

Midsummer Celebration of Wildlife and Antiquities on Anglesey 20th – 23rd June 2022

A celebration of the flora, fauna and antiquities of Anglesey over Midsummer Day, from frantic feeding of tern chicks at Cemlyn with its amazing maritime flora, to magic sightings from a boat trip around Puffin Island. The wonders of Penmon Point and its priory and the search for Anglesey's breeding seabirds – and maybe even a black guillemot if we're lucky. Of course a trip up to South Stack for chough and more, then in search of sundews at a beautiful bog and – of course – The Dingle's very own red squirrels.



Sandwich tern at Cemlyn

Indicative Summary Itinerary

Monday 20th June (page 4)

~11.00 am Dyfi Osprey Project (leave around 10.20)
1.15 pm Lunch
2.15 pm Leave for the Spinnies Reserve for wildfowl and kingfishers, arr ~ 4.30pm
~ 7.00 pm Drive to cottage arr ~ 7.45pm

Tuesday 21st June (page 6)

9.15am Leave for Penmon Point (arr ~10.15) for lighthouse and seabirds;
11.30 am Penmon Priory, cross, dovecote
12.15 pm Picnic lunch
12.45 pm Leave to check in for boat trip at Beaumaris no later than 1.30pm
2.00 pm Boat trip, arr back 3.30pm
4.00pm Picnic tea at Aberlleiniog woodlands, woodland birds

- 5.00 pm Mariandryns SSSI limestone cliffs for butterflies and flowers
- 5.30 pm Fedw Fawr in search of black guillemots and hut circles
- 6.45 pm Leave to arrive cottage ~7.45.
- 8.30pm Dinner at the Lobster Pot

Wednesday 22nd June (page 11)

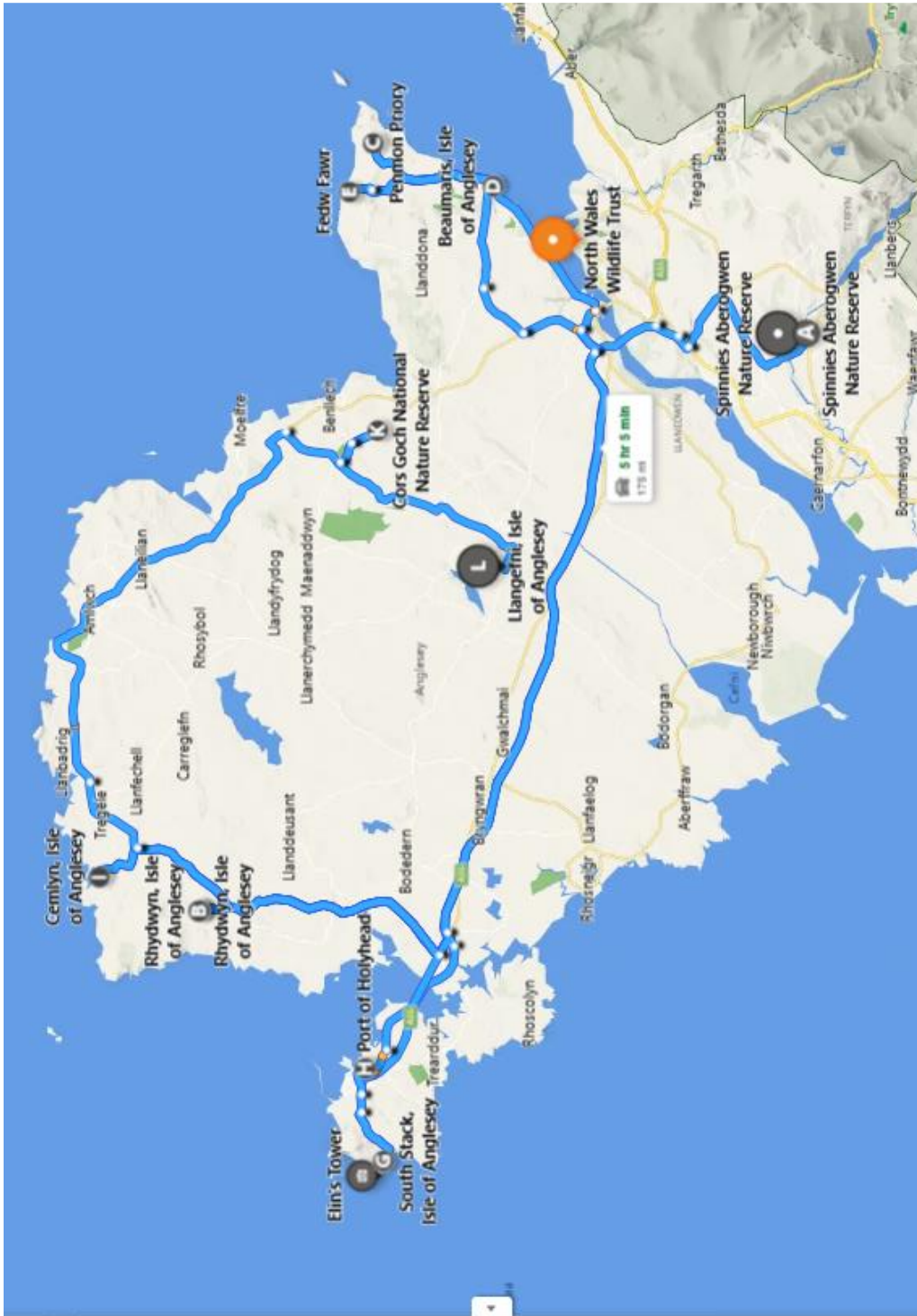
- 9.30 am Leave to arrive South Stack ~10.15 for chough, nesting seabirds, flowers. Visitor Centre / Elin's Tower; Tea and snack at RSPB café
- 11.30 am Penrhosfeilw standing stones if accessible;
- 12.30 pm Penrhosfeilw Common (The Range) for flowers, butterflies, hooded crow?
- 1.00 pm Picnic lunch
- 2.00 pm Holyhead Harbour looking for black guillemots / seabirds; Caer Gybi Roman Fort if time
- 2.45 pm Leave to arrive Cemlyn 3.15pm; tern colony, wild flowers.
- 4.45 pm Picnic tea; Cemlyn beach for waders and seabirds
- 6.15 pm return to cottage for 6.45
- 8.30 pm Dinner at The Lobster Pot

Thursday 23rd June (page 15)

- 9.15 am Leave cottage to arrive at The Dingle for 10.00 with Hugh. When we finish, we'll head over to Cors Goch to explore the boardwalk and surrounding area for orchids, sundews and butterworts, and other wetland flora as well as possible dragonflies and warblers. We'll have out picnic lunch there.
- 4.45 pm Leave by 4.45pm to arrive Abergynolwyn before 7.00.
- 8.00 pm Dinner at the Salt Marsh Café



Behiiiiind you



Spinnies Aberogwen Nature Rese...

Options ▾

- n Nature Reserve, Tai-Y-Bont, Bangor LL57 4AE
- Rhydymwyn, Isle of Anglesey
- Penmon Priory, Beaumaris LL58 8RW
- Beaumaris, Isle of Anglesey
- Fedw Fawr, Llangod & Penmon LL58 8TB
- Rhydymwyn, Isle of Anglesey
- South Stack, Isle of Anglesey
- Port of Holyhead, Platform 2 Seabank Road, H
- Cemlyn, Isle of Anglesey
- Rhydymwyn, Isle of Anglesey
- Cors Goch National Nature Reserve, Llanfair-M
- Llangefni, Isle of Anglesey

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Monday 20th June

Dyfi Osprey Project



Still image of Telyn and Idris' chicks courtesy DOP

We start our holiday with a visit to the Dyfi Osprey Project where Telyn and Idris' 3 chicks will be 26, 25 and 23 days old respectively. We'll aim to get some good views on the cameras and visit the 360 Observatory, maybe to see them being fed.



Common Lizard on the boardwalk at the Dyfi Osprey Project

Leaving the 360 observatory, you can see emerging bog myrtle, cottongrass, and other wetland flora, and look and listen out for warblers in the reeds. Sedge warblers and grasshopper warblers are common, and it is uncommon not to spot reed buntings on the willow above the reeds. Another of the great sights of the Dyfi Osprey Project in warmer weather are the common lizards basking on the edge of the boardwalk and of course dragon and damselflies.

We'll have our lunch back at the magnificent Visitor Centre and explore some of the amazing work upstairs if we can.

We'll leave after lunch to get to The Spinnies AberOgwen Reserve by around 4.30 pm.

The Spinnies Aberogwen

Spinnies Aberogwen's series of lagoons and surrounding habitat provide shelter and food for wildfowl, waders and smaller birds, especially during the autumn and spring migrations. The reserve is next to the estuary of the River Ogwen and the tidal mudflats known as Traeth Lafan, and the constant ebb and flow of the tides attract some amazing species – including, on rare occasions, osprey. Tall, graceful stands of common reed provide sheltered nest sites for moorhen as well as an excellent place to watch grey heron and little egret hunting! For much of the year, the brightly coloured kingfisher is a familiar and well-loved sight as it perches around the reserve and dives into the water in search of prey. Bird hides and feeders provide fantastic opportunities to enjoy the wildlife close at hand.



Moorhen collecting food

We'll be arriving just after high tide, so a great time for looking at the estuary, and plenty of time to explore the woodland too. We'll aim to arrive at our cottage before 8pm.

Tuesday 21st June

Penmon Point

We'll arrive at Penmon Point soon after 10am, to get a lie of the land before our boat trip in the afternoon. We could see all manner of things here, by the handsome black and white lighthouse. It should be busy as birds ferry fish to hungry young on the cliffs. We may see a black guillemot bobbing on the waves and puffins amongst the masses of guillemots and razorbills buzzing low over the water. Kittiwakes and sandwich tern may be visible hurrying through the narrow straight with possibly juvenile shags lined up on low rocks and eiders out to sea towards Puffin Island.

Penmon Point is also a great place to spot dolphins and harbour porpoises in summer.



Female eider off the Welsh coast

Penmon Priory

Before we head off for a different view at sea, we'll stop to visit Penmon Priory.

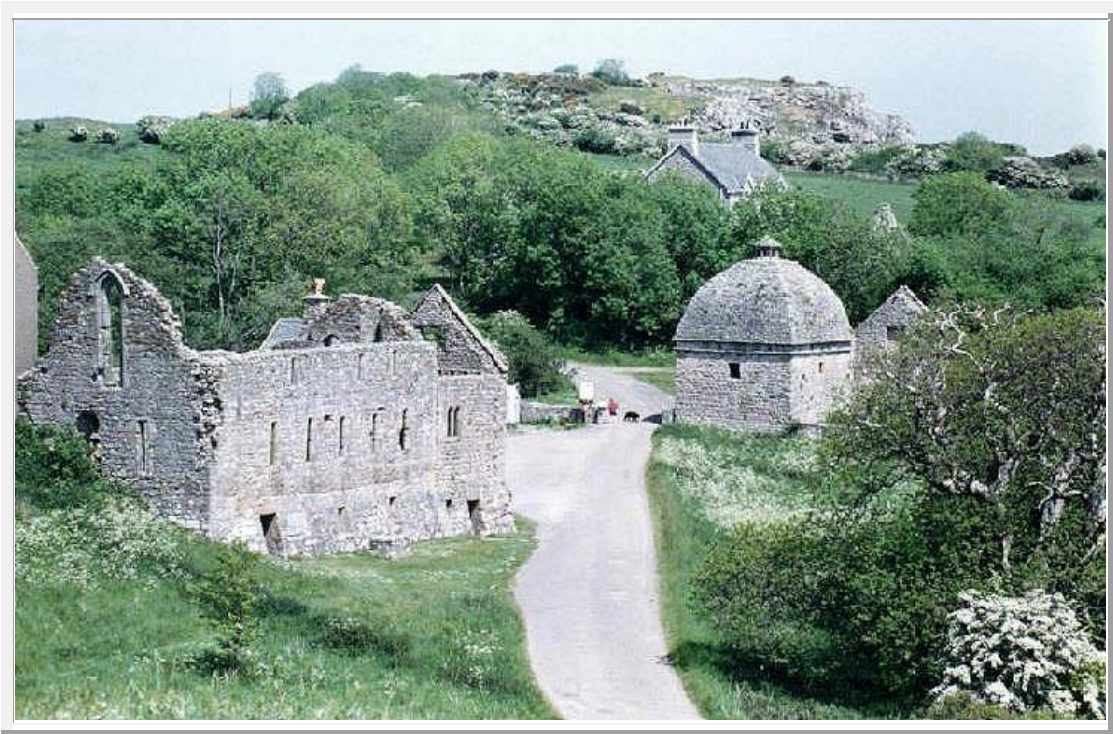
Penmon's history stretches back to the 6th century, when a monastery was established here by St Seiriol. The holy well (with reputed healing properties) that bears his name is thought to be associated with this period, though the 'cell' that houses it is a much later construction. The remains of the priory that stand today largely date from the 13th century, when it became part of the Augustinian order.

Inside the church, which still serves the parish today, stands an impressive cross. Dating from the 10th century, its shaft is carved with intricate patterns of frets and plaits.

The Holy Well is a spring emerging from a cliff behind the church. It is reached by a path on the left just beyond the car park, which skirts the monastic fish pond. Although it is the source of water for the monastery, the structures are relatively modern. The roofed inner chamber around the pool is of brick and dates from 1710. The lower courses and lower antechamber with seats on either side may be somewhat earlier, but no medieval finds were made during recent excavations. The so-called 'cell' beneath the cliff on the left is of uncertain date and purpose.



Nearby, an impressive dovecot was built about 1600 by a local landowner. With its massive domed roof, it has room for nearly 1,000 birds.



Penmon Priory and Dovecote – stock image

Puffin Island Boat Trip

Our boat trip departs from Beaumaris Pier, and we need to be there in good time to check in at least 30 mins before departure.

Puffin Island also known as Ynys Seiriol in Welsh, is located at the North East entrance of the Menai Straits and is the ninth largest island off the Welsh coast. The island was once home to the sixth century saint, St Seiriol, whose monastery is still visible on the top of the island today. Puffin Island is now a bird sanctuary and a nesting site for many species of breeding seabirds, some of which we will have seen earlier. The main season is between April and July when we are likely to see common guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes and of course puffins. We also find fulmar and eider duck breeding on the island and often spot the odd black guillemot in the area too. Other species such as cormorant and shags are on the island all year round as are our resident Atlantic grey seals. You may even be lucky enough to encounter porpoise, sometimes even dolphin.



Black guillemot eating a crab

Arriving back at Beaumaris by 3.30, we'll have a chance to explore a few more small special reserves before the end of the afternoon.

Aberlleiniog Woodlands, Mariandyrys SSSI and Fedw Fawr

Aberlleiniog

Just a few minutes from Beaumaris lies a delightful woodland nature reserve, complete with its own 'secret' Norman castle at its heart. Llangoed Commons and Aberlleiniog woodlands are a Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). The variety of habitats comprises ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland, young broadleaved plantation woodland, flower-rich grassland, wet meadow and scrub. There are a number of ponds at the site, and the Afon Lleiniog runs through the reserve, meeting the sea at Lleiniog beach.

The slopes below the castle hold some lovely old oak trees. The reserve supports many different species of woodland birds, such as wood warbler, nuthatch, tree creeper, and bullfinch. Jays are frequently seen – you can often hear their screeching calls - and ravens, buzzards, kestrels and tawny owls all breed. All three British woodpecker species have been recorded.

Many different species of bats are present within the woodlands at the reserve, including noctule, brown long-eared, common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle. If we are quiet, you may be

rewarded by a sighting of a red squirrel, and it is also worth looking out for signs of otters, especially on the boulders underneath the bridge over the Afon Lleiniog.

We'll have a picnic tea here and see what we can spot.

Mariandyrys SSSI

This splendid reserve lies on a rocky limestone outcrop that raises it above the surrounding area and offers stunning, far-reaching views all year round. Sections of the site were quarried for this limestone in the past and the properties of the underlying rock still shape the vegetation of today. In spring and summer, the site comes alive with wildflowers that thrive in this lime-rich soil, whilst mounds of bare earth provide a glimpse of the busy, city-like yellow meadow ant colonies below. Lush yellow gorse surrounds the site, providing homes for stonechat and linnet, and the air is full of movement as bees and butterflies take full advantage of the flowers on show.



Image courtesy North Wales Wildlife Trust

The reserve is managed with the aim of maintaining its patchwork of grassland and heathland habitats. Dexter cattle graze the site and the gorse is cut on rotation to create a diverse age structure. Both actions control the spread of scrub, which would otherwise out-compete the less robust grassland herbs and flowers.

Our key species here are:

- Common rock-rose
- Grayling
- Linnet
- Brown argus
- Stonechat
- Small pearl-bordered fritillary

Fedw Fawr

Our last stop today is Fedw Fawr in search of black guillemots – they breed here - and hut circles.

Fedw Fawr is an area on the east coast of Anglesey, North Wales, situated just under four miles north of Beaumaris. It is part of the Arfordir Gogleddol Penmon Site of Special Scientific Interest and

is managed by the National Trust. The site covers 20 hectares most of which is made up of peaty gley soil.



Just by the car parking area, and before you descend the path to the beach, you will see the entrance to heathland that is worth taking the time to walk around.

This area is part of the Arfordir Gogleddol Penmon Site of Special Scientific Interest and is managed by the National Trust. The site covers 20 hectares and the cliffs around this area support the only black guillemot colony in Wales – but access to this site is very difficult and parking limited, so we'll need to take care.

Earthworks representing two later prehistoric type roundhouses are set on ground falling to the north, with a further example to the west.

The two roundhouses are represented by circular banks, 9.0m and 7.0m across overall. They are set about 12m apart and are up to 0.2m high. The larger example may have a small rectangular annex on the east side. The third roundhouse lies some 100m to the west and is represented by an 8.0m diameter bank 0.4m high. Between the two sites is a circular mound 6.0m across and 0.5m high. The roundhouses would have been impressive buildings. Their banks are probably the remains of drystone revetted walls from which would have risen conical thatched roofs perhaps 6.0m high. The two roundhouses may have lain within a walled or ditched settlement such as are characteristic of later prehistoric settlement.

We'll leave by 6.45 ready for our dinner at the Lobster Pot at 8.30.

Wednesday 22nd June

South Stack and Penrhosfeilw



View from South Stack

We leave at 9.30 to arrive South Stack ~10.15 for chough, nesting seabirds and flowers. There is a car park quite close to the Visitor Centre and Elin's Tower, so we'll head for that. After some concentrated sea and cliff watching and looking for chough fledglings we'll treat ourselves to tea and a snack at RSPB café before heading off to visit Penrhosfeilw standing stones if accessible – they're around ¼ mile from the road.

Very little is known about the origins of this pair of standing stones. Erected during the Bronze Age, they stand roughly 10ft/3m high and 11ft/3.3m apart. One persistent myth says that they were once part of a larger stone circle and that a cist (or grave) containing bones, arrowheads and spearheads was found between them, but no evidence has ever emerged to substantiate this story.



Penrhosfeilw standing stones

From there we'll head back to The Range for wildflowers and to see if we can spot the elusive hooded crow. We'll have our picnic lunch there.

Penrhosfeilw Common – also known as The Range – is part of RSPB South Stack Cliffs nature reserve. RSPB leases the land from Isle of Anglesey County Council and they manage and care for it in the best, most sustainable way for wildlife. Since the 18th century, about 80% of Britain's heathlands have been lost through development, agricultural improvements and abandonment. This means heathland like The Range is a very special place, rarer than a rainforest!

It is an essential habitat for the rare and threatened chough, the open low growing heath and grassland providing important feeding areas. It is also home to an important range of very rare plants and supports a diverse suite of invertebrates like the endangered and beautiful silver-studded blue butterfly. There are UK and European laws and guidance on how to manage these special places and we work closely with Natural Resources Wales and Anglesey County Council on how to best manage the land for all its special wildlife.

For generations humans grazed their animals here and harvested the heather. This shaped the habitat, creating patches of heath at different heights and of different ages. This varied structure supported all kinds of plants and animals. But farmers no longer cut the heath or graze animals here, so parts have become scrubby, dense and overgrown, leaving some of its unique inhabitants struggling to find the space to thrive.

Some management is essential in order to maintain healthy and thriving lowland coastal heathland, and at times RSPB needs to use machinery to cut some of the taller, denser sections of overgrown heather and vegetation. This work allows light to reach the soil and uncovers and rejuvenates wildflower seeds that have been buried for decades. Traditional grazing is also an important management tool which helps keep the heather and heathland plant regenerating. Grazing is a more sustainable and less heavy intervention, but there are areas on the Range which are difficult for animals to graze and cutting the heathland with machinery helps bring these areas back into good condition and makes them more accessible to grazing animals.

During cutting, and when the arisings are removed from site, there are times especially in wet weather, when the machinery can leave ruts. This looks unsightly but doesn't do any long-lasting damage to the ground. When rutting occurs, RSPB goes back to site and flatten the ruts out so that as the vegetation and plants regrow, the ruts no longer are visible. Due to recent restrictions, including wet weather, the restoration of the rutting has taken longer to carry out. Where rutting occurs that isn't on pathways, and doesn't affect walkers, it is common for these to not be flattened out. For thousands of years humans and grazing animals have disturbed soils in small events like these and the disturbed areas created valuable micro habitats, small niches for very specialised plants and insects. These specialist plants can only grow on areas where the land is disturbed, and so we leave the ruts away from the paths as they make great homes for these rare plants too. Sometimes nature isn't tidy, but it is wonderful in its variety.



Anglesey chough

Holyhead Harbour and Caer Gybi

After lunch we drive down to the not so picturesque Holyhead Harbour looking for black guillemots which are often reliably spotted there, and we'll also pay a quick visit to nearby Caer Gybi Roman Fort if there's time.

Dating back to the 3rd century, Caer Gybi's position on low cliffs overlooking the sea suggests it was part of a coastal network of defences, possibly linked to the late Roman watchtower at Caer y Twr on the summit of Holyhead Mountain. The walls of this rectangular fort are extremely well-preserved, standing up to 13ft/4m high and 5ft/1.5m thick. You can also see remains of four corner towers. Occupying a vantage point above the harbour, the 26ft/7.9m north-east tower is the most prominent, though the top section is a later rebuild possibly dating to the medieval period.

Cemlyn Bay

We leave Holyhead by 2.45 to arrive at lovely Cemlyn for 3.15pm; the amazing summer sandwich, arctic and common terns will be at their most raucous, and year round waders and wildfowl can be seen around the lagoon and at the adjacent shorelines such as oystercatcher, redshank, ringed plover and turnstone. Pelagic birds such as gannets might be spotted out to sea, especially in rough weather, as well as Manx shearwaters this time of year. We should also look out for seals which frequent the bay and the possibility of cetaceans which are sometimes spotted off Anglesey's north coast, particularly this time of year. If we look north east, we'll be rewarded with magnificent views out to the Skerries and their lighthouse, especially good in wild weather!

Wildflowers on the shingle spit will also be looking magnificent.

We return to Stable Cottage for 6.45 for dinner at The Lobster Pot at 8.30.

Welsh Wild *life* Breaks

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info@welshwildlifebreaks.co.uk
07887 861045



Stormy Skerries



Summer terns



Summer maritime flora

Thursday 23rd June

We leave at 9.15 to arrive at the Dingle, Llangefni for 10.00 to meet our hero Hugh. The Dingle Local Nature Reserve is a 10 hectare (25 acre) wooded valley rich in wildlife and history. It is bisected by the river Cefni, which comes from the Welsh word "cafn" meaning trough or hollow – a steep sided gorge formed by glacial meltwater during the last ice age hence one of its Welsh names Nant y Dilyw - Valley of the Deluge. Another name for the Dingle is Nant y Pandy - Brook of the Fulling Mill. This refers to the old wool processing plant situated upstream.

Much of the reserve is ancient woodland which led to it being known as the Dingle as early as the 1830s. Dingle literally means steep wooded valley. The reserve is home to a variety of wildlife including nuthatch and treecreepers, kingfishers, moorhens, woodpeckers, foxes, bats and dragonflies and of course, its famous red squirrels, which we hope we'll get to see and learn more about during our time here.



Cors Goch

When we leave Hugh and the squirrels. Our final stop will be at Cors Goch. A gem of a reserve situated in a shallow valley and fed by lime-rich water, Cors Goch reflects a long history of human activity. Used by the local community for centuries, it's a place where cattle grazed, reeds were cut and stone was quarried to make millstones. Today, the complex geology and wealth of habitats make it one of Wales's most diverse, colourful nature reserves: part of an internationally significant network of fens in Anglesey.

The higher ground of the reserve is made up of coarse, acidic sandstone and more alkaline limestone – you can find examples of these rocks in the many dry-stone walls around the nature reserve. The connection between rock, soil and plants is clearly visible at the surface: enjoy the brightly coloured heather and gorse and the scarce pale dog-violet and marsh gentian that thrive in the acid heathlands or, through the summer months, discover the wide range of amazing orchids that can be found associated with the limestone areas.



Gate to Cors Goch



Cors Goch orchid

At lower levels, Cors Goch's wetlands are home to many other rare plants, including insectivorous species, and their own collection of orchids. Here, a walk in spring is accompanied by the songs of grasshopper warbler, sedge warbler and reed bunting, attracted to the extensive wetlands for nesting. Dragonflies and damselflies can be seen from the boardwalk – flashes of colour darting above the wet ground beneath.



Sundew at Cors Goch



Broad bodied chaser at Cors Goch

We'll need to finally take our leave of lovely Anglesey by about 4.45 to get back to Abergynolwyn for our 8.00 pm dinner at the Salt Marsh Café.