



NEWSLETTER

www.parishgrasslandsproject.org.uk

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BIRDS IN WILD PLACES and AGM

Our AGM will be held at the Mackenzie Hall, Brockweir at 7.30pm on Thursday 13 March. After the business part of the meeting, David Broadbent will give an illustrated talk entitled Birds in Wild Places.



David is a professional photographer living and working in the Forest of Dean. He is a member of the Canon Professional Network, a freelance contributor to the Alamy international picture agency and was a founding contributor to the RSPB Images picture agency. He has lived in St Briavels for the past 10 years. "The Forest of Dean is a great place to live

and work," he says. "It has great woodlands and eco systems, some rarities and some truly spectacular landscapes." He is also a volunteer coordinator for the Wye Garden bee project helping new bee keepers to get started. As well as a busy schedule of work David also runs the Forest of Dean School of Photography offering photo instruction from complete beginner to advanced via group course, photo safaris and bespoke one-to-one training sessions.



www.davidbroadbent.com
www.facebook.com/DavidBroadbentPhotography
www.facebook.com/ForestofDeanSchoolofPhotography

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Things to spot this month



Frogs & spawn; Primrose; Chiffchaff; Orange Tip

SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE

Your subscriptions for 2014 are now due. The rate has been maintained, yet again, at £5 per household per year. This low rate equates for a couple to just under 5 pence per week. Your prompt payment would be very much appreciated. Please send your cheque/cash to:

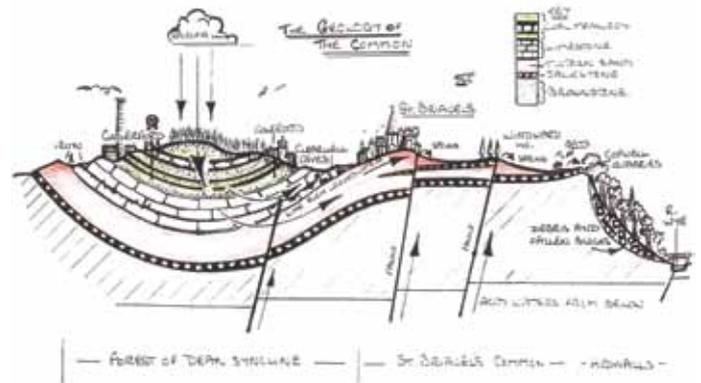
Parish Grasslands Project, c/o Sally Secrett, Greystones House, Hewelsfield, GL15 6UZ

WATER - Alice Hogge

Saturday 1 October saw our autumn meeting, this year a mini-symposium on the subject of Water. It was a full house at the Mackenzie Hall with over 60 people packed in to hear the speakers. The PGP's George Peterken began proceedings, examining the geology and hydrology of the area and explaining that the Hudnalls is the wettest part of Gloucestershire. We nodded sagely as, outside, the heavens opened. Rob Denny of the Monnow Rivers Association described his organisation's work to restore the biodiversity of the river and its tributaries, leaving his listeners with a powerful sense of just what a dedicated team of volunteers can achieve.



Hudnalls resident Phil Morgan took us back in time to explore the folklore and history of our wells and watercourses; there are now plans afoot to help preserve these fascinating local features. Anyone interested should contact the committee. After a short break to down tea and cake, pore over the many maps, models and exhibits, and cast a jaundiced eye at the now pouring rain, we reassembled for part two. Corinna Arnold of St Briavels Common led us



through the options available to anyone seeking to cut their water consumption, with her entertaining talk on greywater systems. (See article alongside). Then Ainsleigh Rice of Herefordshire Hydro outlined to us in vivid style the pros and cons of micro hydro electric systems; by this stage the water racing down Mill Hill could have powered a small generator.

The biggest fanfare, several loud thunderclaps, was reserved for our final speaker Peter Golding, a professional dowser who'd learned his skills in rather drier conditions, the Arabian Desert. And, as if by magic, the rain ceased. Long enough, that is, for us to grasp our wire coat hangers and follow him outside to have a go at dowsing ourselves. For anyone unsure where the Mac's main drain is, we found it. We

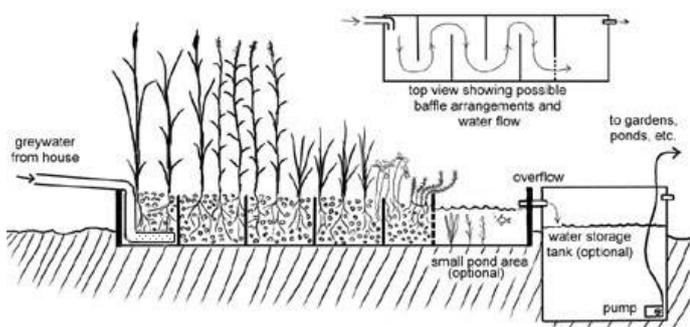


finished with generous offers from Mr Rice to answer any queries anyone might have about micro hydro installation and from Mr Golding to run a one-day dowsing course for us next year. Both can be contacted via the committee or, in Mr Golding's case, through the Slimbridge Dowsing Group. During the afternoon Louise Russell provided a display explaining the work of the Busoga Trust, providing clean water in rural Uganda. Donations for the afternoon totalled £75 and have been passed on to the trust.



GREYWATER SYSTEMS - Corinna Arnold

After a winter of seemingly non-stop rain, PGP members can be excused for wondering why on earth anyone would explore grey water systems intended to reduce fresh water consumption. The short answer is that by recycling water, you're cutting the amount you use, therefore you're both conserving water and taking the stress off your drainage system. This has a positive knock-on effect environmentally, reducing demand on our groundwater supplies and avoiding overloading the sewers.



There's a cost element too: there've been a number of recent newspaper articles pointing to the increase of metering by water companies and in the City there is growing interest in the financial impact of limited fresh water supplies. Many sources estimate that a grey water system can lower your mains water usage by up to a third. Since the Government has indicated that it would like the average person's daily consumption of white water to drop from the current 150 litres a day to 130 litres by 2030, this is another potential driver for looking into re-using grey water.

So what is grey water? Grey water gets its name from its cloudy appearance. It lies between white water, which is of drinking and food preparation quality, and black water, which is the end product of all that eating and drinking. It's defined as 'used' household water that has the potential to be 'reused' in some way.

a grey water system is in essence a water recycling system. It takes leftover water from a number of different sources, hand-basins, baths and so on, and reuses it: internally for flushing loos; externally for things such as watering crop and, washing cars. Some

systems can also recapture heat: using a heat exchange where incoming cold water can be part-warmed by the grey water coming out of your hot shower for example.

The illustration here is of a rather neat device: an all-in-one loo and washing machine, in which all the grey water flows straight into the cistern for use in flushing. Great until you drop your socks!

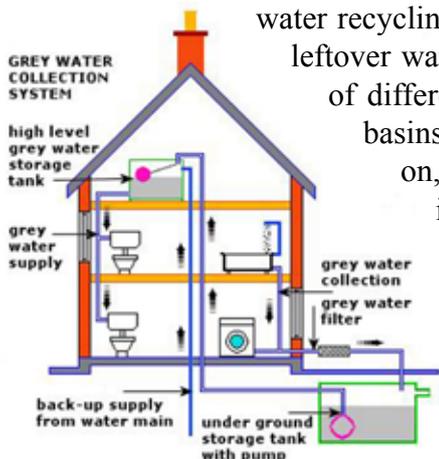


The challenge with leftover water is that it contains contaminants – chemicals from cleaning and bathing products or food particles from kitchen waste – which can lead to bacterial build-up. So one must filter or purify the water and find a way to store it in a way that avoids it becoming a breeding ground for pathogens. Some ways to do this include simple DIY systems channelling water from bath and or kitchen to a holding tank where it is filtered with a UV, ultrasound or membrane filtration system and then re-used; outdoor reed bed systems that filters the water in a natural way; and outdoor water tank systems using gravity to settle any sediments.



There is a lot happening in this area—if you're looking at a new build there are completely new systems that can be built into your house. And if you're trying

to retro-fit an existing dwelling, there's a wealth of information online that can assist you in deciding what approach makes most sense for you. It is, of course, a personal decision. For us, it's probably the idea that our loos are being flushed with perfectly good drinking water that keeps us coming back to the idea of installing some sort of grey water system. We'll keep PGP members posted on our progress!



MEADOWS (The British Wildlife Collection)

Reviews of George Peterken's book

Extract from The Independent - Wed 12 June 2013

Like wild flowers? Are you perhaps even moved by occasional, very special wild-flower encounters? Well, the hay meadow is the wild-flower experience taken to the ultimate power.

A traditional hay-meadow, reaching its peak just now, in June, presents a startling superabundance of floral life. There are so many blooms of so many colours, mixed in with so many waving grasses, that they blend into a rainbow mix that seems to be fizzing, a sort of animated chaos.

From the bright golden haze of the buttercups and yellow rattle, to the white of ox-eye daisies, the mauves and maroons and purples of clover, knapweed, wood cranesbill and spotted orchids, there can be as many as 150 species in one spot, and it's the coming-together of them all which is extraordinary. It makes for a quite incomparable display of the sheer exuberance of the natural world.

Yet this is a human construct: for thousands of years, farmers took grazing animals off the meadows in early spring, so the grass and the herbs could flower and grow tall and be harvested in July as hay, the farm animals' winter fodder. But then the tradition came to an end in the 20th century, and between 1930 and 1980, 97 per cent of Britain's traditional hay meadows disappeared.

Tractors replaced farm horses, so hay was much less needed, and then silage took its place anyway. Many of the meadows were ploughed for crops during the war, or ruined with modern fertilisers as post-war intensive farming took hold. A total of 1.7m hectares has now dropped to a pitiful total of about 15,000, surviving mostly in tiny parcels scattered across the country, where few people get to experience them.

Yet the cause is not lost, and two developments in the last week give hope for the future. One was the initiative by the Prince of Wales to have a "Coronation Meadow" established in every county. The Prince's aim is to begin a widespread meadow restoration movement. More power to him.

The other is the publication of an exceptional book, *Meadows*, by George Peterken (British Wildlife Publishing). This is a proper, scientific treatise by one of Britain's leading ecologists, but it is so well written and so spectacularly-illustrated (there are more than

250 colour photographs) that it is accessible to the general reader.

More than that, it marks a milestone, for Peterken does something new: he gives our wildflower-rich hay meadows their detailed due, for the first time, as one of the most marvellous habitats the countryside has ever contained, and by doing so he plugs a major gap in our knowledge of the British landscape.

He not only sets out the history and geography, as well as the breathtaking flora of our meadows, he also gives a vivid picture of their cultural significance, especially in an inspiring chapter entitled "Meadows in the mind", which is in essence a cultural history of haymaking, and of the significance, down the centuries, of flower-rich meadows in art.

They vanished while we were looking the other way. It was a cultural calamity. But George Peterken's detailing of what they meant to so many generations is a singular service to perform – it gives us a true sense of the scale of what has been lost, and it gives us also the hope that, now we understand what they're worth, some of these exquisite habitats at last may be restored.

Amazon customer review - 9 September 2013

This new series of British natural history with *Meadows* as the second volume is set to be a new classic. Peterken's style is easy but scholarly and the pictures illuminate this fabulous book. Quite simply there isn't a better natural history of meadows. This is a book that the expert and newcomer to this precious habitat can enjoy and learn a great deal. Most importantly it sets out the detailed ecological, social, cultural and modern history of meadows. It lays out what we have lost not just in terms of the plants and other wildlife but a way of life. I love the chapter that outlines the European grasslands, notably those in those remaining rural enclaves such as in Romania. I hope they survive the modern world. This is a beautiful book that anyone interested in meadows should have.

