



Annual Review

A warm welcome to the Marches Meadow Group Annual Review for 2025

View from the Chair

Marches Meadow Group has been in existence for 10 years and it's perhaps a moment to reflect on what we've achieved:

- We have completed over 170 surveys of members' land along with advice on how to manage a wildflower meadow; the database holds plant lists for 331 fields, lawns etc. We hope to initiate a project in 2026 to review how a sample of members' meadows has changed over the past ten years.
- We have translocated green hay from meadows rich in species to meadows which are not, and are now encouraging members to collect their own green hay by arrangement with owners of species-rich meadows.
- We are a partner with Middle Marches Community Land Trust in the Saving Minsterley Meadows project. This project succeeded in buying and managing the meadows and is currently working on a project with local school children, young people and the local community to sustain interest and care for the meadows for the long-term (see report below).
- A leaflet on how to manage meadows has been produced and is available at <https://bit.ly/49qbEPb>



Photo: White Grit Meadows in late summer (c) Sarah Jameson

View from the Chair (continued)

- Over 20 talks to other groups promoting the creation and management of meadows.
- Thanks to hard work by Janet Cobb, we have turned the annual meadows conference into the National Meadows Conference. The second one of these this year in the Cotswolds in partnership with Emorsgate seeds was extremely successful. This led to the development of the National Meadows Conference being hosted at Kew Gardens Millennium seed bank at Wakehurst next year. This will be a two-day event bringing together some of the research that Kew carry out into meadows with experience from practitioners (more details in this Review).
- We work closely with Rob Lee of RL Wildflower Seeds who has helped germinate seeds and produced plug plants, including the Devil's-bit Scabious seeds and plugs that were distributed to MMG members – more details in this Review.
- We've run a series of learning events and guided walks, including the Open Meadows Day organised by Clare Donnelly and training in use of the BCS machine.
- Interest in meadows and creating meadows continues to grow. Janet Cobb is heavily involved in the Shropshire Association of Local Councils. She is looking at support for delivery of nature recovery at a Parish Council level and meadows will be very much at the heart of this work which will continue to develop over the next few years.

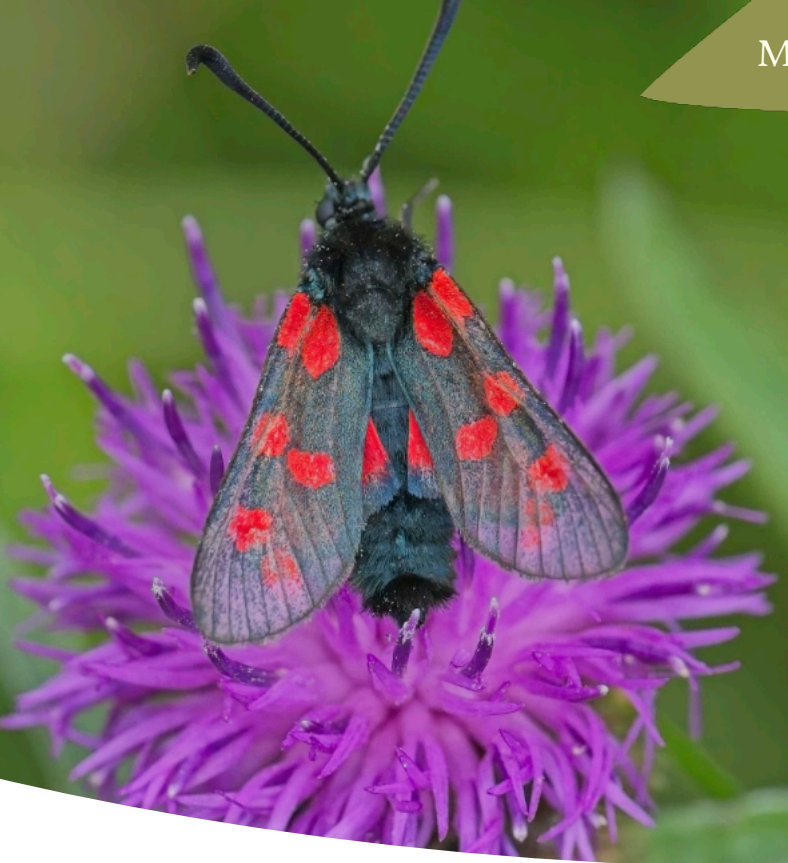
I would like to finish by thanking our members, partners and supporters. We currently have over 150 members. We have quite a high turnover as people join to get the survey and advice and then their membership lapses. However, we've influenced perhaps 300 to 400 meadow owners over the 10 years.

Best wishes to you all for 2026.

Peter Carty
Chair, Marches Meadow Group



Photo: Meadows event at Belmore Farm - Joe Donnelly



Open Meadows Day report

Although other meadow groups are likely to have visits to members' meadows, as far as I am aware there is no organised day when many meadow owners open their meadows to visitors. This year MMG took a tentative step towards this by asking a selection of meadow owners if they would participate in an Open Meadows Day (OMD). Six were able to do so: the National Trust at Jinlye (thanks to Charlie Bell), Natural England at Pennerley (thanks to Simon Cooter) and individual members Clare and Adrian Donnelly, David and Janet Poynton, Priscilla Middleton and Alyson and Richard Small.

The appointed date was 21st June, a hot and sunny day like so many others in summer 2025. We had asked people to book via Eventbrite and non-members were asked to make a donation. About 60 people booked and, although we don't have a breakdown of members v. non-members, donations totalled £95. Unlike the National Gardens Scheme (on which the OMD was based), which raises money for health-related charities, the donations came to MMG.

Meadow owners were asked to suggest a route that visitors could follow without guidance and to prepare some notes on their meadows and what could be seen. Generally, the routes led around the margins of the meadows so that damage was minimised, but at Jinlye at least paths through the hay meadows were available. In the Pennerley/The Bog area a route was devised that allowed visitors

to move from one owners' meadow to the next, although not all followed this path! Clare and Adrian offered tea and cakes, which was well received. The Bog visitor centre was also highlighted as a source of refreshments.

There were lessons to be learnt: David Poynton made some very useful suggestions for future OMDs to both enhance visitors' experience and gain new MMG members. However, the comments received were favourable and the event could clearly claim to have been a success. We hope members throughout MMG will open their meadows, of whatever size and quality to visitors next year – part of the aim is to show would-be meadow owners works-in-progress as well as already flower-rich meadows. The date will be Saturday 4th July 2026 (National Meadows Day).

Thanks to all the meadow owners who participated this year and to Hilary White for making available her stunning photographs taken at Belmore Farm on the day.

Richard Small

Photos:

Top left: Six-spotted Burnet moth on Black Knapweed.

Photo by Hilary White

Top right: Garden Chafer on Cat's-ear.

Photo by Hilary White

Membership Report 2025

Membership numbers peaked in early 2025 when there were 203 members up to the date of the AGM, which this year was on 17/05/25. Membership subscriptions become due on the date of the AGM.

45 members did not renew their membership. Moving house and changing priorities were some of the explanations given but regrettably others failed to renew without giving a reason for why they left.

We have welcomed 24 new members who have joined us since the beginning of January 2025. 10 of them joined after 17/05/25.

So as of 01/11/25 we have 168 members.

Although there is still a concentration of members in the original core area of the former Stiperstones & Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme, we now have members in all parts of Shropshire and beyond. There are sixteen members in Wales, one in Herefordshire and even one member in Liverpool, one in London and one in Hertfordshire (but all have land in the MMG's area)..

The subscription rate has remained at £25 for the second year. As grant income has diminished in recent years the membership subscription fee has become our main source of income. So it is to be hoped that we retain a buoyant level of membership, continue to attract new members and everyone renews their subs promptly.

Siobhan Reedy
Membership Secretary

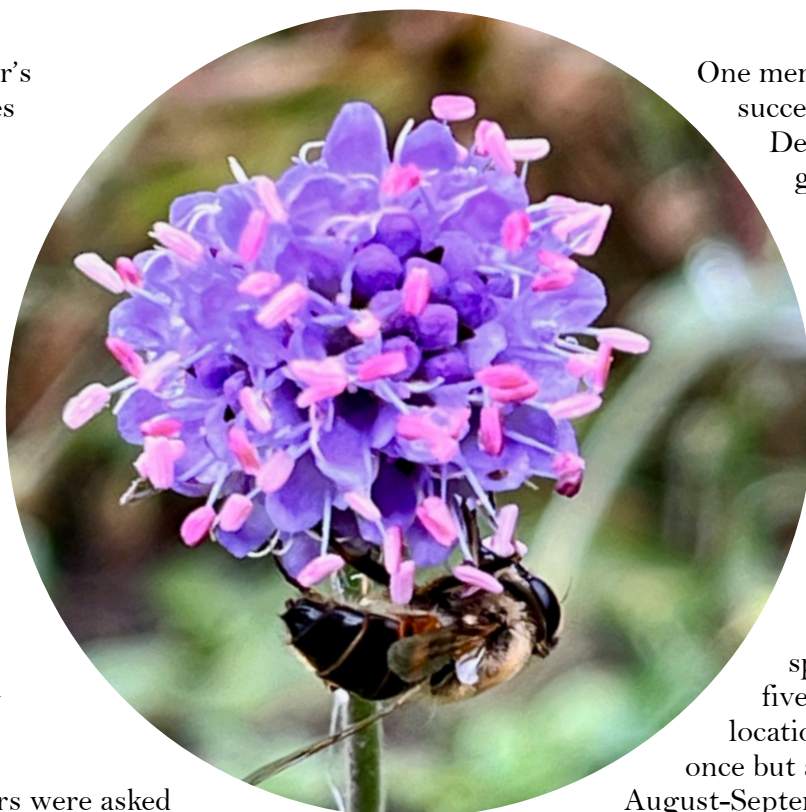


*Top: Fragrant Orchid; bottom: Bog Pimpernel,
both at Sweeney Fen (c) Richard Small
Bottom: (c) Richard Small*



Devil's-bit Scabious project report

As explained in last year's Annual Review, Marches Meadow Group is the species champion for Devil's-bit Scabious within the Stepping Stones Species Recovery Project, and through a grant from Severn Trent Water obtained by committee member Janet Cobb, 250g of Devil's-bit Scabious seeds and 400 plug plants were purchased from RL Wildflower Seeds. These were distributed to 44 MMG members.



This year those members were asked to report their experience with germinating the seed and/or planting out plugs. A simple summary of the 36 reports received is that the outcomes were very variable! However, overall I would say 24 had some measure of success, nine were total failures and the jury is out on three.

At one end of the scale a member reported that the contents of the seed tray had been scattered over her patio by a Blackbird searching for grubs! Twelve respondents reported poor or no germination of seed, but six said the germination was good (or in one case excellent). Survival of the resulting plants also varied – those that kept the plants in pots generally reported better survival than those who planted out their plants. Given the drought over summer 2025 this is perhaps not surprising, but even when the plants were watered they did not always thrive.

Plug plants also suffered from the drought if planted out in the spring. Of 24 plants I planted out only one flowered and I lost track of the others. They may have survived and may flower next year, but I realised I had to be vigilant as both flowering stems were gone within a week, presumably to a rabbit! Some members were able to compare flowering of the new plants with those of established plants – generally the abundance of flowers was similar in the two groups.

One member had also had success with introducing Devil's-bit Scabious from green hay obtained from the meadows at Westhope College. If there had been an award for most successful Devil's-bit Scabious growers it would be a close call between Alice Fraser and Mike Carter. Alice grew her plug plants in 9cm pots over winter and planted them out in spring as two groups of five plants in each of two locations. They were watered once but all 20 plants flowered in August-September and Alice collected seed heads from some of her plants.

Mike sowed seed in pots that were kept in a cold frame over winter; germination was good and about 500 plants were obtained. These were planted out during September 2025 in several sites around Church Stretton: 30 in St. Laurence churchyard, 30 in Mike's garden, 50 in Cudwell Meadow, 60 in Coppice Leasowes Nature Reserve and 300 in the long-grass areas of High Leasowes with the remaining few distributed to Stretton Area Community Wildlife Group members.

I estimate between 20 and 25 sites have new or strengthened colonies of Devil's-bit Scabious as a result of the project, which is a good return on the £174 grant from Severn Trent. Of course, it remains to be seen whether all will become self-sustaining populations, but it suggests the project is worth repeating, perhaps with other species (e.g. Betony) that don't disperse well naturally. Thank you to everyone who took part, reported their results and sent in photos.

Richard Small



Volunteers broadcasting seed at High Leasowes

Improving the floral diversity of High Leasowes

High Leasowes near Church Stretton was purchased by the community in 2023. It comprised three fields (now four since planting a new hedge); in total, c.6ha (15 acres) of grassland, with 1.7km of hedgerows, that for at least 25 years had been farmed organically for annual cuts of hay/haylage. The fields have not been grazed for about 15 years.

A baseline ecological evaluation soon after purchase estimated floral diversities as:

a) Cwm Leasowes:

1.5ha (3.8acres) - 14.4 species per m²

b) Watling Leyes South:

1.1ha (2.7acres) - 9.4 species per m²

c) Watling Leyes North:

1.6ha (4 acres) - 9.4 species per m²

d) Willow Leyes:

1.7ha (4.2acres) - 9.2 species per m²

In floral diversity Cwm Leasowes borders on being species-moderate to -rich; it has not been ploughed or resown for at least 25 years, probably much longer, and is ridge and furrow. The other three fields were ploughed and resown to an agricultural mix about 15 years ago, and in diversity classify as borderline species-poor to -moderate.

So, how to improve grassland floral diversity? The 5 year High Leasowes Management Plan includes measures to raise the number of species per m² and in particular to introduce/increase 'target' species that were rare or absent but suitable for the ecological conditions.

The Management Committee decided to take a gradual approach. It could have decided, for example, to cultivate throughout and sow a wildflower mix. Instead, in the late summers of 2023 and 2024, soon after the grass crop had been cut (but without scarification to expose bare soil) volunteers broadcast a locally collected seed-mix, of mainly Yellow Rattle together with small amounts of target species. Yellow Rattle established reasonably well though patchily in the Watling Leyes and Willow Leyes fields; least well in Cwm Leasowes, we suspect because of a thicker thatch on the soil surface caused by the varying height of the mower in this field as it cuts over the undulating ridge and furrow. In 2024 it appeared that no species in the broadcast seed-mix other than Yellow Rattle had established.

The Management Committee has been reluctant to scarify because of cost and for fear of encouraging agricultural weeds like nettles, hogweed and docks etc. It did however agree to a trial of strimming circles before broadcasting. In 2024 26 circles of about 2m diameter were strimmed to bare earth, then broadcast. In 2025 these circles were compared with surrounding areas for the establishment of broadcast species. Yellow Rattle established abundantly in all 26 circles, much better than surrounding areas. Target species also established well in circles; e.g. Eyebright (in 24 of the 26 circles), Salad Burnet (9/26), Hairy Tare (3/26). Agricultural weeds appeared to be no worse in the circles than elsewhere.

So scarification helps considerably in the establishment of broadcast seed particularly when there is a dense thatch of dead or living sward

See highleasowes.com for information on species recorded and a link to their dedicated iNaturalist page

material covering the soil surface. In 2025 we have strimmed 48 circles; hopefully the circles will provide foci from which seed will spread to nearby areas. Some circles are in long-grass marginal areas (which will not be cut for haylage); these have been sown with perennial and late-seeding species like Common Knapweed, Devil's-bit Scabious, Viper's-bugloss, Field Scabious, and Wild Carrot which are unlikely to survive annual hay-making.

In the autumn of 2025 we also plan to trial sheep grazing on the aftermath in one field, Watling Lyes North. It will be interesting to see whether their hooves pressing broadcast seed into the soil will improve germination.

A problem we face, common to many meadow owners, is trying to persuade a tenant who works through a contractor, to make hay (field-dried, mown, tedded, turned and baled) say over 4-5 days, rather than haylage (mown, perhaps wilted, baled and wrapped) all done in 1-2 days. The former is much more likely to aid the maturing, shedding and spread of seeds within a field than the latter.

Clearly weather conditions determine whether hay or haylage is made; and also cost of more field operations in a busy schedule. But even in 2025 when the conditions were ideal for field-dried haymaking, our grassland crop was taken as wrapped haylage. Perhaps we can address this in future.



Mike Carter taking the grid reference of a strimmed circle

Mike Carter

Photos above and previous page (c) Graham Porter
Photos below (c) John Baines



Minsterley Meadows: Report 2025



The first year of the Minsterley Meadows Project got off to a flying start with an event on April 25th to celebrate the successful purchase of the meadows by The Middle Marches Community Land Trust, the future of the meadows was secured by a massive effort by the local community and a generous grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Hosted by the Crown & Sceptre pub in Minsterley, a day of family fun and tours of the meadows to see the Green-Winged Orchids in all their glory was enjoyed by 150 individuals.

The Celebration event kick-started visits from several interest groups ranging from the U3A, The Mary Webb Society, Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group, small groups from surrounding villages and the Shropshire Mammal Society. Several local shows were attended such as Minsterley Show and the Pontesbury Festival to help promote the meadows. During the course of the first year of the project over 300 people have engaged with the meadows through tours or attending events.

The meadows plants dazzled with their subtle beauty, grass turned many shades of tawny and brown in the summer heat, until the hay cut in late Summer when the year turned to Autumn and grassland fungi like tiny jewels appeared putting on a new display. The Friends of Minsterley Meadows Autumn get together was rounded off by a trip to the meadows to look for fungi, led by Rob Rowe.



Above: Green-Winged Orchids close up (Lucy Gaze)
Below: U3A Naturewatch Group visit in May



At the end of September a Minsterley Meadows themed art project was completed. Local artist Rory McCann worked with the pupils of Minsterley Primary School, who all had input into the design, to paint the school's shipping container with a super sized depiction of the meadows. Meadow plants such as Yellow Rattle, Green-winged Orchids and Ox Eye Daisies along with a Fox, Barn Owl and Shrew make you feel as if you are immersed in the world of the meadows and its inhabitants. The life of the soil is also depicted to highlight its importance.

Work with the school is continuing with Toni Pettitt from Branching Out, a forest school and outdoor learning specialist. The pupils will have four sessions in the meadows next year and other activities for children and families are being planned.

The Minsterley Meadows Conservation volunteers will have their first session at the end of November starting off with the installation of a Tawny Owl box in one of the large Oak trees. After this work parties will be held monthly and will cover a range of maintenance and survey tasks.

Over the Winter and into Spring new gates and fences will be installed along with interpretation panels to inform visitors about the meadows and upcoming events.



*Photos:
Above: Meadow waxcap & Shropshire Mammal Group visit in August; Below: The colourful Minsterley Meadows mural by Rory McCann painted on the side of a shipping container*

Sarah Wallace-Johnson





Photos: Simon Cooter

Scything update

The World's 1st Shropshire Hills Bracken Scything Competition 2025

Held at Bank Rack above Crowsnest Dingle on the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve on the 1st August 2025. This was certainly the first bracken cutting competition in Shropshire, England and possibly the world.

The bracken was loosely spread, approximately 50cm high on a relatively level area with short grass underneath and few stones at an altitude of 420m above sea level. 11 scythers competed, all using Austrian style scythes. A range of experience was on show from regular grass mowing competitors to one local novice.

The lengths cut were 55 metres long and 2 metres wide (swath) and a degree of stamina was required to keep going to the end of the cut. Quality counted

so any stems that had not been cut below the bottom leaf were counted and a 2 second penalty was added to the time for each uncut frond. This was measured using a patent bracken frond counter (designed by Cassy), normally used for counting yellow mountain pansies on these upland acid grasslands.

The overall winner and winner in the veteran category was Richard Brown (Chair of the Scything Association for Britain and Ireland) all the more impressive as this was his first time at cutting bracken and the altitude change from Norfolk must have taken its toll.

The winning woman prize went to Hannah Holden once again, and our only novice competitor Julian did a very respectable time to win that prize, having just walked up the hill from Snailbeach.



Scything update (continued)

Rank	Competitor	Class	Time	Uncut fronds	Final time	Representing
1	Richard Brown	MV	4.37	35	5.47	Norfolk
2	Simon Cooter	M	4.35	70	6.55	Salop
3	Ted Waldron	M	4.20	100	7.40	Salop
4	Hannah Holden	F	5.14	110	8.54	Yorks
5	Peter Blackwell	M	7.23	51	9.05	Lancs
6	Shane O'Reilly	MV	4.38	170	10.18	Leics
7	Phil Holden	M	7.16	99	10.34	Salop
8	Julian Bromhead	MN	7.47	132	12.11	Salop
9	Jayne O'Reilly	FV	8.33	136	13.05	Leics
10	Ivor Thomas	M	11.12	142	13.34	Kent
11	Emma Plover	F	11.45	240	15.45	Salop

M: Male, F: Female, V: Veteran, N: Novice competitor.

Scything with a View

The competition followed the usual week of scything "Scything with a View", which attracts scythers from across the country as well as locals. This year we had scythers from Lancashire, Norfolk, Somerset, Dorset, Cambridgeshire, Kent and Merseyside to name a few. Thanks go to everyone who contributed during the week. This year we mixed up the bracken scything on the Stiperstones with some work on neighbouring land, including bracken in the Hope Valley Meadows SSSI and a glade at Downton Gorge NNR, and grass at a community orchard in Church Stretton and a hay meadow in the Onny Valley, along with some thistles on Norbury Hill. Thanks go to everyone who provided sustenance to the scythers.

Other events

The year started as usual with a blade peening session on the first Sunday in April at the Stiperstones reserve base with good

attendance. Bracken scything started early this year due to the good weather seeing early growth. We have found that cutting bracken two or three times a year can be effective at controlling it, this is okay on grassland, however we are still working on how to do this above the heather on the heathland.

Two scything courses were run from the Stiperstones this year and as always were fully booked. The last event was a late cut of a meadow in New Invention, where a number of scythers turned out, despite the rain.

Every year with the use of scythes we have managed to carry out a lot of positive management of grassland sites on and around the Stiperstones. We welcome new scythers although it is necessary to carry out the scything training first.

Simon Cooter

Scything update (continued)



Photos: Simon Cooter



The second National Meadows Group Conference



The first National Meadow Groups Conference, a MMG initiative supported by Middle Marches CLT, was described in last year's MMG Annual Review; it was judged such a success that similar conferences were requested by delegates. In 2025 the Second National Meadow Groups Conference was held at Emorsgate Seeds' farm near Bath and was oversubscribed with places limited to 125 attendees.

The conference was again organised by MMG committee member and MMCLT Board member Janet Cobb, working closely with Laurie MacIntyre at Emorsgate Seeds. The conference had a full morning of presentations by a range of speakers involved in meadow management, but rather than a stuffy lecture theatre the talks were in a marquee with wonderful views of the local countryside of rolling hills.

The afternoon offered three activities – a walk around the farm, a description of the seed harvesting equipment used by Emorsgate and a scything description and demonstration. These also provided the opportunity to network, which was well received by delegates.

Feedback identified four themes most valued by the conference participants:

- Gaining new knowledge
- Inspiration to do more for meadow protection
- Networking & hearing what was happening in other parts of the country
- Making new contacts

Delegates said the conference was inspiring and gave attendees the confidence to talk about the importance of meadows to others. People valued the new connections made and the opportunity to develop new partnerships.

Almost everyone gave the event the top score of 5 and said the sessions were either very valuable or valuable and everyone wanted to attend the next conference in 2026! Fortunately, Janet had already seized an opportunity to ask a would-be delegate from Kew Gardens (who had had to withdraw at the last moment) whether Kew would host the 2026 conference. This was agreed soon after the conference, and as delegates had asked for more Q & A time after presentations and an after-conference get-together, the 2026 conference will be a two-day event at Kew's Wakehurst Place (home of the Millennium Seed Bank).



Two films of the event are available on-line. The first is a short film giving an overall flavour of the conference (<https://wildseed.co.uk/national-meadows-conference-2025-hosted-by-emorsgate-seeds/>); the second is a film of all the speakers' presentations (<https://vimeo.com/showcase/11854410>).

MMG can be proud to have started this ball rolling and the National Meadows Conferences are set to become an annual event. Our thanks to Janet for having the will-power, enthusiasm and skills to make the first two conferences a success with every indication that the 2026 conference will be larger and even more valuable.

Richard Small (with thanks to Janet Cobb for the information)



MMG Soil Tests

The MMG has an impressive selection of soil testing kits and meters:

- Agreto Soil Compaction Tester
- Growline Soil Conductivity and Temperature Meter
- Hannah Soil Test Kit (pH, Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium)
- Hannah pH and Temperature Meter
- Lutron Soil Moisture Meter
- Solvita Soil Master (CO₂ Measurement)

I was intending to make full use of each kit by testing a number of areas on our site but time constraints have led to this being a brief overview. I won't go into the fine details of how each test is carried out because full instructions are provided for each one should you wish to use them. The land I carried out the tests on is a small (approx 0.75 acre) area of grassland and old orchard near Much Wenlock. It was grazed by Dexter cattle over 50 years ago, Shetland ponies 20 years ago and no grazing since, other than the extensive local deer population. It is a largely sloping site of heavy clay maintained with scythes and a power scythe.

Agreto Soil Compaction Tester

This is the simplest of the tests to set up and carry out. Start by selecting the most appropriately sized point depending on the heaviness of your soil (the smallest one in my case due to the heavy clay soil) and then push the device into the ground and take a reading from the coloured scale. The results I gained certainly agreed with my knowledge of the land:

200psi: Sloping area where no vehicles have ever been present.

300psi: Flat area where there have been vehicles occasionally.

300psi: Flat area with regular Landrover movement.



Growline Soil Conductivity and Temperature Meter

The meter quickly gave me a temperature reading of 13.5°C but gave a conductivity reading of 0.00µS/cm. Which suggests the soil is lacking in the salts that lead to higher conductivity or the probe needs calibrating. I tried it in my garden at home and received a reading of 0.2µS/cm.



Hannah Soil Test Kit

One of the bottles was empty, so I used an identical set I borrowed (I work in a school science department).

This consists of a series of chemical tests that provide measurements as a result of checking colour changes against graduated cards. A soil sample is mixed with an indicator to provide the pH value and a second sample is combined with an extraction solution and then separate sachets to provide the NPK figures. I carried this process out for one soil sample which used all five of the provided test tubes, so repeating this for a number of samples would be quite a lengthy process.

The results of my sample:

pH	5.0
Nitrogen	Trace
Phosphorus	Trace
Potassium	Medium



MMG Soil Tests continued

Hannah pH and Temperature Meter

The probe is calibrated with use of pH buffers. I borrowed some bottles from work to avoid opening the sachets of buffer in the kit. The soil sample is mixed with a solution to form a slurry. The probe is then inserted in the slurry and the result appears on the screen.

My soil sample had a pH value of 5.64. I ignored the temperature reading because I did the test in my kitchen.



Solvita Soil Master



The Soil Master kit comes in a substantial plastic box containing sample pots, a set of digital scales, a soil knife, a sieve, an electronic reader and individually wrapped probes. A weighed quantity of sieved soil is added to a sample pot. A gel-covered probe is placed in the soil with the gel in the airspace above. The pot is sealed and left for 24 hours. Over this period the colour of the gel changes gradually from the blue/purple colour in the picture through green to yellow depending on the quantity of carbon dioxide within the sample. My sample was clearly yellow the following day and when I inserted it in the reader the result was 4.85. This places it within the highest range of values (4.0-5.0) and is classified as "HIGH ACTIVITY - Very Active Biologically".

It's certainly a very useful set of test kits, which have provided some interesting information about the soil on our land (in one specific location anyway!). I'm particularly interested in the very high levels of biological activity suggested by the CO₂ concentration.

The kits are generally designed for an agricultural setting where tilled soil is being tested, so it's possible the more complex structure found in meadows may lead to some anomalies. Testing a representative sample of soil in a container may provide a more accurate measurement and has the added benefit of reducing damage to the probes caused by inserting delicate measuring instruments into soil that is more dense than they were designed for.

Thank you to the MMG for enabling me to learn more about my soil.

Andrew Macpherson

Lutron Soil Moisture Meter

A simple device that is inserted into the soil sample. It was notable how dry the soil was when I dug below 10 cm, so I was expecting a low figure. The meter displayed a value of 0.8%.





White Grit Meadows Appeal

Shorthorn cow at White Grit Meadows: Rob Rowe

This summer has seen the Middle Marches CLT raising money to buy part of White Grit SSSI, which has several owners. The mining community which thrived here in the 19th century gave rise to this area of smallholdings and a series of species rich meadows, some of which still remain today and form the White Grit SSSI, which was designated as such for its rich botanical interest in 1989.

The land for sale consists of four very small fields totalling five acres and is situated a thousand feet up just over the border in Wales at the foot of Corndon. The meadows have been looked after by the present owners for the last 25 years. Each year it is grazed in late summer for a few weeks by a small number of cattle. So, although only once having been cut for hay in recent times, the grazing has a similar effect of removing the vegetation that has accumulated over the summer.

Plants such as Heath Spotted Orchid, Dyer's Greenweed and Devil's-bit Scabious abound and on a summer day the site has a timeless quality about it as you wander from one small room-like field to another alive with bees, hoverflies and butterflies. The tall and thick hedges provide plenty of shelter and usually there is only the birdsong and hum of insects to hear.

Various fundraising activities have helped the appeal pass £30k towards the target of £45,000 which we hope to reach by the end of the year. If you have not already done so, please look at the appeal page on MMCLT's website and tell others who may wish to help us purchase this little gem.

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

Rob Rowe

WHITE GRIT MEADOWS APPEAL

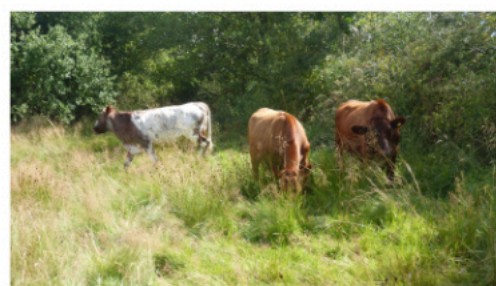
Help us reach our goal of
£45,000



Flowering Devils-Bit Scabious at White Grit Meadows in evening sunshine: Sarah Jameson

WHITE GRIT MEADOWS

Five acres of botanically rich meadow at the foot of Corndon Hill, at White Grit, Montgomeryshire, where plants such as Heath Spotted Orchid, Dyers Greenweed and Devil's Bit Scabious abound. The fields are edged with tall, thick hedgerows, with some small stands of Alder and Goat Willow trees. The mining community which thrived here in the 19th century gave rise to this area of smallholdings and a series of species-rich meadows, some of which remain today. The meadows form the White Grit SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest).



MMG event calendar 2026

As we look ahead to another year, we're delighted to share our provisional 2026 events programme — packed with opportunities to learn, explore, and connect with fellow meadow enthusiasts.

Whether you're managing your first patch of grassland or restoring a long-established meadow, these events are designed to inspire and inform.

Please note that all dates are provisional – confirmed details will be circulated to members and posted on the website.

Saturday 16th May Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Venue: TBC. Join us for a chance to reflect on 2025's achievements, share updates on ongoing meadow projects, and discuss plans for the year ahead. A friendly and informative start to the season.

Saturday 30th May BCS Mower Training

Learn to use the BCS mower for hay cutting on small sites. Gain hands-on experience with the BCS mower — an essential tool for meadow management and restoration. Perfect for members maintaining small meadows or community sites, with expert guidance provided.

June: Meadow Visits Month

Exploring inspirational meadows across the region. Throughout June, we'll visit a range of National Trust and private meadows to see different approaches to creation and restoration. A wonderful opportunity to learn from others, exchange ideas, and enjoy the meadows at their summer best.

Saturday 4th July Open Meadows Day

After last year's success, we're inviting even more members to open their meadows to visitors. Come and explore the beauty and diversity of local meadows, share tips and experiences, and celebrate the Group's growing contribution to wildlife conservation in the Marches.

Saturday 22nd August Seed Harvesting

A practical, hands-on workshop on how to collect, clean, and store wildflower seed responsibly.

Learn how to use locally adapted seed for new meadow projects and help maintain genetic diversity in our grasslands.

Saturday 17th October Meadow Fungi Discovery

Late summer brings a fascinating array of meadow fungi. Join our guided walk to learn how to identify key species, understand their ecological roles, and discover how fungi support healthy soils and plant communities.

Wednesday 21st October Online Q&A Session (via Teams)

An informal online evening for members to ask questions, share experiences, and discuss challenges in meadow creation and management. Bring your photos, observations, and curiosity — our experts will be on hand to help!

MMG contact details

Website: www.marchesmeadowgroup.com

Email: mmgmembership@gmail.com

Facebook: [@marchesmeadowgroup](https://www.facebook.com/marchesmeadowgroup)
www.facebook.com/groups/463777554459852

Officers

Chair: Peter Carty

Secretary: Richard Small

Membership Secretary:

Siobhan Reedy

Treasurer: Andrew May

Donations

The Marches Meadow Group is a not for profit organisation. We are always very grateful to receive donations. If you would like to donate, please [contact us by email](#) requesting our bank account details. Thank you!

MMG thanks Sarah Jameson for her time, patience and skill in compiling and designing this Annual Review.



Marches Meadow Group



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www.marchesmeadowgroup.com



Hayrick on a stormy afternoon (c) Sarah Jameson