

ABOUT MONMOUTHSHIRE MEADOWS GROUP

Flower-rich meadows and pasture were once common throughout Monmouthshire, but over the past 50 years much of this semi-natural grassland has been lost. Members of the Monmouthshire Meadows Group are trying to redress this issue by managing their meadows in a manner which will encourage and preserve our native flower-rich meadows and pasture. This open day provides a marvellous opportunity to walk around and view some of these meadows belonging to our members and to get a feel for how the Monmouthshire landscape would have looked before intensive farming methods were adopted.

Site 1 MIDDLE TON LLANFAPLEY NP7 8SN Tel 01600 780147 Map ref SO368 435

This site at Middle Ton is a field of about 4 acres owned by Owen and Jill Featherstone. The field was ploughed in about 2002 but there was a good seed bank which has resulted in the present vegetation. Part of the field (c 1 acre) is managed as a hay meadow with aftermath grazing by sheep; there is a drainage line and small pond in this meadow. Part is an arboretum planted with exotic and native trees and part has exotic plants in it with a prairie planting area merging into a spring meadow near the house. Hedgerows line the field on three sides and there is a garden and shrub area near the house, with a pool.

Currently, although Yorkshire Fog is the dominant grass throughout, there is a variety of other grasses and many other flowering plants are established, albeit often in low numbers. The flora includes a range of meadow grasses and species such as Common Knapweed, Common sorrel, Field woodrush and Bird's-foot Trefoil. There are small areas of Meadow Vetchling and much Lesser Stitchwort. In late 2006 seed collected by the jointly-owned Gwent Wildlife Trust and Monmouthshire Meadows Group seed-harvester was scattered over the hay meadow. Yellow Rattle has subsequently appeared in many areas.

Directions

FROM MONMOUTH: Take the B4233 from Monmouth (the road that runs past Bridges Community Centre) towards Rockfield. Keep on this road past Rockfield for approximately 8 miles. You will pass The Stone Mill Restaurant and then Warwicks Pub. Keep going past Llantillio Crosseny, the next village is Llanfapley. As you pass the sign for Llanfapley there is a white house on the left. At the 30 mph speed signs for the village turn left down a farm lane. (If you get to the church you have gone too far.) There may be some gates to pass through. Go past a Pink cottage, through the next field and Middle Ton is the White house on the right. There is plenty of parking space.

FROM ABERGAVENNY: Take the B4233 Rockfield road, past the Pen Y Fal estate. Keep on this road for approximately 4 miles. When you enter Llanfapley, drive through the village past the church on the left and as you reach the 30 mph speed signs leaving the village, turn right down a farm lane. There may be some gates to pass through. Go past a pink cottage, through the next field and Middle Ton is the White house on the right. There is plenty of parking space.

Site 2 UPPER RED HOUSE, LLANVIHANGEL-YSTERN-LLEWERN, MONMOUTH NP25 5HL Tel 01600 780501 Map ref SO428131

The farm is 117 acres (47.3 ha) of rolling pasture, small woods, orchards, streams and ponds. It was not farmed intensively over the last 60 years, and when Teona Dorrien-Smith and her husband bought it 15 years ago, they were surprised to find how many different and unspoilt habitats there were, and what a diversity of flowers there were - not something one expects to find on most modern farms. The farm has been certified organic since 2001, and is now coming to the end of a 10 year Tir Gofal agreement – the Welsh farm environmental scheme. Everything on the farm was more or less derelict, so with the help of Tir Gofal grants fences and gates have been restored, hedges laid and been replanted, orchards replanted, ponds restored and created and the pastures for wildlife interest managed, either as permanent pasture or as traditional hay meadows. Spring

cereals are grown, with stubble over winter for the arable weeds and the birds. With the help of grants, old farm buildings were repaired and new woodland planted. A barn owl family has moved in, herons and waterfowl visit and nest by the ponds, and like Little Mill, there are plenty of ant hills and green woodpeckers, as well as dragon flies, water beetles, amphibians, many breeding birds, some “important” bees and much else.

The plant list has much in common with Little Mill Farm, but theirs is longer.

Teona is waiting for the plant species to increase, which is slowly happening. Please help find them if you can.

Directions:

FROM MONMOUTH: take B4233 through Rockfield and after about 4 miles, at Hendre, take first left just after Rolls golf club entrance (no sign). Continue towards Raglan for 1.5 miles and take small first right turn, at grass triangle. After nearly a mile along narrow lane, take first left (on right bend). Continue to buildings at end. Ignore new house on left. Upper Red House is the old house on right.

FROM RAGLAN: Take A40 in Newport direction, and turn off towards Dingestow, Mitchel Troy (and (oddly) Raglan, but don't go there).

Immediately take small turn left towards Tregaer. Then after a mile, first right, after 200 yards first left, after a mile first right, and after a third of a mile first left. Then after a mile turn left again at grass triangle and after nearly a mile take the first left (on bend to right), and continue to the end. If you go down to the church you've gone too far). Ignore new house on left. You want old house on right.

FROM ABERGAVENNY: take B4233 towards Rockfield for about 7 miles. After passing Llantillio Crosseny. continue about 1.5 miles and take first right turn towards Llanvihangel-Y-L, then first left. Pass church then up hill and through wood), then first right at end of wood. Go on to the end and buildings. New house on left. You want old house on the right.

Site 3 FAR BARN, ST MAUGHAMS GREEN NP25 5AA Tel 01600 750309 Map reference SO465178

This site, owned by Mr and Mrs Laws, is part of a field now bisected by the entrance track to their house in a converted barn. Prior to 2006 the Laws regularly mowed the grassland on either side of the track but following advice, they now leave the grassland uncut until July, only mowing winding paths through the grassland. This has resulted in a lovely stretch of flower-rich grassland with a range of species including the delicate yellow umbel flowers of Pepper Saxifrage *Silaum silaus*. Wetland plants occur along the small ditch at the bottom of the site and an adjacent marshy area.

Directions: **FROM MONMOUTH** on the Rockfield road, turn right in Rockfield village on the B4347. Go uphill and along from the village for ca. 1.5 miles and turn right towards Maypole and St. Maughans. Then after ca 1 mile, turn right, signed St. Maughans Green and Tregate Bridge. Go past the houses and take a left turn (not right to Tregate Bridge) signed Skenfrith. Continue down the narrow lane past a turn into Trivor house and take the next turn just before a small stone bridge over an alder-lined stream **up to Far Barn.**

Site 4 LITTLE MILL FARM 1 ½ miles west of NEWCASTLE, NP25 5NF Tel 01600 780449 Map reference: SO426174.

This small farm of about 30 acres, that has been managed by Ann and Michael Eggleton since 1989 (registered as organic 1989-2005), has several species-rich pastures and hay meadows with some damper areas. There are four fields to the north and east of Little Mill Farm and two to the south west (as well as old woodland and new plantations); all have good species-rich tall hedgerows. Dormice have been spotted (thanks to the cats). Of particular interest in the grassland is a population of Meadow Saffron *Colchicum autumnale* although in June not even the leaves will be evident, because of the