

BBS Exeter AGM 2024

There will be a series of field meetings across Devon on Thursday and Friday as well as an excursion to the Heathercombe estate in Dartmoor on the Sunday. For each day, we will meet at 9.15am at the car park off Streatham Road below Reed Hall (SX91549 93916; see attached map) on the Exeter University campus where people can agree which meeting to go to and hopefully share lifts. For those staying outside Exeter, you are welcome to go straight to the meeting car parks (details below) at 10am. Please bring pack lunches and drinks, appropriate clothing, etc. for a full day in the field. We will aim to finish the meetings at 4pm.

Thursday 5th September

Great Haldon Woods

Leader Mark Pool. Mobile no. 07787 955 455.

Meet at Buller's Hill car park (SX 8835 8481). This is the main car park for the Haldon Forest Park and has all the usual facilities, but it's not cheap (£6.50 for up to 4 hours, £9 for all day); car sharing is therefore recommended! Fuller details can be found on the Forestry England website at www.forestryengland.uk/haldon-forest-park. The geology is relatively simple; the higher parts are made of Greensand covered by a capping of clay-with-flints, while the Permo-Triassic "Red Devon" sandstone outcrops beneath the Greensand. Much of the area is devoted to commercial conifer plantations, but there are significant patches of deciduous trees as well. The area has a good variety of bryophyte species, but not (as far as is known) many rarities. A notable exception is *Kurzia sylvatica*, which was recorded there (for only the second time in South Devon) in 2020; at least one fruiting colony of *Sematophyllum substrumulosum* was also recorded during the same visit). Some of the stream gullies can be boggy in parts and some paths can be muddy after rain, but generally speaking stout shoes or walking boots should be adequate footwear. Ticks are likely to be present but shouldn't be a serious problem if exposed skin is kept to a minimum. Participants are advised to observe any warning notices and to beware of traffic; many of the tracks are used by off-road cyclists as well as forestry vehicles. All in all, the visit promises to be worthwhile, particularly for beginners; here's hoping for good weather!

River Dart and Holne Woods

Leader: Sharon Pilkington. Mobile no. 07801 627449.

The Dart is one of the largest Dartmoor rivers and its bouldery channel and ancient woodland slopes are very rich in bryophytes. Its mid-reaches support a large population of the nationally rare *Fissidens serrulatus*, which we will certainly see, together with many oceanic species. *Fissidens polyphyllus*, *Isoetecium holtii*, *Rhynchostegium alopecuroides* and *Porella pinnata* are also known from the river. Nearby, Newbridge Marsh supports rich fen-like vegetation and is a known site for *Sphagnum teres*, *Sibthorpia europaea* (Cornish Moneywort) and *Wahlenbergia hederacaea* (Ivy-leaved Bellflower).

There is a pay and display car park and public toilets at Newbridge, near Holne at SX711708. It can get very busy, so please try to car share if possible. It is most easily accessed from Ashburton, a couple of miles to the east. When leaving the A38 from the direction of Exeter, take the second turning to Ashburton B3352 (signed Princetown, Two Bridges and the River Dart Country Park). The first is also signed Ashburton B3352 but will tediously take you through the town centre. From

Ashburton, follow brown signs to the River Dart Country Park (warning: narrow lanes). Drive on past the entrance to the country park for another mile and the entrance to Newbridge car park is just west of an old (and very narrow) bridge over the River Dart.



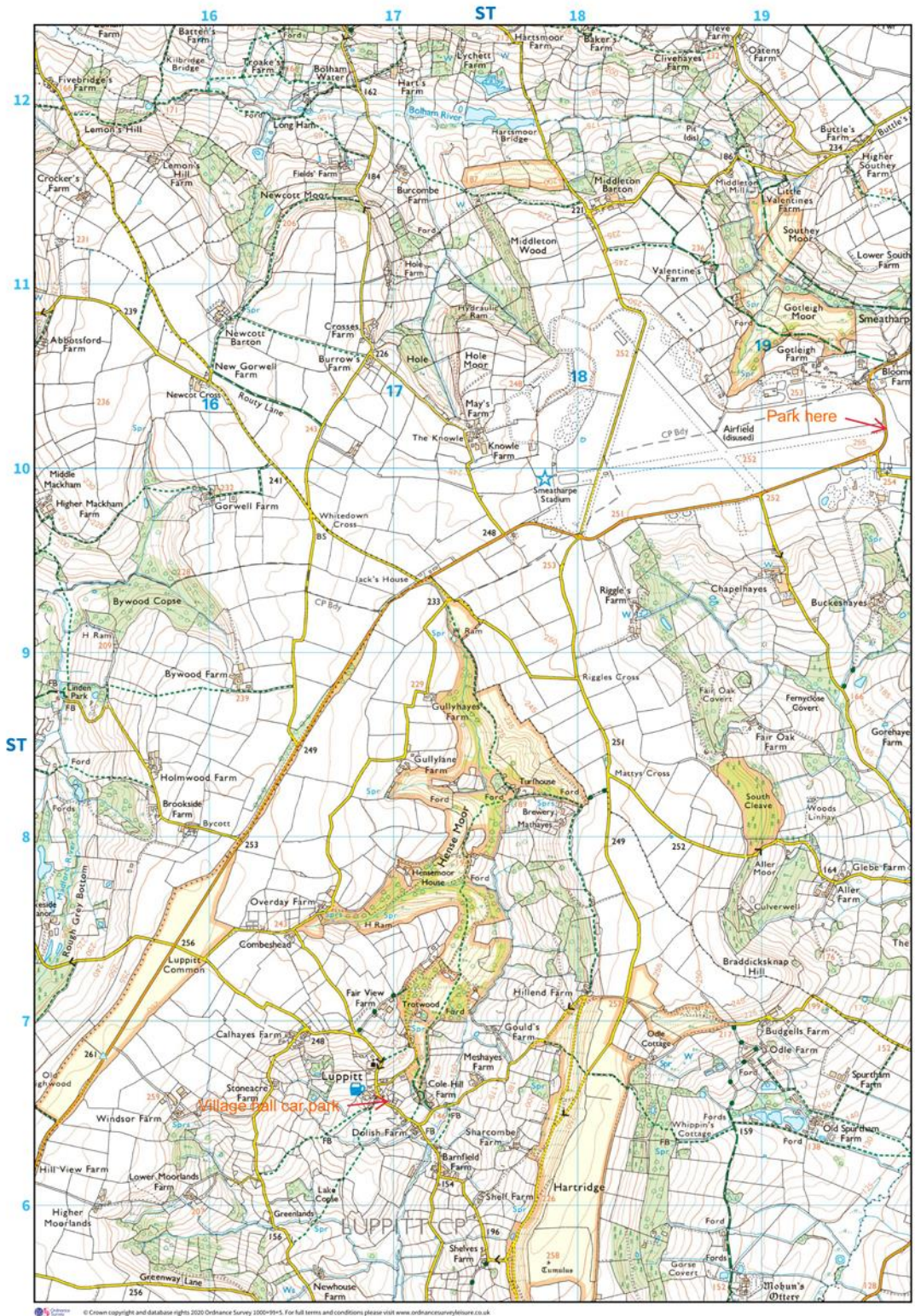
Blackdown Hills (Gotleigh Moor in morning and Hense Moor in afternoon).

Leader Andrew Branson. Mobile no. 07483 809150

Meet at large layby off minor road at eastern end of Smeatharpe disused airfield (ST19661023, see photo below). If you are coming from Exeter, take the junction off the A30 just east of Honiton signposted to Poole, Dorchester and Honiton (A35) and then take minor road right (north) on slip road signposted to Luppitt. Smeatharpe is about 4 miles north of Luppitt.



The common lands of the Blackdown Hills in the east of Devon have been little explored over the decades, but have a diverse and interesting flora. The flat-topped Greensand hills are cut with several small rivers and many springs and flushes where the permeable Greensand meet the Keuper Marl. Here there a rich mosaic of communities, some of which are quite basic in nature. In the morning, we will visit Gotleigh Moor, which is part of a larger SSSI and represents one of the best examples of the habitat. We would hope to see some good mire communities, with a range of *Sphagnum* species, including *S. inundatum* and *S. subsecundum*, as well as members of the 'brown moss' community such as *Campylium stellatum* and *Scorpidium revolvens*. There are some good open scrub and trees for epiphytes. But who knows what we may find? After lunch we will move on to nearby Hense Moor, at the edge of the village of Luppitt. This is an extensive complex of common land and is also an SSSI. We intend to explore the southern part of the area where there is some nice areas of wet heath, woodland and scrub, with a good area of bog (one of the few sites in Devon for *Drosera anglica* Great Sundew), none of which has been explored for bryophytes in recent years. If you are unable to make the morning trip to Gotleigh, we intend to meet at the car park outside Luppitt village hall (ST16940659) at 2pm and walk from there. Wellies are essential for the boggy parts of the meeting.



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Friday 6th September

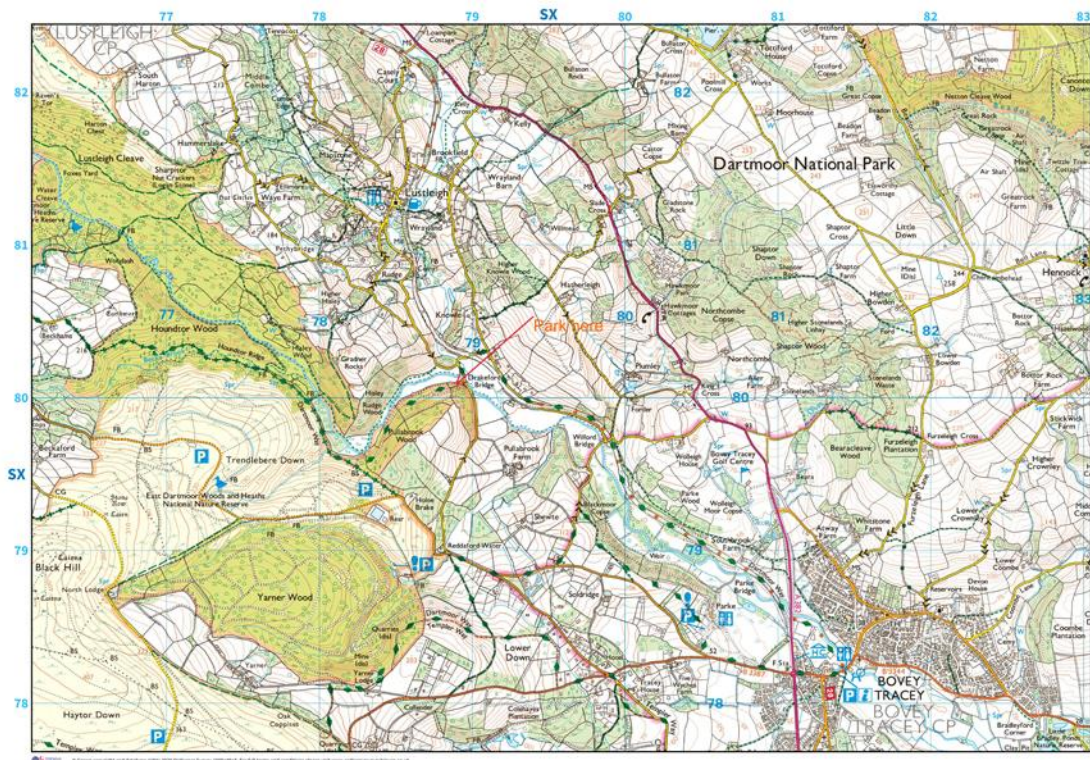
Bovey Valley

Leader: Sharon Pilkington. Mobile no. 07801 627449

The River Bovey runs off Dartmoor through a valley clothed in ancient oak woodland. Its habitats are varied and it is rich in bryophytes, including the only known population of *Bryoerythrophyllum campylocarpum* in England. The river and woodland flushes support large populations of *Porella pinnata* and *Trichocolea tomentella* and one of Devon's few inland populations of *Cephaloziella turneri* was found recently on the bank of a track. On our walk through the wood we are also likely to see *Grimmia hartmanii* (a rare species in SW England), *G. lisae*, *Lophocolea fragrans* and *Polytrichastrum alpinum*.

Please note that we may walk 3-4 miles in total and some of the paths are rocky and uneven, so a good level of fitness and stout walking boots will be necessary.

There is free parking in the Woodland Trust car park at Drakeford Bridge south of Lustleigh at SX78898010. Please share cars where possible and park considerately as it is a popular site and can get busy. The easiest way to get there is from Bovey Tracey. From Exeter direction, take the A38 south and leave at the main Bovey Tracey exit onto the A382. In Bovey Tracey, turn left onto the B3387 (signed to Haytor, Widecombe and Becky Falls). Keep following the brown signs to Becky Falls (narrow roads!) and after about 1.5 miles turn right onto another narrow lane, signed towards Lustleigh. The car park is about 1 mile along this lane, with the entrance on the left just before a bridge over the river.



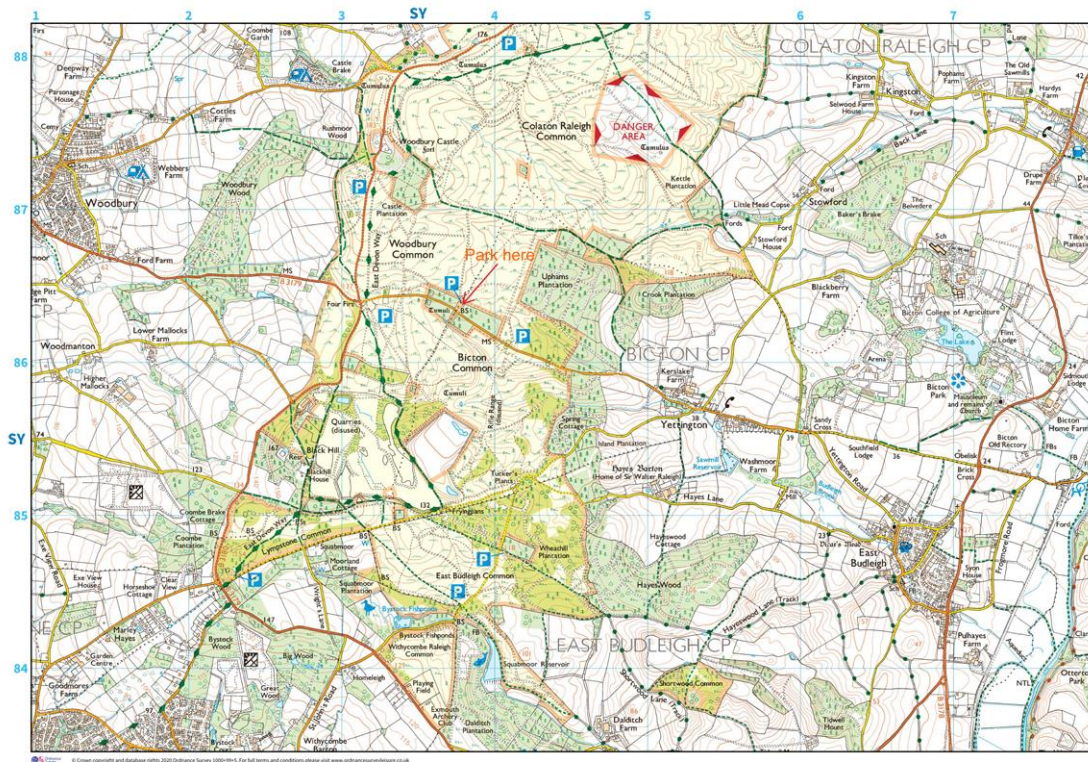
Pebblebed Heaths NNR

Leader Andrew Branson. Mobile no. 07483 809150

Pebblebed Heaths NNR is one of the most recent National Nature Reserves to be declared and incorporates the largest area of lowland heath in Devon. Much of the NNR is part of the Clinton Devon Estate and is managed with other owners including the RSPB and Devon Wildlife Trust. It

includes large blocks of dry heath, with wet heath and mires along the valley sides and bottoms. It stretches from Venn Ottery in the north to the Otter Estuary at Budleigh Salterton. The wetlands include areas of M16 *Erica tetralix* - *Sphagnum compactum* wet heath and M14 *Schoenus nigricans* - *Narthecium ossifragum* mire communities. The latter community has a restricted range in the UK and is found from Cornwall to the New Forest. We will be exploring the heathland and mires of Bicton Common and should find a good range of wetland species, including *Sphagnum* and associated hepatics. *Odontoschisma francisci* was found recently on a nearby bank. Wellies are recommended. If enough people want to see the rare *Tortula solmsii* we can also visit the Otter Estuary at Budleigh Salterton later in the afternoon.

There is free parking at the Model Airfield car park (SY03764 86366) off the minor road to Yettington east off the B3180 which runs from south from the A3052 Exeter road at Half Way House to Budleigh Salterton.



Saturday 7th

AGM Reed Hall

Sunday 8th

Heathercombe, west of Manaton, Dartmoor

Leaders Lionel Pike and Mark Pool. Mobile no. 07787 955 455

Firmly on the Dartmoor granite, Heathercombe is a valley immediately east of the open moorland of the East Dartmoor SSSI, centred on two old longhouses which sit at 320m altitude. Most of the slopes are recently replanted broadleaf and conifer plantations, the interest being largely at the

bottom of the valley where there is a mixture of gardens, meadows, and woodland (the oldest trees dating from the late Victorian era).

The variety of habitats means the valley has a reasonably diverse bryoflora, with around 220 taxa currently known from it. Notable species include *Porella cordaeana* and *Heterocladium wulfsbergii* growing along the stream, and *Andreaea rupestris*, *Racomitrium sudeticum*, and *Glyphomitrium daviesii* growing together at 445m at the top of the exposed granite boundary wall - the latter not having been seen in southern England for over a century before its discovery at this spot.

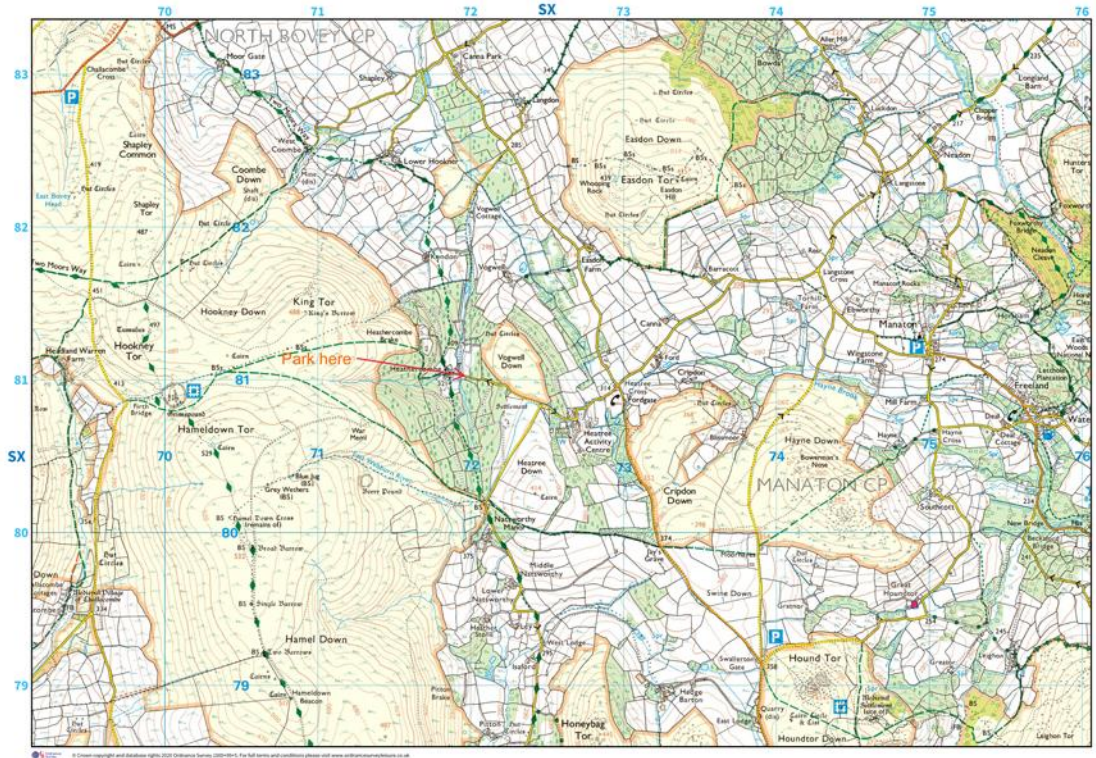
Perhaps the most interesting habitat present is the network of sandy paths and open forestry rides, which feature a number of locally rare species such as *Blasia pusilla*, *Fossombronia incurva*, *Riccia subbifurca* s.s. and its 'new' relative/segregate *R. warnstorffii*, *Campylopus subulatus*, and *Bryoerythrophyllum ferruginascens*. This habitat is shared with possibly record-altitude populations of *Anthoceros punctatus* and *Phaeoceros laevis*. It should on the other hand be noted that Heathercombe's woodland areas have only a very limited oceanic flora, perhaps in part due to the dense canopy (mostly Beech etc.). One notable exception is *Colura calyptrifolia*, which grows on many exposed Rowans on the moorland edge.

From Heathercombe, one also has direct access to the open moorland to the west. Just outside the boundary there are typical moorland streams and flushes (some also show slight basic influence, with e.g. *Scorpidium revolvens*). Going uphill, depending on the direction one will either come to King Tor, a granite outcrop with a colony of *Douina ovata*, or Hameldown, the highest point in the area at 530m with some rocks and boggy areas amid the dwarf shrub heath.

The terrain at the valley bottom is fairly gentle, but as one might expect the hilly moorland is more challenging should anybody wish to explore this. The more interesting hillsides are very steep indeed! Wellington boots are advised for any who would like to venture into wetter ground.

Meet in the large car park which is on the left as you go down into the valley to Heathercombe, just before reaching the bottom (SX72028099). Directions: For those coming from the south, the most straightforward way to get there is to start in Bovey Tracey, then go via Haytor, Hound Tor, and Heatree Cross. Starting at the Bovey Tracey fire station roundabout, you go west following the B3387 past Parke and into the national park, and at the subsequent junction about 500m later turn left to follow the B3387 towards Haytor (one could alternatively continue down the right fork, which reaches Heathercombe via Manaton, but this involves more narrow lanes). Continue to follow the B3387 onto the open moor, continuing on past Haytor, until finally reaching the signed turnoff for Hound Tor and Manaton on the right (SX736766), which should be taken (again, one could alternatively continue following the B3387 and go via Widecombe, but with more unnecessary narrow lanes). Follow this road, passing Hound Tor (watch out for black sheep hiding in shadows) and continuing in the direction of Moretonhampstead and Chagford, and then passing Jay's Grave, until reaching the crossroads (Heatree Cross, SX729809). At the crossroads, turn left following the sign for Heathercombe and Natsworthy.

Continue past Heatree Activity Centre and up the hill, following the signs for Heathercombe at the top of the hill by going straight ahead. This will take you down into the valley, and the car park is on the left as you near the bottom.



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