

## Conserving and Restoring Wildflower-rich Grasslands in Monmouthshire

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### Contact Us

For information about the group or to join MMG contact our membership secretary Marilyn Dunkelman [marilyn@monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk](mailto: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

Other contact details as well as news and events, and information about our meadow reserves at Kingcoed, Maryland and Trellech, are on our web site [www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk](http://www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk)

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### From the Chair

Well, another summer over with a bang. We had another long dry summer and the hay in our meadows was cut in good time. But not before Carys of the Gwent Wildlife Trust was able to head out and collect seed with the harvester which we jointly own.

Despite the covid uncertainties we had two lovely open days in June - very many thanks to our members: Justine & David Scouller at Elm Farm and Martin & Patricia Milling at Blue Door on Far Hill, and David Hathaway at Trewyn in Llanishen who all hosted our Open Meadows on 13<sup>th</sup> June, and Hamish Sandison of Llanllowell House, near Usk who was the host on 27<sup>th</sup> June. A special thank you too to Andy Karran of Gwent Wildlife Trust for spending his Sunday taking MMG members around Hamish's site and the GWT Springfield reserve next door.

Of the agricultural shows, all but the Usk Show was cancelled this year, and again there we shared a tent with Bee Friendly Monmouthshire. This year we were positioned in the thick of it amongst the farm machinery and animals. We also had a very busy day at the Monmouth Bee Festival in August. Committee member Pam had arranged a colouring activity for children which was a great success.

Recently, with the help of a grant from the Wye Valley AONB, members have been able to attend scything courses arranged as a joint project between MMG and the Monmouth Green Spaces group. Trainer Andrea Gilpin ran three sessions, with hosts Judith Carruthers and Clare Catto providing the land to scythe.



Learning to Scythe with Andrea Gilpin (photo Clare Catto)

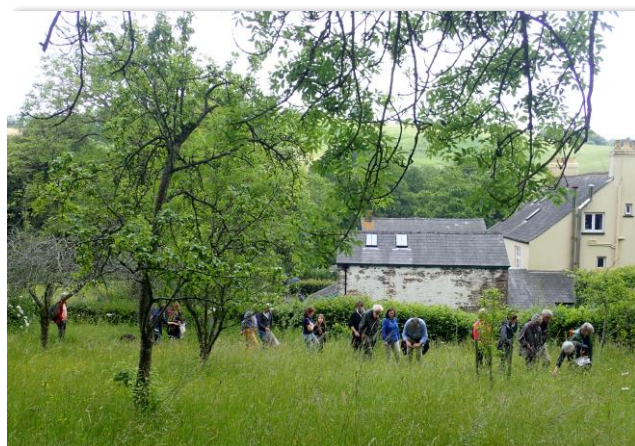


Back in April, our AGM this year was via Zoom, with a fascinating talk on Orchids by Sean Cole, co-author of Britain's Orchids published by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (one of the best botanical field guides around). This was our first AGM as a Charitable

Incorporated Organisation, following a vote at the previous AGM in October 2020. With two AGMs in quick succession, we can now wait until next April for the next.

Thanks to Steph and Alan Poulter's care, Jacinth and Jemima, our Exmoor ponies, spent their summer with Louisa Stafford at Whitebrook. They are now back at Brook Barn.

David Llewellyn and Trevor Tyler-Batt have had an especially busy time cutting various areas of grassland with our Tracmaster. We would like to remind members that David and Trevor are volunteers, and can only do so much. When they are able to cut members' land, it is appreciated if a donation can be made to MMG to help



*Open Day at Llanllowell House (Jon Dunkelman)*



*Some of the masterpieces produced at Monmouth Bee Festival by our young artists*



*Preparing for the crowds at the start of the ACE Festival*



*Open Day at David Hathaway's meadow*

cover the costs of maintaining the machine, and of transport.

David spent some time cutting and helping to clear the orchard by the allotments in Monmouth in preparation for the Action for Climate Emergency Festival in Monmouth at the end of September. Steph gave a talk at the festival, on location at Wonastow Pond, and MMG had a stand on the final day, at which Jon Dunkelman and Elsa Wood put on a lovely fungi display, which led to record local sales of their field guide. The two cut and collect machines owned by Monmouthshire County Council were on show as well. They are apparently very popular with the drivers and it is good to see that they have been put to good use. I have noticed mown roundabouts and verges looking very neat with the clippings dumped to one side.

*Rachel Morgan*

*The scything courses were supported by the Sustainable Development Fund, a Welsh Government initiative in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)*



## The Right Tools

As well as being able to purchase scythes from Andrea Gilpin after the training courses, MMG organised the purchase of some traditional hay rakes, from The Natural Gardener ([www.thenaturalgardener.co.uk](http://www.thenaturalgardener.co.uk)) for our members.

Made from ash, with tough birch teeth, the rake is surprisingly light, and the wide head makes a big difference when clearing cuttings from a large area, compared with a normal garden rake.

Or you could make your own, as Ian Rabjohns suggested, sending in a picture of his home-made rake, showing a simple repair with 5" nails when the end prongs broke (as they are prone to do).

The scythes are normally sold after the course, when you know more about what is best for you. We hope to organise some more courses next year, but for further information contact Andrea via [www.wildmeadow.co](http://www.wildmeadow.co).



*Ian Rabjohns'  
home-made rake*



*The woodpecker would spend ages trying to wedge acorns in to the cracks in the telegraph pole. He also tried a leaf as shown, but as soon as he had gone the blue tits would arrive and remove them.*



*Buzzard perched on a hay bale*



*Meadow management the traditional way  
(Clare Catto)*

## Tales from Trellech Meadow

Some pictures from the Wet Meadow reserve in Trellech, taken by Ray Francis who lives by the meadow.



*Trellech Primary School class heading for their outdoor lesson at the famous Pew*



*The local Walking Group at the Pew*

## From the Survey Team

Sheelagh Kerry, Elsa Wood, Wendy Tyler-Batt and I have visited over 40 new members and a few re-joined members this spring and summer. Some have small patches in their gardens where they want a wildflower meadow, whilst others have either large, long-established meadows or fields where they would like to encourage more wildflowers and insects.

It is a real privilege to visit some of these privately-owned patches from Monmouth in the east across to Cross Ash and Grosmont and into the Black Mountains as far as Capel-y-ffin, as well as others further south in the county. Some turned out to be full of interest, none more so than two fields at Crosshands near Llanosy where a staggering 37 indicator species of dry grassland and nine more of marshy grassland were found; these

included large swathes of Dyer's Greenweed and other increasingly uncommon species such as Pepper Saxifrage, Burnet Saxifrage, Field and Devil's-bit Scabious and Sneezewort. We hope to arrange an Open Day at these fields next year.

Among the memorable visits was one to a large garden meadow at The Fedw, Devauden where we noted over 200 Twayblades. This area had been a regularly mown lawn 10-15 years ago. Other highlights for us were fields at Bully Hole Bottom, at Trostrey near Gwehelog, on the sides of the Graig near Cross Ash and small fields or garden meadows near Itton, Newchurch and Llanishen. It is heartening how many small wildlife-rich patches remain to be discovered.

*Steph Tyler*

## Climate Change - Meadows Matter

There is, currently, no greater threat to life on Earth as we know it than climate change. Many governments are promising tree planting as a mitigation measure, which is clearly important, but planting the wrong trees in the wrong place can actually make things worse. It is estimated that 30% of the earth's carbon is stored in grassland carbon sinks - meaning species-rich grasslands are every bit as important as forests and other ecosystems in the fight against greenhouse gases. Yet the role of species-rich grassland in carbon storage is often overlooked.



Trees are vitally important in the fight against climate change, but destroying species-rich grassland to plant trees can be counter-productive. Digging up grassland releases carbon dioxide from the underground store, and the overall effect can be a net increase in atmospheric climate changing gases.



*Quaking Grass (Jon Dunkelman)*

With COP26 on the horizon, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation and Plantlife have together formed **Grasslands+**, with the aim of promoting species-rich grassland as part of a nature-based solution to storing CO<sub>2</sub>. The Grasslands+ coalition wants to show the public and politicians that protecting grasslands on a worldwide level is crucial in the fight against climate change. They are seeking international protections for grasslands to mitigate the effects of climate change, increase biodiversity and ensure that these areas of natural beauty are preserved for future generations to enjoy.

You can support them, by writing to your MP, talking to others and passing on the message that, for the sake of the planet, protecting and enhancing grasslands, savannahs, plains, heaths, steppes and meadows must be part of both the discussions and the outcomes of COP26.

Find out more on [grasslandsplus.org.uk](https://grasslandsplus.org.uk)



## Grassland Fungi Photo Resource

Last October MMG published the second edition of our Grassland Fungi Field Guide. This year Elsa and Jon have been sorting and categorising their photographs in order to create an online picture reference site, which has recently been launched on Flickr.

The photo resource is free to access and designed to complement the field guide, rather than serve as an independent identification guide (for which you need more information than can be gleaned from a photograph). It is organised following the structure of the book.

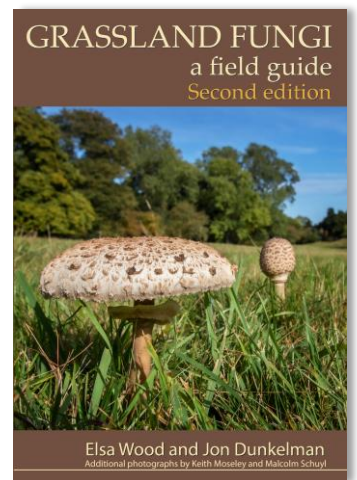
There is a link from the MMG web site or use this link:

[www.flickr.com/photos/135133712@N05/collections/72157717749651651](http://www.flickr.com/photos/135133712@N05/collections/72157717749651651)

The team will continue to survey and add images to the site so it is continuously improving. They want to thank the additional photographers, in particular Keith Moseley, Malcolm Schuyt and Debbie Evans, for agreeing to their photos being included, and Abigail Carruthers who did a tremendous amount of work preparing the photos for publication.



The book itself, *Grassland Fungi: A Field Guide* by Elsa Wood and Jon Dunkelman is available from our distributors NHBS [www.nhbs.com](http://www.nhbs.com) for £19.99 plus postage (ISBN 978-0-9576424-2-3). All proceeds go to Monmouthshire Meadows Group.



## Welcome to our New Members

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

Lucy Blaxland & Hugh Rock, The Hendre  
George Boyce, Monmouth  
Emma Cepek-Beare, Earlswood  
Tom Chadwick, Cross Ash  
Patricia Chisholm, Monmouth  
Frances Cloud, Cross Ash  
Coleford Town Council,  
Alan & Jean Collingbourne, Llandenny  
Ruth Corben, Llandogo  
Jonathan Dimpleby, Devaudan  
Josephine Foubert, The Narth  
Clare Fyfe, Trellech  
Steve Greateorex-Davies, Catbrook  
Linda Green, Maypole  
Bridget Handley, Dixon  
Jenny Hickey, Cleddon  
Amy Hodgson, Forest Coal Pit

Alison Jenkins, Itton  
Ned Jones, Skenfrith  
Annette Langlois, Abergavenny  
Louise Lovell, The Hendre  
Helen Manner, Rockfield  
Harry Marshall, Capel-y-ffin  
Sarah Mihalop, St Maughans  
Ian Mitchell, Forest Coal Pit  
Nickie Moore, Llangenny  
Phillip Morrison, Crosshands  
Roger & Ann Mothershaw, Whitebrook  
Catherine Musk, Penallt  
Kate Owens, Newcastle  
Amelia Pannett, Llantarnam  
Hugh Roberts, Buckholt  
Sallie & Paul Roderick, Llanishen  
Rosi Rollings, Maypole

Ruth Routh, Catbrook  
Pauline Ruth, Shirenewton  
Andy Schultz & Alice Levinson, Forest Coal Pit  
Mark Scott, Llanishen  
Matthew Simpson, Grosmont  
Andrew Singer & Andrea Bailey, Bristol  
Roz Smart, Llwyndu  
Daphne Smith, Monmouth  
Rosemary & Russell Smith, Radyr  
Joanne Smith, Usk  
Helen Spittle, Devaudan  
Robert Stanley, Llansoy  
Rachel Taylor, Trostrey  
Ruth Tudor, Mitchel Troy  
Elliot Waters, Magor

Membership is on a rolling year basis, with reminders sent out twice a year, in March and September. If you have any queries about your membership, contact our Membership Secretary, Marilyn Dunkelman, [marilyn@monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk](mailto:marilyn@monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk) or phone 01600 860031

# The Big Meadow Search (BMS): What, When and What Next?

Laura Moss

*This summer, many MMG members supported the Big Meadow Search, set up by Carmarthenshire Meadows Group. Here is the story from the originator of the idea.*

Hopefully some of you will have already heard about this project and will be interested to learn more. After hearing about Plantlife's plans to develop a long-term scientific project to monitor species in meadow quadrats it got me thinking that it would be good to know what was happening everywhere in my fields. I thought other landowners may be similarly interested and want to take a more detailed look at their grasslands too and so the idea for the Big Meadow Search began. I ran the idea past other members of the Carmarthenshire Meadows Group steering group and thanks to their support I started to develop a plan.

The BMS species list was derived from the National Plant Monitoring Scheme lowland grassland indicator species list and extra meadow axiophyte species were suggested by the Carmarthenshire county plant recorder. The aim was to go out into a meadow, wander around, make note of the species that were seen and tick them off the list. It soon became apparent that we were missing an opportunity to record many other species so we then encouraged additional species to be included in the submitted lists.

The plan is to analyse the BMS data in terms of numbers of participants and sites, map the sites to see which regions had been included, count the numbers of records and the ranges of species and to submit the individual records to the relevant local biodiversity records centres in order to maximise the outputs and benefits from the project.

Initially the project was only going to be offered to members of the Carmarthenshire Meadows Group but the closer it got to the launch the more I realised there was a great opportunity to try and engage with meadow owners in other regions and perhaps more importantly to try and raise awareness and interest in grasslands amongst the wider public. With this bigger aim in mind a Big Meadow Search 2021 Facebook group and an @bigmeadowsearch Twitter account were launched, various UK wide groups were contacted and the game was on to get the project going.

Due to the amount of interest the search period was extended until the end of July and records were accepted from other types of grassland habitat. Sites in six Welsh counties along with sites in Devon, Shropshire, Dorset, Yorkshire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire and Nottinghamshire have been searched so far.

The project is by no means perfect but like many citizen science projects, such as the Big Garden Bird Watch, there is the potential for misidentification and absence of records for certain species certainly doesn't equate to proof of absence. We can all miss things and also it became all too apparent that many of us are scared of grass and sedge identification!

Analysis of the data is on-going and hopefully we will be able to build on this inaugural event, raise interest and awareness of grasslands amongst a broader range of people and help collect more records across the UK. If you are interested in the project please get in touch via [bigmeadowsearch@gmail.com](mailto:bigmeadowsearch@gmail.com)

See also:

[www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk/2021/05/08/big-meadow-search-2021](http://www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk/2021/05/08/big-meadow-search-2021)



*Pyramidal Orchids on Dixton Embankment  
(Jon Dunkelman)*

## Starting a Meadow: Answering Some Frequently Asked Questions

### Wildflower Seed: To Sow or Not to Sow

MMG is often asked where we recommend getting seeds to start a wildflower meadow. There are a number of excellent suppliers on our web site, and you will find an article by Steph Tyler in the Autumn 2020 edition of our newsletter which gives more advice on choosing seeds.

However, our first response is always to question whether you need seeds at all. Plantlife have a simple rule of thumb: if you already have five or more wildflower species growing on your site, don't buy seed. Instead, start an annual maintenance regime with grazing, hay cutting and/or mowing and collecting. This will create the right conditions for more species to colonize the site over time, naturally.

Of course, this means leaving any potential site for a season to see what grows before deciding, but it is by far the best way to conserve the distinctive character of the local wild flora.

We would make a possible exception for Yellow Rattle (using local seeds) which, being an annual, is unlikely to appear of its own accord if there is none already nearby.

### Green Hay

If you do need seeds to get your meadow started, then the best way is using green hay. This means taking recently cut hay from a species-rich donor site, to spread on a recipient site, where the seeds will drop. Green (i.e. just cut) hay is better than dry hay because more seed remains in the flower heads.

The hay must be transferred quickly so the operation must be planned in advance and timed carefully, and the two sites must be close together as the hay must be spread within a few hours of collection. It's best to harvest, collect, transport and spread the hay within an hour if possible, but at least within half a day and before the hay wilts. Once cut, green hay heats up quickly, which can make the seeds infertile.

The two sites should have similar soil types and moisture content, and don't take too much from one site (for example, don't use the same site every year) to make sure enough seed is left in the donor site. Avoid taking any problem plants if you can, such as nettle,

creeping thistle and dock, and avoid taking hay from sites with too many dominating species such as white clover and creeping buttercups.

The recipient site should be cut or grazed very short before the hay arrives, preferably with areas of bare ground. The seeds need to touch the soil to germinate. In the first autumn after spreading green hay, graze or cut the field and then aim to keep the sward height below 4-5cm until spring to provide light and space for the seeds to germinate. Even then, it may take two or more years for some species to flower, so be patient!

### If You Need Seeds After All

Collecting your own seed from a nearby meadow (with permission of course) is one way of ensuring you get suitable varieties, but it is labour intensive. Otherwise, make sure your seeds are as local as possible, and are true meadow mixes. Read Steph's article ([August 2020](#)), and check our list of suppliers for the places we recommend, on our Contractors and Suppliers list: [www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk/contractors-list](http://www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk/contractors-list)

For more information on all these topics see Plantlife's Meadows' Hub [www.meadows.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.meadows.plantlife.org.uk) and Gwent Wildlife Trust's Habitat Management Toolkits [www.gwentwildlife.org/habitat-management-advice](http://www.gwentwildlife.org/habitat-management-advice)



Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) seed and seed heads  
[Muséum de Toulouse, CC BY-SA 4.0  
<<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via  
Wikimedia Commons]



## Saving the Right Bees

Buglife published an article in May entitled 'Save the Bees! (But Which Ones?)', which challenged the emphasis placed on honeybees when talking about protecting pollinators. The author, Buglife's Countries Manager Andrew Whitehouse, points out that there are hundreds of thousands of other species that are also pollinators, including wild bees, flies, butterflies and moths, beetles and wasps. Many of these are specialist species, and many plants rely on these specialist species for their propagation. For example, some flowers (such as tomatoes) can only be pollinated by bumblebees. If the right pollinator is not present, there will be no crop. A healthy ecosystem needs a full range of natural pollinators, not just honeybees. Yet many of our wild pollinators are declining and at risk of extinction while the domesticated honeybees are expanding.

Sadly, there is evidence that honeybees can pose a threat to wild pollinators. By increasing the number of hives, each of which can support over 30,000 honeybees in summer, the competition for the flower resources increases, putting pressure on the more endangered wild bee populations.

Buglife stress that they don't want people to stop keeping bees, but they do want beekeepers to be aware of the issue, and not introduce hives where there are insufficient flower resources to sustain both kept honeybees and the wild insect population. They should not be established in or near protected sites, such as SSSIs, for example, and more emphasis should be placed

on resolving the problems of habitat facing wild pollinators, rather than focusing solely on actions that help honeybees. They want the 'Save the Bees' message to focus on wild species, and to highlight the other important pollinators. We should be celebrating our flies, wasps and hoverflies too if we really want our ecosystem to thrive.

You can read the full article on the Buglife web site [www.buglife.org.uk/blog/save-the-bees-but-which-ones](http://www.buglife.org.uk/blog/save-the-bees-but-which-ones)

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust also have a position statement on managed honeybees: [www.bumblebeeconservation.org/our-position-statements](http://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/our-position-statements)



*Bombylius fly – a fly that resembles a bee (Keith Moseley)*

## Adopt a Meadow?

Abergavenny Town Council are piloting a scheme called Adopt a Garden for people who would like to share gardens. The scheme matches would-be gardeners with people who own too much garden to manage themselves, preferably living close to each other.



The garden owner allows the gardener to use a part of their garden to grow food or flowers, and in return, that part of their garden is cared for.

Part of the aim of the initiative is to combat loneliness and enhance individual and community well-being.

It has been suggested that a similar scheme, Adopt a Meadow, might work for people who would like to have their land managed for biodiversity but don't have the time or levels of fitness needed, by matching them with people who love nature and would enjoy working on the land but are not in a position to own a meadow of their own.

MMG has been approached with a view to backing this scheme, which would appear initially on the council run platform Connect Monmouthshire. If this is something that might interest you, from either perspective, please get in touch with Marilyn at MMG.

You can see more about Adopt a Garden at [www.connectmonmouthshire.org/adopt-a-garden](http://www.connectmonmouthshire.org/adopt-a-garden).



## Members' Meadows - Garden Mini Meadows

*You don't need acres of land to create a flower-rich grassland area. Cathie Holland and Phil Bryan show what can be done in a garden*

At the end of 2015 we moved to a new house in Trellech with turfed lawns in both the front and back garden. In 2017 we stopped cutting a part of the front and back garden lawns to see what would happen and because it looked so boring! We cut the grass in mid/late March and then strim it during September depending on the weather with the removal of the 'hay crop'.

In the second year we were given some Yellow Rattle seed from MMG members' meadows in the Wye Valley. We planted some Camassia bulbs in the front lawn but otherwise the meadow flora is simply the result of natural



*Before and after: the back garden in August 2015, and how it is now, picture from June 2021*



*Before and after: the front garden in August 2015 and June 2021*



*Left: the back garden meadow in June 2021 Right: Yellow Rattle*



regeneration. Both the front and back mini meadows have developed a variety of native 'wildflowers', but in the back garden the yellow rattle and the resultant grass reduction has been much more successful. Further sowing of Yellow Rattle seed in the front is intended in the future to see what happens!

Although limited in size our meadows have enhanced both our front and rear gardens, the close mown grass strips dividing the meadows from the perimeter shrub and perennial borders providing an illusion of more rather than less space.

Whilst our mini meadows have had a mixed reception from passers-by the local wildlife has, we believe, benefitted with butterflies, moths, and bats seen circling over the meadow areas!

*Cathie Holland*

## More Garden Meadows

Diana Morriss was celebrating a wonderful display of cowslips and violets this year in her back garden mini-meadow, at Pwllmeyric near Chepstow.

Elvin Hart was lucky enough to find three Bee Orchid's in his "little wild flower patch", which he says is "not big enough to qualify as a "meadow".

Steve Davis is also developing his wildflower lawn. He stopped mowing in May and by July had identified 33 wildflower species, and had a family of hedgehogs foraging through the long grass. The photograph below shows it at its best in June.

In Penallt, Rhian Williams-Flew was pleased to see their one Green-winged Orchid from 2020 reappearing in their garden. This year it was joined



*Elvin Hart's Bee Orchids*

by at least 10 others, looking like a 'fairy ring', and another was spotted on the other side of the meadow. They have many cowslips too. Rhian writes "we only have a garden meadow but it gives such pleasure. All gardeners should give over a bit of their garden to a meadow. It gives me such joy!". We couldn't agree more.



*Cowslips in Dianna Morris' garden*



*Steve Davis' wildflower lawn in June*



*Small Green winged orchids in Rhian Williams-Flew's garden*



## Members' Meadows - With More Space

*At the other end of the scale to garden meadows, here are some spectacular views from members with rather larger areas to manage*

Paul Cochrane and his sister Anne have two large fields on the west of the county, near Llandegfedd Reservoir, visible in the photograph below. The fields have great potential, not having been ploughed since 1961, and this year two Common Spotted-orchids appeared, twice as many as previous years! He is lucky enough to have Harebells too, to add a bit of blue to the sea of yellow.



At Crosshands near Llansoy is another spectacular area of wildflowers, which if all goes to plan will be one of the sites of our Open Meadows in 2022. Pip has one of the most extensive areas of Dyer's Greenweed in Monmouthshire, as well as some gorgeous expanses of species-rich grassland. It was difficult to choose which of Pip's photographs to include, but here is a taste of what you might see next June.

*Above: Paul and Anne Cochrane's fields by Llandegfedd Reservoir*

*Below: Dyer's Greenweed in Pip Morrison's fields*

*Right: A view across Pip's wildflower-rich meadows*





## Members' Meadows - A Good Year for Orchids

Many members reported seeing more orchids than ever this spring

David and Gayle Whittingham reported their excitement to see about 25 orchids appearing around their pond and in the meadow area around the house. The pond orchids were much darker than those in the meadow. Steph Tyler writes "it seems you have Spotted Orchids, probably *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* but the lower lips have some features of Heath Spotted *D. maculatum*. The lovely dark purple ones are Southern Marsh Orchids *D. praetermissa*. Unfortunately, all the *Dactylorhiza* orchids hybridise like mad so you often get large plants showing hybrid vigour, particularly crosses between the Common and Heath-spotted, but also between Marsh-orchids and Spotted-orchids."

Derek Sanderson, near Trellech, also agreed it had been a very good year for orchids, possibly, he thinks, the best in the 10 years or so he has been managing his fields.

Patsy Lewis sent a picture of her meadow that "seems to produce more orchids year on year". They had several Twayblades and one Early Purple Orchid as well as their many Common Spotted-orchids, and wonders why the Early purples don't flourish in the same way as the Spotted-orchids.

Tim Stevenson, however, has had less luck. Last year he found a single Green-winged Orchid. This year it appeared again, but before he could take a photograph something, probably a bunny, had got there first! Maybe that was its fate last year too, and why they are not spreading? Next year, he will put a wire enclosure over it!



Derek Sanderson's field near Trellech



David Whittingham's Spotted-orchids (left) and Southern Marsh-orchids



Tim Stevenson's solitary Green-winged Orchid, and its sad fate



Patsy Lewis' Common Spotted-orchid



## Members' Meadows - First Sightings

In David Llewellyn's field, Eyebrights have appeared. These lovely little plants are semi-parasitic on grass so do a similar job to Yellow Rattle. There are many species of Eyebright in the UK and dozens of hybrids, all very difficult to tell apart.

Christopher Guinness at Gwehelog sent in his picture of a Heath Spotted-orchid that appeared on his land.

A very exciting first sighting for Steve Swell, who lives near Ida's Meadow, the MMG reserve in Maryland. The Greater Butterfly-orchids found in Ida's Meadow made an appearance in his field. It is great news that these beautiful flowers have spread, although it is possible they were there all along, waiting for the right conditions to appear.

Teri and Matt Lloyd found an unexpected Southern Marsh-orchid growing within the protective fence they had put around their hedge.

Finally another Fungi First in Jon Dunkelman's meadows, this time a Mealy Meadowcap, a fairly uncommon species. It's a brown fungus with a cap that has an irregular edge (or margin) that rolls inwards. Not as obvious as the bright Waxcaps, but it has its own personality.

If you find something new or unusual in your meadow, or have a story to tell, please send it in to us. We love to hear how our members are getting on, and to share our problems and our successes so we can all learn from our experiences.



*David Llewellyn's Eyebright*



*Christopher Guinness' Heath Spotted-orchid*



*Steve Swell's Greater Butterfly Orchid*



*Matt and Teri's Southern Marsh-orchid*



*Mealy Meadowcap (Pseudotracheloma metapodium), in Jon Dunkelman's field*



## Members' Meadows - A Chance to Visit

While MMG holds Open Meadows days each year, to give members a chance to see a wide range of other meadows and wildflower grasslands, several of our members open their gardens and meadows to the public more often. Some do this as part of the annual National Garden Scheme (NGS), raising money for charities including Hospice UK, Marie Curie, Macmillan Cancer Support and many others. Others, such as the stunning gardens at Nant y Bedd in the Black Mountains, are open most of the summer for visits, also supporting various charities.

Clare Owen of Garway House (HR2 8RT) opened her meadow in May 2020 for the NGS. Clare's home is located on Garway Hill just across the border in Herefordshire, with stunning views across the valley to Orcop.



*A view from the meadow at Garway House (Clare Owen)*



*The entrance to the meadow at Trengrove House (Guin Vaughan)*

Guin Vaughan opened her garden at Trengrove House at Nantyerry (NP7 9DP) several times during June for NGS. Her one-acre wildflower meadow is a Local Wildlife Site. You may remember in 2020 Guin posted a virtual tour of her garden which is still available to view on the NGS site: [www.ngs.org.uk/trengrove-house-monmouthshire-throwing-out-the-rule-book](http://www.ngs.org.uk/trengrove-house-monmouthshire-throwing-out-the-rule-book).

When the 2022 programme is announced you can find visiting dates for both these gardens on the NGS web site [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

Sue and Ian Maberley of Nant y Bedd have also taken part in the Open Garden scheme, but you can visit their lovely property at other times during spring and summer months. They are one of only eleven Royal Horticultural Society Partner Gardens in Wales.

Nant y Bedd is a 10-acre site with an organic garden, woodland and meadow, located near Forest Coal Pit in the Black Mountains. Sue has been tending the garden for over 40 years, with the aim of benefitting wildlife and living with the nature around them. The couple only acquired the meadow two years ago, to add to the attractions in this beautiful part of Wales, but it is already showing promise.

Find out how to arrange a visit next year on their web site [www.nantybedd.com](http://www.nantybedd.com)



*Pignut around a picnic bench in the meadow at Nant y Bedd (Sue Maberley)*



### Plantlife Launch the Meadows' Hub

National plant charity Plantlife have launched a new web site dedicated to species-rich grassland, with a wealth of information about making and managing wildflower meadows. There is a link to it on our MMG site under 'Advice and Information', as it brings together all the most useful information in one place. Take a look on [www.meadows.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.meadows.plantlife.org.uk)

### The Wye Invasive Species Project

Wye Valley AONB are running this project, known as WISP, to tackle three of the worst invasive plant species along the Wye Valley: Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and American Skunk Cabbage. These non-native plants present a great threat to the wildlife in this area by taking over large areas, dominating and reducing other natural species. They also create problems along our waterways, causing blockages and increasing the risk of flooding. The plants spread easily and rapidly, and tackling them is not an easy proposition.



This summer teams of volunteers have been working along the valleys within the catchment area of the Wye, pulling up and removing Himalayan Balsam. Working with community groups, contractors have been tackling Japanese Knotweed and American Skunk Cabbage.

There is information about the project, how to identify and what to do if you see these insidious plants, and how to report sightings if you live in the AONB area, on the web site here:

[www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/our-work/our-projects/invasive-non-native-species-initiative](http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/caring-for-wye-valley-aonb/our-work/our-projects/invasive-non-native-species-initiative)

### Ecohab Wildflowers

Dean Meadows Group was established in 2012, and has recently had some new additions to their committee, including Liz and Haydn Brookes. Liz, an ecologist and botanist, has recently set up Ecohab Wildflowers in Churcham, Gloucestershire, giving us another source of local organic seed and wildflower plugs. Haydn is an ecologist and is available for some



*Haydn's Amazone ProfiHopper, ideal for orchards and smaller meadows, can cut, scarify and collect*

small field management work, as part of Ecohab Wildflowers, provided it is not too far from their base, using his small flail and collecting machine. Together they are offering a range of services including ecological consultancy, habitat restoration and wildflower planting advice. [ecohabwildflowers.co.uk](http://ecohabwildflowers.co.uk)

### Woodmeadow Trust

The Woodmeadow Trust is a charity aiming to promote a national network of traditional wildflower meadows combined with appropriately spaced trees as a patchwork area of diverse habitats.



The organisation started by creating Three Hagges Woodmeadow near York, 25 acres of inhospitable, arable farmland which has been transformed into a mosaic of woodland and meadow which, they say, is more biodiverse than either woodland or meadow alone. Three Hagges Woodmeadow is now a thriving wildlife habitat, carpeted with wildflowers and an increasing number of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds.

As they are focussing on converting arable farmland their approach is based on re-seeding an area, and they stress that planning, species selection, ground preparation and planting are only the first steps. Lack of active management results in a homogeneous woodland structure and allows the rapid establishment of native invasives such as bramble and nettle, which in turn prevent colonization by native woodland wildflowers.

Their approach, they say, is “thoughtful, timely and consistent management” and that their success will be measured by long-term monitoring.

There’s more about their group and their interesting methodology on their web site [www.woodmeadowtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodmeadowtrust.org.uk)

### Celf Caerleon Festival Field

An article in the last MMG newsletter featured Hanbury Field, site of the Celf Caerleon Arts Festival, which is now being managed to encourage wildflowers. The team of volunteers from the Caerleon Gateway Project, as it is now known, has been busy working on the site over summer to keep the pathways clear and allow the wildflowers to flourish. Bryan Dale, their Director of Field Operations, reported that there were masses of Ox-eye Daisies and Red Campion in the field, and that the Yellow Rattle is becoming more established. [caerleon-arts.org/news](http://caerleon-arts.org/news)



### Bee Orchids in Cornpoppy Avenue

Cheryl Cummings sent in this picture of the Bee Orchids on the corner of Watery Lane and Cornpoppy Avenue in Monmouth (see the previous issue of the MMG newsletter). This June they were more prolific than ever, demonstrating the value of pieces of waste land if nature is allowed to thrive there.



## Future Events

With the difficulties of Covid this last two years the Diary Dates have been difficult to finalise. Our Autumn Social has been cancelled, but we optimistically expect to restart in-person events again in spring. All MMG events will be advertised via our web site, and by email bulletin to our members, together with activities of interest that we hear about from other organisations.

Many organisations have been running online talks and activities during the pandemic, many of which are still available to view on YouTube. Future events are advertised on their web sites, including:

**Gwent Wildlife Trust:** at [www.gwentwildlife.org/whats-on](http://www.gwentwildlife.org/whats-on)

**Plantlife:** [www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/events](http://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/discover-wild-plants-nature/events)

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: **Keep Wales Tidy; The Long Forest Project; 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; Trellech United Community Council; The Welsh Church Fund**



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