

Fungus Foray, Cefn Goleu Wood, Bwlch-y-cibau 7/10/22

Organiser: Fran Holland, Les Hughes

MFS members Sue and Andy Hughes acquired Cefn Goleu Wood some five years ago with the aim of 'gently' restoring it to increase its biodiversity without losing any of its habitat range. The fifteen acres of ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) lie on the north facing slope of Cefn Goleu ridge, overlooking the Cwm Nant-y-meichiaid valley.

It is believed that the wood was clear-felled, or at least substantially felled, some hundred and fifty years ago and the oldest trees date back to that age with a few older specimens. Sixteen species of tree have been identified including thirteen native species (predominantly Sessile Oak and Ash but including Rowan, Silver Birch, Hazel, and Hawthorn). Non-native species include a small amount of Sycamore, a few Larches and a small copse of Sitka Spruce. The wood is thought to have been 'un-managed' for at least a hundred years and grazed by sheep for much of that time. The task of patching and erecting new fences to keep out the sheep was completed the year before our visit, and the results were immediately in evidence this spring when large numbers of flowers were observed for the first time.

The wood supports many nesting birds including Pied Flycatchers, Redstarts, Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Nuthatches. Badgers, Foxes, Stoats, Weasels and Hares are regularly seen. Sue and Andy have informally recorded 70 species of plants, 23 species being ancient woodland indicators (AWIS).

On the day of our visit, we were very pleased to welcome over 30 Field Society members and delighted that mycologist, Les Hughes, could join us once again to share his specialist knowledge. The 'recce' for the outing had taken place during the long summer drought when the surrounding countryside was parched brown and the ground rock hard. "We desperately need rain" we said at the time, "or there will be no fungi to see in October". Always be careful what you wish for - on the day of our visit the heavens opened as we set off for the wood!

Crossing pasture land we discovered a fine display of true Parasols, Wax Caps, and the finger like clumps of white and orange Spindle, then continued into the wood where we found a welcome respite from the deluge to eat our sandwiches under a parachute silk canopy strung between the trees. The rain was relentless, however, and we agreed to head back to the shelter of the house. As luck would have it, the clouds and rain cleared and we sat and discussed our finds with mugs of tea and an amazing spread of cakes and biscuits kindly provided by Sue and Andy, gently steaming dry in the afternoon sunshine,

The morning's finds included Smoky Roundhead - not often seen and a relative of the brightly coloured Blue Roundhead; Dog's Vomit Slime Mould Fungi and Burgundydrop Bonnet spotted by Les as he was leaving for home. Revived and refreshed by tea and cake, a group of members set off on a second foray in the afternoon finding Fly Agaric, Turkeytail and Cramp Balls.

Mark Lawson has compiled a comprehensive list of bryophytes found on the day including Rock Bristle-moss and Alder Silk-moss for which there are few records in Montgomeryshire, and Kate Thorne an extensive record of vascular plants.

A huge thank you to Sue and Andy for their generous hospitality and hard work in making our visit possible, and to Les for joining us once again to share his invaluable knowledge. Although fungi may not have been so abundant in the wood on the day of our visit, their emergence probably delayed by the recent drought, Les has promised to return at a future date to do an additional survey. And the Field Society has been invited to revisit the site next year to add to the lists of recordings. So, much to look forward to in 2023!