

SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP

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



Meeting Report

Sunday 14th July 2024, Britty Common (VC5)

Leaders: Karen Turvey, Linda Everton & Steve Parker

Report: Steve Parker

Thirteen SRPG members attended the meeting which started at Staple Hill car park, a very popular dog walking venue. The aim of the meeting was to record the mires on the northern slope of the Blackdown Hills. Setting off from the car park the group walked downhill to the bottom of the slope where we divided into two groups, one going to the mire on Mount Fancy, led by Linda Everton and Karen Turvey, while the other group continued on to Britty Common.

Mount Fancy is a Butterfly Conservation reserve and has a relatively large mire which supports a good population of Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and a small patch of Marsh St John's-wort (*Hypericum elodes*) and Marsh Valerian (*Valeriana dioica*).

The mire is surrounded by scrub and there are signs that the scrub is increasing on the mire, the ground conditions must make access for scrub management extremely difficult, with grazing animals finding it impossible to have much impact on the mire vegetation.

The track below the mire runs with water, making it a habitat for plants such as Round-leaved Crowfoot (*Ranunculus omiophyllus*), Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*) and Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*). Drier grassland has a selection of Eyebrights including English Eyebright (*Euphrasia anglica*) with carpets of Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and some scattered plants of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*).



Exploring the Britty Mire © Steve Parker

The second group walked further along the track to Britty Common. This area had been cleared of conifers by the Neroche Project which had started in 2005 removing trees and introducing cattle grazing. The site has shown some signs of recovery.

The small mire has Pale Butterwort (*Pinguicula lusitanica*). On an earlier visit in May the leaders had recorded seven plants, on this visit we counted forty plants, many of them in flower. This is a considerable increase on earlier counts where just one specimen had been seen in the past.

The mire has a good range of sedges with Pale Sedge (*Carex pallescens*), Common Sedge (*C. nigra*), Carnation Sedge (*C. panicea*) and Flea Sedge (*C. pulicaris*). It also supports Lesser Skullcap (*Scutellaria minor*) and Marsh Violet (*Viola palustris*). Like the Mount Fancy mire, Marsh St John's-wort is also scattered across the wet parts of Britty. On a patch of very muddy ground, we recorded a small colony of Leafy Rush (*Juncus foliosus*). One of the plants was collected and later sent to Mike Wilcox the BSBI referee for rushes. Mike had requested samples of this species to be sent to him.



Leafy Rush (*Juncus foliosus*). © Steve Parker

As part of the Neroche Project, there was a major investment in a walking route along the hill. This is a well-made and very wide path, with ditches on either side. These ditches intercept the water draining from the mire. Along the edge of these ditches there were many stands of the very beautiful Wood Horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*) with Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*).



Wood Horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*) © Steve Parker

At lunch, the two groups met up again and discussed what they had found. Karen Turvey had a map showing the mire that was spared from coniferization in the early 1960s. With the aid of this we were able to rediscover a small very wet area that has Bogbean and very large tussocks of Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*). Access was difficult so only limited recording could be carried out. Thanks to everyone who helped with the recording of this interesting location.