

YSTRADFELLTE FIELD MEETING MAY 25 2011

The Programme Secretary organised a trip to the upper Neath Valley on Sunday 22 May 2011, and drove us the long way there and back with his usual patience. Our local guide was Tony Ramsay, who amongst all his other virtues could pronounce the Welsh names. Paul had arranged for a break in the drought so that we could see the famous falls of the Ystradfellte area in something like spate. He also supplied us with very helpful Resource Sheets.

In the wake of the first rainstorm of the day, Tony introduced the district in a car park beneath a fine rock face (Craig y Ddinas): the glaciers of the Ice Ages gouged out the Vale of Neath, forming rejuvenated rivers in deep wooded gorges. He showed us a remarkable area nearby where the Carboniferous Limestone was excitingly folded. Later, from the village of Pontneddfechan, we climbed the wooded valley of the River Pyrrdin, where outcrops of what older members will always think of as Millstone Grit, but is now known in this area as the Marros Group (Namurian), started to appear, and came to a fine waterfall (Sgwd Gwladus), where harder rock forms a step for the plunge down into the softer mudstone hollowed out downstream. There were erratic boulders in the flatter area at the top of the falls, brought down by the ice from the Brecon Beacons to the north.

After lunch, which we took in the van to avoid another storm, we walked down from higher ground towards the valley of the River Mellte, and so to a second waterfall (Sgwd Clun Gwyn); here we walked on slippery slabs above the fall and admired the fossilised tree roots (Stigmaria from Sigillaria). We then took a quite strenuous walk over the ridge to another valley, where the most spectacular fall of all awaited us (Sgwd yr Eira). We climbed down an even

steeper path to the river here, and could get right behind the water, so overhanging is the sandstone step.

Finally, we drove to a spot (Cwm Porth) where a river enters a limestone cave (Porth yr Ogof) to embark on an underground course.

We hope that a second trip to this varied and exciting area can be arranged. Tony promises a mystery tour.



Sgwd Gwladus