



The community orchard is in the north-east corner of St Briavels playing field

# Year one in the orchard



The first steps in the creation of a project for the community



January 13: building tree guards



January 24: after all the talking and planning tree planting is finally under way



April 14: a work party to cut the grass, do some weeding and apply a good mulch



September: the plan was to have a photograph of our first apples here but they had all been picked by the time the photographer arrived. We hope someone in the community enjoyed them!

April 25: our first apple blossom time



# N E W S L E T T E R

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## COMMITTEE

*Chairman:*

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*Secretary, Treasurer and*

*Membership:*

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*Committee Members:*

- Helen Axe
- Deborah Flint
- Jean Green
- John Josephi
- John McCarthy
- George Peterken
- Phillip Powles
- Gwion Trefgarne
- Ursula Williams



**Successful restoration will produce a varied meadow sward**

# Come and learn about meadow restoration

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### Things to spot this month



Spiders' webs



Waxcap fungi

At the Parish Grasslands Project we have been encouraged this year to have received five inquiries from local residents keen to receive advice about how they could restore or establish wild flower meadows on a variety of sites.

This led us to choose meadow restoration as the subject of our autumn meeting at the Mackenzie Hall on Saturday October 12, starting at 2pm. Four excellent speakers will be on hand, who between them have a wealth of experience on the subject.

**Caroline Hanks** organises the very active Herefordshire Meadows. She will talk about new ideas on conservation grazing which maintain productivity, restore the flora and increase carbon storage. **Sue Holland**, also of Herefordshire Meadows, worked for many years for the Herefordshire Nature Trust and has experience of the long-term

## Four excellent speakers at our October meeting

course of some of their early meadow restorations. **David Whittingham** is a member of the Monmouthshire Meadows Group and has been restoring his own floodplain meadow. **Bruce Langridge** works at the National Botanic Garden of Wales near Carmarthen, where they have successfully restored several meadows by different methods.

During the interval tea, coffee and cake will be served, and following the speakers there will be an open discussion. Admission is free and open to members and non-members alike.

# The meadow hunters

The event known simply as the Flower Hunt, the annual visit by the Preschool and Class One of St Briavels Primary School to one of the special meadows in the parishes of St Briavels and Hewelsfield & Brockweir, followed the formula well-established over the last 11 years: it works, so we don't need to fix it.

Jean Green's meadow at Hollyside Farm has been traditionally farmed over the years and thus, without suffering the effects of modern methods which discourage biodiversity, is very rich in both flora and fauna.

This year the meadow has been grazed by a small flock of sheep, which has reduced the normal height of the sward. This was fortunate as it turned out, for the day planned for our expedition coincided with the wettest period in June, and the Preschool children (Sunflowers) are very small and would have been submerged in dripping vegetation had it been any taller.

Indeed, at 7.00 am that day, I wondered if we should cancel as menacing grey clouds and drizzle hardly felt

## A fun day out that introduces the younger generation to the joys of the natural world

encouraging. However, Jo George, supervisor and teacher, was not to be deterred and the day was definitely "on".

The colourful tapestry of flora was as brilliant as ever and the children enjoyed using sweep nets to catch insects (though I was concerned to see one handling a giant horsefly) to be temporarily secured in our keep net, and using pond nets to dip for newts and tadpoles in the water trough fed by a permanent spring. The butterflies and day-flying moths were harder to catch, whilst other children wanted to collect specimens of the different flowers to identify.

After Sunflowers were transported back to school, Jo walked with Class 1 (Bluebells) from school to the meadow, a distance of just over a mile. This was a real achievement for some, especially those unused to climbing stiles, but they quickly revived after eating their picnic lunch in Jean's barn and then enjoyed their afternoon of exploration in both the meadow and the wood.

With weather conditions far from ideal, I rated the day one of the very best we have had. We heard not one complaint and the delight and enthusiasm shown by all, parents, teachers and especially children, was very heartening.

Jean's thoughtful and thorough preparation of the field and of refreshments and Jo's guidance and supervision of the children were the reason for the success of the day so thanks to them both for yet another memorable day for the children.

**Ursula Williams**



**Intense activity by budding young naturalists during this year's Flower Hunt**



**Haymaking is a key element in the annual cycle of meadow management. Here the task of bale hauling is about to begin in the top field at Hollyside Farm** *Photo: David Pollok*

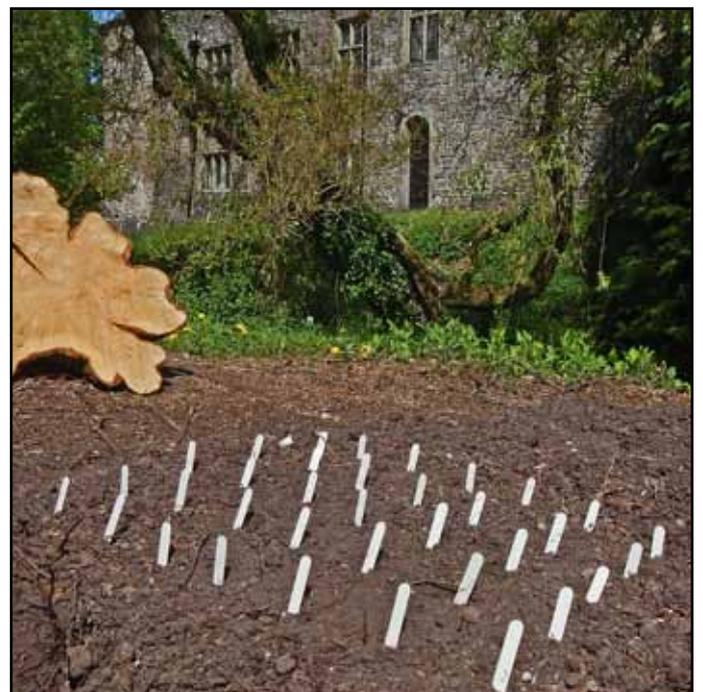
## Remembering the lost flowers

Our new garden in the moat will hold species that have become locally extinct

Last year, our flower survey found about 500 species of flowering plants, grasses, rushes, ferns, etc growing wild in Hewelsfield & Brockweir and St Briavels parishes, but failed to find 60-70 species that had been recorded hereabouts in 1920. This year we have found a few more, but there are still many that have apparently become extinct within our boundaries. None are rare nationally and many still grow not far away, but we have nevertheless lost some elements of local natural diversity.

The PGP thought it would be worth creating a Garden of Remembrance for Lost Flowers. This is not the start of a re-introduction programme - though it could develop into that - but a means of bringing the losses to wider attention and discussing what, if anything, we want to do about it. Earlier this year, a small plot was cleared in the grounds of St Briavels Castle (Tump side), specimens of a dozen lost species have been planted and most have now established themselves. The lost species include water plants and others that would never be able to grow in the plot, so this is only a sample. Ursula Williams and George Peterken are maintaining it and will be happy to explain what is going on to anyone who is curious.

Next summer we hope to make the garden the centrepiece



**Blank labels represent the vanished species**

of a “seance”. We could meet at the plot, identify the lost species, discuss why they have gone and consider how we might get them back. The photo, incidentally, shows the plot before the plants were set out there: we thought an empty plot with blank labels was an interesting representation of what has happened.

**George Peterken**