

Pistyll Blaen-y-Cwm , Cwm Pennant, nr Llangynog 3/9/2018

Organiser: Sue Bosson

The infant River Tanat starts its journey to the Severn by tumbling over the cliffs as the mighty Pistyll Blaen-y-cwm, wending its way through the glacial valley that I call home these days. The land here changed hands more than fifteen years ago and the current owner values this land even more than his privacy which he fiercely protects. But a recent letter of his to the Powys Planning authority, relating to a proposed clay pigeon shooting application, caused me to think he just might allow Montgomeryshire Field Society to explore.

So, a lovely day in September found more than forty members meeting Julian Freeman-Attwood at his farm. He explained that he had developed his love of trees from an early age, planting lots of trees in his youth at Chirk castle, his family's ancestral home and that he had planted many hundreds here. He had also rebuilt and restored the near derelict houses, Tyn-y-Cablyd and Blaen-y-Cwm. He led us up to the latter where he pointed out the huge Sycamore, estimated to be several hundred years old and one of the highest growing trees around, as in altitude, apart from Birch and Rowan. They were much maligned he said but should be grown more, especially as they were rarely blown down. Joan Daly wrote later that she was most impressed with this enormous sycamore tree by the farmhouse. [see pic 35].

At this point he must have decided he liked us enough to take us to view his home, Tyn-y-Cablyd and led the party past beautifully rebuilt stone walls along the lane. [see pic 4] In the yard he was growing a cutting from a 4,000-year-old yew from Linton Church, Herefordshire. Martins and Swallows occupied over 30 nests on the walls of the house and he led us inside, to the rear, oldest part where a huge inglenook fireplace dominated the room. Julian had a meeting to attend in London so had to leave us at this point but pointed to our route up to the waterfall across his meadows and beside the infant Tanat. We were left in the capable paws of his two beautiful and friendly dogs. [see pic 8]

Joan later looked up the English translation of 'Cablyd' and it is maundy as in the day before Good Friday which suggests the house had been associated with pilgrims in ancient times.

These thoughts submitted by Ruth Dawes caused me to check the records and MFS had last visited in 2001. *"Such a pleasure to go the old way to the waterfall, like the field clubs used to. You arranged the weather, including an atmospheric mist to start us off."*

We walked along the streamside corridor of tree planting, done to prevent cattle getting to the river. We were told the hay meadows are well worth seeing in the summer but sadly they had been cut before our visit. We passed a small hydro-electric system, one of many in this area. (We'd seen one previously on a visit to nearby Nant-ewyn.) Making our way up the meadows, the waterfall our goal, we saw the evidence of glacial action with large rocks strewn over the fields. [see pic 15] Above us, heather grows on the special protected area of blanket bog and young trees are re-growing on the hillsides due to stopping grazing by sheep. [see pic 17 permission has been given by all to put this on the web or report] As we climbed the valley and looked back the view was breathtaking. [see pic 22].

Lizzie Beare said *"The botanists had an energetic time following up every wet flush, stream and boggy area, finding Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius* along with Tawny sedge *Carex hostiana*, Lesser Spearwort *Ranunculus flammula*, Beech fern *Phegopteris connectilis* and Parsley fern *Cryptogramma crispa*. After clambering up and down steep slopes and negotiating the ankle-twisting tussocks of Purple Moor-grass it was glorious to sit on one side of the narrowing cwm and watch the sunlight playing on the steep side opposite, highlighting the scree, rocks and heather of this dramatic valley."*

Joan Daly and Sylvia were botanizing as they tried to get to the top of the waterfall and found the little pink flowers of lousewort – *Pedicularis sylvatica*. *"Looking across and down the valley the sunlight was shining on the Rowans on the hillside which looked silver-leaved as the wind blew contrasting with the scarlet*

berries. We also collected a few creeping thistle flowers – *Cirsium arvensi* which smell of honey and keep their fragrance days after being picked.”

Peter Rivers wrote “I have heard a lot about St Melangell and her shrine and so this foray was high on my list. I took the opportunity to visit the Church and later to talk to Chris the Guardian. We had much to talk about. I have to say that I disliked the drive from there with all those poor marauding pheasants. However once on the estate it was glorious.

I am so pleased to have met Julian Freeman Attwood. I thought he was delightful. I share some of his passions, not mountaineering, but in particular, conservation of land and buildings. My own particular interest is in trees and I have myself planted a number of trees but not on the scale of Julian, my plots have been much smaller. I have also had quite a lot to do with the conservation of buildings and so I was fascinated by the skilful refurbishment and enhancement of the two farms.”

Unfortunately, time caught up with us and we had to leave this beautiful place. Our reward was to enjoy a lovely tea, once again, provided by the committee of the Memorial Hall in Llangynog. Or in Ruth’s words “and then the grand finale - a very fine tea indeed.”

Thanks to Mike Backhouse, Sue and Richard Swindells and others for the bird list.

Pheasant	Phasianus colchicus
Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus
Red kite	Milvus milvus
Buzzard	Buteo buteo
Wood pigeon	Columbus palumbus
Barn owl	Tyto alba
Peregrine	Falco peregrinus
Jay	Garrulus glandarius
Common crow	Corvus corone
Raven	Corvus corax
Coal tit	Periparus ater
Marsh tit	Poecile palustris
Blue tit	Cyanistes caeruleus
Great tit	Parus major
Swallow	Hirundo rustica
House martin	Delichon urbicum
Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita
Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes
Nuthatch	Saxicola rubicola
Meadow pipit	Anthus pratensis
Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs
Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis

Mary Oliver who managed a shorter walk sent the following.

Herb Robert, Red Campion, Nettle, Hawthorn, Honeysuckle, Lady fern, Broadleaved plantain, Rose with straight prickles, Blackthorn, Sycamore, Broadleaved dock, Hazel, Rosebay willow herb, Coltsfoot, Alder, Wall lettuce and Marsh woundwort.

Finally,

Ruth Dawes was so moved by the place to write this wonderful poem which totally captures the essence of the place:-

The hare astride a weather vane indicated we were nearly there.
Past the old stone church and ancient yews,
beyond Melangell’s resting place, only a cold stone slab gweily.
Once there was a ruined ty hafod with an old porthole,

now the extensive stone house is whole again.
Once more we walk on that old flat springy path,
where Saint Melangell went and field clubs followed,
past the laden old crab and the crimson red rowan.
Over the Achlas stream and up to the cwm where a pistyll flows,
where golden gallii and goldenrod bloom.
Red kites fly overhead and noisy peregrines call.
The niwl lifts and autumn blustery winds fan white clouds.
Devil's-bit, Jasione and harebell reflect the blue sky.
But heads are down, seeking out the flora –
tiny Euphrasia in turf, marsh pennywort leaves in bog,
purple bell heather in rocks, Potamogeton in runnels.
The bravest botanists scramble - ferns to admire,
black spleenwort and parsley, but not to eat.
Other naturalists potter, admiring the view
in this remote secluded Cwmreig spot.
The heatwave has gone and cool peace remains.

Many grateful thanks to everyone who sent me their thoughts.
Sue Bosson
Final picture of Sylvia 10.