



Examining *Bazzania trilobata*

Eridge Rocks, East Sussex (VC 14)

30 November 2014

Only a few miles from the centre of Tunbridge Wells, Eridge Rocks is an extraordinarily special site, just tucked inside East Sussex and managed by [Sussex Wildlife Trust](#). Within the 40 hectare woodland a line of sandstone cliffs, some 10m high, runs towards the Broadwater Warren RSPB reserve, and is home to a famous collection of bryophytes, especially hepatics, most very unusual in the south east.

Given the range and number of unfamiliar plants we were due to see, Tom Ottley led us on a fascinating and initially rather brisk excursion, which included some clambering up and around the cliffs from the moment we left the car park.

The first stop immediately illustrated the richness of the site as Tom pointed out the day's first patch of *Dicranum scottianum*, with much attendant *Barbilophozia attenuata* and *Odontoschisma denudatum*. Some metres further on, the rocks were coated in the alien *Orthodontium lineare*, though in a slightly more sheltered spot nearby a small number of *Orthodontium gracile* can still be seen, mercifully still surviving here since William Wilson first found it at Eridge in the 1840s.

BBS south-east group: meeting report



Dicranum scottianum

Barely had we left that rarity than we saw another of the site's specialities, *Calypogeia integristipula*, and a further colony of *Dicranum scottianum* complete with capsules, which Tom was also pleased to find, as this species was looking precarious here a couple of years ago. Other, more familiar, inhabitants of the sandrock were present too, and included the pioneer *Tetraphis pellucida*, and *Lepidozia reptans*, plus *Cephalozia bicuspidata* and *C. connivens*. Alongside these, we had the opportunity to compare *Cephalozia lunulifolia* and *C. catenulata*. Further along the cliffs Howard Wallis and Tom drew our attention to the finer points of *Kurzia sylvatica*, *Lophozia ventricosa* and *Harpanthus scutatus*.

Eridge isn't just known for its bryophytes, and David Streeter paused to show us *Hymenophyllum tunbrigense* (Tunbridge filmy fern), as well as the lichens *Cladonia incrassata* and *Bunodophoron melanocarpum*, the latter particularly noteworthy in the south east.

A jogger stopped to find out what everyone was looking at, and we hope she may remember the splendid wall of *Bazzania trilobata*. Nearby was also found *Campylopus fragilis* with its pale leaf bases and broken leaves, and *Syntrichia latifolia*.

Towards the end of the outcrop we finally uncovered *Scapania gracilis*, and a greater number of colonies of *Scapania umbrosa* than have previously been known at the site. Tom noted that these are of particular interest since the species seems to have declined in the Ardingly area and Eridge is now a very important site for it in the south east. One of the last records for the day was *Nowellia curvifolia*, growing unusually on the sandrock.



Odontoschisma denudatum

In general, Tom observed that the rocks are looking their best since he first visited them 30 years ago. There is little doubt that the wetter weather we have experienced over the past few years is very beneficial to the sandrock bryophytes.

BRAD SCOTT