



A wildflower-rich sward... cattle grazing after midsummer is an ideal form of management

Red cows on your grassland?

Earlier last summer the PGP was asked by Barry Hutchinson whether any members would be interested in having his cattle on their grassland, so several members of the committee went to his farm in Alvington to find out what he had in mind. Barry, who lives in St Briavels parish, keeps an expanding herd of Red Ruby Devon cattle at Beanhill Farm, Alvington, and is looking to expand. At that same time, he thought that several field owners in the PGP might welcome some extra grazing on fields that are often under-utilised.

Barry is willing to make an arrangement that suits individual field owners. By way of explanation he sent us several examples, but other possibilities could be worked out. In his own words:

1. "Own A Cow" The main disadvantages of owning cattle, for most ruralists, are the liability of dealing with the inherent bureaucracy, and the practical responsibility for day-to-day management. We can deal with that! An individual animal can be owned by ANYBODY, provided it is under the management of a registered cattle keeper (which I am). For somebody looking to have all of the joy (and occasional woes, unfortunately!) of cattle production, but without being involved in the associated paperwork and decision making, we can tailor a unique opportunity, under the banner of the established Beanhill Herd. No minimum amount of land or experience required, and

Footing it round Our Fields

Our Open Fields event on June 4th attracted a host of visitors to eight meadow sites. In total we recorded 166 site visits, an average of more than 20 per site. Of course most visitors turned up at more than one site, but the award for the best effort of the day went to David and Sally Pollock, who managed to visit seven of the sites -- and did so on foot. We hope they will defend their record at our next open day.

A new opportunity for flowery field management

terms for capital contribution can be negotiated. The financial returns may surprise you, over the potential breeding lifetime of these hardy cows.

2. "Beanhill Herd Community Associate" For somebody that does not want direct financial exposure, but wants a "part of the action", we could offer an association, on fixed annual terms. For a fixed fee, the associate would receive a 10 kilogram prime beef box at harvest (and exclusive access to others, at retail value), two free tickets to an annual herd walk and barbecue (with exclusive access to additional tickets, at cost), quarterly Newsletter, and other occasional promotional goods (mugs, badges, or car stickers, for example). The idea would be to create inclusion and interest, but at a controlled "arms length".

3. "Pasture Management" Subject to acceptability on our part (we would need to assess access, water provision and fencing), we could bring grazing cattle to land, removing them at our discretion, and topping the waste to encourage fresh grass growth. Timings would be to suit the landowner.

4. "Beefeater" For those who may not have any suitable land, or an agricultural bent, why not just try some delicious, native prime beef?

The PGP committee liked what it saw and heard. Cattle-grazing after mid-summer is the ideal form of management for flowery fields. Each field owner would have to discuss where on this spectrum of possibilities suits him/her best, and the PGP will be ready to help in the discussions if asked. Barry and his partners seemed willing to design an arrangement for individual circumstances. Owners who wish to sound out possibilities can contact Barry at 07773 332 467, barry.hutchinson@icloud.com or beanhilldevons.co.uk



NEWSLETTER

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Something to spot this month



The revised and reprinted PGP walks leaflets are now on sale in the Village Shop and the Pantry

Come along to enjoy a taste of the Hudnalls

Our autumn meeting, on Saturday 29 October, is all about the delights of wild food -- and drink. And we want Parish Grasslands Project members to play a central role. We invite you to share with us your favourite recipe for some item of food or drink where at least one of the ingredients is "wild". The key ingredient needs to come from any "wild" and unmanaged source, so it could be from the woods, the fields, the hedgerows, the rivers or lakes. The entries will be judged on the night and the winner will receive a fantastic prize. Full details of the recipe competition below.

Here is the full menu for our day of wild food:

Starter

2pm – 4pm: a unique opportunity to go foraging with expert guide Raoul Van Den Broucke. (There is space for only 15 people on this afternoon session and all the places have been snapped up.)

Main Course

7pm onwards, at the Assembly Rooms, St Briavels. Raoul Van Den Broucke will reveal some of his favourite foraging recipes, with ingredients gathered

in the afternoon session. Yvette Farrell of Harts Barn Cookery School, Longhope, will explore the history and uses of the magnificent nettle and demonstrate how best to cook with it – you'll get the chance to make nettle tea, nettle pasta and nettle flatbreads. There will be hedgerow-wine tasting and, last but not least, our Recipe Competition, for a recipe – food or drink – using foraged ingredients (which Yvette Farrell has very kindly agreed to judge). The rules are simple: we're looking for the best recipe, with the primary ingredient(s) being foraged or "wild" food (all secondary ingredients may come from the store-cupboard). You will be judged on presentation and innovation. The prize is a pair of gift vouchers, worth £55 each, for you and a companion to attend any of the wonderful courses held at Harts Barn. Further information is available on our website. Please send us a copy of your recipe by 22 October and please bring with you a sample of your dish or drink for tasting to the Assembly Rooms by 6.45pm on the evening of Saturday 29th.

Pudding

There will be nettle cocktails! What more could one ask for? **Alice Hogge**

The joys of scything

A perfect day at our summer training course

It was my idea of a perfect day. It consisted of learning something useful by theory and by doing it; being taught by an excellent teacher in a group of enthusiastic disciples; and stopping to scoff cake and coffee, and picnic lunches, at regular intervals. The weather was perfect too: the grass was damp but there was sunshine, and breezes to cool the scythers.

The course was organised by the PGP and run by Andrea Gilpin from Caring for God's Acre, an



organisation which specialises in the care and maintenance of country churchyards. Scything is the obvious choice for cutting grass in such places. We learned so much that day: starting with naming the parts of a scythe and assembling them, then moving on to how to carry a scythe, how to sharpen it, how to put it down, and how to clean it safely. Then we learned the correct stance for mowing and we all spent the next hour scything grass in the orchard. I was delighted to find that it was a comfortable and natural action. It makes almost no noise, and the only smell is the scent of mown meadow grass.

For me personally the most important things I learned were: firstly that an Austrian scythe is a very different and more manageable tool than the traditional English scythe. I had tried to use my father's old scythe and found it impossible to wield. Secondly that the sharpening of the blade at regular intervals of about 20 minutes is essential, as is peening the blade every four to six hours of mowing. Thirdly - and I learned this the hard way - never sharpen a scythe without wearing Kevlar protective gloves.

Judy Craven



The trainee scythers are instructed in the vital art of blade sharpening by Andrea Gilpin



One of many Parish Grasslands Projects during the year: we organised a pond dipping session for the Brockweir youth group, as part of the AONB's River Festival.

Knotweed - the battle continues

Following *John Josephi's* report in the last Newsletter, here is his summary of work done at Cinderhill Farm to eradicate Japanese Knotweed.

Early Summer 2015: Knotweed 6ft high felled.

Autumn 15 (Sep/Oct): regrowth at 18 inches average. Sprayed overall with Roundup at a rate of 1fl oz per gallon.

Early summer 16: Regrowth seriously reduced in density and vigour. Sprayed again as before.

Autumn 16: Inspected Sep 16. KW now very sparse and may have been grazed by sheep.

(Job not quite done.)

Proposed action:

1. Spot weed with Roundup before Autumn frost (2016)
2. Spot weed again 2017 Summer (outcrops of KW inevitable)

Note: the site will be invaded by docks, bracken etc. This needs topping and a follow up with sheep should help to introduce grass. Failing this, chuck old hay bales around. The site will need monitoring for years. Odd regrowth will try to emerge KW is virtually nuclear, but CAN be managed.

