

Snowdon Outing - June 9th 2015 - 'In Search of the Snowdon Lily'

In November 2014, Snowdonia National Park Senior Warden, Dewi Davies, gave an excellent talk to the MFS entitled 'The Special Features of Snowdonia'. Not surprisingly, the Snowdon Lily (*Lloydia serotina*, or *Gagea serotina*) featured in his talk, and reminded me of a long-term ambition to see this rare alpine plant for real, as in Britain it is confined to a handful of sites in Snowdonia. When asked whether it would be possible for him to lead a group of MFS members, who also record plants as members of the Montgomeryshire Flora Group, Dewi agreed enthusiastically to take us to see some of Snowdonia's botanical specialities during spring 2015.

So it was that an excited group of us met up with him on June 9th, at Llanberis, armed with warm layers, packed lunch, and binoculars in case we had to view the flowers from afar! We were blessed with a dry and sunny day, and comforted by the knowledge that Dewi knew of at least two *Lloydia* flowers which had opened a couple of days earlier! The round walk of six miles or so was a delight, with excellent views of the Cambrian mountains and beyond. A stop at the Halfway Cafe was much appreciated on both the outward and return routes, but of course the main attraction was the chance of seeing *Lloydia*.

Perhaps what we hadn't expected was to come across several other botanical rarities for Wales, including Moss Campion (*Silene acaulis*), which nestled prettily on a large and particularly species-rich boulder, Roseroot (*Sedum rosea*), Starry Saxifrage (*Saxifraga stellaris*), Northern Rock-cress (*Arabidopsis petraea*), Alpine Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum alpinum*), Spring Sandwort (*Minuartia verna*), Green Spleenwort (*Asplenium viride*) and three clubmosses - Fir (*Huperzia selago*), Alpine (*Diphasiastrum alpinum*) and Stag's-horn (*Lycopodium clavatum*).

A stone on our path showed very clear brachiopod fossils, which Dewi explained were probably from above the Upper Rhyolitic Tuff formation, near the summit of Snowdon, which were later transported by ice/gravity to their current position.

After quite an ascent, and negotiating a small stretch of scree, we were rewarded by our first sighting of a Snowdon lily, almost squealing with delight as we admired its dainty white flower, veined delicately with purple, and its rush-like leaves. Once we 'got our eye in' we were pleased to spot several other plants, all growing on inaccessible rock ledges or faces, and smaller than I'd imagined, at about 12 cm in height. Although out of reach of humans and grazing animals, we certainly did not need to resort to our binoculars in order to see them, which came as a pleasant surprise. As Dewi explained, the Welsh name, *brwynddail y mynedd*, meaning 'rush leaves of the mountain', seems particularly appropriate for this beautiful plant. It was first recorded by Edward Lhuyd, and named after him in honour of the outstanding work he carried out in recording wildflowers in Wales.

As we retraced our steps to Llanberis, we thanked Dewi several times over for sharing with us an experience which we will remember always, and for giving of his time and knowledge so generously. This was a dream come true for me, and I think maybe for one or two others too!

Sue Southam