

SATURDAY 30TH MAY 2015

LIFFEY HEAD BOG AND KIPPURE

Seven members gathered in the car park at the base of the path leading up to the Kippure transmitter mast (757m). The group first moved to a site near the car park on the east side of the military road where *Neottia (Listera) cordata* (Lesser Twayblade) is to be found, along with some classic blanket bog plants such as *Andromeda polifolia* (Bog Rosemary), *Empetrum nigrum* (Crowberry), *Trichophorum germanicum* (Deergrass) and *Eriophorum angustifolium* (Common Cottongrass). Unfortunately, this site is directly adjacent to a licensed turbary area and may eventually be obliterated by it.

The group took the time, before getting down to recording work, to study the various lichens and bryophytes to be found in the area. Four *Cladonia* lichens predominate in the blanket bogs of eastern Ireland, *C. pyxidata*, *C. portentosa*, *C. floerkeana* and *C. uncialis*. A number of *Sphagnum* species were seen, including *S. cuspidatum* ("drowned kitten" bog moss), *S. capillifolium* and *S. papillosum*. Other mosses found include *Polytrichum commune*, *Racomitrium lanuginosum*, *Pseudoscleropodium purum* and *Hylocomium splendens*.

An interesting effect of the path and road building in the area is that plants arriving as seeds with the gravel from the limestone midlands have been able to grow by the path where there is still a good quantity of limestone, even though the surrounding area is highly acidic, e.g., *Alchemilla vulgaris* agg. (Lady's-mantle) and *Leucanthemum vulgare* (Ox-eye Daisy).

Aquatic plant species can persist in the drains and ditches at the edges of the blanket bog, and the species include *Potamogeton polygonifolius* (Bog Pondweed), *Ranunculus omiophyllus* (Round-leaved Crowfoot) and *Equisetum fluviatile* (Water Horsetail).

At the summit of Kippure, we found abundant *Huperzia selago* (Fir Clubmoss) and good quantities of *Lycopodium clavatum* (Stag's-horn Clubmoss). The biting cold and wind at the summit slowly took its toll on members and as the group dwindled to four, we finally came across one small patch of the scarce Lycopod, *Diphasiastrum alpinum* (Alpine Clubmoss), frustratingly straddling the Dublin/Wicklow border.

To cap off a very fruitful day, and with only the leader remaining, *Vaccinium vitis-idaea* (Cowberry/Lingonberry) was found on the west face of Kippure, recorded here by JP Brunner in 1934. Brunner mentions that it was "becoming scarcer owing to the weathering of the peat", and indeed it is still scarce and is surrounded by highly eroded areas of peat.

Alexis FitzGerald