

Thursday 1st October 2020

**Marloes Mere and The Deer Park with Richard Ellis**, former Head Warden for Pembrokeshire National Trust and keen wildlife enthusiast.

An enthusiastic group of members met at The National Trust Beach Car Park at Marloes on a lovely sunny morning. Richard joined us and gave an overview of what we hoped to see during our morning walk.

We set off at a brisk pace along a track from which we could overlook Marloes Mere. Richard pointed out a Skylark overhead and lots of Swallows. The Swallows were making their way to Africa with their next stop being probably Cornwall. The songs of a Dunnock (previously known as a Hedge Sparrow) and Robins were clearly heard.

Trehill Farm, a National Trust property, could be seen across the Mere. Some years ago it took part in a trial to reacidify some of the surrounding land using sulphur from the oil refinery chimneys. Before leaving The Mere a Linnet's song was heard and a Buzzard soared above us.

We made our way across fields with Skomer coming into view and entered the Iron Age Watery Bay Fort. It is defended on its land side by a double set of semi circular ditches and embankments. The settlement platform was originally much larger but it has been eroded away by rock falls and landslides caused by wave action on the cliffs. Here we saw a Raven and some Choughs which Richard described as "Crows with a college education".

Gateholm could be easily seen just off the coast. The island was also a well defended settlement which has been explored by the archaeology Time Team. Over 100 iron age dwellings have been discovered.

Continuing our walk along the coast on this lovely clear morning Grassholm could just be seen in the distance. A hairy caterpillar was spotted on the path which has been identified as a Fox Moth Larva. Once again we saw flocks of Choughs, Jackdaws and Rooks overhead. A small Rock Pipit was pointed out as we made our way to The Deer Park.

Oystercatchers were in abundance and a Meadow Pipit put in an appearance. We were all hoping to see some grey seals and their small white pups. We were not disappointed seeing quite a number in two of the bays.

The mothers stay with the pups for about three weeks and then they have to fend for themselves.

At this point we started our return journey to the car park spotting a Stonechat, Wheatear, Devil's Coach Horse Beetle and a male Wall Brown Butterfly on the way. We had been very fortunate to see so much wildlife. Richard was thanked for sharing his knowledge and making the walk both interesting and informative.