

SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP

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



Meeting Report

Sunday 15th June Lilstock (VC5)

Leaders: Steve Parker and Ro FitzGerald

Report: Steve Parker

Meeting in the car park close to Ro FitzGerald's house on a lovely sunny day, Ro explained the plan for the day. First to the beach to search for maritime plants, in and around the old harbour and then after lunch on to a near by arable field that had a range of interesting plants. This was a return trip to Lilstock, the SRPG had visited in 2014 and the area has been well botanised over many years by local botanists. The monad has 250 species recorded, so our chances of making new discoveries was low.



Lilstock Harbour. © Steve Parker

The beach at Lilstock is shingle backed by low cliffs. In the past there was an attempt to build a harbour, today only the remnants of this structure survive, the mouth now blocked by the shingle. The base of the old harbour has developed a saltmarsh flora and as a small population of Sea Barley (*Hordeum marinum*). On the shingle Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) was flowering well, previously the SRPG had recorded these plants as the subspecies *maritimum*, however we could not confirm this on the current meeting.

On leaving the harbour we searched the narrow strip of grassland at the top of the beach here Bird's-foot Clover (*Trifolium ornithopodioides*) was flowering, this was growing alongside Bulbous Foxtail (*Alopecurus bulbosus*) with scattered plants of Slender Hare's-ear (*Bupleurum tenuissimum*) which had only just germinated with only the leaves visible. At this point we were at the edge of the monad and so we took the opportunity to see if these rare species were in the adjacent 1km square, which they were.

After lunch, Ro directed us to a privately owned ex-arable field closer to Lilstock. This large field had once been intensive arable; the land owner was restoring the area; to do this there had obviously sown a "wild flower" seed mix.



Ex-arable field Lilstock. © Steve Parker

Plants found growing here included small populations of Fodder Vetch (*Vicia villosa*), Corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*) and Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*). In such a situation it is extremely difficult to judge what is sown and what is naturally occurring in the field.

The group walked through the field calling out their findings, small groups discussing the plants, was it a

true native or something introduced, maybe even a continental variety. As I say a difficult problem in what and how to record.

The field had some very common arable “weeds” such as Black-grass (*Alopecurus myosuroides*), Many-seeded Goosefoot (*Lipandra polysperma*) and Scented Mayweed (*Matricaria chamomilla*). Scattered amidst these common plants were some less common arable plants with a small number of flowering Sharp-leaved Fluellen (*Kickxia elatine*) and the very beautiful Grass vetchling (*Lathyrus nissolia*).

A ditch running along the northern boundary of the field was very badly polluted with runoff from the adjacent farmyard. However, the ditch on the eastern boundary did support a few aquatic plants including Horned Pondweed (*Zannichellia palustris*).

We all thanks Ro for her help in leading the group and showing us some interesting species.