

# SOMERSET RARE PLANTS GROUP

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



## Meeting Report



**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September, Winsford Hill, (VC5)**

**Leaders: Steve Parker**

**Report: Steve Parker**

This was a second trip to Exmoor for the SRPG in 2025, on arrival the weather was awful with heavy rain. However, the rain soon stopped and conditions were fine for the rest of the meeting. There were eight members of the group, the reason for the meeting was to update records for the monad SS8635. The area had been visited by Caroline Giddens with members of the Exmoor Natural History Society in 2006. Graham Lavender had recently recorded some of the more uncommon species. From the area where the cars were parked we recorded in a dry acid grassland with grasses including Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), Heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*), Silver Hair-grass (*Aira caryophyllaea*) and Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*), herbs included Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Heath Speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*) with scattered Gorse bushes with both (*Ulex europaeus*) and (*U. gallii*) and their hybrid. Some of the scattered Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)

trees supported a fine growth of fruticose lichens (*Usnea* species). The dry heathland was typical for Exmoor with extensive Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) with the occasional Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*). A few small wet areas had Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), with low-growing Water-purslane (*Lythrum portula*) covering the peaty ground.



Heavy going © Steve Parker

Crossing the road, we headed towards Little Ash Combe. Before getting in to the combe proper there was a cry of triumph as the tiny pale blue flowers of Ivy-leaved Bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*) were discovered. This find turned out to be the first record for the monad. We found at least two largish populations. There were scattered plants of Eyebright *Euphrasia confusa* and *E. officinalis subsp. anglica* both identified by Fred Rumsey. At lunchtime It was hard to find a dry place to sit; we were more or less forced to site on the side of Little Ash Combe on very wet ground. But at least we had a good view.



Lichen covered trees. © Steve Parker

The combe proved to be relatively steep sided, with extensive Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and some bramble (*Rubus sp*) cover, climbing down the combe was hard work due to the ground being very wet indeed. This mire was somewhat overgrown but did have Carnation sedge (*Carex panicea*) and Star Sedge *C. echinata* with some Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*). There were small patches of Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) with Marsh Violet (*Viola palustris*) in the wettest parts.

From the mire we returned to the road and botanised along the roadside grassland, here there were a number of more common plants with Daisy (*Bellis perennis*) and the leaves of Lady's Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*). It was a good day on Exmoor, the weather turned out good and we updated many records, many of the species now in the Red Lists. The total count for the monad is now 155 species.