



# BROOK MEADOW CONSERVATION GROUP NEWSLETTER No.96 APRIL TO SEPT 2019

## Girls Brigade Visit to the Meadow

You might call it Cleavers, but where I come from it's Sticky Willy. A botanist talks of Galium Aparine, an herbalist of one of the most useful plants, while the taxonomist savours a variety having more common names than you can shake a stick at.

To a kid, big or small, though it has one priceless quality... It sticks to things. You can drape your friends with it and it won't fall off, you can throw it and it has a fair chance of adhering. In fact it's play value is probably equal to its medicinal value.

Yet I was staggered to find that a party of Girls Brigade members I took round the meadow in June hadn't ever seen it let alone had a go. That was soon remedied as we were starting in Palmers Road Copse where there was a really good crop so it was one of the first points of interest.

Mind you, if they didn't know what Sticky Willy was they were certainly switched on about the importance of the meadow and the river, indeed the whole conservation effort. More than one pointed out that this was where the tarmac stopped.

Indeed every example of something they didn't know about common wayside plants was matched by some ecological concept they were fully aware of. (Sorry of which they were fully aware.) Trust me, this generation *know* this stuff.

Humbled and feeling really quite ignorant I put most of the earnest stuff I had in mind back in the bag and concentrated on just enjoying the walk. A nature ramble like Miss Lacey took us on in 1964.

So we felt grasses, talked about stingers and docks, looked for hardheads, smelt meadow sweet, watched moths landing then disappearing against the background, listened - yes just listened to the noise of the meadow, enjoyed walking seemingly invisible amongst growth bigger than us.

They enjoyed it so much we ran over time, getting yours truly a telling off from Pam who had the other party, but my goodness we had a good time.

I suppose you could say we played. I wouldn't deny it. But you see I was lucky I grew up in low input low mechanisation rural England in the fifties. When I was these girls' age a lot of the countryside was still like Brook Meadow even mowing grass and arable field boundaries where early machines could not get. We romped in this stuff all the time. You don't get many such opportunities in the urban sprawl of the Solent Borders.

As a group I think we should be proud that through our conservation efforts we give people of all ages somewhere to play. It's an important achievement..

**Roger Mills**



Dan in front of the stall

## BMCG at the Emsworth Horticultural Society Show

We had a really good day. I arrived shortly after 09.00 and David, Kathy and Debbie had started to unpack the gazebo and sort out the poles. At 10.30 it was erected and furnished with tables, chairs, display board, Brook Meadow banners, Kathy's craft table and a fabulous collection of wildflowers that Brian had collected earlier from the meadow.

Dave McVittie had brought round 11 bags of 5 recycled tennis balls that he has been collecting up, hand washed and disinfected for sale.

Dan brought loads of

dog poo bags too.

Lots of volunteers attended to help on the stall, Tony, Terry, Reg, Brian and his wife as well as those mentioned above. Sorry if I have missed anyone. Pam was busy treasuring; I believe Colin was on car parking duty. Dave McVittie popped by to enquire after sales of balls and I was able to tell him that 14 found new homes. Dan also sold lots of his dog poo bags. Quite a few members renewed subscriptions and some generous donations were received.

**Maurice Lille**



Brian Fellows with his basket of wild flowers

## PRACTICAL WORK IN THE MEADOW—3rd QUARTER SUMMARY

PRC=Palmers Road Copse, SLP=Seagull Lane Patch, SM=South Meadow, CM=Central Meadow, NM=North Meadow, HQ=Tool Store.

### Conservation Work Session—Thursday 20th June

15 volunteers. Leader Maurice. Weather: no report.  
Tasks: Scything, strimming and clearing green paths, cutting back nettles and bramble from gravel paths, litter picking and back filling the chestnut piles in the stream in Palmers Road Copse. ►



### Conservation Work Session—Sunday 7th July

10 volunteers. Leader Maurice. Weather: Drizzle  
Tasks: Cutting back nettles, brambles and thistles from path edges, cleaning sign cases, reinforcing the North path which has been falling away. ►



### Conservation Work Session—Thursday 17th July

12 volunteers. Leader Colin. Weather: calm, overcast with light drizzle (18°C—24°C). Tasks: remove twig barrier from flower rich meadow, ► clear Lumley gate for tractor access, cut low hanging branches from paths, side cut paths in PRC, install leaflet boxes and mark out area for annual cut by contractor.



### Conservation Work Session—Sunday 4th August

14 volunteers. Leader Colin. Weather: Calm, overcast and bright, rather close. Tasks: Clear fallen tree debris in SLP around HQ. ► Cut branches from tree overhanging path in the NM. Trim willow fence at observation point in CM. Trim growth at observation fence in PRC. Trim hedge in SLP.



### Conservation Work Session—Thursday 15th August

13 volunteers. Leader Reg. Weather: calm summer morning.  
Tasks: Cut paths in NM and SM with power scythe. Clear overhanging vegetation and remove litter from river while water level is low. ► Litter pick and sign case clean.



### Conservation Work Session—Sunday 1st September

10 volunteers. Leader Colin. Weather: Bright, overcast and warm. Tasks: Cutting back growth in the SM using the power scythe and hand tools. (Very heavy work.) Arisings collected and dumped nearby. Also cutting back fallen tree debris which is intruding on the meadow. Litter pick and sign case clean as usual. Welcome coffee break at the seat in the CM. ►



## WILDLIFE ON THE MEADOW - Flowers, Butterflies and Moths

From Brian Fellows' wildlife blog



**Damsel flies.** I watched the river for about 30 mins today without seeing anything of interest except for a passing Moorhen. However, I did spot a very nice male Banded Demoiselle perched on the leaf of Branched Bur-reed in the river. Banded Demoiselles are less common on the meadow now than Beautiful Demoiselles. Damsel flies have two wings which are generally held against the body when at rest.

**Painted Lady Butterfly.** David Minns pointed out a very pale Painted Lady resting on the ground, only the second seen on the meadow. We were informed that there would be large numbers of these butterflies migrating in from the continent, however sightings have been scarce. This butterfly cannot withstand our winters and migrates south or perishes at the end of autumn.



### **Marsh Woundwort.**

My count this morning of Marsh Woundwort flower spikes near the Weeping Willow is now at an astonishing 256. This is the best year ever for this attractive plant. They must be seen to be believed!



### **Wild Flowers**

There has been a glorious cacophony of wild flowers on the Lumley area, surely enough to tempt Painted Lady butterflies from Dan's garden! These include Common Fleabane, Creeping Thistle, Hogweed, Wild Angelica, Common Comfrey, Hoary Ragwort, Red Bartsia, Common Knapweed, Hedge Bindweed, Perforate and Squared-stalked St John's-Wort, Great Willowherb, Water Mint, Prickly Sow-Thistle, Pepper-Saxifrage.



## Welcome to our new councillor

Jennifer Rye welcomes one of our new councillors, Julie Thain-Smith (right) who joined the Sunday work session on 1st September. Julie stayed for the whole work session and helped with the difficult task of starting to clear growth in the South Meadow. We hope that Julie's visit will contribute to keeping Havant Borough Council in touch with the work we do on the meadow and that she may be of assistance in our dealings with the council and its contractor Norse.

## Black Poplars

There are two fine young black poplars on the central meadow. These trees make a fine feature. However the right hand tree has a blight which has caused it to shed its leaves early this year.



Looking more closely, I discovered the leaves (*see photo left*) on the apparently ailing tree appeared to have been attacked by a leaf mining insect producing dark blotches between the veins and around the edges of the leaves. The other tree with its leaves still intact appeared to be unaffected apart from a lot of very small spots on the leaves. **Brian Fellows**

## Annual Meadow Grass Cut

It was very good to see Martin Cull back on the meadow to do the annual cut of the grassland. Martin, and his father Brian before him, has been doing this very important management work ever since the group was formed in Year 2000. As there are no grazing animals on the meadow it is important to cut the grass every year. The cutting is done on a rotational scheme except for flower rich areas which must be cut every year. For the past two years we have employed a contractor who has the correct machinery. The cost of the cut is the major expense for the group. We have asked Havant Borough Council to do the cutting but their contractor was not able to meet our requirements. This situation will be kept under review.



## Forthcoming Events

AGM: Friday 8th November at 7.00 pm. In St James Church Hall. Business will be conducted first, followed by refreshments and a nature talk on the subject of water voles and their habitat.

**Photographs this issue:** Brian Fellows

### FORTHCOMING WORK SESSIONS 9.30-12noon:

Meet at the Tool Store, Seagull Lane. Tools and gloves provided.

**Sunday 6th Oct: Thursday 17th Oct : Sunday 3rd Nov: Thursday 21st Nov : Sunday 1st Dec:  
Thursday 19th Dec: Sunday 5th January**

### BROOK MEADOW CONSERVATION GROUP—CONTACTS

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