

St Michael's on Wyre - 15th June 2022

7 members met at St Michael's on Wyre village hall car park which included an appearance from 2 Saturday walkers, hon. Sec. Julie and Christine incognito wearing her Audrey Hepburn sunglasses. No wonder I didn't recognise you to begin with.

Carol, Owen, Howard, Anne and myself introduced ourselves to these enlightened 'newcomers' and then decided where to go. I had recced the walk last year when the adjacent 'meadow' had been full of wild flowers and insects but unfortunately this year had been mown very recently. Furthermore the Sand Martin colony east of the A586 bridge had suffered bank erosion and they had not returned this year. So much for my best laid plans. With this in mind I offered an option of a rural adventure on footpaths rarely used, but this was declined so I returned my secateurs to the car boot, knowing I would not need them on the river walk.

Off we set and headed downstream from the A586 bridge where we were immediately enchanted by 20+ Banded Demoiselles rising to c 50 by the time we reached the end of the river footpath. This species is going from strength to strength and delighted everyone. One male Banded Demoiselle took its life in its own hands as it chased off a female Emperor Dragonfly which could have had it for breakfast if it wasn't already afternoon. Peaking too soon meant downstream also became downhill as the embankment provided little in the way of scarce wild flowers. Water Pepper, Creeping Yellowcress and the Giant Hogweed were the pick of the bunch with the hogweed looking stately in both size and appearance. However if you liked Fragrant and Spear Thistles, Nettles, Himalayan Balsam and Hemlock Water Dropwort then this was right up your street.

Insects were chiefly represented by the ravenous Green dock beetles that had turned the dock leaves into colanders. Various soldier beetles (we knew them as bloodsuckers in our schooldays) were to be seen and Dung beetles were also present which was not at all surprising as we carefully avoided the many dung pats and horse droppings. Butterflies were thin on the ground but included a single Painted Lady, 2 Red Admirals, 3 Small Tortoiseshells, 2 or was it 3 Meadow Browns and a single male Orange Tip. In an adjacent maize field we were glad to see an adult Lapwing with 3 chicks, no doubt keeping a watchful eye out for Crows and the Kestrel hovering nearby.

We returned to St Michaels and proceeded upstream but not before Owen and Carol took their leave with Owen succumbing to hay fever having clearly not looked at the BBC pollen forecast. Another of Owen and Carol's walks is to Larkholme grasslands, best of luck with that.

Before reaching the river we passed a large area covered with comfrey, quite a sight. The river held a Grey Heron but little else. A Blackcap was singing in the wood opposite and a Whitethroat scolded us as we passed by. Further Meadow Browns were to be seen here as well as the predictable Speckled Woods, but 3 Large Skippers were perhaps a bonus.

Not the best or most eventful mid-week walk, but I trust enough to have justified turning up, on what was a pleasant afternoon.

Barry Dyson

17/6/22