

SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP

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



Meeting Report



A view from Cadbury Castle Photo © Steve Parker

Saturday 29th July, Cadbury Castle, South Cadbury (VC5)

Leaders: Steve Parker

Report: Steve Parker

On a bright sunny day, the group gathered in the small car park at South Cadbury to walk to Cadbury Castle. This Iron Age hill fort had been visited before by the group. The steep ramparts are known to be home to a range of interesting plants including our target for the day, Hybrid Self-Heal (*Prunella x intermedia*). Today we planned to map this plant's distribution.



Hybrid Self-Heal © Steve Parker

Once the group had climbed up to the castle the search began. We knew roughly where a single plant had been discovered by Ellen McDouall back in 2014. The ramparts have a rich calcareous flora, they are very steep and hard to clamber across. After a few minutes came a cry “found it”. The grid reference was recorded. Then came a second shout and then a third, this rare hybrid was more common than we first thought. For the rest of the day the plant was found in multiple locations, nearly all on the thin soils of the ramparts with others on small outcrops within the interior of the monument. During the day over 40 individuals of the hybrid were found and recorded in seven locations. This site supports the largest population in VC5.

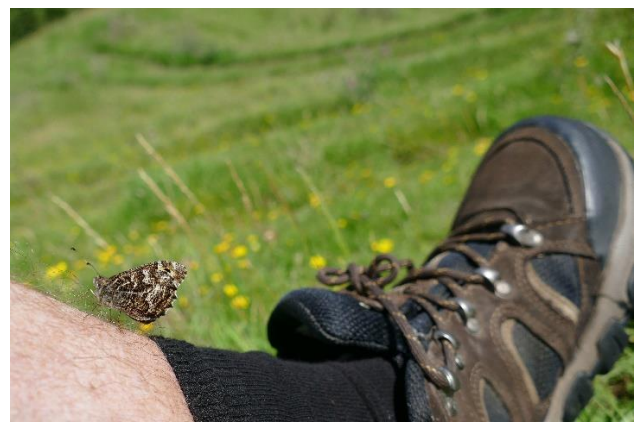


The middle of South Cadbury Hill Fort © Steve Parker



Recording the ramparts of the castle Photo © Steve Parker

Moving around the site some taller vegetation was visited. Here a large patch of Cotton Thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*) was mixed with scattered plants of Twiggy Mullein *Verbascum virgatum* and Hound’s-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*). Insects were also recorded, including a very friendly Greyling (*Hipparchia semele*) which settled on the VC5 recorder’s leg!



Greyling butterfly making friends with Steve Parker’s leg © Steve Parker

After lunch we continued our botanical survey of the site, recording nearly 130 plant species during the trip. The wooded sides of the hill fort have a few veteran Oak (*Quercus robur*) but access to this woodland was impossible. As we were about to leave the fort another Hybrid Self-Heal was found growing by the site entrance. A great trip on an interesting site.



SRPG members admiring a veteran oak © Steve Parker