

Hook Head, Co. Wexford, (H12), 15 July 2012

We might have known it would be a damp outing – it was, after all, St Swithin's Day! However, hopes were high for a good day's botanising with Paul Green and we weren't disappointed.

We met at Hook Head Visitor's Centre – Paul Green, Paula O'Meara, Úna McDermott, Jim Hurley and myself, Zoë Devlin. We left the cars at the Centre's car park and headed towards the fossil-laden rocks and cliffs (see photo 3 on page 2) to see what was to be found, botanically speaking. Flowering among the rocks were *Inula crithmoides* (Golden-samphire), *Limonium binervosum* (Rock Sea-lavender) and *Spergularia rupicola* (Rock Sea-spurrey). Further along the cliff-tops we found *Scorzoneroideis autumnalis* (Autumn Hawkbit), *Convolvulus arvensis* (Field Bindweed) and, on an old wall, *Cerastium diffusum* (Sea Mouse-ear). The habitat was mixed, some sandy patches, some arable, some coastal grassland, but all of it constantly lashed by the wind and sea-spray. We enjoyed the brisk sea 'breeze' and looked out to sea for signs of cetaceous bodies but none were on view on this particular day. Heading back towards the car park and 'sandwich-time' we stopped to look at *Sinapis alba* (White Mustard), *Epilobium parviflorum* (Hoary Willowherb), *Vicia hirsuta* (Hairy Tare) and *Trifolium dubium* (Lesser Trefoil) among others. We had hoped to find *Kickxia elatine* (Sharp-leaved Fluellen) in a field next to the Hook Head Centre, but there was no sign of it. Perhaps it was too early in the year.

After lunch, we drove to the little harbour of Slade. This harbour was built to accommodate the need for coal which was imported from Wales in the 12th century and was necessary for the functioning of the lighthouse at Hook Head, two miles away. First species we found – or rather Paul pointed out to us – was *Erodium maritimum* (Sea Stork's-bill) and he also drew our attention to *Lepidium coronopus* (Swine-cress). We left the cars by the harbour and headed up an old track to see a species which had intrigued the writer earlier in the year. Paul identified it as *Delairea odorata* (German-ivy), an introduced species, native to S. Africa. Further along the track we saw *Pastinaca sativa* subsp. *sylvestris* (Wild Parsnip). Over a brambly hedge, was a large natural pond and Paul, Paula and Jim volunteered to see what was growing in it. Úna and I decided to stay put and watch the herd of cattle in the field instead, giving warning to our colleagues should the bull decide to come too close for comfort. The carpet of white on the pond was identified as *Ranunculus baudotii* (Brackish Water-crowfoot) with *R. hederaceus* (Ivy-leaved Crowfoot) and the trio found *Callitriche platycarpa* (Various-leaved Water-starwort) and *Nymphaea alba* (White water-lily), also growing in the pond. The bull didn't make a move which was just as well as both Úna and I had become absorbed in identifying a type of Comfrey which was new to both of us and was growing along the track. We identified it as *Symphytum officinale* (Common Comfrey) and Paul confirmed it as that species on his return.

On the way back to the harbour, we found the minute *Sagina maritima* (Sea Pearlwort), *Sedum acre* (Biting Stonecrop) and many more species. We recorded over 160 species, eleven of them new to the hectad. Many thanks to Paul for a most informative and interesting outing. See middle left photo on inside cover.

Zoë Devlin