

## **Bryntail Lead Mines, Clywedog, Llanidloes 23/04/2025**

**Organisers: Judy Abbey and Liz Wilson**

The original April excursion to Hafren Forest was unfortunately postponed after a new member to the Field Society, Maya Bimson, advised that having been promoted by a number of influencers on TikTok the venue had become extremely problematic with severe overcrowding and major parking issues. Following a last minute recce with Therese Smout, who lives locally in Llanidloes, it was decided that the area around Llyn Clywedog and Bryntail Lead Mines would provide a suitable alternative.

Llyn Clywedog is a man made reservoir formed by the construction of the Clywedog Dam. The lake has a surface area of 615 acres (230 football pitches), and 216 ft deep at its maximum depth and stretches in all a distance of some six miles and at its maximum, it is just 500 yards wide. There are a number of viewing points and picnic areas arranged along the circular drive around the lake enabling visitor to enjoy the wonderful panoramic views.

Bryntail Lead mines (a Cadw site) sits in the shadow of the dam at the southern end of Llyn Clywedog Reservoir. Its buildings illuminate a time when this tranquil spot was a bustling site of industry. During the 19th century this was a noisy, smoky place as lead was extracted and processed, before being transported to nearby Llanidloes and shipped down the River Severn. Bryntail closed in 1884 as the local mining boom came to an end. The remains that still stand include crushing houses, ore bins, roasting ovens, smithy and the mine manager's office.

A turnout of around 20 members plus a couple of visitors met on the day with the weather being much better than forecasts had suggested. A picnic lunch was enjoyed around the remaining Lead mine buildings before groups set off in all directions following the various paths available.

A group of, mainly, botanists set off to do the small circular walk which started through woods initially just above the Clywedog river, before rising steeply to a plateau with stunning views and returning via a green lane to the lead mines. The floor of the woods was covered in a thick layer of moss looking like something from Lord of the Rings! Several species were recorded for the first time in 25 years including Lesser Burdock. A highlight was seeing the Bloody Nose Beetle squirting the Hemlock Water Dropwort. In addition to botanising a good number of birds were recorded, the highlights being Redstart and a handsome male Pied Flycatcher.

The Clywedog reservoir is now famous for having breeding Ospreys nesting and Steve Southam was lucky enough to have a wonderful view of an Osprey flying above him for several minutes. It is always good to know that they have returned back to Wales after their winter migration to Africa. Last year the nesting pair raised one female chick so fingers are crossed for this year.

A small group enjoyed a walk along the Glyndwr Way up to the kiosk at the dam and onwards and upwards to the picnic area above the dam and into the fields beyond where they enjoyed the sight of recently arrived Swallows, a flock of House Martins, some female Siskins and a Pied Flycatcher. The group also observed a good range of plants and trees including the Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) and profuse fruits on the Bilberry. They noted that the views across the dam and reservoir were spectacular.

MFS member Mark Lawley along with visitors Ralph Martin and Philippa Thompson enjoyed a walk along the Clywedog river and noted a list of 117 bryophytes. A phenomenal number. No rarities but an interesting mixture of acidophiles and a few species that like slight base-enrichment.

At the end of the day, just as it began to drizzle, everyone headed down into Llanidloes to enjoy afternoon tea made by Kate at the Hanging Gardens – a Wilderness Trust Community project – where everyone agreed it had been a most excellent day.

Report by Liz Wilson

