

Lymore Pools, Montgomery 11/8/2023

Organisers: Philippa Young, Maureen Preen, Debbie Freeman

Over 40 members signed up for the chance to visit Upper and Lower Pools at Lymore near Montgomery. Another walking group met in the same car park! Fortunately overflow parking was available. We were blessed with perfect weather, following a scorcher, and with rain the next day.

Spreading into smaller groups, we found plenty to enjoy. There were birds on the water, dragonflies and (elusive) butterflies in the orchard by Upper Pool. Evidence of other invertebrates were huge pearly shells - fresh water mussels, likely to be Swan Mussels (*Anodonta cygnea*). The growth ridges and size of the shells suggest they may be decades old - a sobering thought. N.B. These are not the endangered Freshwater Pearl Mussels.

Nearby, we admired the 'Windy Oaks' - a remarkable stand of twisted dead trees, actually Sweet Chestnuts. Andy Hugh's measurement put the age of the largest at over 300 years (confirmed from the history of Lymore Hall which was expanded around 1690). A few are still alive, and fallen chestnuts have been replaced by planting new oaks, so the grove continues - hopefully for centuries more.

As usual, the botanists strode out further, past the cricket pitch, across parkland and along Offa's Dyke. They returned to identify Golden Dock growing at the edge of Upper Pool. Our President did not hesitate to get her feet wet investigating just that little bit further...

We thank Neil Oughton and Powis Estates for access to Upper Pool and Lower Pool and the surrounding fields at Lymore Farm. Neil was very generous with information and help when planning, though unfortunately he was too busy with the harvest to join us on the day.

Over 30 of us repaired to The Abermule Inn and crowded in for a delicious tea.

From Maureen - Noted on walk: Acres of spoiled corn, lost crops due to unseasonal weather. Some asked if it had been sown for wild birds since it had not been harvested. The very healthy maize crop was fringed with Common Poppies, Fumitory, Field Pansies and what I was telling people was *Persicaria*. But on looking it up I found it referred to as Redshank (*Polygonum Persicaria*), and on further research it is now Redleg (*Persicaria Maculosa*), the book noting it is 'an unfortunate victim of name changing'. The dark spot on the leaf is attributed in legend to the blood of Christ, or to being pinched by the Virgin Mary - or the Devil! Having found *Aethusa Cynapium* in my wild garden, with its amusing bearded affect thanks to centimetre-long bracteoles, I was pleased to recognise it on our recce along Offa's Dyke, and equally pleased to hear that our County Recorder didn't have it on the day's list. However, it may be 'out of county', as the poem on the Offa's Dyke sign noted, we were 'one foot in England, one foot in Wales'. Further research emphasises that it is a very poisonous plant containing Coniine and Cynopine. No wonder its English name is Fool's Parsley! However, the poisons disappear when the plant is dried, so it is harmless in a crop of hay.

From Debbie: Lymore is a beautiful place and it is very accessible with easy tracks to walk along. There are limes, oaks, a beautiful copper beech and lovely views of surrounding countryside. We saw a Tortoiseshell, Spotted Wood and several other butterflies, heard Chiffchaff and Goldcrest, and saw Swallows and Buzzard. It was breezy, so not as much to observe as in calm weather. We found Knapweed and even a late orchid. We finished by the Lower Pool with Greylag geese swimming in a large flock, House Martins skimming the water and two Swans. Lovely weather, good company and a lovely peaceful venue, what more could we ask for a great day out?

Report by Philippa Young, Maureen Preen, Debbie Freeman