

This was a real summer's day in a period of hot sunny weather, something we have sorely missed in the last few years. Members gathered in the yard of Fronhaul and were immediately captivated by the uninterrupted view in a great arc to the South.

The owners of these 9½ acres, Richard and Sarah Hayes have in ten years transformed an uninhabited long house and a derelict barn into a fine house for their extended family full of energy saving building techniques, a ground source heat pump for heating and hot water and high-spec insulation and glazing. The then very overgrazed land now has a fruit orchard, a wood, a shrubbery with beehives, a vegetable garden and a wildflower meadow; the pond has been relined with clay and allowed to regenerate naturally.

Fronhaul is rather different from the usual sites we visit which tend to be long established areas of the rarer plants, either managed carefully for particular species or often declining in diversity. However Fronhaul is more of an adventure in what can be done in a few years with the desire and energy to create what would have been the norm in more sustainable times. After all it is the hard labour of our forbears which planted the hedgerows, created the meadows and managed the landscape that we admire. Before that it was mainly forest glorious too in its own way but less accessible.

After a leisurely stroll around the paths mown through the wood and the meadow many members found it too hot to do more than rest in the shade on the terrace and admire the garden and take in the view. A few made lists of plants but the diversity was limited due to the meadow having been sown on the area cleared to install the ground source heat pump pipes and the grasses in the wood, now growing with vigour without grazing, will give way to other species as the trees grow and shade the ground.

A few members made the trip down the lane to Llanlunan to see St Mary's Church and the preaching stone and baptism pool in the stream on the other side of the lane. There has been a church here since the C6th and the current building has a C15th stained glass window. A monastery of Cistercian nuns is associated with the church from 1188 until the Dissolution.

The birders had a good day with 21 species including Red Kite, Redstart, Linnet and Bullfinch and other sightings included the butterflies Small and Large Skippers, Large White, Small Copper, Small Tortoiseshell, Meadow Brown and Ringlet and the day-flying moth Six Spot Burnet plus Red-tailed and Buff-tailed bumble bees. It is encouraging to see how quickly the smaller creatures colonize suitable habitat and it will be intriguing to see how this site develops with time.

An excellent tea was provided by Menna Watkin of Cefn Coch Inn.

A full list of plants and birds will be printed in the 2014 annual report.