

## U3A Wild flower group Monthly report July 2024

During July the wild flower group had 2 walks.

The first walk was in Hayberries Nature Reserve. At the start of the walk there was a lot of rain so not many Members had ventured out. There were frequent rain showers but the group persisted. Hayberries Nature Reserve is a disused sand and gravel quarry. Many of the old quarries in the area are home to a wide range of wild flowers. The group saw 3 different types of Orchid including Bee Orchids. There were swathes of the pink flowered Common Centaury and Yellow Wort, lovely to see as we don't see these plants often. There was also masses of Restharrow with its lovely pink flowers. Sadly there is a lot of Alchemilla Mollis and the Upper Teesdale botany group led by the botanist Margaret Bradshaw are taking steps to reduce this invasive plant. Members were able to learn how to distinguish black medick from hop trefoil, by the tiniest spur on its leaves. After looking at the flowers the group went to Cotherstone Old Chapel. This has been skilfully and sensitively changed into an attractive and welcoming cafe.

The second walk was Bishop Middleham Quarry on a pleasant warm but not too hot afternoon.

The quarry is north of Sedgfield and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It was abandoned in the 1930s after being used to quarry magnesium and limestone. It is well known in botany circles as being of particular interest for the large number of rare dark red helleborines. We were rewarded with swathes of the dark red helleborines both at the top of the quarry and down at the base. We also saw fragrant orchids, pyramidal orchids and common spotted as well as twayblades.

We enjoyed seeing the field scabious and greater knapweed which are different variations from those we see in Teesdale. There were lots of common centaury and yellow wort which we had seen in Hayberries. We saw the carline thistle which is an unusual lemon gold colour and very short growing close to the ground. We saw swathes of agrimony which again is a plant we do not see locally. In all we saw around 63 plant species in flower. Just near the end of the walk we were treated to autumn gentians in flower.

During August the wild flower walks group plan to have 2 walks in Upper Teesdale and Bowes Kate Keen



