

Allt-y-Main, Meifod - 6th October 2017

Organisers - Jane Firth Emmerson and Sylvia Backhouse

The majority of members who attended this lane, fields, woodland, and forestry hill walk chose to walk the 1.2 miles from the village car park to the edge of the woodland called Allt-y-Main, near Meifod village. Leaving the village of Meifod by walking up the hill road that leads to Cwm Nant y meichiaid members turned right along the narrow no-through-road that led to the woodland. The lane was edged with ancient hedgerows and lush lane-side vegetation where, amongst many other plants, mistletoe was discovered growing on an apple tree. Nearby, a sharp-eyed member spotted two hoverflies - *Eristalis tenax* and *Helophilus pendulus*.

Neville Walters, a mycologist, had very kindly agreed to join us and teach members the intricacies of identifying fungus.

Those that had travelled by car to the deciduous wood were greeted by the calls of a green woodpecker and wren. The day was still and quite balmy for the time of year with the occasional ray of sunshine breaking through. Richard Morris, whose animals graze the deciduous woodland and meadows fringing the forest, had kindly given his permission to park on the land. A metal gate led to a junction of ways that served two houses, meadowland, woodland, footpath, and bridleway. Travelling straight up the gradually rising track into the deciduous wood it was not long before members passed through a gateway onto Natural Resources Wales' land. Rose hips were shining bright red and "millions" of acorns were underfoot as progress was made up the track. Here views were obtained down into the flat valley with its winding snake-like river, fine oxbows, and fertile acres. The delicate Climbing corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*), Navelwort (*Umbilicus rupestris*), Heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and many other plants braved these slopes. Amongst the deciduous planting on the edge of the track members were surprised to find Wild privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) towered over by Noble Fir (*Abies procera*) and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*). At teatime one member produced a spectacular mushroom called Larch Spike, (*Gomphidius maculatus*). Neville Walters was able to produce a good spore print from this with individual spores much larger than others that he had previously seen. On a fine lookout point high on a rocky ridge that was edged

with broom, a bench helped members to enjoy their lunch. Birdwatchers spotted seven herons along the riverside making a tasty meal of frogs. Crossbills had also been seen here when the organisers did a reconnoitre of the area. On the approach to this high spot, a holly tree's bright fruit punctuated the autumnal scene. By now members had left the tall conifers and entered the rich deciduous edge of the forest. Descending through this mixed planting, members caught the distinctive smell of the Stinkhorn. Another group of members not only smelled them but were lucky enough to see them. Bracken hung gracefully along this path where many species of fungus were spotted including the humorously named Penny-bun (*Boletus edulis*), and Plums and Custard (*Tricholomopsis rutilans*). Stepping out of the trees onto farming land, many ancient pollarded birch edged the agricultural track that descended into a hung valley with its green meadowland and several cottages. This valley was open with views of its surrounding hills. It was very pleasant walking through grazed and open meadows after the tall conifers of the forest. A skittish flock of rams were nervous of members passing through their meadow. A friendly lady who lived at Crud yr awel greeted members as they walked through her garden. Returning to the edge of the forest, the main track carried on further up the hill where the landscape surrounding Glascwm valley fell away to reveal spectacular views of the Shropshire plain, Breidden Hills, Long Mountain, Corndon, and Roundton. This track eventually petered out into a narrow footpath through wild vegetation. Several members were fit enough to brave the steep climb up the rocky escarpment to the triangulation point with its breathtaking panoramic view. Taking the recommended diversion on the return journey members discovered a large patch of Fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*). These were a wonderful sight to behold and were all at different stages of emergence. Further funguses were discovered in the meadows on the other side of Allt y main where on a previous reconnoitre the organisers saw a muntjac quickly disappearing into the deciduous trees. Another beautiful view of the countryside was enjoyed whilst descending to the road. Meifod Women's Institute provided a delicious tea for members in the Village Hall.

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