



# MINSTERLEY MEADOWS MUSINGS

## NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MINSTERLEY MEADOWS

*Dear Friends, I hope you enjoy reading the first “News and Musings from Minsterley Meadows” newsletter. A lot has happened since the successful purchase of the meadows by The Middle Marches Community Land Trust in October 2024. Without the generosity of the community, societies and local businesses who raised £158,000 plus grant funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the future survival of these precious meadows would have been uncertain. They represent an oasis of biodiversity in our landscape, which is fast becoming a dwindling part of our countryside.*

### SPRING

The meadows slept through winter and with the arrival of Spring burst into life. One of the highlights of the meadows’ flora is the wonderful display of Green-Winged Orchids in April. These appear in their thousands and paint the meadows a rich purple, much to the delight of visitors (these orchids are the main reason for the meadows’ designation as an SSSI, or Site of Special Scientific Interest). To coincide with this annual spectacle we held a celebration event on April 25th, to thank the community for all their hard work and enthusiasm.



*Photos: Minsterley Meadows (Sarah Jameson)*



## CELEBRATION DAY AT THE CROWN & SCEPTRE ON APRIL 25TH WITH FAMILY FUN AND DISPLAYS

Kindly hosted by the Crown and Sceptre pub in Minsterley, a day of fun activities, craft demonstrations, food and drink and tours of the meadows was attended by 150 people. Ten volunteers helped with all the hard work in the background, putting up gazebos, directing people to the meadows and helping with activities.



*A local woodturner kindly made wooden mushrooms from a branch, which had fallen from an ash tree growing in the meadows, available to buy at the celebration event with donations going to the work of MMCLT.*

### Watch our short film!

Take a look at the Middle Marches Community Land Trust's **Minsterley Meadows web page** to view a short film of the celebration event.

Other Middle Marches events and news can also be seen on the website; keep visiting to see what is coming up!







*U3A Nature Watch Group,  
led by Rob Rowe*



## VISITS TO THE MEADOWS

During May and June the meadows had many visitors, several local groups and individuals on self led tours.

Numbers so far for groups led by members of The Middle Marches Community Land Trust team total 268, a testament to how important the site is to local people and visitors from outside the area.

The Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group had an evening of bat detecting in the meadows. A way of experiencing the meadows through the use of bat detectors was an exciting experience led by a local bat expert.



*The Orchids are well worth a close look  
to see their true beauty*



## SOME MEADOW PLANT OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Of course we are not the first people to observe the plants around us. In 1597 John Gerard wrote his mighty work of 1484 pages the “*Generall Historie of Plantes.*”

Based on his own observations in the countryside and no doubt in hay meadows like Minsterley Meadows, previous herbals and many correspondences with botanists, gardeners and plant collectors of the time, many of whom were his friends, it is a treasure trove of folklore, people’s beliefs at the time and old names for plants. A couple of plants or fungi will be featured from Gerard’s *Herbal* for each season in the coming newsletters.

### Green-Winged Orchid

Gerard calls Green-Winged Orchids The Male Foole Stone and Female Foole Stone. The shape of the flower he says is like a “Fool’s hood” (probably a jester’s hat) or “Cocks Combe”. Some types of orchids were called Dog Stones in Gerard’s time. He also mentions that the flowers have a pleasant smell. As to their medicinal value he doesn’t say very much other than “*if a man drinks a decoction of the Male Fooles Stone roots he will have male children*” and “*if a woman drinks the same of The Female Fooles Stone roots, she will have female children.*”



A woodcut showing a Green-Winged Orchid from 1633 edition of Gerard’s Herbal



## MOONWORT

A visiting botanist to the Meadows, in April, noticed one plant of the diminutive fern Moonwort. He kindly supplied coordinates enabling the plants to be located; several individuals have now been found. Moonwort is an ancient grassland indicator, it is really wonderful to have a colony in the meadows.

Gerard mentions some interesting, if strange, folklore associated with the plant. He says that it is “*singular to heale greene and fresh wounds it staieth the bloody flux*”. Then goes on to say that “*it hath beene said among the Alchymists and witches to do wonders, it will loose lockes and make fall from the feet of horses that graze where it doth grow their shoes*” He is not convinced by this as he goes on to say “*in truth they are all but drowsie dreams and illusions*”!



Woodcut of Moonwort from 1633 edition of Gerard's herbal and Moonwort plant growing in the meadows, photographed in May 2025.

### More Minsterley Meadows plants & fungi

Full current Plant List for Minsterley Meadows can be [found here](#) and the Fungi list is [here](#)





## SUMMER

With the arrival of Summer the orchids having had their moment in the sun, produced seeds and are now quietly dying back until next year's exuberant display. Let's hope it is as good as this year's.

The meadows are now dominated by the billowing flowers of grasses with lovely names such as Yorkshire Fog, Crested Dog's Tail and Sweet Vernal Grass. They lend an elegant sway to the rhythm of the meadows as they move in the wind. Ox-Eye Daises, Buttercups and Rough Hawkbit speckle their muted, subtle colour palette with splashes of yellow.

Summer will soon lead to cutting of the hay in mid/late July, in the next newsletter we will feature "what is a meadow" and report on the hay crop.



Sweet Vernal Grass

Crested Dogs Tail

Yorkshire Fog



## FRIENDS' EVENTS

Keep an eye open for upcoming Friends events via emails from the Friend's email [\*\*minsterley@mmclt.co.uk\*\*](mailto:minsterley@mmclt.co.uk) and the **Middle Marches Community Land Trust website**.

We will be holding an autumn meeting for the Friends; date to be confirmed soon.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES: THE NATIONAL LOTTERY GRANT IS ENABLING US TO:

Plan new perimeter fences where required, install new gates and improved access, and more information boards.

A kids club, to be led by a children's wildlife activities leader.

Production of a mural at Minsterley Primary School is underway. We are excited to be working with local artist **Rory McCann**. The pupils at the school are all involved with designing a mural to feature the meadows and the next newsletter will report on progress with the project. We are grateful to the school for engaging so enthusiastically..

## CAN YOU HELP US?

Friends can help look after the meadows by:

- 1 Keeping a watch on the meadows for any unwelcome activities**  
These can be reported to us via [\*\*info@middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk\*\*](mailto:info@middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk) or Meadows Project Coordinator, Sarah Wallace-Johnson via the friend's email address [\*\*minsterley@mmclt.co.uk\*\*](mailto:minsterley@mmclt.co.uk)
- 2 Keeping records of any interesting plants or animals you might spot**
- 3 Recording orchid numbers and distribution and species**  
We hope to run some wildlife ID training days in the future for Friends who might be interested in using iRecord.





*Log bench kindly supplied  
by The Friends of Pontesford  
Hill and transported to the  
meadows by wheelbarrow!*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to:

- Lucy Gaze for photographs and filming for the celebration day micro film.
- Robin Fellows-Weir for producing the micro film.
- Minsterley Primary School teachers and pupils for engaging so enthusiastically with the art mural project.
- Marches Meadows Group for continued support and advice.
- Natural England.
- Sarah Jameson for artwork and designs.
- Thank you to all the Friends who are helping to care for the meadows and keeping a watch on them.
- All the volunteers who have helped with events.
- The National Lottery Players for making the Minsterley Meadows project a reality.
- Friends of Pontesford Hill for donating a bench to the meadows.



*Saving Minsterley Meadows is made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund.  
Thanks to National Lottery players, we have been able to secure the future of Minsterley Meadows.*