

# SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP

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



## Meeting Report



Recording at the base of Wellington Monument. Photo: Steve Parker

**15<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

**Wellington Monument (VC5)**

**Leader: Steve Parker**

**Report: Steve Parker**

This meeting was aimed at beginners rather than looking for rare plants. Five members were joined by a guest, Carolyn Ellis, to look at the grassland

habitats around the Wellington Monument and the mire grassland known as Castle Fields Reserve.

Walking from the National Trust car park toward the monument we could see that the major restoration work had almost been completed. The grassland around the monument is species rich, at the time of the visit the vegetation had not been cut, a sign asked visitor not to walk over the grass and we were happy to comply with this request. We spent an hour keying out some of the more frequent species

using “The Wildflower Key” and talking about how we go about recording, using the recording cards and the need for accurate grid references especially for rare species.

In the “Atlas Flora of Somerset” there is a reference to Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*) being “found near the base of Wellington Monument” in 1993. Karen Turvey remembered seeing the plant on the site about 20 years ago. She and Alastair Stevenson went to search the area where Karen had seen the plant. They returned some 15 minutes later having not found Moonwort, the grass was too long, and it was probably a bit late in the season. (After the field meeting Karen confirm the location with Tony Price, see map below). We hope to revisit next year to see if Moonwort still survives at this only known location on the Blackdown Hills.



Historic location of (*Botrychium lunaria*). Photo: Google Earth

Recording was going well so we had lunch before walking down hill on to Castle Fields, here we were greeted by a herd of cattle that were doing excellent work in grazing the species-rich mire. The grassland has many plants of Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*), Betony (*Betonica officinalis*), and Common Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*). Our small group walked across the grassland calling out the names of the plants they were finding. Linda Everton had walked down the hill and came back with Dyer’s Greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*). However, when we went to get a grid reference, it took 10 minutes of searching to relocate a very large patch of Dyer’s Greenweed which was fruiting well.

Returning up the steep hill we found a large bush of the hybrid Willow *Salix x multinervis* = Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) x Eared Willow (*Salix aurita*). A few of us then walked through the Beech *Fagus sylvatica* woodland, but this added very few species to the days list. On returning to the car park a total of 141 species had been recorded. All agreed a most

enjoyable day and it was good to be out botanising again.



Castle Fields SWT Reserve Photo: Steve Parker

## References

Green Paul R, Green Ian P and Crouch Geraldine A.  
The Atlas Flora of Somerset 1997