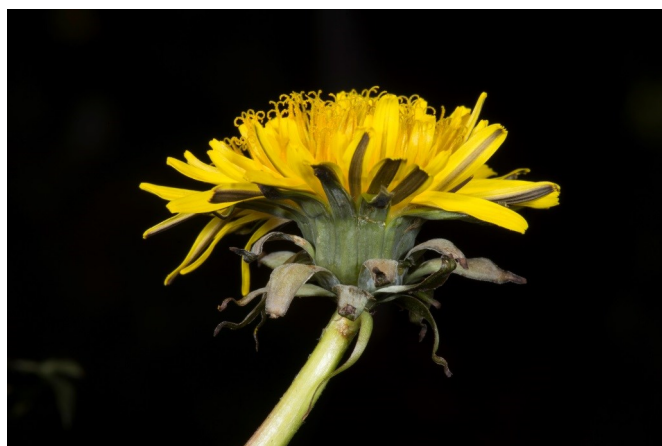
**Taraxacum laeticolor** Hankridge retail park, Taunton (ST254254), 3 Mar, grass verge, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5.

**Taraxacum laticordatum** Thurlbear Wood (ST27172111), 15 Apr, on edge of broad muddy ride, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5.

**Taraxacum leucopodium** Taunton (ST235244), 30 Apr, in seldom-cut lawn in back garden of 15 Trinity Street, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

**Taraxacum lucidum** Thurlbear Wood (ST27062081), 15 Apr, woodland edge between the two large glades, in species-rich grassland, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

**Taraxacum melanthoides** The Quants (ST18881804), 17 Apr, in species-rich grassland and scrub, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.



*Taraxacum melanthoides* from Quants © Mark Lynes

**Taraxacum mimulum** Woolston Moor (ST099400), 26 Apr, in damp grassland with abundant *Succisa pratensis*, *Betonica officinalis* etc, RFitzG & JW, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

**Taraxacum necessarium** Taunton (ST235244), 18 Apr, on path in front garden of 15 Trinity Street, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset. Ham Wall (ST451395), 20 Apr, in barish ground of track and gateway on SE side of Ashcott Bridge, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC6, second for Somerset.

**Taraxacum nigridentatum** Thurlbear (ST27232133), 15 Apr, on bare laneside bank, at



corner of lane opposite entrance to Thurlbear Wood nature reserve, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, second for Somerset.

***Taraxacum pallescens*** – Minehead, Seaward Way (SS97874582), 16 Apr, verge between road and building site, near Tesco supermarket, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, second for Somerset.

***Taraxacum pallidipes*** – Minehead, Seaward Way (SS978457), 16 Apr, verge between road and building site, near Tesco supermarket, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum prionum*** Taunton (ST253253), 3 Mar, lay-by at edge of dual carriageway on A358 adjoining Hankridge retail park, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum proximum*** Minehead, Summerland Avenue (SS970461), 24 Feb 2004, on garden wall, JW, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, third for Somerset.

***Taraxacum pruinaum*** Ash Priors Common (ST15192905), 17 Apr, on verge of W side of lane at edge of woodland/scrub, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum retzii*** The Quants (ST18851804), 17 Apr, in area of scrubby grassland at S end of Butterfly Conservation nature reserve, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum rhamphodes*** Thurlbear Wood, to S of nature reserve (ST27152067), in long grass by gateway beside track to Slough Green, 15 Apr, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum sahlinianum*** Ash Priors Common (ST15432889), 17 Apr, wooded lane bank on S side of Donovan Lane, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset. Sand Point (ST33016596), 18 Apr, at base of steps by turning circle, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC6, second for Somerset.

***Taraxacum semiglobosum*** Ash Priors Common (ST15092889), 17 Apr, on road verge opposite

car park, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum subhamatum*** Hawkcombe (SS88354585), 10 Apr, edge of bridleway, GL, det AJR; first record for VC5, fifth for Somerset.

***Taraxacum subxanthostigma*** Staple Hill (ST24681597), 17 Apr, dry grassy bank on W side of entrance to FC car park, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum sundbergii*** Staple Hill (ST24681597), 17 Apr, dry grassy bank on W side of entrance to FC car park, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum tenebricans*** Minehead, Marsh Common (SS97984582), 16 Apr, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, second for Somerset.

***Taraxacum trilobatum*** Taunton (ST235244), 16 Apr, in seldom-cut lawn in back garden of 15 Trinity Street, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum tumentilobum*** Thurlbear (ST27412129), 15 Apr, lane opposite parking place on N side of Thurlbear Wood nature reserve, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5, second for Somerset.

***Taraxacum undulatum*** Somerset Heritage Centre (ST205258), 21 Mar, on waste ground, SJL & I. Salmon, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset. Ditchat (ST626354), 3 Apr, in flower bed at Tunlake, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC6, second for Somerset.

***Taraxacum unguilobum*** Minehead, North Hill (SS928477), 8 May 2007, grassy sward at 270m, JW, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5.

***Taraxacum valens*** Minehead, Marsh Common (SS97944575), 16 Apr, BSBI/SRPG Dandelion Workshop, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5.

***Taraxacum vastisectum*** Orchard Wood (ST25152050), 6 May, edge of woodland ride/footpath, SJL, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

***Taraxacum xanthostigma*** Washford (ST048419), 20 Apr, in hedgebank on Monk's Path, JW, det AJR, **TTN**; first record for VC5 and Somerset.

# Other 2016 Plant Records

## Compiled by Helena Crouch

Thank you to everyone who contributed records for vascular plants in Somerset in 2016: altogether we made nearly 80,000 records. All our records contribute to the BSBI's Atlas 2020 project as well as being useful at a local scale. Every record is valuable and there have been many more interesting and significant records than can be listed here. As usual, most new Somerset/Vice-County records in 2016 were for alien species; however there are several native taxa new to each VC. Many significant records were made for Rare Plant Register species, some of which are listed in the third section. All records below are for 2016 unless otherwise stated. Those marked with an asterisk are neophytes (recent introductions). Recorders and referees whose names appear more than once have been abbreviated as follows:

|        |                                |
|--------|--------------------------------|
| BPS    | British Pteridological Society |
| SRPG   | Somerset Rare Plants Group     |
| HJC    | Helena Crouch                  |
| RFitzG | Ro FitzGerald                  |
| DEG    | Dave Green                     |
| LH     | Libby Houston                  |
| GL     | Graham Lavender                |
| SJL    | Simon Leach                    |
| CML    | Clive Lovatt                   |
| EJMcD  | Liz McDonnell                  |
| CM     | Chris Metherell                |
| JP     | John Poingdestre               |
| RDR    | Rob Randall                    |
| GHR    | Gill Read                      |
| TCGR   | Tim Rich                       |
| FJR    | Fred Rumsey                    |
| ITS    | Ian Salmon                     |
| JDS    | Jonathan Shanklin              |
| AS     | Alastair Stevenson             |
| JW     | Jeanne Webb                    |
| MAW    | Margaret Webster               |
| MPW    | Michael Wilcox                 |

Reference is made to the most recent floras for our area; these are abbreviated as follows:

Green, I.P., Higgins, R.J., Kitchen, C. & Kitchen, M.A.R. (2000). *The Flora of the Bristol Region*. Newbury: Pisces Press: *FBR*

Green, P.R., Green, I.P. & Crouch, G.A. (1997). *The Atlas Flora of Somerset*. Wayford and Yeovil: privately published: *AFS*

## NEW SOMERSET RECORDS

\**Aloe aristata* (Lace Aloe) Castle Cary (ST64543250), 25 Sept, large clump 50cm across, on road outside on-street house at W end of Wyke Road. House owner told us she had it as a houseplant on a windowsill and thinks a plantlet fell out of the window and rooted, now a substantial clump! HJC & SRPG, VC6. Second site in Britain.

\**Ballota pseudodictamnus* (False Dittany) Wellington (ST14202068), 24 Jul, 1 plant as street weed, Stephen Parker, VC5.

*Calystegia x howittiorum* (*C. pulchra x silvatica*) Three Ashes Lane (ST65244645), 27 Jul, large patch in hedge on N side of lane, extending for 8m, with large pink flowers, HJC & Val Graham, conf. Mark Carine, VC6.

*Carex x boeninghausiana* (*C. paniculata x C. remota*) Tricky Warren (woodland centred on ST201147), May, 10-15 small tussocks in wet woodland, Conrad Barrowclough, det. MPW. VC3 [this is not a new record for VC3, but is new for modern administrative Somerset].

\**Cymbalaria pallida* (Italian Toadflax) Bath (ST73836286), 30 Jun, few plants on old wall on S side of E end of Bloomfield Drive, DEG, VC6.



Italian Toadflax on old wall in Bath © Helena Crouch



*Dryopteris affinis* subsp. *paleaceolobatum* Durborough Farm (ST19513542), 19 Jun, in hedge by gate, GHR, K. Jackson, Christine Loudon & RFitzG, VC5.

\**Eclipta prostrata* (False Daisy) Bath (ST75426584), 24 Sept, 1 plant in flower in large tree planter outside Ripples bathroom centre, RDR, det. Matthew Berry, VC6. Second post-1930 record for Britain.

*Euphrasia arctica* x *confusa* Mole's Chamber (SS71953943), 18 Jul 2015, 150 plants on dry grass bank above the flush/mire, GL, det. CM, VC5.

*Juncus* x *kern-reichgeltii* (*J. conglomeratus* x *effusus*) Dunkery Hill (SS90494246), 16 Jul, MPW, VC5.

\**Lonicera henryi* (Henry's Honeysuckle) Shepton Mallet (ST62614302), 15 Jan, large patch in scrub on S side of path along disused railway, HJC & FJR, VC6.

\**Mahonia japonica* (Japanese Mahonia) Chew Magna (ST57886356), 9 Jun, 1 large shrub on bank of lane, perhaps bird-sown, HJC & MAW, VC6.

\**Miscanthus sinensis* (Chinese Silver-grass) Evercreech (ST6438), 12 Jun, pavement weed seedling in The Drang, c.15cm high, presumably self-seeded from garden plant nearby, SRPG, VC6.

*Myosotis stolonifera* (Pale Forget-me-not) Dunkery Hill (SS90124256), 16 Jul, in a flush, MPW, conf. David Welch, VC5.

\**Phyla nodiflora* var. *minor* (Frogfruit) West Quantoxhead (ST10694182), Sept 2016, well established on a rough grass bank in Staple Lane outside a garden hedge, RFitzG, det. JW, with taxonomic assistance from FJR, VC5. Third record for Britain.

*Rubus scaber* Kinsford Gate (SS73633693), 19 Aug, large patch on roadside, GL, ITS & RDR, VC5.

\**Spiraea alba* (Pale Bridewort) – Ellicombe (SS98844481), 31 Aug 2015, in lane, may have seeded from nearby plants in garden, AS, VC5.

\**Symphoricarpos orbicularis* (Coralberry) Durborough Farm (ST19513542), 19 Jun, in hedge by gate, GHR, K. Jackson, Christine Loudon & RFitzG, VC5.

\**Verbena hastata* (American Vervain) Wyke Champflower, SW of (ST65673401), 7 Aug, 1 plant in weedy area between field gate and R. Brue, just W of the bridge, JP, det. FJR, VC6.

#### NEW VICE-COUNTY RECORDS

\**Calystegia silvatica* subsp. *silvatica* (Large Bindweed) Cold Harbour, Brendon Hill (ST0135), 19 Jul 2013, recorded as var. *silvatica*, JW, VC5.

*Euphrasia arctica* x *confusa* Ubley Warren (ST50475536), 4 Jul, abundant in short species-rich turf, HJC, det. CM, VC6.

*Euphrasia arctica* x *nemorosa* County Gate (SS79514857), 15 Jul 2015, 100+ plants on L edge of path down, across road from car park, GL, det. CM, VC5.

*Euphrasia nemorosa* x *confusa* Pennycombe Water (SS83433780), 28 Jul, fairly extensive on grassy slope, GL, det. CM, VC5.

*Euphrasia officinalis* subsp. *anglica* x *arctica* Goat Hill (SS73254003), 7 Jul, very tall specimens over 30cm with long glandular hairs, GL, det. CM, VC5.

\**Hieracium exotericum* (Jordan's Hawkweed) Twelve Acre Post (SS88312509), 16 Jul, on N side of road opposite layby and cottages, Bob Hodgson, VC5.

*Lotus subbiflorus* (Hairy Bird's-foot-trefoil) Taunton (ST228253), 29 Jul, 30+ plants, mostly fruiting, in open ground on recently remodelled road verge of new inner relief road, near road leading up to S side of Taunton station, alongside station carpark, growing with *Trifolium glomeratum*, SJL, VC5.

*Montia fontana* subsp. *fontana* (Blinks) Emmetts Grange (SS754366), 12 Jun, in flush at gate entrance, GL, det. MPW, VC5.

\**Symphoricarpos* x *chenaultii* (Pink Snowberry) Bath (ST75106345), 9 Dec 2015, small patch, S side of Lyncombe Vale Road, HJC & DEG, VC6.

#### OTHER INTERESTING RECORDS

\**Acanthus spinosus* (Spiny Bear's-breech) Long Ashton (ST53967054), 17 Jul, outside the Spice Inn, SRPG, VC6. Second record for VC6 and Somerset.

\***Anemone ranunculoides** (Yellow Anemone) Laverton (ST78045305), 14 Apr, ten large clumps on N bank of Henhambridge Brook, near bridge over brook, HJC & DEG, VC6. Third record for VC6 and first since AFS.

\***Anthemis punctata** subsp. **cupaniana** (Sicilian Chamomile) Weston-super-Mare (ST32426226), 6 Aug, in gutter and at base of wall in Cecil Road, Dave Gibbs, VC6. Second record for VC6 and first since AFS.

\***Berberis julianae** (Chinese Barberry) Shepton Mallet (ST62744364), 15 Jan, large stand over 2m tall by footpath just W of viaduct, HJC & FJR; Bath, Lansdown Hill (ST73286773), 7 Dec, 1 small plant on waste ground at edge of playing field, HJC & DEG, VC6. Second and third records for VC6.

\***Bergenia crassifolia** (Elephant-ears) Fifty Acre Wood, Abbots Leigh (ST53547212), 11 Aug, garden throwout on road verge, EJMcd & CML, VC6. Third record for VC6.

\***Calystegia pulchra** (Hairy Bindweed) East Penard (ST596374), 22 Aug, in hedge by footpath west of church, JDS, VC6. First record for VC6 since AFS/FBR.

\***Calystegia silvatica** subsp. **silvatica** (Large Bindweed) North Petherton (ST2832), 27 Aug, HJC, GHR & JW, VC5. Second record of this subspecies for VC5.

**Calystegia x lucana** (*C. sepium* x *sylvatica*) Ditchat churchyard (ST625363), 22 Aug, JDS, VC6. First VC6 record since 1999.

**Camelina sativa** (Gold-of-Pleasure) Forche's Cross (ST064318), 23 Sept, frequent in arable field / set aside, GL & ITS, det. TCGR, VC5. Fifth record for VC5.

**Campanula glomerata** (Clustered Bellflower) Maperton, Quarry plantation (ST66902522), 23 Jul, 8 plants on species-rich bank close to hedge, E of road, JP, VC5. Second record for VC5 since AFS, for species which now has only 2 known sites in VC5.

**Carex divulsa** subsp. **leersii** (Leers' Sedge) Lower Monkton Farm / Steyning Farm (ST21934264), 20 Sept, 2 clumps in base of roadside hedge, RFitzG, conf. David Pearman, VC5; Odd Down (ST72466179), 21 Jul, 1 plant in clearing in Middle Wood, HJC & DEG, conf. Mike Porter, VC6.

Second record for VC5 and first since 1987; third post-2000 record for VC6.

**Chenopodium glaucum** (Oak-leaved Goosefoot) Steanbow, S of (ST57043953), 4 Sept, c.40 plants on former manure heap in corner of field, JP, VC6. First record for VC6 and Somerset since 1938.



*Chenopodium glaucum* at Steanbow, Pilton on former manure heap © Helena Crouch

\***Clematis montana** (Himalayan Clematis) Horsington, W of (ST69992363), 17 May, scrambling through shrubs along A357, JP, VC5. Third record for VC5 and Somerset.

\***Clematis viticella** (Purple Clematis) Congresbury (ST43416392), 23 Aug, in hedge at edge of cycle path, JDS, VC6. Second record for VC6 and Somerset.

\***Corydalis cheilanthifolia** (Fern-leaved Corydalis) Winsford (SS90563506), 15 Aug 2015, in wooded area, AS, VC5. Fifth record for VC5.

\***Cotoneaster hjelmqvistii** (Hjelmqvist's Cotoneaster) Nailsea & Backwell Station (ST476691), 19 Jul, 1 low shrub on road verge by station, EJMcd & CML, det. FJR, VC6. Third record for VC6 and Somerset.



***Dryopteris cambrensis*** (Narrow Male-fern) Highbury (ST68924997), 18 Mar, 1 plant on bank of stream in wooded valley, HJC & FJR; Stockhill, Mendip (ST55695164), 4 Jun, 1 large plant on N side of E-W track in NE part of wood, Alison Paul and BPS, VC6. Third and fourth records for VC6.

***Dryopteris x complexa*** (*D. filix-mas* x *D. affinis* sens. str.) Ham Woods (ST60044491), 14 Feb 2013, 1 plant on S side of track, near large *D. affinis*, HJC & FJR; Castle Orchard (ST77003196), 11 May 2014, 1 large plant on W bank of River Stour, in woodland, HJC & FJR; Ebbor Gorge (ST52154851, ST52154852, ST52494849), 5 Jun, 2 plants beside flush on N side of path from car park down through wood and 1 plant on E side of path leading up towards gorge, BPS, VC6. Third, fourth, fifth and subsequent records for VC6.

***Dryopteris x deweveri*** (*D. carthusiana* x *dilatata*) Shapwick Heath (ST42444080), 5 Jun, large clump beside bridge along Sweet Track path, BPS, conf. FJR, VC6. Fourth record for VC6 and Somerset.

***Euphrasia arctica* x *confusa*** Pinkery (SS72404049), 19 Jul, road verge on entrance to Pinkery, GL, conf. CM, VC5; Ubley Warren (ST50565540), 20 Jul, in grassland near W end of The Rakes, HJC, det. CM; Cheddar Gorge, S side (ST47655416), 26 Jul, in short grassland along grassy track in field, E of area of limestone pavement, HJC & MAW, det. CM; Cheddar Gorge, N side (ST46915432), 18 Aug, frequent on steep grassland slope above Landslip Quarry, HJC, det. CM, VC6. Second record for VC5 and second, third and fourth records for VC6.

***Euphrasia arctica* x *nemorosa*** Culbone Hill (SS83414727), 12 Jul; North Common (SS81794744), 28 Jul; Yenworthy Farm (SS80224861), 2 Aug, GL, conf. CM, VC5. Second, third and fourth records for VC5.

***Euphrasia confusa*** (Confused Eyebright) Kittuck Mead (SS80834301), 9 Jul 2015, small patch on grassy bank near to gate, GL det. CM, VC5. First record for VC5 since pre-2000. [Record reported in 2015 as first since pre-2000 was in fact the second]. Recorded in 2016 by GL at a further ten sites on Exmoor.

***Euphrasia nemorosa* x *confusa*** Yenworthy Farm (SS80224828), 2 Aug; Kinsford Gate

(SS73983664), 7 Aug; Pinkworthy (SS72174183), 10 Aug, in short unimproved grassland; Holcombe (SS76373554), 16 Aug, beside road in short grass; all GL, det. CM, VC5. Ubley Warren (ST50375538), 29 Jul 2014, many plants in short turf at W side of reserve, HJC, det. FJR; Cheddar Gorge, N side (ST46875417), 8 Jul, at base of cliff above road, opposite prominent rock, HJC, conf. CM; Redhill, N of (ST496641), 11 Jul, on nice limestone grassland slope, MAW, det. CM; Ubley Warren (ST50565543), 20 Jul, in heathland at N edge of reserve, HJC, conf. CM, all VC6. Second and subsequent records for VC5 and for VC6.

***Fallopia dumetorum*** (Copse Bindweed) Nailsea (ST46576948, ST46586948), 30 Aug, 5 patches of varying sizes over a distance of 10m, scrambling over bracken and scrub, EJMCD & CML, VC6. First record for VC6 since 1836 and a new hectad for this Nationally Scarce species.

***Gaudinia fragilis*** (French Oat-grass) Old Wood, Pylle (ST60423915), 7 May, small colony in open woodland, JP, conf, Tom Cope, VC6. New hectad record for a Nationally Scarce species.

***Hieracium eminentiforme*** (Exmoor Hawkweed) Honeymead Two Gates (SS80193924), 19 Jun, 14 plants on narrow road verge; Drybridge Combe (SS76013835), 19 Jun, 24 plants on moderately steep roadside bank, GL, det. TCGR, VC5. First records for VC5 and Somerset since AFS. Subsequently found by GL at 6 further sites on Exmoor, 3 with TCGR, all conf. TCGR.

***Hieracium glevense*** (Gloucester Hawkweed) Leigh Woods (ST561739, ST562737), 30 May, at bottom of Quarry 4 and on grassy slopes by Quarry 5, TCGR, VC6. First confirmed records for VC6 and Somerset since 1980, when a specimen was collected by CML in Leigh Woods (ST562735), at N end of saltmarsh beside the towpath, and determined as this species by David McCosh in 2012.

***Hieracium schmidtii*** (Schmidt's Hawkweed) Cheddar Gorge, N side (ST47855460), 27 May, 1 plant on cliffs above road; Cheddar Gorge, S side (ST46955421), 14 Jun, 1 plant in flower 4m up rock face, on nose of bend between top two car parks, HJC & TCGR, det. TCGR, VC6. First records for VC6 and Somerset since AFS. 10 further plants subsequently found in Cheddar Gorge by HJC, conf. TCGR from photographs.

**Lathyrus aphaca** (Yellow Vetchling) Wedmore Allotments (ST44024785), 16 Jun, 1 plant in the recorder's vegetable plot, appeared spontaneously, EJMcd, VC6. New hectad record for a Nationally Scarce species.

\***Matteuccia struthiopteris** (Ostrich Fern) Halswell House, Goathurst (ST24973377), 29 Sept, by ornamental spring head, RFitzG & EJMcd, VC5. Second site for VC5 and fourth for Somerset.

\***Melilotus indicus** (Small Melilot) Highridge Common (ST56406849), 31 Jul, 1 plant on disturbed verge at E edge of common, HJC & CML, VC6. First post-2000 record for VC6.



Melilotus indicus on disturbed edge of Highridge Common  
© Helena Crouch

\***Narcissus** 'Telemonius plenus' Edbrook, Cannington (ST235404), Mar 2014, 2 clumps in hedge at Edbrook Farm, RFitzG, VC5. Fifth record for VC5 and Somerset.

**Oenanthe fistulosa** (Tubular Water-dropwort) Moormill Bridge (ST73152233, ST73162231, ST73162232, ST73162233, ST73162234), 19 Aug, five small patches in damp meadow, HJC & FJR, VC5. New hectad record for this Vulnerable species.

**Oenothera x fallax** (*O. glazioviana* x *biennis*) Long Ashton (ST53627027), 17 Jul, 1 plant in Keads Lane, SRPG, VC6. Fourth site for VC6.

**Ornithopus perpusillus** (Bird's-foot) Nailsea/West End (ST44766952). 30 Sept, one large rosette on bare soil on edge of rubbish heap by Old Quarry Stables, EJMcd & CML, VC6. New hectad record for species which only has one other VC6 site with post-2000 records.

\***Oxalis dillenii** (Sussex Yellow-sorrel) Congresbury (ST435637), 26 Jun, in churchyard, EJMcd & RFitzG, VC6. Second record for VC6 and Somerset.

**Polystichum x bicknellii** (*P. aculeatum* x *setiferum*) West Wood (ST69982155), 24 Apr, a single plant in hedgebank on N side of road; Lattiford (ST697926040), 20 May, 1 plant in recently cleared shady ditch, JP, VC5. Second and third records for VC5.

\***Potentilla recta** (Sulphur Cinquefoil) Weston-super-Mare (ST343623), 2016, Jean Webb, VC6. First record for VC6 since AFS/FBR.

**Prunella x intermedia** (*P. laciniata* x *vulgaris*) Sutton Montis (ST62832496), 19 May, spread over many square metres above and around standing dead small tree, JP, VC5. Third site for VC5.

**Rorippa islandica** (Northern Yellow-cress) – Nailsea, West End (ST44796904), 30 Sept, several small sprawling plants in cracks of concrete forecourt of cottage, EJMcd & CML, det. TCGR; Blagdon Lake (ST509597, ST509606)), 4 Nov, on drawdown zone, Rupert Higgins & Nigel Milbourne, VC6. Third and fourth sites for VC6.

\***Rosa multiflora** (Many-flowered Rose) Lambridge, Bath (ST766665), 14 May 2011, mature bush, bird/mammal-sown, beside footpath through made grassland, RDR; Highbury (ST692495), 15 Jul 2015, 1 shrub along fence line on W side of road, HJC & Cam Valley Wildlife Group; Congresbury (ST43886379), 26 Jun, scrambling high in a hedge near the River Yeo, EJMcd & RFitzG, VC6. Second, third and fourth records for VC6.

**Rosa x dumetorum** (*Rosa canina* x *obtusifolia*) Lambridge, Bath (ST766664), 28 May 2011, 1 bush in remnant of abandoned pasture beside footpath, RDR; Frome, Rodden Manor



(ST79964762), 13 Oct, several plants in hedge-row by Rodden Brook, just SE of church, HJC & GHR, det. Roger Maskew, VC6. First and second record for VC6 and Somerset since *AFS/FBR*.

***Rubus scaber*** Ashcombe Plantation (SS77483977), 19 Aug, GL, ITS & RDR, det. RDR, VC5. Second record for VC5.

***Salix x forbyana*** (*S. cinerea x purpurea x viminalis*) East Huntspill (ST32814403), 29 Aug, 1 large bushy shrub/tree by roadside near Huntspill River, EJMCD, det. JW, VC6. Fourth record for VC6.

***Scandix pecten-veneris*** (Shepherd's-needle) Pitcombe (ST67753235), 29 May, 5 plants in flower/fruit along disused railway, in unusual closed turf with *Rhinanthus*, *Briza media* etc community, on flat centre of track, JP, VC6. New hectad record for this species which is Critically Endangered on the GB Red List and Endangered on the England Red List.

**\**Sisyrinchium striatum*** (Pale Yellow-eyed-grass) Bath, Lansdown Hill (ST73296772), 7 Dec, 1 plant on waste ground at S edge of playing field, HJC & DEG, VC6. Fifth record for VC6.

**\**Solanum physalifolium*** (Green Nightshade) Backwell Common (ST48656979), 30 Sept, several plants on heap of top soil, EJMCD & CML, VC6. Third record for VC6 and first since *AFS/FBR*.

***Sorbus porrigentiformis*** (Grey-leaved Whitebeam) Ubley Warren (ST50765532, ST50775531), 11 Aug, 1 multistemmed tree 3m tall, in fruit, growing from edge of low cliff, and 2 small trees (maybe only 1 plant) in fruit, growing from side of low cliff with 1 small tree growing from nearby rock outcrop, DEG det. TCGR & LH; Ebbor Gorge (ST52574857, ST52604859, ST52614859), 14 Sept, 4 plants in fruit growing out sideways from below cliff top, TCGR, LH & HJC, VC6. New hectad records for Nationally Scarce species.

**\**Symphoricarpos orbicularis*** (Coralberry) Enmore Castle (ST23653528), 30 Oct, naturalised by lake but probably planted, GL, RFitzG & EJMCD, VC5. Second record for VC5.

**\**Symphoricarpos x chenaultii*** (Pink Snowberry) Frome (ST76674858), 23 Feb, small patch on S side of A362 by gate, HJC & GHR; Frome (ST78834572), 25 Oct, large stand along E side of Feltham Lane, spread along verge outside over-

grown garden, HJC & GHR; Sedgemoor Services, southbound (ST359527), 22 Dec, amongst scrub on north bank of road, Ian Green, VC6. Second, third and fourth records for VC6.

**\**Tolmiea menziesii*** – Ashcombe Plantation (SS77343943), 15 Aug 2015, a few plants, AS, VC5. Second post-2000 record for VC5, updating one of only 2 known sites in VC5.

**\**Trachystemon orientalis*** (Abraham-Isaac-Jacob) North Cadbury, N of (ST63762821), 20 Mar, Small clump on W side of stream near water's edge, and at base of twin fallen alders 50m to N, probably washed downstream from a garden but in totally wild situation, JP, VC6. Fourth record for VC6.

***Trifolium glomeratum*** (Clustered Clover) Taunton (ST228253), 29 Jul, 1 fruiting plant, with *Lotus subbiflorus*, in open ground on recently remodelled road verge of new inner relief road, near road leading up to S side of Taunton station, alongside station carpark, SJL, VC5. An extraordinary record of this Nationally Scarce species.

**\**Vicia villosa*** (Fodder Vetch) Pipehouse (ST77635985), 4 Nov, several large plants in flower in new border outside development of new houses, with an array of other weeds amongst planted *Stachys lanata*, HJC & DEG, VC6. Second post-2000 record for VC6.



*Vicia villosa* at Pipehouse © Helena Crouch

**\**Vinca difformis*** (Intermediate Periwinkle) Edbrook, Cannington (ST238403), Mar 2014, hedge west of Upper Horn Hill, RFitzG; Hawkcombe (SS8845), 2014, GL; Porlock Community Allotments (SS8846), 2 Oct, in hedges around

allotments, GL, VC5. Third, fourth and fifth records for VC5.

***Viola canina*** subsp. ***canina*** (Heath Dog-violet) Ebbor Gorge NNR (ST52934875), 6 May, 12 plants in flower by footpath (West Mendip Way) through scrubby grassland at E edge of NNR, HJC & FJR, VC6. Second record for VC6 and third for Somerset since *AFS/FBR*.

## SRPG Membership and Contacts

Annual subscription is £8 payable in January of each year. Payment can be made by cheque or direct into SRPG account. Contact the treasurer Clive Lovatt (see below) for payment details.

Members attend meetings at their own risk. Field meeting leaders carry a list of emergency phone numbers so please contact Liz McDonnell if you have not completed a membership form, so that she has the telephone numbers of those to contact in case of illness or accident.

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