

Wildflower Group

Bruce Shepherd

Monday 3rd June was a bright, breezy day with good visibility. A near record number of the group (18) left Bowlees and crossed over the Tees to what used to be the Yorkshire side of the river. Turning left, we followed the public footpath which leads to Holwick. The path is unusual in that it runs alongside a line of aspens, which (unlike alder and birch) is not a tree one would associate with Upper Teesdale.

As a side issue, completely unrelated to wildflowers, the aspen is called cottonwood in the US - as in the Wild West film (the name of which escapes me) in which John Wayne promises his new bride that he will build her a house "at the bend in the river where the cottonwoods grow".

Within a short distance of the cottonwoods the land rises, offering a variety of habitats well-suited to wildflowers, including boggy areas with reed-beds, dry grassy slopes and open meadowland. In total, we recorded some 50 different flowers, notably bird's-foot-trefoil, water avens, cuckooflower, mountain pansy, spotted orchids, milkwort and the beautifully named germander speedwell.

Several of us spent time matching the 'official names' of some of the flowers with their 'local Teesdale names' - for example water avens (soldier's buttons), bird's-foot-trefoil (lady's slipper) and cuckooflower (milkmaids). The general view (though maybe a little biased) was that the local names were far more attractive and better described the flowers. It was also interesting to note that the 'official name' for wild garlic is ramsons - a name most of the group had never heard of before.

Our outing to Hayberries on 28th June will be presented in the July edition of The Forum.

Our July walks are:

Mon 8th July 2:00pm Bowlees Grasses talk & walk with Steve Gater from Durham Wildlife Trust.

*Wed 17th July **11:00 am** Teesmouth NNR. Meet North Gare Sands Car park. Bring packed lunch.*

*Fri 26th July 2:00 **Probably** meet near Langdon Beck for walk along Harwood Beck.*