

Wildflower Group Report - July 2019

Walk at Teesmouth National Nature Reserve By Rose Pude

On 17th July nine members had a seaside walk at the Teesmouth National Nature Reserve (North Gare Sands section) near Hartlepool Power Station. Nearby are some industrial sites but they did not detract from the attractiveness of the reserve. To the north we could see the beach of Seaton Carew and in the distance the three masts of HMS Trincomalee naval frigate launched in 1817 and now moored at Hartlepool.

The reserve contains moist meadow, sandy soil, dunes and muddy seashore habitats. We explored all of these and found an impressive total of 56 flowers including many we do not see in Teesdale. These included pyramidal orchid in the meadow, purple milk vetch and nodding thistle on the sandy soil, acrid lettuce and rugosa rose on the dunes, and sea rocket and sea spurrey on the seashore. We also found some of the colourful orchids we do see in Teesdale; northern marsh orchid, common spotted orchid and fragrant orchid.

Rugosa roses come from eastern Asia and have been grown in British gardens for over two hundred years. They are now naturalised on sand dunes around the coast and can become a serious threat to the native plants by blocking out the light.

After the walk some of the members went to Seaton Carew for refreshments. The town has recently benefitted from a £1.3m regeneration project and now is an attractive little seaside resort well worth a visit if you are in the area.



Pyramidal Orchid



Rugosa Rose

Walk at Widdy Bank Farm & Harwood Beck 26th July by Bruce Shepherd

Our next venue on July 26th was to one of our usual haunts in Upper Teesdale. We met at a small parking area close to the gate leading to the track to Widdy Bank Farm, from where we had a choice of three routes - along the track to the farm, along Harwood Beck or up to Cow Green. Nobody opted for Cow Green so the group split into two.

At first sight, the track to Widdy Bank Farm seems pretty uninspiring as far as wild flowers are concerned, as it looks to consist of little other than barren moorland with reed beds and thistles. Now this is just the type of terrain where one needs 'to get one's eye in', which involves ambling along at a very slow pace staring at the land either side of the track. It paid off - within 200 metres or so we logged a total of 38 different flowers.

The list included three different types of thistle (marsh, spear and creeping, together with a white variation of the latter). Many people may regard thistles as weeds and not flowers, though quite what distinguishes one from the other must be the subject of many a pointless discussion. Needless to say our group always regard them as flowers. Other flowers of note included three types of bedstraw heath, fen (which, given the terrain was not surprising) and lady's.

The branch party which set off along Harwood Beck reached Saur Hill Bridge and therefore walked a lot further than the Widdy Bank amblers. The 58 flowers spotted included grass-of-parnassus - a beautiful white flower which is absent from the south but locally common in the north. It is a perennial of damp peaty moorland and usually flowers later in the season. The name grass-of-parnassus sounds as if its been lifted straight out of one of the Greek Classics.



Birds-foot trefoil



Harebell

Our September meetings are:

Tue 10th Sep Meet 2:00 at Bowlees for a Fern talk & walk with Steve Gater from Durham Wildlife Trust

Wed Sep 25th meet 2:00 Cotherstone near the village hall for an autumn walk looking at trees, ferns, lichens & fungi.