



Middle Marches Community Land Trust White Grit Meadows Appeal Launch, Saturday 31 August 2025, at Corndon Chapel

Report (and images) by Lucy Gaze

Corndon Marsh Chapel is exactly what it says it is - a chapel, albeit strikingly clad in tin, sitting on marshland beneath the great hulk of Corndon Hill, just over the Welsh border. On a gloomy Saturday at the end of August, that hill was a brooding, dark presence as the heavens opened, but one that only highlighted the warm glow and animated chatter emanating from within the chapel. Here, people, both local and from afar, poured in, with no evidence of their enthusiasm dampened, in spite of the increasing rain, to hear about the White Grit Appeal, Middle Marches Community Land Trust's latest exciting project, which aims to preserve 5 acres of botanically important meadows with SSSI status, in the hamlet of White Grit.

Chairman of the Trust, Dr Richard Keymer introduced the event, providing a background to the origins of the Trust, its board members and its objectives as an organisation, together with an overview of the sites they currently own. He then introduced White Grit itself, explained briefly why it was of interest, and thanked current owners and custodians Grace and Ken for the option to buy, before handing over to local artist Tom Davies.

Tom, who has a personal interest in preserving local landscapes that dates from his childhood, made a most generous offer, to paint a scene of anyone's choice for £200, with proceeds to go directly to the White Grit Appeal. Someone called out from the audience, asking the price of a large painting Tom had displayed on the wall. Declaring it was £900, he obviously thought the price tag would put the person off, but I later discovered it had been bought for £1000, with Tom donating the entire amount. An incredible gesture!

Following on, Rob Rowe of MMCLT, botanist and meadow enthusiast for over 50 years, described just how biodiverse the White Grit Meadows are, containing a remarkable 26 indicator species, including heath orchid, wild scabious and dyers greenweed. For Rob, these meadows are of particular interest because they also contain a wide variety of sedges 'grasses with edges,' his personal speciality.

For Richard Small, also of Marches Meadows Group, the significance of the White Grit Meadows cannot be overstated. He explained the classification system of meadows where they are assigned to groups according to their level of botanical interest, red being the highest. The White Grit meadows fall into this category, of which only a mere 5% of meadows belong. Richard, who lives a couple of miles away at The Bog, talked about how fantastic it would be if the meadows between here and his home could also be protected in perpetuity, creating a joined up landscape where meadow species and wildlife alike, could thrive, flowing between these different areas uninterrupted.

After many, excellent questions from the audience, tea and a fantastic selection of cakes were served, and for those that wished, there was the opportunity to view the White Grit meadows. By then, the weather had deteriorated even more, but people were undeterred and a long line made their way to the viewing point in Grace and Ken's garden. Shorthorn cattle were nearby grazing and in spite of the grey blanket of solid rain that had set in, jewels of raindrops held in golden grass flowers twinkled, while a purple haze of wild scabious managed to shine through the gloom.

White Grit is undoubtedly a unique place, steeped in atmosphere, its history and presence felt by the people who visit and those who are lucky enough to live there.

We are grateful to Grace and Ken for the opportunity to purchase this special site and our first over the Welsh border.

To donate to the White Grit appeal please visit

<https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/white-grit-meadows-appeal>

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Images (c) Lucy Gaze

