

Penybontfawr 3/09/21

Organisers: Sue Bosson, Lizzie Beare, Sheila Turner, Debbie Freeman

It was particularly pleasing to have 31 members gather for our September outing. It was an unpromising looking day, many of us starting our journey to Penybontfawr in drizzle or threatening clouds. However the rain held off as we gathered at noon to eat our picnic lunch in Sue Bosson's garden, a very generous offer. Chairs were produced, sandwiches eaten, the garden admired and it gave members the chance to spend time with Sue to offer condolences on the recent loss of her husband John, the MFS's auditor for many years. Sue showed us a photograph of the old railway yards on the site of which her bungalow is built.

There was a wide choice of routes from 1 mile to 4 ½ miles, plus a riverside walk and the option to stay in Sue's garden to botanise and relax. Some of the Flora group took the opportunity to survey in nearby monads which were under-recorded. 21 of us set off on a lane running between the River Tanat, very low after a long period of dry weather, and the route of an old railway line, now long defunct and grassed over. A few relics of the line still remain, including a rather fine stone-built arch allowing access at one time beneath the old railway to pastures beyond. We crossed the Tanat on a sturdy footbridge built on massive stone abutments which have withstood countless years of the flooding rushing waters of the Tanat in certain seasons. Here Mike Backhouse saw a grey wagtail and the droppings of dippers. The 1 mile route crossed the fields back to the village from this point. The longer routes followed a bridleway which had been made passable, largely by Sue, with a bit of extra man/womanpower and furnished with two very professional signs made by Stanley Turner to aid crossing the busy road which connects Penybontfawr to Llangynog. Road crossing was accomplished safely with Sheila and Debbie in hi-viz gilets marshalling and Sue directing the route ahead down quiet lanes. Thereafter it was: "choose your own route and your own pace." The weather improved, the skies lightened and it was possible to view the surrounding hills and spot high flying birds. Trees were identified, wych elm and hazel causing some confusion and 3 very fine walnut trees spotted near a farm entrance where a rather over-territorial dog had to be deterred from approaching walkers with some strongly-worded commands from Lizzie. Debbie identified a chiffchaff giving its non-breeding song. Common Hempnettle, Common Figwort, Lesser Stitchwort and some fine Nippeworts were seen.

As we were starting on the last leg of the longest walk we realised that time was marching on and we had to do the same, trying hard not to be distracted too long by unexpectedly finding Opposite leaved Golden Saxifrage and Bog Stitchwort in a damp hedgerow. As so often happens we were the last to arrive for tea at the Memorial hall Llangynog, but luckily there was plenty to enjoy, lots to chat about and it seems the variety of routes had catered to all tastes. Kate Thorne identified a mystery groundsel found in a roadside patch of gravel as Sticky Groundsel, the first time I have seen it. The countryside around Penybontfawr is stunning, the weather was kind to us and on MFS field trips there is always something new to discover, an insect, a plant, a bird or a view.

Lizzie Beare