



## RINGWOOD NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

### West Cliff Walk

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025  
Weather: Overcast, Windy and Cold  
Walk Leader : Christine Storey  
Attendees: 8

Our first walk of 2025 started from West Overcliff Drive found to the west of Bournemouth town centre near to the district of Westbourne. We used roadside parking opposite Argyll Bowling Club, and also near to an entrance into Alum Chine. It got its name from the alum mining which took place locally in the 16th century. Alum is a fixative that was used in dyeing, tanning and painting. The mines eventually became uneconomical and closed in the mid-17th century. A chine is a steep-sided dry river valley. Alum Chine is the largest of the four chines in Bournemouth.

The chine was used by fisherman to store their boats and equipment until the late 19th century/early 20th century, when the present mixture of deciduous and evergreen woodland was planted. This woodland creates a great habitat for several species of birds including woodpeckers, summer warblers and thrushes. Insects such as dragonflies and butterflies are to be found, along with grey squirrels. It holds SSSI status.

We walked down the zig-zag path through the chine towards Alum Chine Beach which holds a Blue Flag, we passed the Tropical Gardens, planted in the early 1920's and subsequently replanted in 1996 after deteriorating. They contain a wide variety of tropical and sub tropical plants such as Chusan Palms, Yuccas and Pampas grasses, along with Hottentot-fig, Gazanias and African Daises all of which were in flower there. We discovered these gardens have very recently been closed off by BCP council, they deem the gardens are unsafe because of cliff slip fears due to erosion and a risk to public safety. They will remain closed whilst the council look at options for funding future stabilisation works. We met a group of the dedicated volunteer gardening team who informed us they remain determined to obtain access to maintain the gardens before they become overgrown and neglected for the public to enjoy.

Arriving at West Undercliff Promenade we walked in a westerly direction towards Sandbanks, reaching Canford Cliffs Chine and beach. Due to the adverse weather conditions and snow being forecast for later in the day, we returned back retracing our steps and walking into the very cold easterly wind. Afterwards we had a pleasant lunch at Cafe Argyll.

Birds	Flowering Plants
Herring Gull	Common Gorse
Wood Pigeon	Daisy
Feral Pigeon	Seaside Daisy
Carrion Crow	Hottentot Fig
Magpie	Sweet Alison
Shag	Smooth Sow-thistle
Black-headed Gull	Tree Heather
Pied Wagtail	White Comfrey
	Stinking Iris (fruits)