

SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP

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



Meeting Report

Sunday 6th July , Whitstone Post, Exmoor (VC5)

Leaders: Steve Parker, Fred Rumsey

Report: Steve Parker

Exmoor is such a wonderful area to botanise, sadly the SRPG visits infrequently because it is a long way from many of our members; we only organise one or two trips a year. On this occasion we had two targets to find, the first Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*) has been well recorded, the other Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*) which was last recorded in 2007 by John Poingdestre. The weather was good for Exmoor while the meeting point at Whitstone Post car park, provided magnificent views over Porlock Bay to Hurlstone Point.

The habitat was that typical Exmoor with extensive heathland with flowering Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*) with scattered Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*). Sheep grazing created a grassy mosaic of dry acid grassland and heathland. With Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*) and the remnants of Early Hair-grass (*Aira caryophyllea*).



Photographing the roadside flora © Steve Parker

From the meeting point the group walked through the heathland down to New Road, here Hay-scented Buckler-fern (*Dryopteris aemula*) was spotted by Fred Rumsey, alongside this track a series of springs had resulted in some nice species-rich mire communities, which supported Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*) and Carnation sedge (*Carex panicea*) with Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) and Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*). Careful searching by the group discovered the wonderful tiny blue flowers of Ivy-leaved Bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*) and also Cornish Moneywort (*Sibthorpia europaea*).



Exmoor Heathland © Steve Parker

After lunch we set out to record the Chamomile. The location is well known and there was little difficulty in finding the Chamomile flowering well at the top of Porlock Hill in a grassy area by a seat, the plant was first recorded in this location by Caroline Giddens of the Exmoor Natural History Society in 1991.

We now made our way back, Fred Rumsey finding and identifying two Eyebrights *Euphrasia confusa* and *E. confusa x micrantha* in the short grassland.



Fred Rumsey describing characteristics of Hay-scented Buckler-fern
©Steve Parker

Our next target was Moonwort, this was last seen in short grassland, we had a good grid reference made by John Poingdestre in 2007. However, once at the location it appeared that Gorse had spread and the habitat now looked unsuitable, a search was made but sadly the Moonwort could not be relocated.

Back at the car park we managed to have ice-creams to celebrate another great day looking at the wonderful flora of Exmoor.