

White Lion Meadow Summer 2022 Diary

Plan for the Meadow

White Lion Meadow was gifted to the people of Lyonshall through the Parish Council who are the owners of the land and therefore ultimately responsible for it. A steering group is responsible for the implementation of the work. Organised activities such as volunteer working are covered by Lyonshall Parish Council's insurance.

Two consultations were carried out in the first half of 2022 so that local residents could have their say. As a consequence a plan of action was drawn up from these consultations. In early summer, Lyonshall Parish Council agreed to the action plan which can be found in full in the information table on the Meadow Home Page.

The site is being developed as an environmentally friendly, wildlife site with native trees and wildflower species planted. Suitable conditions will be created to encourage the regeneration of natural vegetation.

Habitats will be provided for wild creatures of all sizes and safe corridors maintained for use by these creatures. Hedges and native species trees are included in the plan. The meadow grasses themselves will be useful for smaller mammals and invertebrates to travel through, as well as providing habitats to live in.

Access is required for all people with wheelchair/buggy access and seating provided. The idea is to create a quiet area for reflection, in keeping with the protected essence of the site.

The steering group proposes to provide information about the project to the Parish Council and to Lyonshall residents as work progresses. It should be noted that this is a long-term and evolving project and dramatic changes in the short-term should not be expected. Indeed, the early summer of 2022 involved leaving the site largely untouched and watching what happened. Volunteers worked on the site's fringes and tidied up the stream and banks.

Works Completed

One of the best ways to get the meadow clear of overgrowth is to put sheep on to graze the land, which we did in early spring. During the following few months some light clearing was undertaken by volunteers. Much work has been done in controlling nettles, docks and thistles in the meadow area, however, some will be left in the edges as they are valuable for insects. No sprays or chemicals are being used. Mowing of nettles and cutting out of docks and thistles is already proving successful.

In early July 2022 the vegetation was "topped off" which means a farmer mowed the grass on a higher setting. This left a lot of cut plant matter which had to be raked up by hand and the resultant "thatch" was removed from the site. If left, it would rot down and feed the faster growing and therefore more invasive growth at the expense of less vigorous plants. It was agreed that a mower of sufficient size that took the thatch off would be a better use of time.

Plant Observations in the Meadow in Spring and Summer 2022

Sixteen different species were observed and identified as well as several types of grasses. Please refer to the information table on the Meadow Home Page showing the broad-leaved plant species found in White Lion Meadow during 2022.

The broad-leaved plant species in White Lion Meadow are the types one would expect in a pasture which has been grazed and manured by livestock for many years. The most visually attractive include birds-foot trefoil. This is an important nectar source for bees and a food plant for several species of unusual butterflies.

Bush vetch is also present. It has an intricate tracery of small pea-like leaves and tendrils, with long lilac flowers held in groups. It is found in rough grassy places and can sometimes be seen in country lane verges. Bumble bees and honeybees feed on the flowers which emerge between April and November.

Three types of buttercups: bulbous, creeping and meadow have been found. The latter has finely dissected leaves and is found in damp grasslands; however the bulbous buttercup prefers dry grassland, which shows the range of habitats in White Lion Meadow. The name "buttercup" was not commonly used before the 18th

century and was probably derived from the idea that the buttercup is responsible for the yellow colour in butter – the irony is that the plant is poisonous to livestock.

All the broad-leaved plants have their importance to wildlife in White Lion Meadow, for example the creeping thistle's seeds are a valuable food for farmland birds, and the common nettle is a food source for the larvae of several species of butterflies, including the small tortoiseshell and the peacock. Similarly the dandelion provides nectar for bees, seeds for birds such as linnets, and the leaves are used by the larvae of species of butterflies and moths. There is no aim to eradicate these plants in White Lion Meadow, just to create other micro-environments and keep these highly successful plants in check so that other wildflowers can establish. This will only enrich what is already there.