

## DRAFT

Dolmelynlyn, Ganllwyd - 15th September 2014  
Organisers Michael and Sylvia Backhouse

Soft rain started to fall as members boarded the coach which was bound for Ganllwyd, Dolgellau. It was not until we had covered the major part of the journey, through our stunning scenic countryside, that we left the rain behind. The sky was bright for our walk in the Dolmelynlyn Estate which is owned and cared for by the National Trust. The day was still and quiet which echoed the mood of the Afon Gamlan as it gently flowed and tumbled down rocks. A pair of grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) flitted about the water's edge looking for insects. With Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*) and Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*) flourishing at our feet, and following the Afon Gamlan upstream, we soon entered the hanging oak woodland. The woodland was dry and rocky underfoot as we walked uphill, passed over a footbridge, and climbed up many rocks to the two Rhaeadr Ddu waterfalls that plunged into deep pools. Three weeks previously this river was a raging torrent and the noise of its rushing, crashing water filled the air. Here, overlooking the clear deep pools under the waterfalls, was seen, clinging to the steep banks, beds of Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and Harebells (*Campanula rotundifolia*). Whilst Goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*) stood like a sentry on a rocky promontory, Wilson's Filmy-fern (*Hymenophyllum wilsonii*) was discovered amongst many types of bryophytes that seemed to cover every surface. Hop Sedge (*Carex pseudocyperus*) also found these damp conditions ideal.

As we followed the winding path through this beautiful woodland, we saw the prolific growth of the common poisonous woodland mushroom Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*), and Shaggy Scalycap (*Pholiota squarrosa*) on rotting tree trunks. Under a stone was Orange Peel Fungus (*Aleuria aurantia*). As well as the usual woodland plants, ferns of every type loved these shady and damp woodlands. Here are a few of them:- Broad Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), Lemon-scented Fern (*Oreopteris limbosperma*), Soft Shield-fern (*Polystichum setiferum*), Lady-fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*), and Hard-fern (*Blechnum spicant*).

The footpath left the oak woodland and took us into a plantation of tall evergreens with a thick and diverse understory of vegetation. This changed the intimate ambience into a spacious experience. The high escarpment of Y Garn could be seen through the trees as we followed the repaired stone wall and stream until we reached an interesting footbridge. Passing over the footbridge we moved into heather and bracken-clad moorland where, at our feet, was a stunning display of the delightful Ivy-leaved Bellflower (*Wahlenbergia hederacea*). Many members had seized the opportunity to sit on one of the many outcrops of rock in this open upland and have lunch. They had wonderful views over the Coed y Brenin to Rhobell Fawr, the Arenig Mountains, and the steep escarpment of Y Garn. The stillness was only disturbed by the

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cranking of the raven (*Corvus corax*) above the escarpment and the distant, plaintive call of bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) in the woodlands. Here in these boggy conditions the eye was caught by the seed spikes of Round-leaved Sundews (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*). Higher up the hill stands the ancient stone remains of buildings used in the extraction of gold during the period 1862 to 1914. This was Cefn Coch mine, the third richest in the Meirionnydd gold belt. In the crevices of these old walls was found Rustyback Fern (*Asplenium ceterach*), Wall Rue (*Asplenium ru-ta-muraria*), and Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*). Devil's Coach Horse Beetle (*Staphylinus olens*), a Dor Beetle (*Geotrupes sp*), and Autumn Hawkbit (*Leontodon autumnalis*) were spotted on this old track. The ladder stiles on this walk are quite magnificent structures. Climbing over this particular, very large stile, almost required mountaineering skills. Walking downhill through rock-strewn, bracken and fern-filled fields was very pleasant. Here was found Common Puffball (*Lycoperdon perlatum*) and Lesser Hawkbit (*Leontodon saxatilis*).

Entering the oak woodland, we were swiftly transported along rocky paths to the valley bottom and the banks of the Afon Gamlan. Several members were startled by a grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*) which flew from the nearby track towards the Afon Mawddach.

The confluence of the Afon Gamlan and Mawddach was explored by many members. Here the water had carved the rocky river bed into unusual shapes that resulted in tranquil reflective pools. By the picnic area was found the Charcoal Burner fungus (*Russula cyanoxantha*). A footbridge allowed access over the river into the deciduous edge of Coed y Brenin where well-kept roads made for easy walking.

We had a delicious tea at the Fronolau Country Hotel.

Sylvia Backhouse

Plants identified by Sheila Turner, Lizzie Beare, et al.

Bird list:- Grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), Common buzzard (*Buteobuteo*), Common wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*), Great spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopus major*), Grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*), Pied wagtail (*Motacilla alba*), Winter wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), European robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*), Common blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), Wood nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*), Eurasian jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*), Common raven (*Corvus corax*), Common bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*).

Michael S. Backhouse, Sue & Richard Swindells.