



NEWSLETTER

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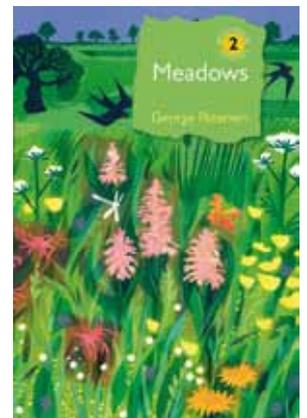
Committee Members:

- John Childs
- Tony Eggar
- Jean Green
- Alice Hogge
- John Josephi
- Philip Morgan
- George Peterken
- Ursula Williams

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George Peterken's book on Meadows

has recently been published by British Wildlife Publishing, the second volume in a new series under the general title The British Wildlife Collection. The first in the series was about Mushrooms and the third, next year, will be about Rivers. Meadows, which runs to 432 pages and over 200 illustrations (including some taken locally), is not just about British wildlife: there are chapters on the history, management and cultural associations of meadows, as well as a good deal about meadows on the European mainland. George will be speaking to the Dean Meadows Group about the book on Friday 25 October at the parish hall, Westbury-on-Severn, starting at 7.30 p.m.



The book is obtainable from British Wildlife via their website for £29.95, but it can be ordered via bookshops ISBN 978-0-9564902-4-7.

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Autumn Meeting: WATER

Our Autumn Meeting will be at **2.00 pm Saturday 19 October at the Mackenzie Hall** on the subject of **Water**.

Following the successful previous two autumn meetings, we are continuing with the 'mini symposium' format which combines illustrated talks with practical demonstrations and exhibits.

Water is an essential part of rural life - our local area is enclosed by two important rivers and we have many streams, springs and wells that have shaped our landscape. A good proportion of us have our own sewage disposal systems and even water supplies.

Our meeting will cover the underlying geology that has determined the way the water flows, the related history and myths of the area, using water for generating power, recycling used water, the creatures in our ponds and streams, and how to find underground water by dowsing - 'may the course be with us'.

There will be a break for tea and cakes and an opportunity to talk with the presenters at the end and see a stunning 3D model of the Hudnalls.

Things to spot this month



Elderberries

FLOWERS AND NIGHTJARS - Ursula Williams

After a spell of dry weather, the Met. Office accurately forecast rain to start at 4.0 p.m. on Thursday 27th June in West Gloucestershire.

The predicted drizzle intensified and by 6.0 p.m. when 20 stalwarts assembled in the car park on Tidenham Chase there were almost as many brollies as participants. The planned route for the evening included a walk over Poor's Allotment (SSSI) to Ridley Bottom (a nature reserve owned by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust) and thence to the heathcovered Park - a circuit of some 2 miles.

The aims were to see the flower meadows in the reserve and to experience the antics of the nightjars on the heath. Undaunted by the rain, we crossed the B4226 on to the Allotment. Watched by docile Longhorn and Gloucestershire cattle, whose grazing keeps the area from reverting to scrub, we wandered over the springy grassland with our guru, George Peterken, enlightening us on matters botanical. Its floral display, however was totally outshone by that at Ridley Bottom where despite heavy rain the meadows were solid drifts of colour....spotted orchids, yellow rattle, knapweed, twayblade, bird's foot trefoil, to name



just very few – and in such abundance that some were inevitably squashed underfoot. Here Kevin Castor (Reserve Manager of the Wildlife Trust) and Gill Maher (a volunteer) joined George to guide us around the fields identifying species and explaining the history and management of this very special reserve.

Happily no-one got lost as we threaded our way up a winding path through the wood thence back over the road and into the west side of the Park to our sorely needed refreshments (both solids and liquids)!



It was only drizzling when our next 'teacher' joined us. Ivan Proctor, ornithologist extraordinaire, told us the story of these weird and fascinating birds - the nightjars. Due to lack of suitable habitat in this country they are rare but we are fortunate in the Forest to have five locations where they can be found in summer. They are 'a birder's bird,' he said, with a very individual lifestyle; a night flier whose two-tone churring call starts only at dusk and whose acrobatic flight as it patrols its territory feeding on moths thrills. We learnt a lot from Ivan's talk and then were privileged to both hear and see the birds themselves as they began their night shift.



Though almost dark and certainly chilly the final curtain of the evening was taken by the appearance of a woodcock as it too began its night patrol over the heath.

I hope that those who braved the miserable midsummer evening felt well-rewarded for their effort. I certainly felt it was time well spent.

FLOWER HUNT - Ursula Williams

Also in June we held the Flower Hunt for the children of the St. Briavels Early Years and for those in the School's Reception Class. The hunt was held at Hollyside Farm, Brockweir Common where the meadows, not treated with artificial fertilisers, support a wonderful variety of flora and thus a biodiversity which the PGP exists to celebrate, encourage and sustain. The planned trip last year had to be cancelled twice due to the awful weather but this year the 18th June was warm and cloudy - just perfect for the event.

The obvious enjoyment and focus of the children amply rewarded the organisation of the day by the owner of the meadows, Jean Green, and the staff and supportive parents.



GREEN WOODWORKING COURSE - John Josephi

Many of us who attended the Parish Grasslands Project's Timber Use meeting last October will remember seeing Bill Howard of Monmouthshire Meadows demonstrating his skill in the craft of making furniture and working tools out of locally grown green timber.

The interest generated by the demo led the Meeting's organiser, Deborah Flint, to persuade Bill to give a masterclass in the construction of the Shavehorse, the specialist workbench he uses to practise his skills.

Duly, during the course of Saturday 27th of July, five of us were shown how to turn a rather unpromising pile of logs into a bench not unlike Bill's own, by means of cleaving, shaving and turning the logs, using implements that were the stock in trade of craftsmen for centuries up till the 2nd World War, after which they fell into disuse.

At the end of a day of considerable exertion, for which we paid £25, each of us left the course with the materials and expertise to make his (or her!) own shavehorse together with an appreciation of the satisfaction that comes from working with fresh green timber.

The energy expended in the Cinderhill barn was more than restored by the excellent light lunch and copious liquid refreshment pressed on us by Deborah throughout.

We are very grateful to Bill for giving us his time as well as for the patient and painstaking instruction, and also to Deborah for setting up the exercise in the first place.

Stop Press: Part II Workshop on Saturday 21 Sept.

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