

WESSEX BRYOLOGY GROUP

Asham Wood and Westdown Quarry, East Mendip (Somerset VC6)

15th February 2009

Leader: Sharon Pilkington

In the morning five of us headed into the northern part of Asham Wood. This is an extensive block of ancient ash-maple woodland in the eastern Mendip Hills. The main attraction of this part of the wood was a stream and associated flushed ground in the woodland. The high humidity and clean air was immediately apparent from the luxuriant growth of epiphytes such as *Cryphaea heteromalla*. Trees close to the stream supported much *Lejeunea cavifolia* and sheets of *Homalia trichomanoides* at their base, along with mats of *Neckera complanata*. Further along the stream a pronounced calcareous flush was dominated by *Palustriella commutata*, along with *Fissidens adianthoides* and *Plagiomnium affine*. *Hookeria lucens* was found around the bases of some trees in this area but unfortunately there was no sign of its frequent associate, the 'hairy liverwort' *Trichocolea tomentella*.



One of Asham's famous stoggles

After lunch we explored a quite different habitat, in a disused limestone quarry along the edge of Asham Wood. Though degraded in places by the activities of motorcyclists, the floor of the quarry provided good acrocarp pickings. Within a few metres of the road we had found a bewildering array of small species, including *Aloina aloides*, *Encalypta streptocarpa*, *Barbula convoluta*, *Bryum klingraefii*, *Dicranella varia* and *Trichostomum crispulum*. Some *D. vinealis* was also found, its bright green shoots contrasting with the brown older leaves below. An old track through the quarry floor supported typical pleurocarps, most notably sheets of *Ditrichum gracile*, resembling green fur.

When we had tired of squinting at very small plants we explored some of the rocky woodland on the slopes of the quarry. Old stoggles (a peculiar local form of coppice) were frequent and provided a locus for *Anomodon viticulosus*. Limestone crags in the woodland looked like hanging gardens, festooned with curtains of *Neckera crispa* and *Porella platyphylla*. Shady crevices supported *Rhynchostegiella tenella* and *Mnium stellare*.

Sharon Pilkington