

Wildflower Group Report - August 2019

Bowlees walk 16th August By Bruce Shepherd

Friday August 16th was overcast with heavy showers forecast later in the day. Nine members of the group met at Bowlees, with one group heading off to the nearby (former) quarry and the rest going down to Low Force. As many readers will know, the way to the force crosses two fields. Early last year a drainage ditch, running diagonally across the first field, was re-dug with the spoil banked up on either side of the ditch.

Amazingly, in such a short period of time, the banks had become colonised by various flowers including what was thought to be lesser stitchwort or its close relative bog stitchwort, which on reflection, is the likelier of the two as it favours damp places and therefore well suited to the banks of a drainage ditch.

We also walked past a cluster of small white flowers called eyebright. The name of the flower does not, however, come from its attractive sparkle - it alludes to the fact that a preparation made from it was used in the Middle Ages to heal eyes and give them a shine.

Walking toward High Force along what used to be the Yorkshire side of the river, were masses of devils-bit scabious, easily recognisable by their long slender stalks and violet-blue flowers. Compared to the height of the plant, its roots are very short and for this reason it acquired its name, ie the devil must have bitten off most of the root.

The group which went to the quarry spotted several flowers, most notably devils-bit scabious (which was obviously having a good year) and common twayblade which is a member of the orchid family - recognisable by its height (up to 50cm tall), cluster of yellowish green flowers and (what to my mind makes it particularly distinctive) a pair of broad oval leaves which grow from the lowest part of the stem ie. hugging the ground.

True to the forecast, light drizzle turned into heavy rain, which was the signal to speed up the pace and head towards the cafe in the former chapel.