

Monmouthshire Meadows

Issue 30

Registered Charity No. 1111345

Spring 2019

Our aims are to conserve and enhance the landscape by enabling members to maintain, manage and restore their semi-natural grasslands and associated features

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Contact Us

To join MMG contact our membership secretary Marilyn Dunkelman marilyn@monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk tel. **01600 860031**, or use our [online membership form](#)

Contributions to the newsletter or items for the web site can be sent to Marilyn

Contact details for the rest of our Committee, as well as news and events, and information about our meadow reserves at Kingcoed and Maryland, are on our web site

www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk

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From the Chair

Stephanie Tyler

As ever the winter period is relatively quiet for the Meadows Group although planning for the AGM and the open meadows and other events in the summer has been taking place and we had some work tasks on reserves. The botanists are also organising visits to new members to look at their land.

Details of the forthcoming events are on the MMG website and also in this newsletter.

Work tasks: Ida's Meadow and Wet Meadow

We had a work party at Ida's Meadow at Maryland in November when Paul Mobbs-Morgan cut up some of the fallen willows that were on the meadow and volunteers moved all the brash and cleared brambles around the edges.

At Wet Meadow in Trellech there was a work task in February when MMG members and Gwent Wildlife Trust volunteers helped patch up the fence so sheep could not escape, cut back encroaching brambles and mow part of one bog, raking off the cut material. March 14th saw 18 MMG, Gwent Wildlife Trust and Wye Valley AONB volunteers back at Wet Meadow to plant hedge plants in gaps in some internal hedges. We obtained three quotes for double fencing these gaps and just before the work party Owain Rees fenced these gaps so sheep could not destroy our work. We managed to plant up



Hedge planting at Wet Meadow, Trellech

135 metres of new hedge. The hedge plants – Hazel, Hawthorn, Holly, Dog Rose and Field Maple were kindly supplied by the Long Forest Project, a Keep Wales Tidy and Woodland Trust initiative. My thanks in particular to Tom Ward-Jackson of the Long Forest Project for enabling this and also for providing payment for Owain Rees' new fences.



This rather disgruntled toad popped up from a hole during hedge planting at Wet Meadow (picture Carol Cooke)

Virtuous Well at Trellech

At the last meeting of the MMG trustees we heard that there seems to be no ownership on the land registry for the wetland at the Virtuous Well. It formerly belonged to Court Farm at Trellech. A small stream runs through the property, now much overgrown with willows but there is a small area of dry grassland and marshy grassland with an important population of the large Tussock Sedge *Carex paniculata*. Southern Marsh Orchids *Dactylorhiza paetermissa* and Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* are among the interesting plants present. MMG is exploring whether we could acquire this land as we have helped manage it with Exmoor Ponies belonging to Steph and Alan Poulter and our own Exmoors grazing the area off and on for at least the last decade.

New members

A list of recent members appears later in this newsletter but we hope to visit all of you if you would like us to, in order to carry out a survey of plants already present on your land and to suggest ideal management for whatever your aspirations are – hopefully a flower-rich meadow.

Sheep at Wet Meadow

MMG has continued with the same grazier, Eifion Davies from Ystradfellte, who had his sheep on Kingcoed Meadows prior to MMG buying the land. Eifion also this year brought 35 Welsh Mountain Sheep to graze the land at Wet Meadow. There have been problems though as Eifion lives a great distance away so our local warden Dick Coates has had to check them almost daily. He has also had to frequently cut sheep out from brambles and to retrieve escapees from neighbouring land. Sadly, two sheep have been killed by errant dogs despite Dick's huge efforts wardening and putting up notices for walkers to keep dogs on leads. I would like to register a huge thank you to Dick for all his work.

Ponies

Two other people to whom MMG owes its thanks are Steph and Alan Poulter who have been as ever taking our two Exmoor Ponies by horse-box to graze various sites between the autumn and spring. They have done this for more than 10 years and many members have benefitted from hosting Jacinth and



Lunch break from hedge planting with soup provided by Dick Coates (Isca didn't get any!)

Jemima. The ponies are now back at Jane Pannett's fields near Tintern where they spend the summer until needed once more by any member.

Website

If you haven't recently looked at the MMG website, you should do so as it has been completely re-vamped thanks to Marilyn Dunkelman. She did this when on holiday in Canada whilst her husband Jon was skiing! Many thanks Marilyn.

Finally, this will be my last report as I am stepping down as Chair at the forthcoming AGM. After more than 10 years in post I feel that it is time to pass the baton to somebody else with fresh energy and ideas. I am delighted that Rachel Morgan has agreed to stand as Chair on 30th April.

Steph Tyler

AGM & Spring Social Tuesday 30th April, 7pm at Llanishen Village Hall

Our Spring Social will be the usual great opportunity to meet fellow meadow enthusiasts and catch up on MMG activities. We shall have a short business meeting followed by our guest speaker then our usual buffet supper made by our committee and members.

Our speaker is botanist Elsa Wood, joint vice county recorder for the BSBI (Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland), and of course a familiar face to long-standing members of MMG. Elsa's illustrated talk this year will be *Changes in the Flora of Monmouthshire over the Last 100 Years*. (The pictures are a sneak preview.)

Llanishen Village Hall is situated on Church Road East in the village of Llanishen, just off the B4293 between Chepstow and Monmouth, post code NP16 6QE. There is a map on the hall's web site, on their Location page www.llanishenhall.org.uk

The supper is £14 for members, £17 for non-members. Members can attend just the talks at no cost, or £2 for non-members.

Please book in advance, online or contact Marilyn, telephone 01600 860031 or email marilyn@monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk.

Don't forget to tell us if you have any special or dietary requirements when you book (we

always have a good selection of vegetarian options on the menu).

We'll send details for online payment, or you can send a cheque, made payable to Monmouthshire Meadows Group, to The Beeches, The Narth, Monmouth NP25 4QL.

Please contact one of the committee members if you would like to arrange a lift.



Above: Harebell,
Campanula rotundifolia

Left: Dyer's Greenweed,
Genista tinctorial

Pictures by Elsa Wood

AONB Lower Wye Catchments Project

The Lower Wye Catchments Project covers four Wye tributaries between Penallt and St Arvans, working with landowners, land managers and the public to investigate practical sustainable solutions addressing land management, water run-off, access and invasive weed issues. The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is working in partnership through this project, which runs until December 2019, with Monmouthshire County Council (MCC), National Farmers Union Wales, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Monmouthshire Meadows and the Woodland Trust.



Himalayan balsam (top) and Japanese knotweed, invasive plants

The invasive weeds primarily targeted through this project are Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam, which spread rapidly and are a major weed problem, especially on riverbanks. These species cause significant problems to agriculture and nature conservation, suppressing other plant growth and leaving bare river banks in winter vulnerable to sediment erosion and input of silt into river systems. Control of these species can be most effective from the top of catchments, as although the plants are also transferred from site to site by humans and animals, their dispersal is generally via water in a downstream direction.

The watercourses in the project area primarily rise on the Trellech Plateau, which leads into more heavily wooded steep valley sides of the Wye Gorge. The land

and water management on the Plateau can impact the volume and rate of flow downstream towards the River Wye, and the villages of Whitebrook and Tintern. Through the project, advice will be available on catchment sensitive farming where we will be working with the Wye and Usk Foundation to promote features including hedges, stream buffer tree planting and attenuation pools.

One element of the project is working with MCC and flood risk consultants to explore how some longstanding surface water run-off related highway and access issues could be addressed, initially by investigating water flow source and pathways. The aim is to establish the impacts on specific highways with the hope of moving forward to a position where works to improve highway conditions can be considered.

Another focus of the project is to investigate the potential and benefits of Natural Flood Management (NFM). NFM is the principle of maintaining or restoring natural processes, aiming to help slow down the flow of water through a catchment, while improving habitat and water quality. NFM is increasingly seen as a valuable addition to conventional flood protection approaches, adding resilience to engineered works and incorporating wider benefits such as improved habitat connectivity, increased soil infiltration and reduced sediment loading to rivers.

The natural landscape has always played an important role in managing water, and NFM looks to



The presence of woodland and hedgerows can affect water flows through increased evaporation and soil infiltration



The benefits of woody debris include the creation of pools and faster flowing sequences, while progress of silt downstream can be impeded

restore natural features such as wet woodland, gully tree planting, enhancing naturally wet low points and maintaining the capacity of ponds and ditches to store and slow down the flow of water before it reaches communities downstream. Woody debris is a natural component of, and valuable throughout river systems. It falls naturally into the water from bankside trees, lodging in the channel or being carried by the flow until it settles, causing obstruction to flow. Woody debris is important for biodiversity, providing shelter and food for a range of fish and invertebrate species.

There are a number of NFM project trials across several catchments in the UK, and current research is suggesting that NFM can complement existing traditional flood defence assets by making catchments more resilient to climate change. Two of the most sustainable ways of managing flood risk are better land use planning and catchment-wide water storage. River catchment response is a function of key characteristics such as slope, soil, land-use and travel time through the catchment system, and success of NFM scheme interventions will also depend on these features, as well as the underlying geology.

We are looking for suitable sites within the project area to pilot modest water management work techniques such as hedge/tree planting, enhancing naturally wet low points and leaky dams, with a view to

reducing water run-off, holding water back in the upper reaches of catchments to slow the flow downstream and improving habitats. This work will be funded through a small capital works project grant, and opportunities will be available to apply for the AONB Landscape and Biodiversity Enhancement grants through the Sustainable Development Fund.

If you would like to be involved, can help provide locations of invasive weeds within the project area or would like to find out more about this project please contact Chris at projects@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

Chris Radford

Lower Wye Catchments Project Officer



Leaky woody dams are a natural flood management tool which aims to increase resistance to flow and divert water out to storage areas. This is an example from a NFM project in Stroud, where large trees were felled into and across the channel which also formed part of the woodland management thinning operations

Meadow Open Days 2019

This year we have three Open Meadows events, all free to attend and open to everyone. There will be guided flower walks, and in some cases refreshments. Maps and directions for all these locations can be found on the MMG web site.

Sunday 16th June, 2pm to 5pm Northridge House and the SAMFAL fields, Shirenewton

Northridge House meadow and woodland plantation covers about 5 hectares. The land was acquired by Ann and Michael Robinson in 2001 as neglected pasture, overgrown with bramble, bracken and encroaching trees. It faces south with fine views and is bounded by a stream with some mature trees including Small-leaved Lime.

The Shirenewton & Mynyddbach Fields Association Limited (SAMFAL) was formed in 2006 to protect and enhance the biodiversity and special ecological value of the 'Green Wedge' between the villages of Shirenewton and Mynyddbach. There are 11 acres of mixed habitat in two fields divided by a small stream with meadow areas occupying around 50% of the site.

Sunday 23rd June, 11am to 4pm Wet Meadow, New Grove Meadows and Ida's Meadow in the Trellech area

Wet Meadow is the reserve managed jointly by MMG and Gwent Wildlife Trust. It is comprised of five fields in the centre of Trellech, from Roman Way behind the doctors' surgery running adjacent to the B4293 north of Trellech. The fields are flower rich, including huge swathes of Heath Spotted-orchids, many Common Spotted-orchids



and a lovely patch of Early Marsh-orchid x Spotted-orchid hybrids, as well as hedgerows, a small area of oak woodland, an old seasonal pond surrounded by willows, two areas of bog and a boundary stream.

A short walk from the north of Wet Meadow is Gwent Wildlife Trust's **New Grove Meadows** reserve - Monmouthshire's Coronation Meadow. The northern two fields of this reserve are amongst the very best wildflower meadows in Britain – their grassland flora is indicative of an unbroken history of traditional management. In June there is an amazing profusion of Common Spotted-orchids. Twayblade, Adder's-tongue fern and Moonwort have also been recorded here.

A couple of miles away is **Ida's Meadow**, our reserve in Maryland, The Narth. This small area of grassland is full of Greater Butterfly-orchids. It was part of Four Acres, the land owned by Ida Dunn who took loving care of her meadows for many years. Ida passed away in 2014, aged 102, and her estate donated this part of the land to MMG.

Sunday 14th July, 2pm to 5pm Blaentrophy Meadows

The extensive meadows at Blaentrophy Farm near Grosmont were open in June last year when many members were able to see their thousands of Heath Spotted-orchids and hybrids and a host of other interesting plants. This year the owners, Ruaridh and Caroline MacDonald, have invited us back to see the fields later in the year when different flowers will be evident. These meadows form an SSSI and are probably the most important and largest area of species-rich grassland in Monmouthshire.

Meadow etiquette: When visiting wildflower meadows, please keep as far as possible to the paths and edges of the fields so that the hay crop is not flattened and the flowers are not damaged.

Help our Hedgehogs

Carol Cook of Hobos Hedgehog Rescue



Spring has arrived and hedgehogs are starting to emerge from hibernation. When they first emerge, they are often dehydrated and therefore appear wobbly. To help them, please consider leaving out a shallow dish of water and a nutritional meal of hedgehog biscuits or cat biscuits, please no milk, bread or mealworms.

During hibernation a hedgehog's metabolism is almost at a standstill. They are vulnerable at this time and should not be disturbed. They do wake fairly frequently during hibernation, but rarely leave their nests, called hibernacula.

Hogspital update

Injured and sick hedgehogs arrived at Hobos throughout winter. We have treated them for a variety of ailments - toxicity, malnutrition, broken legs, and eye and ear problems. Two hedgehogs were found trapped in school football-netting, so please lift nets after use. Sadly, despite everyone's best efforts, we have been unable to help some of the hedgehogs. We are ever conscious that we must provide treatment, care and rehabilitation that lead to the hedgehog being able to return to the wild.

We are delighted that all our autumn juvenile hedgehogs made it safely through winter and we have begun the lovely job of taking them back home.

Gardening hazards



With spring arriving, many humans turn their thoughts to the garden. Please check for hedgehogs before using garden machinery. We deal with numerous strimmer injuries throughout the year. Stickers like these are available for tool hire and landscape gardening companies and local councils, please email: info@britishhedgehogs.org.uk.

Please do not use slug pellets in your garden, slugs form part of the hedgehogs' diet, so not only do they harm hedgehogs, but also damage their food chain. Keep all netting a foot above the ground so the hedgehog can

travel underneath. Hedgehogs love compost heaps, so please take care when turning the heap.

If you see a hedgehog out during the day, they may need help, please ring your local rescue for advice.

The UK hedgehog population is in severe decline, but we can all help. Please consider making your garden wildlife friendly by providing hedgehog highways in their gardens, by cutting a small hedgehog-sized hole in any fencing. Hedgehogs travel between 1-2 km per night to feed, one garden is not enough.

Please help Hedgehog Champion Hugh Warwick to get to 500,000 signatures with his petition to make hedgehog highways in fences a legal requirement for new builds.

www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/hedgehog-highway-petition



Social media guru required

Can you spare 2-3 hours a week as a volunteer to manage and expand our social media pages, currently just Facebook and Twitter? Raising awareness and sharing information is a vital part of the work we do.

Events

It's Hedgehog Awareness Week from 5th to 11th May. To get involved order a free pack from www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk.

The Prickly Party in aid of Hobos Hedgehog Rescue is on Saturday May 11th in The Assembly Rooms St Briavels, please email us to book.

Any questions or advice please email hoboshedgehogrescue@gmail.com or ring Rosie on 07977 171743 or Carol on 07922 176767. We are entirely volunteer-run so may not answer straight away but we will return your call.

In an emergency contact your local vet or Vale Wildlife Hospital on 01386 882288. Follow us on Facebook at Hobos Hedgehog Rescue.

The Growth of Local Meadows Groups

In the years since I joined MMG in 2011, it seems to me that the plight of wildflower-rich grasslands has gradually become more widely recognised, and local groups formed by like-minded people have been starting up all across Wales and England. As an MMG committee member I've come to know a few of them, and after a bit of research here is a summary of the groups we know in our part of the UK.

It all started in 2001 when our close neighbour the *Parish Grasslands Project* (PGP) was formed. People came together with the aim of raising interest in, and knowledge of, the grasslands on the former commons of St Briavels, Hewelsfield and Brockweir, and they offered help and advice on grassland management within that area.

Following their lead, Monmouthshire Meadows Group started up in 2003, and, as you know, is now thriving with over 200 members.

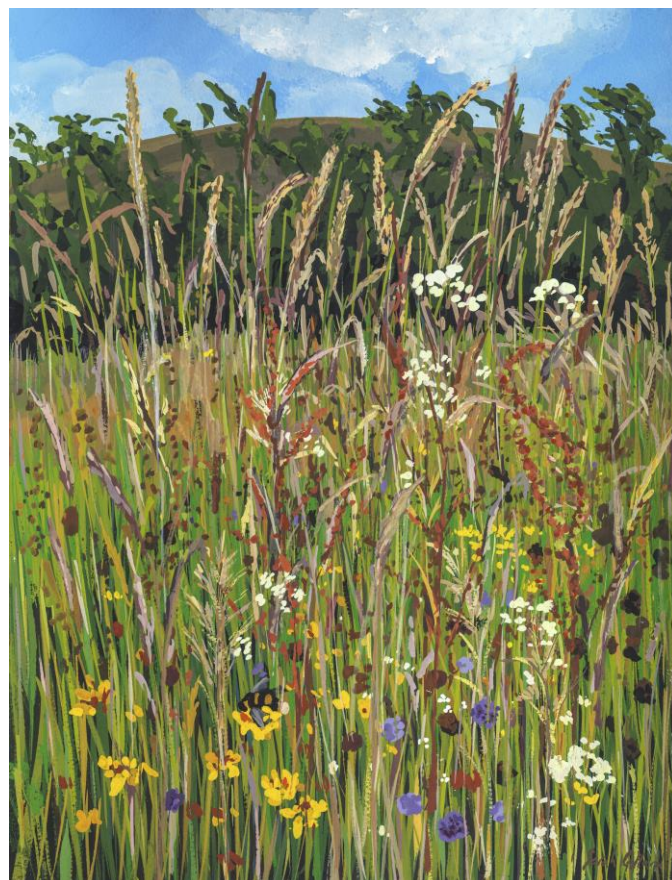
Across the Wye in the Forest of Dean, *Dean Meadows Group* was formed in 2012 by a group who felt that, apart from the PGP at St Briavels, little was known about how many wildflower-rich grassland areas still existed across the Forest and what state they were in.

Our other neighbour, *Herefordshire Meadows*, was founded in 2015, initially to arrange informal visits to grasslands in the county. They focus on holding events and discussions on how to manage, create and restore meadows, and building up a network of local people with relevant skills.

The *Carmarthenshire Meadows Group* was also established in 2015. They have the beautiful meadows of the National Botanic Garden of Wales in their area, where Steph Tyler and I met them just before their formal launch. Their neighbours *Ceredigion Meadows Group* are much more recent, forming in 2018. Supported by Plantlife, they held their first events last summer at Denmark Farm Conservation Centre, Betws Bledrws (www.denmarkfarm.org.uk).

In Shropshire, the *Marches Meadows Group* is based in the Stiperstones and Cordon Hill area of the Welsh Marches. They formed in 2015, as a spin-off from a Heritage Lottery funded Landscape Partnership Scheme in the area, and delegates visited MMG at the time to find out how we do things. Steph Tyler spoke at their meeting last year and met more of their members,

including artist Sarah Gillard who specialises in colour, and has some stunning pictures of meadows (below, and more can be seen on www.sarahgillard.com.)



'Gatten' by Sarah Gillard

Further afield in Dartmoor, *Moor Meadows* was established in 2015 (that was a popular year). They started with a meadows email exchange so members could get in touch with each other, and their focus is very much on promoting networking and cooperation within the group.

In North Wales we know of a new group forming near Bangor and another on the Llŷn Peninsula where the small islands of semi improved grassland are especially important for foraging cought.

We also hear of groups in other parts of the country, including The Weald and Worcestershire, and there are probably others we haven't yet come across.

It is interesting to see how the different groups develop, coming up with new ideas and projects that suit their particular situation. All offer support and advice to members, some have machinery to loan or offer a work party service, and most arrange training courses, meadows visits and botanical surveys of members' land.

Groups have also developed more specialised services. Some run seed exchanges, some co-ordinate green hay donor and recipient sites (hay from a flower-rich grassland is strewn on a sparser field to improve its diversity). The *Marches Meadows Group* takes green hay exchange very seriously, not just putting people in touch with each other but ensuring a good match between the fields in terms of soil, altitude, and existing management to maximise the chances of success.

Moor Meadows has created a Google map for members to indicate the position of their land, building up an overview of wildflower grasslands on Dartmoor. This allows them to see where wildlife corridors could link neighbouring meadows, and encourages neighbours to work together: www.moormeadows.org.uk/map.

Other groups have more high-profile projects in partnership with larger organisations. *Herefordshire Meadows* is involved in one of six Nature Recovery Network pilots across the country in a project to create more meadows, linking pollinator habitats across mixed farming land, that arose from the national Coronation Meadows project.

The organisational structures adopted are different too, although while MMG chose to become a registered charity, most have remained more informal networks. What these groups have in common however, other than their main aims and a love of wildflowers and nature, is that they developed from the grassroots of a community (with apologies for the unintended pun). Sometimes the group started as a project by an existing organisation or, more commonly in the above examples, people organised themselves into a viable, voluntary community group. They often have support from an established organisation such as their local Wildlife Trust, their regional Plantlife office or (in the case of The Weald) their AONB, but the impetus is from local activists.

While there are undoubtably challenges, such independent voluntary groups have advantages over larger more established charities. They are self-sustaining and do not rely as much on short term grant-funded projects which peter out when the funding ends, and they can be flexible and innovative. They all depend, however, on active and willing volunteers, led by a few committed individuals who provide the energy and skills to keep a group going, and without whom the group would not get off the ground.



Picture courtesy of Llŷn Meadows Group, used on the front of their leaflet. The artist is Rachel Porter

Of course, how the group organises itself is not particularly important. It is what they achieve that counts, and that has been to raise the profile of wildflower-rich grasslands across the country. Thank goodness for those inspirational people!

Marilyn Dunkelman

Not all the groups mentioned have web sites. Here is a list of those that we know of:

- Carmarthenshire Meadows Group:
www.carmarthenshiremeadows.com
- Ceredigion Meadows Group:
www.facebook.com/groups/1247709428705073
- Dean Meadows Group:
www.deanmeadows.org.uk
- Herefordshire Meadows:
www.herefordshiremeadows.org.uk
- Marches Meadow Group:
www.marchesmeadowgroup.com
- Moor Meadows:
www.moormeadows.org.uk
- Parish Grasslands Project:
www.pariahgrasslandsproject.org.uk
- The Weald Meadows Group:
www.highweald.org/look-after/weald-meadows-network

Long Forest Project Update

Tom Ward-Jackson

It's been a busy autumn and winter of hedgerow work in Monmouthshire, one of four focus areas for the Long Forest hedgerow project across Wales. The project is a partnership led by Keep Wales Tidy with the Woodland Trust that aims to raise the profile of hedgerows as an important feature of our landscape.

Several thousand hedge whips have been planted, many metres of hedge laid, and tree seeds gathered and sown in nursery beds. Many volunteers have been involved, learning about hedges, their value, and how to look after them. Next winter will be the last within the three-year project. Overall targets for planting and volunteer engagement are already almost reached so there'll be some more emphasis on areas including surveying and research projects.

Monmouthshire Meadows Group members have worked at Wet Meadow, Trellech, to renovate hedge lines there planting approximately 700 whips (*pictured on the front of this newsletter – editor*). The ground was painstakingly prepared beforehand and has been fenced afterwards to protect the new hedge plants from livestock. Long Forest was able to supply the plants and rabbit protection as well the fencing on this project.

Other Long Forest planting projects include a stretch on the estate at Dingestow with Gwent Wildlife Trust, continuing infill planting beside the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal with the Canal and River Trust, Monmouthshire County Council planting at Rogiet Countryside Park and two projects on private land gapping up old hedge lines. All these have renovated

hedge and boundary lines to improve habitat value and connectivity.

Cardiff Conservation Volunteers have been laying hedgerows on two sites in the county. Their volunteers really enjoy this work and developing their skills in it. Some members were able to join a LANTRA accredited hedge laying training course put on by Long Forest. The aim was to build skills among those who would be leading other volunteers on future projects.



Participants on the LANTRA accredited training course

Volunteers from Branch gardening group were trained in gathering tree seed and propagation on a course at Mardy Park in Abergavenny last autumn. Seed was gathered and processed and after stratifying over the winter has just been sown this Spring. It will produce locally sourced hedging stock for the project and will go for planting in hedgerows identified as in need of renovation. Last year's sowings from bought in seed are looking well and will be ready to be planted out next season.

A big priority in this last summer of the project will be encouraging use of our Long Forest survey app which will engage people in investigating hedgerows and enable us to build a picture of hedgerow condition in Wales. It is easy to use and a great way to explore hedgerows in your area. We'd be keen to get a good body of records in Monmouthshire. You can download it free from Google Play or Apple app stores by searching for 'Long Forest'.

If you need any help getting started individually or perhaps as part of a group (a walking group perhaps) please get in touch. If you are a group who may gather



Volunteers working beside the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal

a lot of records in a particular area we can produce a report on your results which may help with planning future work to improve the hedgerow network.

We'll also be working on some 'historical' research projects. Working with people in the Llanthony valley we aim to gather oral history about hedge management, particularly hedge laying. We will be working with a couple of Monmouthshire schools to investigate old hedge field hedgerows still present in built up areas.

Please get in touch if you would be interested in volunteering on projects like hedgerow planting, hedge laying, tree nursery work, surveying or historical research. Contact the Monmouthshire project officer Tom Ward-Jackson by email Thomas.ward-jackson@keepwalestidy.cymru or on 07766 754 894.

Find out more about the Long Forest hedgerow project at www.longforest.cymru

Leaflet Reprint Launch at Monmouth Bee Festival

MMG has received funding from The Pollinator Fund to purchase new display material, including display boards, posters, and a revised version of our leaflet *Management of Grasslands for Wildlife*.

The leaflet, written by Steph Tyler and originally designed by Clare Adamson, includes essential information on managing species-rich grasslands. It includes all the important points about caring for your hay meadow or pasture, and answers the questions that are asked most often about encouraging wildflowers and the wildlife they support onto your land.

The Pollinator Fund was set up by Monmouthshire County Council's Operations Department to help deliver environmental improvements as part of a larger local



authority revenue grant from the Welsh Government's Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate. The Council's Operations Department set aside funding specifically for the benefit of pollinators. Many of Monmouthshire's community groups have received funds for projects that actively help reverse the decline in pollinators.

The display will be used at the launch of the **Nature's Not Neat** campaign at **Monmouth Bee Festival** on 19th May, and you can [download a pdf version or the leaflet from our web site](#).

The original leaflet was published in 2013, funded by Gwent Wildlife Trust with a grant from Monmouthshire Natural Assets Project.

Members' Meadows

Fox Moth Caterpillars

MMG members Teri and Matt Lloyd have sent pictures of these two-inch long caterpillars (right). They found dozens of them on their meadow and near their lake, near The North.

These striking caterpillars belong to Fox Moths, a fairly common species on moors and heaths and in marshy grassland. The eggs are laid in the early summer on heather or bilberry or on plants such as Meadowsweet in wetter areas, as here. The caterpillars then feed up from June to September when they hibernate on or just below the ground. In the spring they emerge but do not feed and they soon pupate with the adults emerging in May/June to complete the life cycle again.

Please take photos of your discoveries in your meadows this spring and summer for our autumn newsletter. We love to hear about your successes!

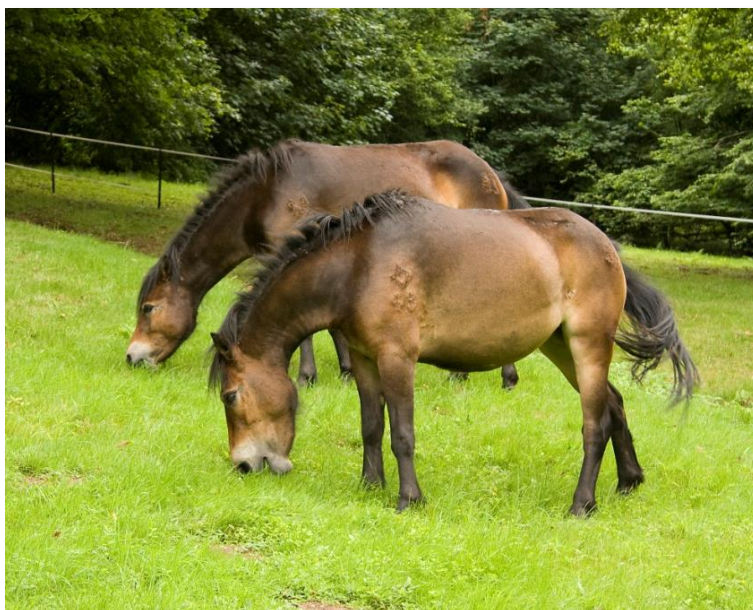


Our Ponies and Their Guardians

Since our two MMG Exmoor Ponies, Jacinth and Jemima, were purchased from their breeder as yearling fillies in the autumn of 2006, Steph and Alan Poulter have been caring for them, moving them between members' fields several times a year, visiting them on site and generally looking after their welfare. Steph is an expert on Exmoor ponies and has been actively involved with the national Exmoor Pony Society for many years. She is currently their President.

Exmoors are particularly good for our fields as they have large, deep-rooted teeth which give a clean bite due to incisors that meet like a pair of pliers, well adapted for grazing coarse vegetation. They feed mainly on grasses but also eat rushes, heather, and gorse, and will eat some of the troublesome coarser plants that cattle and sheep will not eat.

We are incredibly grateful for all the work Steph and Alan do, all on a voluntary basis. But there are expenses involved in taking care of the ponies and



Jacinth and Jemima hard at work!

moving them around, which is funded by MMG. That is why we appreciate donations to help cover the costs.

If any MMG members are interested in getting some help from Jacinth and Jemima they should contact the MMG committee.

A Bench for Wet Meadow

St Nicholas Church, Trellech has been selling off (with consent) some of its pews, including these two from the chancel made 100 years ago in oak. They turned out to be just what Monmouthshire Meadows Group wanted to stand on the brow of Wet Meadow, where there is 360-degree view of the surrounding

countryside. We have been planning to install a bench on this spot for some time, as part of the commemoration for our former Chair Diana Bevan who sadly died in 2016. (In 2017 the first Wet Meadow hedgerow was planted in her honour.) MMG members Will Wright (who took this photo), Dick Coates & Derek Sanderson put them in place; not without a struggle!



Welcome to our New Members

We are delighted to welcome these new members to the group:

Hayley Coristine, Tintern; Steve & Jane Gilliard, The Narth; Paul Gorrigan, Undy Julia Green, Hendre; Robert & Sue Maloney, Llanfoist; Gill Mackley, Gilwern; Lucy Prichard, Bettws Newydd; Richardson, Trellech; Lynn Williams, Devauden; Diana Willson, The Narth

Converting MMG to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

The MMG Committee, who are trustees of the charity, propose that MMG should convert to a 'Charitable Incorporated Organisation' (CIO). This is a relatively new type of charitable structure that allows an organisation to become a corporate body, giving the trustees 'limited liability' without having to become a limited company. This means the organisation itself can own assets, enter into contracts and so on, without trustees being individually liable for any financial loss if the charity collapses. At present, MMG is an 'unincorporated charity' which means individual committee members are liable for any debts, and the charity itself cannot own property other than by appointing the Charity Commission to hold the land in its name.

Before 2013, to become incorporated, charities had to become limited companies. They were then subject to monitoring by both the Charity Commission and Companies House, and had to comply with two regulation regimes, with two sets of returns to file and a great deal more paperwork to do. Charities which become CIOs are monitored only by the Charity Commission, with much less red tape and other costs associated with reporting and governance.

Since it was established as a charity in 2005, MMG has had the good fortune to become a significant landowner through the purchase or bequest of two outstanding areas of high species-diversity meadowland (Kingcoed Meadows and Ida's Meadow). Being a CIO will allow MMG to directly hold the title to its land holdings, rather than indirectly through the UK Charity Commission.

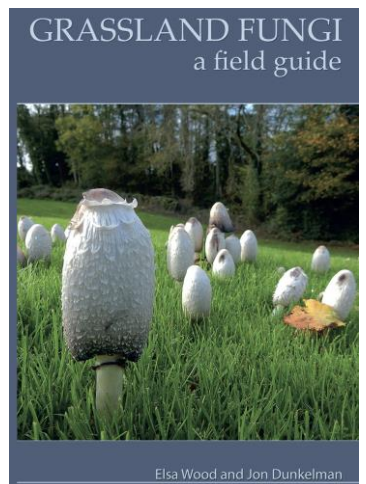
There will be no change to the objectives, purpose or operations of MMG. Basically, being a CIO has the advantages of being incorporated without the disadvantages of being a limited company.

Conversion to a CIO will require amendment of the MMG Constitution, which requires approval of two-thirds of MMG Members present at a General Meeting. The draft proposed MMG Constitution will eventually be circulated to members and made available on the MMG website (together with the existing constitution which is already available), but the plan is to vote just on the intention to convert to a CIO at the AGM on 30th April then look more closely at the constitution with a view to presenting it for a members' vote in the Autumn.

Grassland Fungi: A Field Guide

Our well-reviewed field guide, compiled by MMG members Elsa Wood and Jon Dunkelman with photographs from Keith Moseley, Malcolm Schuyll and others, published by MMG. Available to buy from www.nhbs.com retail price £19.99.

Also available at MMG events at a special price (£10 to members, £15 to non-members), but we are not able to post copies



Monmouthshire Meadows Group is grateful for all the help both financial and physical given by our members. We are also indebted to the following for their sponsorship and help: **Tom Ward-Jackson of Keep Wales Tidy; Sustainable Development Fund, a Natural Resources Wales initiative in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); Gwent Wildlife Trust; Monmouthshire Natural Assets Project; Bee-friendly Monmouthshire; Raglan Community Council**



The following sponsors assisted with the purchase of Kingcoed Meadows: **Biffa Award, The Alan Evans Memorial Trust, The Banister Charitable Trust, Foyle Foundation, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Habitataid, Ricardo Crawley Trust, New Grove Trust and Waterloo Foundation.**

Supported by



Dates for your Diary

Check our web site www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk for details, location maps and updates

Saturday 13th April: the first **Wildflower Walk** of the year with Monmouthshire Botany Group*, looking at woodland at St Prides and Magor services

Tuesday 30th April: Our **AGM and Spring Social** at Llanishen – details in this newsletter

Wednesday 15th May: **Wildflower Walk** with Monmouthshire Botany Group*, in the Angiddy Valley

Sunday 19th May: **Monmouth Bee Festival**, organised by Bees for Development and Bee Friendly Monmouthshire to celebrate World Bee Awareness Day, with stalls and activities in the Nelson Garden in Monmouth, 10am to 4pm

Monday 3rd June: **Grasses, Rushes & Sedge** at Wet Meadow, Trellech. Gwent Wildlife Trust course 10am to 1pm, £25 non-members of GWT, £15 GWT members. Booking essential**

Tuesday 4th June: **Meadow Plant Identification** for Beginners at Pentwyn Farm, Penallt. Gwent Wildlife Trust course 10am to 12.30pm, £15 non-members of GWT, £10 GWT members. Booking essential**

Thursday 6th June: **Conservation Farming** at Pentwyn Farm, Penallt. Gwent Wildlife Trust course 10.30am to 1pm, £150 non-members of GWT, £5 GWT members. Booking essential**

Tuesday 11th June: **Meadow Plant Identification** for Intermediates at Pentwyn Farm, Penallt. Gwent Wildlife Trust course 10am to 12.30pm, £15 non-members of GWT, £10 GWT members. Booking essential**

Saturday 15th June: **Wildflower Walk** with Monmouthshire Botany Group*, in Loysey Wood

Saturday 15th June: **Focus on Wildflowers** – A photography course in nature at Pentwyn Farm, Penallt. Gwent Wildlife Trust course 10am to 2pm, £35 non-members of GWT, £30 GWT members. Booking essential**

Sunday 16th June: **MMG Open Meadows** in the Shirenewton area - details in this newsletter

Sunday 23rd June: **MMG Open Meadows** in the Trellech area - details in this newsletter

Sunday 23rd June: **Wetlands in Bloom Walk** at Newport Wetlands Centre, 2pm to 4pm. Booking not required, no charge for walk, parking £3 (free to RSPB members)

Thursday 27th June: **Rare Plants of Henllys Bog**, a guided walk around Gwent Wildlife Trust's Henllys Bog SSSI reserve near Cwmbran, 10am to 12.30pm, £15 non-members of GWT, £10 GWT members. Booking essential**

Saturday 13th July: **Wildflower Walk** with Monmouthshire Botany Group*, at the Canal at 14 Locks and Allt-yr-yn

Sunday 14th July: **MMG Open Meadow** at Blaentrophy Farm, Grosmont – details in this newsletter

Saturday 10th August: **Chepstow Show**, MMG will be in the Gwent Energy tent with Bee Friendly Monmouthshire and others

Wednesday 14th August: **Wildflower Walk** with Monmouthshire Botany Group*, in the Black Mountains, at Hatterall Hill or Grwyne Fawr

Saturday 14th September: Final **Wildflower Walk** of the year with Monmouthshire Botany Group*, at Cwm Filkins and the fields near Blackwood

***Monmouthshire Botany Group:** The Monmouthshire Botany Group was established in 2013. It has more than 30 participants with between 10-20 attending field meetings. All are welcome to join the group and meet fellow and aspiring botanists. The programme of walks shown here is provisional as some venues may be changed. Days start at 10am continuing until about 3-4pm. All days are for helping to improve ID skills and recording for Atlas 2020. Booking is essential, and you will be sent the exact meeting point. Contact Steph Tyler steph_tyler2001@hotmail.com

****Gwent Wildlife Trust** runs events throughout the year. We have selected those that are mostly meadows related. A full list of their events, booking details and locations can be found on www.gwentwildlife.org/whats-on