

Wild Norley

Think Global - Act Local

July

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MAD DOGS AND ENGLISHMEN

The tragic death of Michael Mosley, after walking some nine miles in searing heat, made me ponder my own fallibility, being in hospital with a badly infected finger. Whilst handling turves from old pasture wearing Lancashire Gloves i.e. bare handed (Old Cheshire joke), a tiny splinter caused an infection in my middle finger and red lines started tracking up my arm.

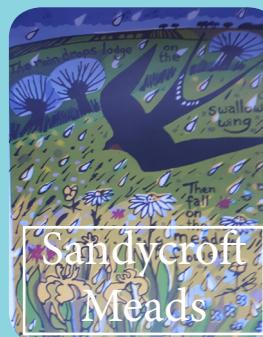
So a tetanus jab, intra-venous antib's and an op ensued. A cautionary tale, luckily it wasn't anthrax. Annoyingly too I wasn't able to see the Wilding film about the transformation of the 3,500 acres of the Knepp Estate into a wondrous place for wildlife, where nightingales sing and Storks have successfully raised young in Britain after a 600 year absence. See <https://knepp.co.uk/2024/04/wilding-movie/>. In turn that also reminded me that I've neglected to let people know about Norley's own mini Knepp project - a gentler rewilding of 20 acres of Sandycroft Farm. The meeting about it on the 17th May had a good turnout with over 40 people. It was a useful meeting with Roger Goulding, CWaC's Green Infrastructure Team Leader, clearly setting out the basis of the Biodiversity net gain, with wildflower meadows and better hedge management for wildlife. In regard to hedges there was some discussion about not allowing hedges to present a risk to road users. Reassurance was given that any such obstructions would be dealt with. The discussion on access basically agreed to maintain the present gates with notices advising that dogs would be allowed if on leads. As to other gates, there was a discussion about access from Crabmill Lane, where there is a blocked/defunct gate going into Brines Moss. And as to a possible gate from the Memorial Garden which has limited parking, it was agreed it could not provide an easy route as it would be quite steep. But nonetheless it would make a good pathway from the gate in School Lane, so it's likely one will be put there.

The area set aside for a Community Orchard (CO) / Memorial Orchard (MO) or possibly a woodland gave rise to a lot more discussion. Some concern was

expressed that the area was too steep for an orchard. Roger G. said it wasn't uniformly steep, some landscaping could be done and there could be a mix of shrubs on very steep parts and fruit trees on the flatter areas. But there was insufficient discussion about CO's. There are apparently over 20 in the County but all are funded/ run differently. An orchard wouldn't need to be planted in its entirety in the first or even second year, all that was required were a couple of pruners (training given) and someone to mow the grass around the trees twice a year.

From NWG's point of view a CO or Flowering Shrubby Woodland is best for BNG as both would be planted straight away.

Our Parish Council agreed to carry out a consultation using a preferential form in the Norley News/Facebook and forms at the Stores/School and Churches. NWG offered the use of its website for the form and associated information which would help to make sure everyone was as informed as possible. (c.f.



Neighbourhood Plan). One thing that could be voted on is a name for the fields - Sandycroft Meads has been suggested.

ORCHIDS

Since the meeting NWG has agreed with Roger G. to help him raise Orchids for planting in the Sandycroft

meadows.

The seeds from four species being available:

1. Pyramidal
2. Green winged
3. Early Purple
4. Spotted Orchid

In order to grow them symbiotic mycorrhizal fungi (MF) are essential (though Clattinger Farm raise them in Petri dishes). Orchid seeds have no endosperm (food for the developing seedling viz. like cereals or nuts).

So in order to have a fair chance of propagating them, NWG will need to find soils where there are MF, particular to "their" species of Orchid. The seeds are fine dust like spores only 50 µm in diameter. (1mm = 1000



Orchid

micrometres)

NWG has discovered some Dactylorhiza Orchids in Brines Moss and we are now thinking about how to get them to spread into the adjoining field, where no doubt they once grew in abundance.

For more information on the mysterious & amazing world of Orchids see

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/may/24/scientists-transplant-soil-fungi-in-race-to-save-the-worlds-rthreatened-orchids>

<https://phys.org/news/2024-05-orchid-nurture-seedlings-underground-fungal.html>

<https://britishorchids.co.uk/orchids-at-clattinger-farm/>

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/plants/wild-flowers/early-purple-orchid/>

A BRAVE NEW WORLD

By the time you are reading this, a new administration will be in place. The list to sort out environmental issues alone must be longer than a Gibbon's arm. Two in particular are exercising us in NWG - Flaxmere Moss and Beavers.



Flaxmere in 2022



Bogasphodel on Flaxmere Moss

Flaxmere Moss is the jewel in the crown of Norley's habitats, both a SSSI and a RAMSAR site. A precious rare schwimgmoor (quaking bog) it was part of CWT's Lost Mosses Project and work by CWT and NWG continued afterwards. So it came as a complete surprise to discover that CWT had dropped it from its portfolio. But Natural England who are responsible for such sites have now recognised that more needs to be done to make sure these sites are properly conserved. Flaxmere Moss was improving; attention has to be given to it to make sure this improvement continues. And NWG will continue to press the alarm

button until the right undertakings are given. Our next concern regards CWT's Beaver Project, indeed all beavers. After a 400 year absence they are back, but their future is not secure. All the Wildlife Trusts are calling for a Beaver Strategy for England which would provide a roadmap for a future where:



1. There are more beavers in many more catchments
2. Beaver populations are healthy and thriving
3. Management frameworks are agreed which provide support for farmers, landowners and river users
4. Beaver impacts and their population health are scientifically monitored

Both NWG and the Wildlife Trusts believe that beavers should be an integral part of a green recovery.

See

<https://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/news/beavers-build-back-better-their-future-not-secure>

WORKDAYS

On Sunday 30th June at 10am to bash Himalayan Balsam on Brines Moss using the entrance (once it's clear) off Crabmill Lane.

Then on Sunday 28th July 10am we are to remove bracken birch and brambles from Wickentree Moss. It's not arduous work but many hands make light



work. If you want to help please contact me.