

Cwm Mawr, Hyssington

4 July 2016

Organizer Lizzie Beare

Hyssington is just inside the Montgomery border in the thumb of land around Churchstoke that points eastwards into Shropshire. Cwm Mawr was bought by the Holden family back in the 80s and its diverse and glorious flora has been managed until recently using a herd of Hebridean sheep to preserve, conserve and record this gem of a farm. So for MFS members it was a privilege and a joy to be able to visit such a magical place - one member enthused "it is the kind of place I dreamed of finding one day".

After the wettest June on record for many years we were relieved that the forecast for our outing was dry and although not sunny it was pleasant for walking and the visibility was good. Some took the footpath to Roundton rising up to 370m behind Cwm Mawr which required quite some energy. A group of us followed the same path as far as Upper Hurdley and then turned uphill north eastwards past the ruin at Givron and on to Brithdir, the neighbouring farm to Cwm Mawr also with lovely wild flower meadows. This route took us East of Roundton steadily climbing to well over 260 metres. The botanists amongst us were glad of the excuse to stop and puzzle over unfamiliar plants like Field Penny-cress *Thlaspi arvense*, while others just admired the long views over the Camlad valley and hills beyond. From Brithdir the footpath turned SE and at Cubbulch west to join Cwm Mawr in the upper hay field. The third route started in the same way but turned south at Upper Hurdley and followed the lane down until an old track on the left leading back to the minor road to Hyssington and thence up the drive to Cwm Mawr.

Meanwhile the dedicated botanists stayed at Cwm Mawr and the neighbouring Brithdir Fields to check out the species listed which form the basis for the SSSI status. The first two fields were full of Common spotted orchids, Fairy flax, Ragged robin, and best of all the rare Dyer's greenweed *Genista tinctoria* at its peak of flowering - a golden sight indeed. Ruth found some different species on the Picrite quarry, the bluish stone used to make Bronze Age axes, like Carlina thistle, *Carlina vulgaris*, Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea* and False brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*. Kate Thorne and Gill Foulkes, County Recorders, with a band of followers produced a long list to be printed in the Annual Report.

A great day was had by all, followed by tea at the Horse and Jockey who produced some scrumptious cakes and gallons of tea. We were glad that Barbara Holden joined us for tea and we were all able to thank her profusely for her hospitality and the chance to visit such a unique site as Cwm Mawr.

Birds seen and heard by Richard and Sue Swindells: Wren, Chiffchaff, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Wood Pigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Blue Tit, House Martin, Swift, Swallow, Carrion Crow, Buzzard, Linnet, Goldfinch

Birds seen:

Mute swan

Red kite

Cygnus olor

Milvus milvus