

## **A whole new look at the flora of the granite tramway**

I have joined a number of walks organised by Granite Elements, the Parishscape Project, to uncover the fascinating landscape of the tramway, from art to birds to land management. This one on flora led by the extremely erudite Albert from Natural England made us all look very carefully at the tiny plants we walk on and the grasses we ignore. We spent time peering at the sexual habits of grasses, the Bents, Fescues and Yorkshire Fog - and was there one called Stripey Pyjamas or was that my overheated imagination?

We started on moorland near Haytor on a bright day with pods of rain drifting across the marvellous view of an English landscape that many visitors come to see. We slowly travelled down the hillside noting that the moorland with its hard pressed vegetation and outcrops of gorse (and I now know the difference between Western Gorse and European Gorse!) started turning into pioneer woodland with Birch, Rowan and Holly and the bramble thickets that are a good habitat for birds. We peered under the bracken to see the violets that feed the Fritillaries and then moved on down to the rich woodland with its great oak trees - and identified the peduncles on *Quercus Robur* and the lack of them in the Sessile oak. On the woodland floor the bilberries were dripping with fruit and the fragile Cow Wheat was a haze of gold. As one of the group said - we would never be able to go on a fast walk again!