

# SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP

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



## Meeting Report



Admiring the colony of Slender Hare's-ear (*Bupleurum tenuissimum*). Photo © Simon Leach

### Sunday 6th August 2023, Wall Common (VC5)

**Leader: Steve Parker**

**Report: David Gibbs**

Wall common is an extensive area of saltmarsh, shingle bank and grazing marshes between Bridgwater Bay and the Steart Marshes Nature Reserve. The SRPG have visited Wall Common five times since it was formed (meetings in 2000, 2005, 2009, 2012 (with BSBI/ WFS) and 2018). Together with casual records from SRPG members 851 records have been amassed, the earliest from September 1965. Despite this the monad has only 215 taxa recorded since 2000 (in total 232 since 1900), but

only half of the monad is dry land (S. Parker pers.comm.)!

Seven SRPG members gathered in the small car park at Wall Common. Conditions were dry but rather windy and with some threatening dark clouds across the bay. We set off west along a gravel track just behind the sea wall. It was not long before we came across Slender Hare's-ear (*Bupleurum tenuissimum*) growing along the edge of the track at the base of the sea wall. The colony proved to be very extensive with dozens of plants, the best showing those that knew the site could remember.



Slender Hare's-ear (*Bupleurum tenuissimum*).  
Photo © Simon Leach

Even more cryptic was Hard-grass (*Parapholis strigosa*), growing on the track itself along with Lesser Sea-spurrey (*Spergularia marina*) and a tiny patch of Annual Pearlwort (*Sagina apetala*). The ditch on the landward side of the track was dominated by Sea Club-rush (*Bolboschoenus maritimus*) amongst which was growing a good colony of Parsley Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe lachenalii*), Sea-milkwort (*Lysimachia maritima* formerly *Glaux maritima*) and some very robust examples of Saltmarsh Rush (*Juncus gerardii*). A large patch of Common Fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*) in the ditch proved very attractive to a couple of Brown Argus (*Aricia agestis*). A little further on both Long-bracted Sedge (*Carex extensa*) and Distant Sedge (*Carex distans*) were found growing on the grassy bank of the sea wall and Sea Barley (*Hordeum marinum*) beside the track.

At lunchtime we found a little shelter in a dry drain, where we hoped to find Bulbous Foxtail (*Alopecurus bulbosus*). Unfortunately, none could be found but the hybrid with Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus* x *bulbosus* = *A. x plettkei*), last seen in 2012, was discovered by Simon in the bottom of the ditch.

After lunch we stopped to admire a couple of large patches of Strawberry Clover (*Trifolium fragiferum*) and compare the leaf veins with those of White Clover (*Trifolium repens*).



Strawberry Clover (*Trifolium fragiferum*).  
Photo © David Gibbs



White Clover (*Trifolium repens*) (below left) and Strawberry Clover (*Trifolium fragiferum*) (upper right). Photo © David Gibbs

With the day warming up and the sun occasionally appearing, we were distracted for a while by a very large of colony Bee Wolf (*Philanthus triangulum*) digging their tunnels in the sandy soil and even watched some coming in with captured Honeybees. As recently as the 1980s, this species was only known to have permanent colonies on the Isle of Wight (Falk 1991). Subsequently, in response to the warming climate, it has spread north as far as Yorkshire (BWARS).



Female Bee Wolf (*Philanthus triangulum*).  
Photo © Simon Leach

Towards the western edge of the monad was a colony of White Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*). Numerous plants were counted, most past their prime but with a few flowers remaining. Hiding deep inside some of these flowers were tiny black beetles which proved to be the pollen beetle (*Meligethes nanus*), a very rare species with few British records, and as far as I can find out only otherwise recorded in Somerset when I came across it on Wavering Down in 2001.

At one spot the Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) had been extensively galled. These proved to have been caused by a tiny mite (*Aceria galiobia*).



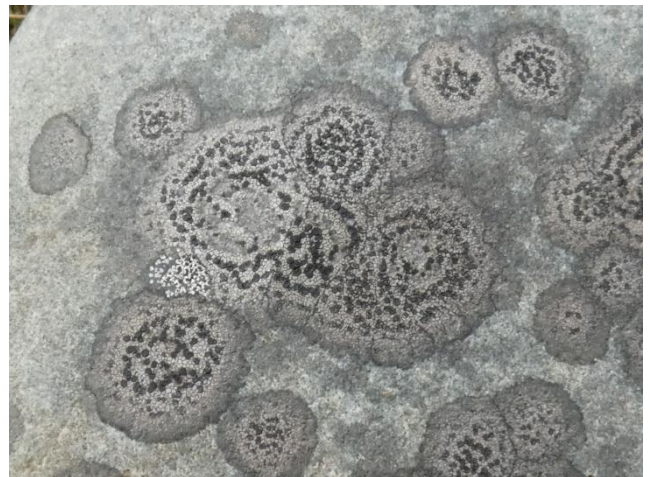
*Aceria galiobia* on Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*).  
Photo © David Gibbs

Arriving at the beach several plants of Yellow Horned-poppy (*Glaucium flavum*) were found, unfortunately no longer in flower. Also here were two small, non-flowering plants of Hairy Buttercup (*Ranunculus sardous*).



Hairy Buttercup (*Ranunculus sardous*).  
Photo © Nicky Davies

On the beach we noticed that many of the cobbles were very attractively patterned by lichen. This proved to be (*Rhizocarpon reductum*).



(*Rhizocarpon reductum*). Photo © David Gibbs

We made our way back across the fields without once getting rained on, apparently the downpours stayed in Weston-super-Mare!