

I've been checking on the meadow patch during my daily walk. We haven't been able to take away the rest of the turf because of lockdown - but we will come and get it once the restrictions are lifted. At the moment it's only dandelions and rye-grass which are appearing - that isn't unusual for the first year, you often get a big weed bloom before the wildflowers get going. For now, I'm just keeping an eye on it but I might do some weeding if it gets too prolific. I'm hoping this rain might now get the wildflowers going, as it's been too dry before. A sign will be going up at some point but again that has been delayed because of lockdown. We'll re-evaluate what has taken hold in August and possibly put some more seed down in September to give it a boost if it needs it. If the lockdown allows we'll go do our floral surveys in July for the Millennium meadow, graveyard extension and playground. If possible we would also like to do a moth night, maybe in August and take a moth trap down to the Millennium meadow to see what turns up, would be a nice activity for families to come join in with (moth trap is essentially a big light with a motor but in the centre of the meadow I don't think it would be too disruptive to anyone).

On another subject I've been thinking about the Himalayan Balsam problem in Overton. If you don't know what Himalayan balsam is it's a large invasive species with a pink flower which often grows along watercourses, in woodlands and meadows. It is a big concern because it shades out native flora and destabilises bank sides, causing erosion and sedimentation of the watercourse (damaging fish populations). I've made a map of the areas I am aware of (I'm sure there is much more but these are the bits I have seen myself). The dots are scattered bits; the blocks are dense stands. The main areas of concern I think are Castle wood, Llan-y-Cefn wood and to a lesser extent Boltha wood, as here the Himalayan balsam is the biggest threat to native flora. I have spoken to the local Wildlife Trust and they already carry out control on the areas around Erbistock so I would like to start looking into doing some work to control the other patches. Most can simply be a case of pulling bits out when passing (where there are small stands) but around Castle wood and Llan-y-Cefn it would be good to get a load of people out on a volunteer day.

I was wondering if you have the contact details of the landowners. For Castle wood it would be particularly useful if either of you knew the owners of Gwernheylog House or Asney Park Farm, as it's quite far away so parking on one of their drives would make life a lot easier if we went to do some pulling. If you are the landowners and would be happy to allow balsam control to go ahead this would basically involve volunteers pulling up the balsam, squashing the stem, and leaving it in piles to rot. This would need to be continued for several years until the seedbank was emptied. Let me know what you think. Obviously nothing would happen this year if lockdown goes on too long as control needs to happen before the plant flowers to avoid encouraging seed dispersal. Realistically this would probably take place over 3 or 4 days each year (as there's only so many weekends I can give up) and how much we get done would depend massively on who is willing to come help.