



Conservation volunteers taking a break  
from scything Blackthorn

# MINSTERLEY MEADOWS MUSINGS

## NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MINSTERLEY MEADOWS

*Dear Friends, I hope you enjoy reading the fourth “News and Musings from Minsterley Meadows” newsletter.*



### SPRING IN THE MEADOWS

Over the Winter the Meadows have been busy with various activities linked to The National Lottery Heritage Funded project. Read on to find out more.

Spring finally arrived after a soggy Winter but late May has seen exceptionally hot weather which has hastened the Green-Winged Orchids flowering season.

See page 2 for some extraordinary news!

*What in the world is this found in the Meadows during a work party? And how does it connect Minsterley Meadows to the Bog Mine? Look inside to find out!*



*The Great Orchid Count in the Meadows (photo © Terry Moore)*

## EXTRAORDINARY NEWS!

We undertook the first count of the Green-Winged Orchids on May 5th, with help from the Friends, Rob Rowe and Cassy Clayton, Senior Ranger at The Stiperstones NNR. A huge task and not one that can be rushed. Sections of the Meadows were divided up with tape measures and bamboo canes with flags. Lines of people using clickable counters walked slowly together, clicking every time they spotted a flower spike. The final total after a long days concentration was a whopping:

★ **50,341 FLOWER SPIKES** ★

Extraordinary, and testament to the careful management of the Meadows over the years. The count will be undertaken annually, so if you would like to be involved, keep an eye out on the mailing list near orchid flowering time next year.

We were also joined by local photographer Terry Moore who is photographing the sites that encompass the new Stiperstones Landscape National Nature Reserve. He took some lovely photos of the group counting the orchids.



*One of the thousands of Green-Winged Orchids at Minsterley Meadows*



*Valiant Friends of Minsterley Meadows  
Conservation volunteers scything Blackthorn*

## FRIENDS CONSERVATION WORK PARTIES

The Friends Meadow Conservation group has been meeting every month, working hard in all weather, to undertake a variety of tasks over the chilly months.

Blackthorn has been encroaching over the years from the hedgerows into the Meadows. Funds from The National Lottery Heritage grant have enabled us to buy scythes with blades that can tackle tough plants such as Blackthorn.

Over several sessions the group knocked back the “Blackthorn front” to the hedgeline. This will now be maintained in various ways to prevent encroachment in the future.

As the scything gang worked along the hedgeline they came across some unexpected industrial archaeology: a concrete base for one of the aerial ropeways that ran from The Bog Mine, several miles away, appeared from the undergrowth.

The ropeway carried ore to the railway station at Maelhurst (now an industrial estate).

After some further investigations, three more bases were discovered from the tangle of vegetation making up the location of the wooden support trestle that supported the ropeway cable. Some rather rusty pieces of cable were also found in the second field.

The bases will be cleared and an information board installed detailing the history of the ropeway. This will link to the local mine areas and encourage visitors to explore other sites in the locality.

You can find out more about the aerial ropeway system by visiting The Bog Visitor Centre. You can also find them online here: [www.bogvisitorcentre.com](http://www.bogvisitorcentre.com)

## ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNGSTERS IN THE MEADOWS

One of the core aims for the project is to engage youngsters in the Meadows and to this end the grant has funded Toni Pettitt from Branching Out Forest School.

Toni has written a Teachers' pack for Minsterley Primary School and purchased equipment to support the lessons. The classes from the Primary School have been taught by Toni in the Meadows, with the first session taking place on 14th April.

Toni will lead the classes through the teachers' pack over the next months, each session being themed to teaching the pupils about the Meadows and nature.

Minsterley Meadows Wildlife Club is also up and running on a monthly basis with children joining Toni for nature related fun and activities.



*Wildlife Club making energy balls from Hawthorn leaves*

## TONI'S TAKE ON HER WORK WITH CHILDREN IN THE MEADOWS



*We've now hosted two family Wildlife Club sessions at the Meadows, with children clearly enjoying the wonders of the Meadows and all it has to share.*

*Our last session saw us exploring the different trees along the perimeters of the Meadows, learning the difference between veteran and ancient trees, and how these critical species are host to an abundance of meadow wildlife.*

*The children were immersed in helping to identify the different species, and working out their ages and height. The super math-keen ones even did the hard work to calculate the carbon stored within each tree and the volume of water drunk in each day, which can be a whopping few thousand litres each - what food for thought!*

*The sessions with Minsterley Primary School have been a real highlight. The children have displayed such enthusiasm for the Meadows, embracing and taking pride in having this SSSI site within their local village. Many have taken joy in sharing the Green-Winged Orchids flowering with their families, returning to the Meadows outside of school hours - a clear win for community engagement!*

*It's been a privilege to see the Meadows take hold of their inspiration, with children turning their eye to small details within the Meadows, finding immense joy in recording this in art form, as well as turning their hand to life as an 'ecologist' in the Meadows and practicing skills of using a quadrat, magnifying loupes and ID charts.*



*Minsterley Primary school pupils made careful drawings of the Green-Winged Orchids learning observational skills.*



*A fun day making nests from material gleaned from the Meadows and hedgerows during Easter's Wildlife Club session.*



*Joy of Wildlife group examining invertebrates from the hedgerows and Meadows margins.*

## JOY OF WILDLIFE VISIT

The Joy of Wildlife Group visited the Meadows on Wednesday 15th April and in inclement weather carried out an early Spring invertebrate survey on site.

You can find a summary of the visit and their finds [here](#) (scroll down the page to find it). Their blog is well worth reading - it is as informative as it is entertaining!

They talk about the 'edge' habitat in the Meadows (between hedgerows and main Meadows) being an important place for invertebrates:

*"In fact the margins were, not unexpectedly, an excellent source of invertebrate life in our trays. These 'edge habitats' are usually rich in life and should be preserved at all costs. Field margins provide vital refuges for animals of all sorts when meadows are cut and where they grade into the hedgerows, the taller and woodier plants within them offer an alternative habitat, increasing the overall biodiversity of the site."*

## OTHER EVENTS

The 1st Rea Valley Beavers enjoyed an evening session in the Meadows learning about owls.

The Meadows attended the Pontesbury Green Day on May 2nd, a fun family day of nature related activities.

"Go Wild in Worthern" was another successful event attended by families where the Meadows display made a colourful addition to the wildlife related theme.

Several other local groups and visitors have held events in the Meadows over the Spring.



## BRIDGES AND GATES

Shropshire County Council Footpaths team and the footpath volunteers have installed a fantastic new bridge over the ditch that leads into the Meadows from Minsterley's playing fields.

They have also installed new entrance gates, an accessible kissing gate next to the new gates, which will enable all users to gain access to the Meadows, plus some steps and a kissing gate at the Callow Lane entrance that leads on up to Poles Coppice.

*Shropshire County Council Footpaths team installing a new bridge and kissing gate at the Meadows.*



## MEADOW MINDFULNESS

If the exceptionally hot weather is preventing you from too much outdoor activity visit the [Minsterley Meadows section of the MMCLT website](#) to download some new "Meadow Mindfulness" colouring sheets of plants that grow in the Meadows. The images have been produced by local artist Sarah Jameson.

More will be added, why not collect the set and spend a bit of time enjoying some mindful colouring!

We have added 2 colouring sheets to the back of this newsletter.



# GAMES AND PUZZLES PAGES

## MEADOW WORDSEARCH

Find the plants hiding in the Meadows

U	B	F	A	C	O	W	S	L	I	P	C	C	F	U	C	R	U
I	E	S	B	B	T	W	U	Z	M	Y	C	L	O	F	S	R	P
C	Q	R	B	L	U	A	A	I	C	I	Z	E	X	H	Y	N	P
Y	A	R	R	O	W	T	U	X	S	H	J	A	G	Q	I	C	Q
Z	V	I	O	L	E	T	T	A	C	V	J	V	L	M	B	Y	E
Q	O	E	J	S	C	C	H	E	W	A	F	E	O	H	K	U	P
V	D	A	R	A	T	T	L	E	R	G	P	R	V	D	G	L	O
D	A	I	S	Y	F	S	T	U	T	C	C	S	E	E	B	N	K
J	J	P	Y	C	E	L	I	K	H	H	U	L	I	S	N	I	N
R	W	V	P	I	G	N	U	T	U	V	N	P	U	C	I	D	G
G	R	E	E	N	W	I	N	G	E	D	O	R	C	H	I	D	O
T	H	K	X	K	Y	C	S	E	L	F	H	E	A	L	Y	K	D

YARROW  
RATTLE  
COWSLIP  
WAXCAP  
DAISY  
FOXGLOVE

GREEN WINGED ORCHID  
BUTTERCUP  
VIOLET  
SELFHEAL  
PIGNUT  
CLEAVERS



# MEADOW COLOURING PAGES



**Moonwort**

# MEADOW COLOURING PAGES



**Green-Winged Orchid**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to:

- Lucy Gaze for photographs and filming.
- Robin Fellows-Weir for continuing to film the Meadows over the seasons.
- Terry Moore for photographs of the orchid count.
- Minsterley Primary School staff and pupils for engaging so enthusiastically with the outdoor lessons in the Meadows, the school has been wonderful to work with.
- Toni Pettitt from Branching Out Forest School for facilitating the Primary School and Wildlife Club with such professionalism and enthusiasm.
- Marches Meadows Group for continued support and advice.
- Natural England.
- Sarah Jameson for artwork and designs.
- Thank you to all the Friends and the community who are helping to care for the Meadows and keeping a watch on them.
- All the volunteers who have helped with events.

## 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.

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

