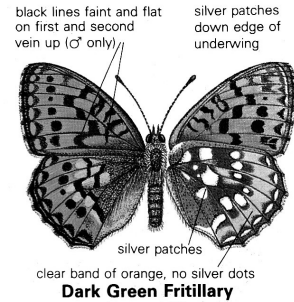


Brown, Green and Grey

On Sunday 20th July a band of 20 "Coastlanders" led by Peter Royle walked for 6 miles across Castlemartin Range in perfect weather - sunny but not too hot. It was a wonderful opportunity to see the dramatic coastline, fascinating geology, wonderful display of wildflowers, interesting birds and yes - a few shell holes and bits of artillery lying around! But perhaps the memory that remains with many of us was the sheer number of butterflies skipping over the grasses and flowers. For the first two miles or so, the ground was covered with a display of purple Betony and Greater Knapweed, interspersed with white Wild Carrot, and with a sprinkling of yellow supplied by various catsear's and trefoils. None of these plants were more than a foot high, whether due to the wind exposure, the poor soil or the dry summer I do not know, but they obviously suited the huge numbers of Meadow Browns and Dark-green Fritillaries.



The latter is a reasonably large and striking butterfly, deep orange and decorated with black tracery, with an underwing patterned with silver and dark-green patches hence the name. But the "dark green" bit is largely irrelevant as an ID feature because actually seeing one of these butterflies perched is the first problem - mostly they just fly rapidly over the flower tops without stopping - and seeing the underwings is pretty well impossible as they perch with their wings open. We were lucky enough to see one individual feeding on a Knapweed close to the path which gave most of us good views, but we have still never seen the "dark green" bit! You can see Dark-green Fritillaries nearer to home as there is quite a big population on the Deer Park - but it will be too late in the year by the time you read this!

The other interesting butterfly, which was common along the paths and rocky areas, was the Grayling. In complete contrast, this butterfly always settles with its wings tightly closed and facing the sun so that it shows no shadow. With the dappled grey underparts matching its stony perch it is invisible until it flies up from the path. Graylings are not at all common in the UK in general but they are quite common on the coast path here - another one to look out for next year!

Rosemary Royle