

# MINSTERLEY MEADOWS MUSINGS

## NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MINSTERLEY MEADOWS

*Dear Friends, I hope you enjoy reading the third "News and Musings from Minsterley Meadows" newsletter.*



### AUTUMN & WINTER

A wet Autumn has been followed by a relatively mild Winter except for storm Goretti on Jan 8th when the snow lay thick on the fields and damaged some of the hedgerow trees.

Seemingly a quiet time of year read on for some of the activities in the meadows that have been happening over the colder months

*Some excellent snow sculptures including this Snow Goose, appeared in the Meadows on a school snow day.*







Sniffing fungi to help identify the species is sometimes very helpful

## FRIENDS AUTUMN MEETING AND FUNGI FORAY

The Friends' Autumn meeting on October 25th at Minsterley Parish Hall was followed by a fungi excursion, led by Rob Rowe. Although the dry summer seems to have suppressed the appearance of the grassland fungi fruity bodies, many eyes helped to find a new species for Minsterley Meadows. "Skinny Spindle" *Clavaria incarnata* was spotted in the first meadow (May Piece). This species of club seems to be found in association with Meadow Waxcap.



The group found several other beautiful Waxcap fungi during the foray. NB none of them are edible!!

The curious and delicate Skinny Spindle fungus - new to Minsterley Meadows fungi list







*Valiant Friends of Minsterley Meadows  
Conservation volunteers braving the cold weather*

## FRIENDS CONSERVATION WORK PARTIES

The first Friends work party on November 28th was a day of torrential rain (the old Welsh Marches expression of a “Blunks shower” comes to mind!).

Despite the weather the group valiantly managed to clear a substantial amount of old barbed wire from the perimeter ditch, starting at the entrance gate.

Quite a large volume of rubbish was also cleared from the ditch including a very rusty bike, sheets of plastic and several footballs! New shiny tools purchased with the National Heritage Lottery Fund grant have made the work more manageable and enjoyable.



*Barbed wire removed from  
the field edges*



## FRIENDS CONSERVATION WORK PARTIES CONTINUED ...

On the same day John Lightfoot from the Shropshire Barn Owl group braved the rain and installed a Tawny Owl box in one of the hedgerow trees. John had previously surveyed the site and decided that a Tawny Owl box was more appropriate than a Barn Owl box. Lets hope it will appeal to the local Tawny Owls. John makes the boxes himself to a very high standard after many years of observations.

Since then we have had two more work parties, the group have continued with clearing brash, litter and old fencing. The work of the group is vital to the management of the meadows and their energy and enthusiasm turns the jobs into fun activities when we all enjoy some fresh air, company and exercise.



*John Lightfoot valiantly installing the new box in November 2025*



*Too-wit too-woo: Tawny Owl, pencil & coloured pencil drawing (Sarah Jameson)*



*Tawny Owl box in situ*



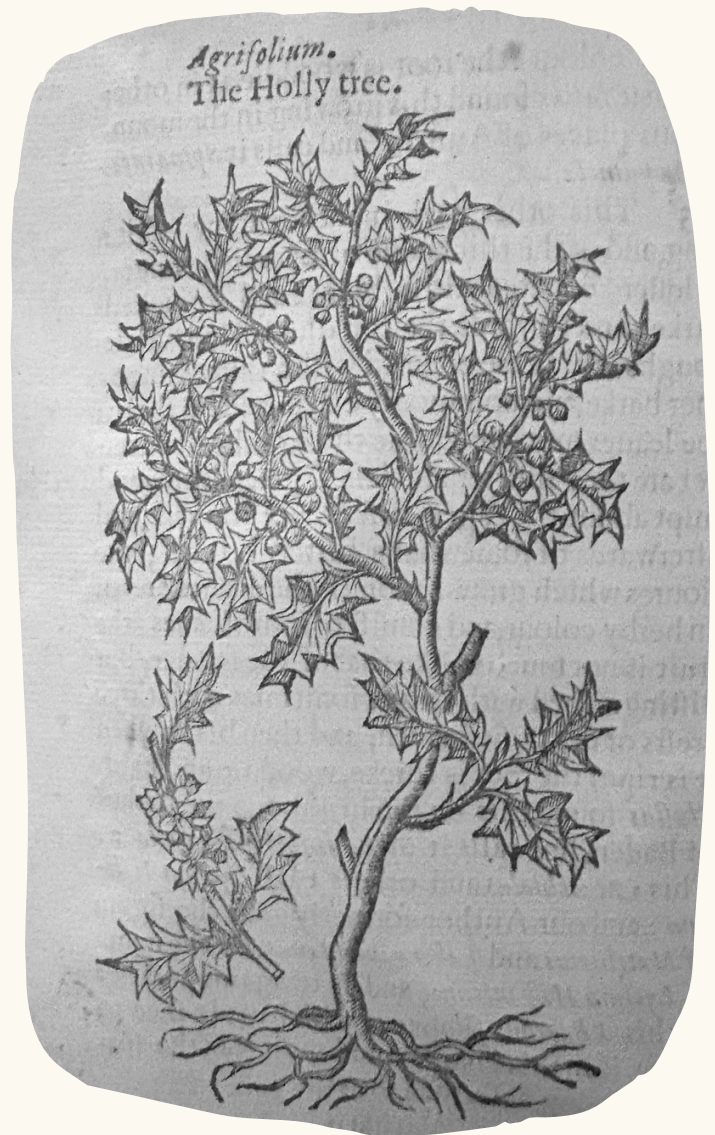
## SOME MEADOW PLANT OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

In the last newsletter some of the plants to be found in the meadows and its hedgerows from John Gerard's 1597 "*Generall Historie of Plantes*" were featured. Here we look at a couple of common evergreen plants you might have spotted over the Winter as described by Gerard, advice definitely not to be followed nowadays!

### Holly (also called Holm and Hulver by Gerard)

Gerard describes the production of Birdlime. Birdlime would then have been smeared on branches etc to catch birds, something that seems wrong to us today but in the past no doubt provided a valuable source of protein.

"There is made of the smooth bark of this tree, birdlime, which the birders and country men do use to take birds with: they pull off the bark and make a ditch in the ground, specially in moist, boggy, or soggy earth, wherein they put this bark covering the ditch with boughs of trees, letting it remain there till it be rotten and putrefied, which will be done in the space of twelve days or thereabouts: which done they take it forth and beat in mortars until it be come to the thickness and clamminess of lime: lastly, that they clear it of pieces of bark and other filthiness, they do wash it very often: after which they add unto it a little oil of nuts and after that do put it up in earthen vessels."





## SOME MEADOW PLANT OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

### Ivy

Gerard's description of the virtues of Ivy show how people in the past had to resort to extreme measures to cure everyday ills. No doubt many people ended up sicker than before after following this advice.

"The juice drawn or sniff up into the nose doth effectively purge the head, stayeth the running of the ears that hath been of long continuance, and healeth old ulcers both in the ears and also in the nostrils: but if it be too sharp, it is to be mixed with oyle of roses or salad oyle."

"The gum that is found upon the trunk or body of old stock of ivy, killeth nits and lice and taketh away hair".

"The leaves of Ivy fresh and green boyled in wine, do heal old ulcers, and perfectly cure those that have a venomous and malicious quality: and are a remedy likewise against burnings and scaldings."





## OTHER NEWS: TREE SURVEY UNDERTAKEN

An extensive tree survey has been undertaken by a local tree surgeon; some of the recommended work has started and will continue over the winter.

## FUTURE 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 a Spring meeting for the Friends; date to be confirmed.

## FOREST SCHOOL NEWS

A Forest School leader, Toni Pettitt, is working with Minsterley Primary School. Look out for an article from Toni in the next issue.



*A chilly Winter  
meadow guardian*

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

- Install new perimeter fences where required, install new gates and improve access, and information boards.
- Fencing work is ongoing; the wet winter has meant that the ground in the meadows has been too wet for the installation of new fencing.
- Work on new interpretive boards has started.

## 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.





Colourful waxcaps in  
Minsterley Meadows



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to:

- Lucy Gaze for photographs and filming
- Robin Fellows-Weir for continuing to film the meadows over the seasons
- 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
- John Lightfoot

<https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/minsterley-meadows>

