

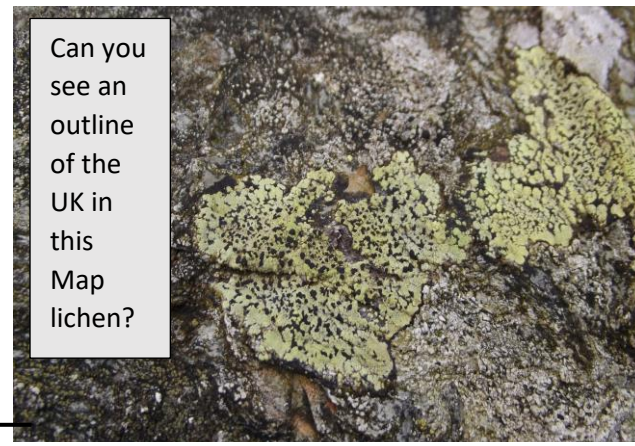
A guide to lichens growing on rocks near the Welcome Hub Car Park at the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust's Gilfach Nature reserve.

The Rock is my Pillow

The rocks at Gilfach host sheets of life. These include *Lichens* – a strange mixture of fungi whose threads enfold simple plant cells called algae. Together the community of living organisms in a lichen can survive harsh conditions and gather enough sustenance for life even on a rock face. 420 species have been found at Gilfach which is nearly a third of the species known in Wales.



Can you see an outline of the UK in this Map lichen?



Rhizocarpon geographicum The Map Lichen

This lichen is often used to date objects, as it is common, fairly easy to see and grows relatively fast for a lichen. It is used to track how fast glaciers are retreating and exposing moraine rock.

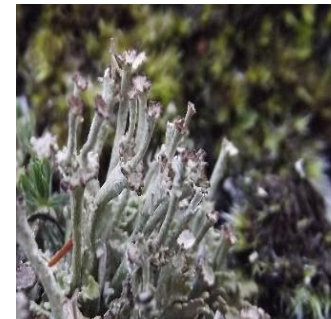


Start at the Welcome car park at Pont Marteg. Walk along the path and find the Lizard rock. Can you spot these nearby rocks and their lichens?

The rocks are Llandovery Shales and about 440 million years old.

Cladonias

Cladonia lichens are the main food source for Reindeer. They are so tough they can grow even in arctic conditions. *Cladonia portentosa* is used in floristry and even by model rail enthusiasts!

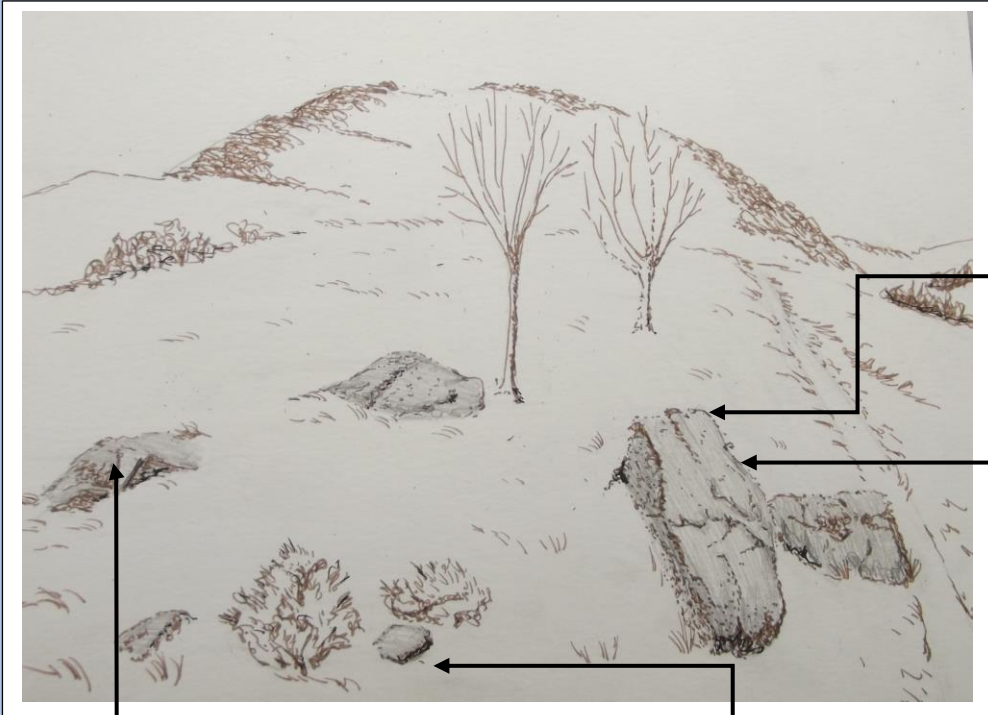


Cladonia subcervicornis. This grows on nearly all of these rocks.



Cladonia portentosa is tucked away under some heather.

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Xanthoparmelia conspersa
 makes usnic acid – which has potent antibiotic effects against bacteria like *Staphylococcus*.



Stereocaulon vesuvianum
 A common upland lichen often found on the top or edges of rocks or walls. Stereocaulons make a compound which gives orange and brown dyes.



Umbilicaria deusta.

Gilfach has a cluster of lichens which are more usually found further north. Lichens from this family have been used as a survival food in the Arctic, but they are very bitter and require a lot of preparation!



Parmelia saxatilis

Also known as Crottle, this lichen was used to produce the rusty orange and deep red colours of Harris Tweed, but crofters also used it to dye the wool for their knitted socks.

According to folk tradition, it was believed to be a cure for epilepsy, especially if it was found growing on an old skull.

Once mature, the centre of this lichen becomes covered with little finger-like projections, known as isidia. These break off and start clones of the lichen.

More information about Lichens.

Lichens can tell us about air pollution.
 See two citizen science projects using lichens;
 The OPAL Air survey; www.opalexplornature.org
 APIS www.apis.ac.uk

Lichens in the UK

The British Lichen society
www.britishlichensociety.org.uk
 Clare Dalby Wall charts – Lichens on Trees & Rocks
www.britishlichensociety.org.uk/resources/bls-publications. Two beautiful and inexpensive posters.



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