

The Great Orme via the West Shore and the Invalids' Walk 12th July 2017 by coach.

It was Ruth Dawes we must thank for asking me to accompany her on a coach trip to Llandudno in 2016. Ruth wanted to show me somewhere special she said, and she knew I wouldn't be able to resist and that I also wouldn't be able to resist submitting this as an outing for MFS. The week before our trip Ruth reported the Silver Studded Blue and Dark Green Fritillary butterflies had been seen as well as several Choughs.

So, in July the coach left Llandidloes, picking up en route at Newtown and Welshpool and by the time it reached Oswestry it was full. We dropped one member in Llandudno at the coach park first, so all would know where to come back to at tea-time and then drove round to the West Shore. Here we met Sion Dafis, Assistant Country Park Warden for the Great Orme who gave us a short introduction to this part of the Great Orme. He explained about the rare plants we might find such as the Spiked Speedwell and Dropwort because of the limestone, although we were just a little too late to see the Hoary Rockrose. Sion also suggested the best path to take to see a Chough possibly. Guillemots, Razorbills and Kittiwakes might be seen on this path too.

He suggested another diversion off the Invalid Walk, the Zig Zag path where we could reach the farm, surrounded by a stone wall, belonging to the National Trust.

Like me, most members had not seen this beautiful side of Llandudno with the lovely pebbly and sandy beach of this other bay. With maps handed out and everyone free to 'do their own thing'. I joined Maureen Preen and Jane Emmerson and we ate our picnics on this lovely beach and noticed the maritime plants in abundance there. Marram grass, sea camomile, sea rocket, salt marsh goosefoot, sea plantain and sea kale complete with caterpillars. Lots of wild carrots with the distinctive red spot. We chased the six-spot burnet to try to get a picture, but it wouldn't stay still.

The Invalids' Walk (IW) starts by the castle type building at the north end of the shore after the derelict house and industrial railings. It is at its steepest at the beginning but there were many benches to rest on and admire the view and to look out for the Silver Studded Blue butterflies. It wasn't long before many of us had seen these small butterflies which also favour the brambles to rest on. (Another good reason to have brambles).

Sue and Richard Swindells reported that they walked a little way along the road beyond the castle type building and saw one chough high above on the short grass. They then retraced their steps to the start of the invalid walk

but took the path to the left that Sion had mentioned which was lined with pink and white *Centranthus rubus*. Looking up to the grassy area above the rocks they saw a chough with a noisy juvenile. They then turned back and joined the invalid walk into town where once on the front, decided to turn left and went along the toll road a little way. That is where they saw a fulmar flying around a rock face. Sue and Richard's complete bird list contains Raven, Jackdaw, House Martin, Herring Gull, Mute Swan, Cormorant, Redshank, Collared Dove, Gannet, Buzzard, Stonechat, Chough, Rock Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Goldfinch, Linnet, Greenfinch, Black-headed Gull and finally the Fulmar.

Pam Blair was taken under the wing by some professional wildlife photographers she met on the way up the IW, had a lovely time with them and with whom she was able to record Hummingbird hawk moths and 6 spot Burnet moths, a Golden ringed dragonfly, Dark Green Fritillary, Grayling, Red Admiral and Meadow Brown butterflies and a Stonechat. The Hummingbird hawkmoth was also recorded by Julie Pearce and Mark Thomas.

On reaching the entrance to the quite tropical Haulfre gardens which were first laid out in the 1870s by Henry Davis Pochin, a Victorian industrial chemist, the inventor of white soap, a notable plants man, the father of the first Lady Aberconway and founder of Bodnant Gardens we were met with *Trachycarpus*, Passion flowers and *Indigofera* shrubs in full pink flower. Many other exotics grow here too; Aloes, *Tryphylla* Fucshias, Bananas, Bamboos. Several paths meander through the garden, now in the care of the town council and which in most places is well cared for. Some areas are under many trees where *Asplenium scolopendrium* -Hart's Tongue fern abound.

On one of these paths is a forbidding looking solid wooden gate. A gentle push reveals that it isn't locked and is another gateway to the summit. Through here we came across Julie and Mark again who were watching a Burnett Moth caterpillar building its own chrysalis. (Pic enclosed). Some of us were reluctant to leave this fascinating spectacle but we were in search of another prize, which we found not 100 yards further on up the slope. We felt like the goats that inhabit the Orme as we scrambled up away from the more sedate path. Sheila Turner and I found an unusual white flower which we couldn't identify and guessing at some sort of *Silene*, took a photo for later. Even though we weren't at the summit of the Orme, the views out over the trees to both bays were outstanding and most rewarding considering we hadn't climbed too high to achieve it.

Time was beginning to run out, so we found another way back down to the gardens where several members has been enjoying ice-cream etc. at the delightful tearooms. These charming tearooms, originally owned by Sir Thomas Lipton of the tea fame, had been opened to the public by Lloyd George in 1930. The going was easy now,

all downhill, past the tram station to the pier area of the more famous bay and a quick march through the town to the coach station.

From here we travelled the very short distance to the Bodnant Welsh Food Centre where we enjoyed a really nice tea in sumptuous surroundings overlooking the Conway Valley. The funny thing was, when I booked this venue, this back room looked just like any other village hall; perfect for us. They didn't tell me they were 'doing it up' for weddings.

Many other species were seen on the day and Ros Gillard and daughter Sarah recorded many and sent in a select list; Pyramidal orchid-anacamptis pyramidalis, Seaside centaury-centaureum littoral and Sea storksbill-erodium maritimum. They recorded Ivy broomrape-orobanche hederaceae alongside of the marine parade.

Lizzie Beare added Quaking grass, Parasol mushrooms, and believed she saw the very rare Spiked Speedwell - Veronica spicata in the last stages of flowering, just the top of the spike still in flower, plus two bees, Bombus lapidarius (red tailed) and B terrestris (buff tailed).

Sheila Turner sent in a comprehensive list of the day including Rock Samphire - Crithmum maritimum, Lyme Grass - Elymus arenarius and Bloody Cranesbill - Geranium sanguineum, the latter enjoying the Mediterranean conditions afforded it by its location on the limestone rock.

There are five extremely rare plants growing on the Orme and we were a little too late or too early in the season for those so maybe another year in an earlier or later month we should do the same trip again. These are Great Orme Berry, Spiked Speedwell, Basil Thyme, Goldilocks Aster and Dark Red Helleborine.

Links you may wish to follow.

<http://www.greatorme.org.uk/Trail12.html>