

Y Golfa, near Welshpool 11 June 2015

Organizer Sue Southam

Y Golfa is a 341m hill approximately 3 miles to the west of Welshpool, and home to Welshpool Golf Club. The terrain is a mixture of upland pasture, heathy hilltop and golf course (grazed by sheep), remnants of ancient woodland, and some wetter areas.

24 members met here, on a warm and sunny day, and enjoyed the distant views whilst picnic-ing alongside the practice 'green'.

Afterwards, a choice of routes gave opportunities to follow many of the well-marked tracks and paths both over and around the hill. Some chose to keep to the relatively gentle lower route, walking through remnants of ancient woodland, whilst others followed Glyndwr's Way, ascending to the summit and beyond, past Golfa Wood and on towards Llanerchydol Hall. Those who made it to the summit were rewarded with a 360 degree panoramic vista, and spectacular views across the mid-Wales countryside.

As the hill area is all Open Access land, there were opportunities for access to any areas which looked promising for recording purposes! These included a base-rich wet flush which kept several of the botanists busy for much of the afternoon. Plants of interest here included Marsh Arrow-grass *Triglochin palustris*, Bog Pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius*, Bogbean *Menyanthes trifolita*, Marsh St John's Wort *Hypericum elodes*, Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsia* and Bog Pimpernel *Anagallis tenella*. (For full plant list see central pages of 2015 Annual Report). A drainage channel alongside the 'buggies track' yielded several unexpected plants, including Marsh Speedwell *Veronica scutellata* with its narrow olive-brown leaves and delicate whitish flowers, tinged pale blue.

Ancient woodland indicators, including extensive patches of bluebells and wood sorrel, adorned the slopes either side of the lower track. Tree pipits were also spotted here, identified by their rich song flights as they took off and then landed again on their tree perches. Meadow pipits were numerous, and put on several impressive 'parachute' displays appreciated by all who saw them. Other bird highlights included two magnificent male stonechats in pristine plumage, a pair of yellowhammers amongst the gorse, several linnets and a redstart. A hare was spotted, bounding across the grassland, its powerful hind legs enabling it to move quickly out of sight.

The sunshine also brought out butterflies and a day-flying moth, the Brown Silver-line. Several Small Heath were seen, but the butterfly which aroused most interest was described by Mike and Richard as 'a Red Admiral-sized bright strawberry ice-cream coloured individual', which they watched for some time but were unable to photograph. After contacting our Montgomeryshire Butterfly recorder, Douglas Boyes, they concluded it might be a Large White that could somehow have become coloured. Since then, I have read on the UK Butterflies website, that 'a newly-emerged adult Painted Lady is flushed with a beautiful salmon-pink and is a most beautiful insect.' This colouring apparently fades rapidly, and so most of us only ever see the more muted colouration of this lovely migrant. As thistles are the primary foodplant of this species, and common on Y Golfa, it remains a possibility, but unfortunately we will never know, and it has to remain a mystery! (Incidentally, whilst researching our 'mystery butterfly', I discovered that the Painted Lady is the only butterfly species ever to have been recorded from Iceland!)

As we returned to the Clubhouse, and compared notes on the day, we were treated to a wonderful spread of tea, sandwiches, scones, cake and a first for an MFS outing – croissants, jam and cream! We were particularly grateful to the catering staff, who were only here on a temporary basis, but certainly did us proud. We also met several friendly golfers, who shared their golf course with us, giving us the chance to see plenty of 'birdies', but alas no eagles!