



# Wyre Forest Study Group

## Historic Wyre, Friday 25th June, 1858

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IT HAS BEEN TRANSCRIBED BY MICK BLYTHE

### Kidderminster, Mopson's Cross, Wyre Forest, Furnace Mill, Dowles Brook and Bewdley

The third meeting for the season 1858 was held on Friday, 25th June, in Wyre Forest, near Bewdley. The muster was at Kidderminster, from whence carriages took the party through Bewdley, a short distance beyond Mopson's Cross, on the Cleobury Road, and here scientific exploration commenced. The geological structure of Wyre Forest is shown in the shales of its coal-field wherever the rock is exposed, and a quarry by the road-side which was visited, contained abundant remains of Palaeozoic vegetation, though in the shattered state that troubled waters when they subsided had left it in. Fragments, heavy as they were, filled the bags of the stone-breaking Palaeontologists, and thus ballasted the intricacies of Furnace Coppice were encountered, though its deep fosses and dense thickets were passed with some difficulty, repaying, however, those who sought the beauties of vegetation in lonely pools where several species of *Orchis* made a bright show, and one called *incarnata* was particularly admired. At the end of this coppice Furnace Mill was reached, where a cabinet picture of romantic wildness is presented to view in the ravine below the mill. Hence the naturalists plunged at once into the mazes of the greenwood, and directed their steps to the celebrated old Sorb or "Whitty Pear Tree," as commonly called, in the midst of the forest shade, where an acceptable spread had been tastily displayed on the grass by the worthy host of the Crown, at Bewdley. Amidst the festal scene the old Sorb tree appeared the withered wreck of centuries, and after the repast was concluded, the Vice-President of the Club gave a sketch of its history, suggesting that as it was the only individual of the *Pyrus domestica* that existed in Britain in an apparently wild state, it was in reality of foreign origin, and not improbably brought over from the south of France by some recluse in the reign of Edward III., when the Duchy of Aquitaine was held by the English, as this species of *Pyrus* was known to be indigenous to the slopes of the Pyrenees. The repast over, the members visited the great bay, where many rarities have been found, and then crossed Dowles Brook, that prettily meanders amidst a depth of umbrage in its rocky channel, and followed its course to the Severn side on to Bewdley, and returned in an excursion carriage to the Kidderminster Station.

The plants found were almost too numerous to recount, but two may be particularly mentioned as discoveries - the *Cerastium arvense*, a rare species found a few days before in some abundance in a sandy field, by Mr. Ground, and exhibited; and the *Lilium pyrenaicum*, met with within the forest bounds in a naturalized

state, though probably derivable from some former old garden past and gone. Other plants noticed or gathered were - *Rosa villosa*, *tomentosa*, and *inodora*, *Rhamnus frangula*, *Geranium sanguineum* and *sylvaticum*, *Pyrola minor*, *Myosotis repens*, *Pedicularis palustris*, *Scutellaria minor*, *Anagallis fenella*, *Orchis latifolia* and *incarnata*, *Gymnadenia conopsea*=*Habenaria conopsea*, *Habenaria bifolia*, *Epipactis palustris*, *Triglochin palustre*, *Carex fulva* and *vesicaria*, *Eriophorum latifolium*, *Equisetum sylvaticum*, and *Lastrea oreopteris*.

The Fauna of the forest is not to be noted in a day, but some black grouse were seen, now the only place where they yet linger in Worcestershire, and it had been reported that they were quite exterminated. The water ouzel (*Cinclus aquaticus*), though rarely seen, still haunts the stony water breaks of Dowles Brook, and Mr. Ball mentioned a nest with young ones, found in the present spring in the vicinity of one of the mills.

At this meeting the following gentlemen were elected members of the club - the Rev. John Henry Whiteley, Rector of Pedmore, near Stourbridge; David Everett, Esq., F.R.C.S., Worcester; the Rev. A. Bromfield, Kidderminster; and George Woodward, Esq., Franche Court, near Kidderminster.



Whitty Pear New Parks, 30th October 2003 Rosemary Winnall