



# **Mountsorrel Heritage Group**



## **The Navins Wildflower Meadow**

**Jeff Scott**

**October 2014**



## The Location

The site is a small triangle of ground close to Christ Church at the foot of the eastern edge of Broad Hill. It is adjacent to the former Mountsorrel Quarry complex that has now been re-instated to grassed high potential grazing by Lafarge Tarmac as successors to the Mountsorrel Granite Company.

Historically the site was used as part of a larger parcel of rough grazing common land but was also at times used for vehicle parking



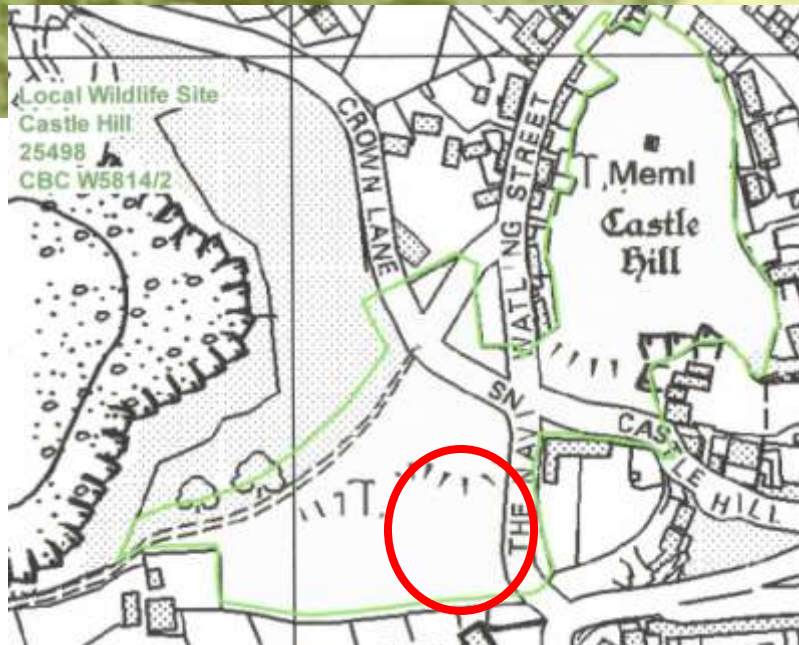
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## The Location

The soil is a thin layer of heavy clay over an underlying granite hardcore. Although it becomes quite wet after rain it also dries out very quickly in sunny weather. At the northern edge is a capped spring known locally as “The Froggy”

The site is part of the Local Wildlife Site “25498 Castle Hill” registered with Charnwood Borough Council.

The meadow is adjacent to the larger area of uncultivated and generally unmanaged common land bordering the former Mountsorrel Quarry.





## Site Adoption and Management

During the winter of 2005/6 Ken Wiblin, the Chairman of Mountsorrel Heritage Group negotiated with LaFarge as leaseholders of the land from the De Lisle Estate and the Parish Council to establish a small wildflower meadow at the foot of the Navins. LaFarge were very supportive and provided plant and contractor support to prepare the land for seeding.

### *Mountsorrel Heritage Group Meeting Minutes 28<sup>th</sup> July 2006:*

May I take this opportunity to thank the volunteers who turned up to the work evening at the Navins. We dug out a great deal of brambles and it certainly looked better when we had finished. Some further digging was done following that evening but you may have noticed that someone (I think perhaps the contractor) has mown the area. I hope this does not have a negative effect on the wild flower seed. There were some flowers showing but I fear they didn't have time to self-seed. Fingers crossed everything will be OK. I have listed the seeds that were sown along with the slow growing general grass seed. I hope to be able to raise some seed and plant them as plugs at the right time. I will be contacting the contractor to request that the area is mown in late autumn only to enable the flora to drop seed. Needless to say we will need to keep on top of the brambles.

.....K Wiblin



Initial scything and haymaking – Autumn 2007

## Original Seeding 2006

- **Wild Flowers Sown:**

Yarrow Common Knapweed; Wild Carrot; Lady's Bedstraw; Field Scabious; Oxeye Daisy; Birdsfoot Trefoil; Musk Mallow; Ribwort Plantain; Hoary Plantain; Cowslip; Selfheal; Meadow Buttercup; Yellow Rattle; Common Sorrel

- **Grasses Sown:**

Common Bent; Crested Dogstail; Red Fescue; Slender Creeping Red Fescue

## Continuing Maintenance

### Village group work to start meadow

A GROUP of volunteers from the Mountsorrel Heritage Group met at the Navins to tidy the area and remove rubbish that has accumulated.

The volunteers are trying to establish a wild flower meadow in the area known locally as the 'Froggy' and have been progressively planting wild flowers in the area.

The Navins, next to Christ

Church, is believed to have taken its name as being the site for the temporary wooden hut homes of the canal worker 'Navvies.'

During the morning they removed six bags of cans, bottles, waste paper and general rubbish from the area.

Young brambles were dug up to prevent further growth and any dead branches were removed from trees.

The group was formed three years ago with the aim of promoting all aspects of Mountsorrel's Heritage both historical and natural history.

The group meets every second Tuesday of the month at the Mountsorrel Baptist Church next to the Memorial Hall and currently has about 20 active members.

Anyone who has an interest in any aspect of Mountsorrel's heritage would be welcome to join the group which is seeking to appoint a Mountsorrel Heritage Warden.

The Heritage Warden Network is made up of volunteers who help monitor and conserve the rich heritage of Leicestershire and Rutland's countryside and landscape.

Full support is offered by both the Community Heritage Initiative based at Holly Hayes, Birstall, and the local heritage group.

Further information can be obtained from and applications can be made to its secretary, Keith Foster, on 0116 210 6041. E-mail [keith.foster3@ntlworld.com](mailto:keith.foster3@ntlworld.com)



Heritage volunteers all set to tidy up in Mountsorrel in their bid to establish a wild flower meadow. CNF

The regime of autumn scything, allowing seed to fall and set and then haymaking continues to be followed. The more vigorous plants such docks, nettles, brambles and bindweed are hand weeded and Yellow Rattle has been successfully seeded to reduce the more rampant grasses.

In 2010 the first primroses and cowslip appeared from the original seeding and plug plants of other wildflowers raised individually by members have been added

Loughborough Echo 22 May 2008



# The Meadow Through The Year

**January**



**February**



# The Meadow Through The Year

**March**



**April**





# The Meadow Through The Year



**May**

**June**



## The Meadow Through The Year



**July**



**August**



# The Meadow Through The Year



**September**



**October**



# The Meadow Through The Year



**November**



**December**



## Site Surveys 2010

In the early summer of 2010 site surveys were carried out for the Group by two qualified botanists who reported finding the following:

Ash	Bindweed	Birds-foot-trefoil	Black knapweed
Bramble	Broad-leaved dock	Buckwheat	Buddleia
Cleavers	Common vetch	Common sorrel	Cow parsley
Cranesbill	Creeping buttercup	Creeping thistle	Crested dog's-tail
Dandelion	False oat-grass	Herb bennet	Horse chestnut
Ivy	Meadow buttercup	Ivy-leaved speedwell	Knapweed
Lesser trefoil	Mouse-ear chickweed	Musk mallow	Ladies bedstraw
Nettle	Nipplewort	Oxeye daisy	Ragwort
Red clover	Ribwort plantain	Rough chervil	Silverweed
Spear thistle	Sycamore	Teasel	Thyme-leaved speedwell
White clover	White dead nettle	Wild carrot	Wood avens
Woundwort	Yarrow	Yorkshire fog	Yellow rattle

**NB: Primroses and Cowslips had died down at the time of the surveys**



A photograph of a vibrant green meadow in the foreground, filled with various grasses and small white flowers. In the background, a dense forest of tall, leafy trees stretches across the horizon. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

# **The plants and their uses**



## Yellow Rattle

A grassland annual flowering from May until September. As the seeds ripen the rattling in their pods is said to indicate that the meadow is ready for haymaking.

A hemi-parasitic plant it attaches itself to the roots of a wide range of meadow plants, especially grasses. Whilst gaining nutrients from the other plants and in consequence limiting their vigour it does so without parasitizing them.





# Common Knapweed and Black Knapweed

Grassland perennials thriving on moderately fertile soils. An attractive plant and very useful bees, hoverflies, butterflies and beetles. The seed heads attract Goldfinches and other seed eating birds





## Ox-Eye Daisy

Common grassland perennial, also called Dog-daisy. Wide spread, native, common across Europe. The unopened can be marinated and used in a similar way to capers in cooking



## Lady's Bedstraw

A herbaceous perennial, native to Europe. In the past the dried plants were used to stuff mattresses as the plant scent acts as a flea killer. The flowers were also used to coagulate milk and to colour Double Gloucester cheese. It is also used in dye making and in Denmark it is used as an infusion in a drink





## Comfrey

A native of Europe, uses include:

- Organic fertiliser, rich in potassium
- Animal feed
- Herbal medicine and ointments – an old name is “Knitbone”
- Herbal tea



## Bird's Foot and Lesser Trefoil

Common grassland flowering plants, the name coming from the shape of the seed pods on the stalk. Sometimes grown as a forage plant





# Common Vetch

A nitrogen fixing leguminous plant, often grown as a green manure or for livestock fodder





## Cow Parsley

A very common roadside plant. Although it can be easily mistaken for several similar looking poisonous plants eg. Poison Hemlock and Fools Parsley the true Cow Parsley can be eaten but is not very tasty!





## Cleavers Herb

With the common name of “Goose Grass”, Cleavers is in the same family as Coffee and the fruits can also be dried and roasted,

Medicinal uses include being served as a tea to act as a diuretic or lymphatic detoxifier. It can also be made into poultices and washes to treat a variety of skin complaints, light wounds and burns



# Cranesbill

One of 442 flowering species of Geranium. A good source of nectar for insects, moths and butterflies





# Nettle

Very familiar to everyone. Nettle has a long history of use as a medicine and as a food source

Nettle can be used as:

- Tea for gout and urinary symptoms
- Shampoo to treat dandruff
- spinach for food
- A dye
- A textile (it was used to make German uniforms in WW1)
- A garden fertiliser, it is rich NiPh and trace elements



# Bindweed

Although there are over 200 species it is a plant we avoid





## Meadow Buttercup and Creeping Buttercup

Although pretty to look at they are seen essentially as weeds. Birds will eat the seeds



## Dandelion

Very common but with many uses:

- Herbal medicine – used to treat almost every ailment!
- Tea
- Salad leaf
- Wine making





# Mouse-ear Chickweed

Can be eaten and said to taste similar to spinach, rich in nutrients





# Ragwort

**A food source for at least 77 insects the most common being Cinnabar Moth which is totally reliant upon Ragwort for survival. Poisonous to cattle and in theory to humans.**





## Red Clover

Grown as a fodder crop, fixes nitrogen into the soil. Used as green manure and also in Alternative Medicines



## Ribwort Plantain

**Common plant and a weed in cultivated ground. It has medicinal uses in a form of tea and other herbal remedies for coughs, skin diseases, insect bites and infections**





## Silverweed Cinquefoil

With over 300 varieties it has many herbal uses and the roots can also be eaten



## **Spear Thistle**

**Providing a good source of nectar for insects etc the seeds are also a food source for Goldfinches and Greenfinches.**

**The stems can be steamed or boiled and the tap roots eaten raw or cooked.**





## Teasel

Formerly of major use in the textile industry, the seeds are much loved by Goldfinches



# Hawk Weed

Very common similar to and often mistaken for Dandelion with similar uses. There are over 260 species in Europe.





## **Woundwort**

**Common names include, Heal All, Self-Heal, Betany and Lambs ears. It is used in medicines world-wide and is viewed by herbalists as something of a panacea**



# Yarrow

A really useful herb, has medicinal properties, can be eaten, very attractive to butterflies and various birds, especially Starlings use it for nest lining as it has parasitic inhibiting properties





## Wood Avens

Also called Herb Bennet, Colewort and St Benedict's Herb. There is much folk lore surrounding this plant. The leaves growing in threes and the flower petals in fives are said to be reminders off the Holy Trinity and the five wounds of Christ.

Modern herbalists use it to treat Diarrhoea, heart disease, halitosis, mouth ulcers and to prevent colic





## White Dead Nettle

Used in many herbal preparations as a tea or shampoo. The pollen is much loved by bumble bees.





# Common Sorrel

Cultivated for food for many centuries, the leaf can be used in soups, sauces and salads.



## White Clover

Also called Dutch Clover, it is a nitrogen fixing plant and has been used as a medicinal plant by Native Americans. A source of nectar for bees.





## **Creeping Thistle**

**An important food source for Goldfinches and Linnets and to a lesser extent other finches. The foliage is an important food source for butterflies, moths and aphids. The roots are edible**



# Thyme Leaved and Ivy Leaved Speedwell

A perennial flowering plant of the Plantain family





# Broad Leaved Dock

Well Known overpowering common weed, often associated with Nettles





# Bent Grass *Agrostis Tenuis*

Over 100 species belong to this grass family including some of the main lawn grasses





# Buckwheat Flower

Very useful for attracting bees. Also used for making flour especially for those avoiding wheat



## **Buddleia Davidii**

**Well known as the Butterfly Bush and hugely attractive to butterflies. Originates in China.**





## Cocksfoot

A common grass which grows well on light sandy soils. Introduced from America in 1763



## Common Bent

Another lawn grass, particularly desirable on golf courses because it can be mown to a very short length without damage and can cope with a lot of foot traffic. The name “bent” refers to the shallow roots which bend just below the surface to propagate laterally





# Cowslip *Primula Veris* & *Primula Vulgaris*

Cowslip veris is native throughout most of temperate Europe and Asia. It often hybridises with *Primula vulgaris*. Can be used for wine making amongst other culinary uses A harbinger of spring and the coming warmer weather



## Crested Dog Tail

Used for grazing sheep on and is a food plant for the Skipper and Brown Butterfly families. Also used as a rat killer





# False Oat Grass

Tall growing grass often used as an ornamental





## Field Scabious

Food plant for insects. It was used to treat scabies and other skin complaints including sores caused by Bubonic Plague. The name comes from the Latin – scabere, to scratch





## Hoary Plantain

An edible plant used medicinally for:

- Treating wounds as an astringent
- Toothache
- Eye infections

Archaeological evidence shows that has been in use in Britain since at least the Roman era



## **Musk Mallow**

**Often grown as an ornamental plant for its attractive scented flowers. The leaves and seeds are edible**





# Selfheal

Used to treat cuts and inflammation amongst many uses in herbal medicine. It can be made into a herbal drink and the leaves used in salads



## Wild Carrot

An attractive tall plant the roots of which can be eaten when young but they do become “woody” very quickly. Can also be used in dyeing.





## **Red Campion**

**A very pretty flower used by butterflies and bumble bees and there are species of moth that feed on the foliage.**

**Crushed seeds have been used to treat snake bites**



# Ragged Robin

Used as a source of pollen by bees and butterflies it prefers a damp environment. Has declined in Britain due to modern farming techniques





A vibrant green meadow filled with tall grasses and small white flowers, set against a backdrop of a dense, sun-dappled forest. The scene is bright and natural, suggesting a healthy ecosystem.

# The Animals



Several common wild animals have been sighted on the meadow, including:



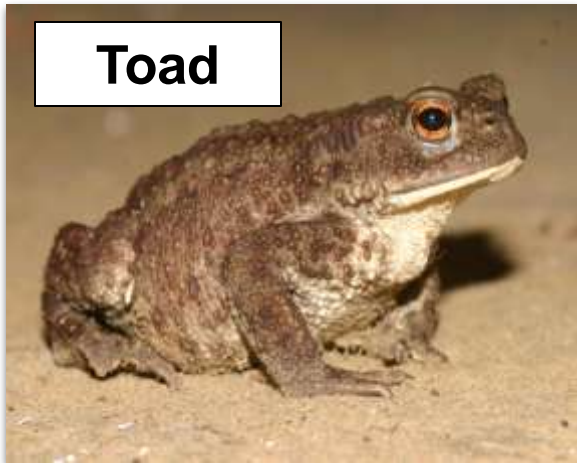
**Frog**



**Common Vole**



**Common Shrew**



**Toad**

Although we have no specific sightings on the meadow both Fox and Badger are very common in the immediate area



**Muntjac**



## Muntjac



In early spring 2014 a new born Muntjac was found hidden in the bushes at the edge of the meadow. The next day it had gone and as there was no evidence of predation we believe that it had been collected by its mother.

Some days later an adult was also spotted on the meadow



# Animal Nests

The annual haymaking in 2014 revealed many vole nests





# The Future

The Group plan to maintain the current management regime and where possible add more wild plants appropriate to the area and soil.

It is hoped to develop a more structured recording methodology and include insects and birds.



# The Work Continues



**Tending to Mountsorrel's wildflower meadow. Pictured from left are Phil Proud, Jeff Scott, Robin Davies, Patrick Whelband and Keith Foster.**

Loughborough Echo 26 Oct 2012





# **Mountsorrel Heritage Group**



**In Memory of Ken Wiblin**