



# Wyre Forest Study Group

## Historic Wyre, Saturday, 30th September, 1854

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IT HAS BEEN TRANSCRIBED BY MICK BLYTHE

### Bewdley, Seckley, Arley, Eyemore Wood, Warshill Camp and Kidderminster

The third and last meeting for the season 1854 was held on Saturday, the 30th September, in Wyre Forest, near Bewdley, and the celebrated botanist, Mr. Babington, of Cambridge (who was on a visit to Mr. W. Mathews, Hon. Sec.), honoured the party with his presence. The members assembled at Bewdley, from whence Mr. G. Jordan conducted them by the banks of old Severn up to Dowles Brook. On this route *Polygonum Bistorta* was observed, and the pretty *Coronilla varia* seen in flower, naturalized on the bank of the river. *Grammitis ceterach* = *Ceterach officinarum*<sup>1</sup> then existed on Dowles Bridge, and above this point *Spiræa salicifolia* used to grow, but by the falling in of the bank of the brook could not then be found. The forest itself was soon after entered, and nothing could be prettier than some of the scenes traversed, especially perhaps the little winding dingle noted for the growth of the rare *Equisetum hyemale*. Amidst the foliage or on the verge of the path several gay flowered plants were seen, as the Golden-rod *Solidago virgaurea* and the geraniums sanguineum and sylvaticum. The party pressed onward from this point towards Button Oak, and a spring called the Holy Well, in a very boggy vicinity, where *Anagallis tenella*, *Scutellaria minor*, and other bog plants were found, and *Potamogeton plantagineum* observed growing in the water. Here also *Melica nutans* was gathered. Still pressing on, a boggy pool was come to filled with Sphagnum, but rather soft for crossing; however, it was crossed rather carefully, and the buckbean, *Menyanthes trifoliata*, *Veronica scutellata* and *Eriophorum angustifolium* observed there, as well as *Ænanthe fistulosa* in flower.

From this morassy pool the thick bushes were threaded until a pleasant road was entered upon, leading to the Seckley Wood, and in passing along various little points of beauty met the eye, especially where the autumnal gorse (*Ulex Gallii*) broke in upon the coppice in a streak of gold; or the sides of the heathy way were milk white with extensive patches of the ground lichen (*Lecidea icmadophila*). Seckley Wood suddenly overlooks the Severn, upon a sandstone cliff of the coal measures, and a charming prospect is presented of the valley below, and the opposite wooded heights. This is one of the wildest bits of scenery the Severn presents between Bridgnorth and Worcester; thick woods overhang the stream on either side, which, with timid indecision,

divides itself around a verdant-tufted island, and then, resolved upon its progress, dashes over a rocky ledge<sup>2</sup> that forms a kind of weir in the bed of the river. The foliage is very thick on the Seckley Ridge, except where a land-slip has broken down the coppice, and is made more sombre by a clump of indigenous yew trees, among which Mr. Babington detected a curious pendulous variety, of which he took berries, for the Cambridge Botanic Garden. Seckley Wood has been long noted for some magnificent brambles growing there in great luxuriance; and these were now critically investigated. In one of these, which has enormous leaves, and a widely-distended panicle, Mr. Babington recognized the plant, which has been selected for his own celebration - *Rubus Babingtonii*, and which had been but imperfectly understood before. Other brambles now identified were *Rubus glandulosus*, var. *rosaceus*, *R. Guntheri*, *R. pallidus*, *R. calvatus*, and *R. Lejeunii*.

The party now took the side of the river, which in places was prettily adorned with the late flowering Soapwort (*Saponaria officinalis*), and so walked on to Upper Arley, where a halt was called at the Valentia Arms, not far from a modern castle erected by the late Earl of Mountnorris, but which, though rather towering, seemed little able to resist any attack made upon it. From Upper Arley the naturalists directed their march through Eyemore Wood to Warshill Camp, an old intrenchment said to have been occupied by Henry IV. in one of his expeditions against Owen Glendower, and from the summit of which a grand panoramic view presents itself on all sides. Westward, the solemn forest ridges ascend one after the other till crowned by the tump of Clowes Top, but at this time the rising vapours of evening gave a misty obscurity to the scene, though the level rays of the lurid setting sun lit up the sandstone heights of Kinver Edge and the neighbouring eastern hills, where Habberley Valley, far below the eye, lay in solemn obscurity, with its bare Pecket rock and awful "Giant's Grave" – like the black dismal trough in some tempestuous sea, and from thence the party ended their peregrinations at Kidderminster.

At this meeting the following new members were elected: the Rev. J. Adlington, Rev. George Hodson, F.S.A., Dr. Grindrod, Malvern, and W. J. Hopkins, Esq.

<sup>1</sup> The Old Bridge at the mouth of Dowles Brook was washed away by a flood recently, and is now replaced by a wooden structure.

<sup>2</sup> The ledge is now known by the name of the Folley Rapid or Fall