



## Hay Time – North Pennines The Fourth Year of Action: 2009/2010

Hay Time – North Pennines began in May 2006. The project aims to restore and enhance upland hay meadows at carefully selected sites within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and to increase people's awareness, enjoyment and understanding of this important habitat.





Learning about hay time in the past (NPAP)

## Three Steps to Hay Time

Taking children out of the classroom to experience for themselves the colour and life of a hay meadow in summer is a key aim of our project and during 2009, Hay Time Community Officer, Neil Diment, worked with six primary schools in the North Pennines to make this happen. 'Three Steps to Hay Time' begins with a classroom visit from 'Mr Hay Rake' – Neil dressed in the traditional garb of a 1950s farm worker. The children are encouraged to think about the laborious task of making hay in the past and to help with this are shown the 'History of Hay Time' DVD which combines images of hay times past with the voices of those who remembered the task in the pre-mechanisation days following the Second World War.



Primary school children explore a meadow (NPAP)

A visit to a local meadow is the second step where the children are helped to explore the many different types of flowering plants and grasses found there. Thanks to a partnership with Beamish Museum, most schools are then able to take the third step by taking part in special hay time activities at the museum. Here they can meet

Cover main image – Water avens

Cover small images – top to bottom: Marsh marigold, meadow crane's-bill, devil's-bit scabious, heath spotted orchid

Below - Melancholy thistle

working horses face-to-face and turn their hand to hay raking – an arduous task that would have been all-too-familiar in their great grandparents' days.

## Hay – What's all the fuss?

This summer a new exhibition will explore the marvellous hay meadows to be found in the North Pennines. Visitors will be invited to discover some of the characteristic flowers and wildlife of the meadows and to listen to the stories and memories of some of those alive today who still recall hay time with hay rakes and horses.



Hay time at Brockersgill Farm, Teesdale in the 1950s (Robert Hooper)

There will be hands-on hay timing activities for children, demonstrations and special hay time teas available throughout the weekend. Colleagues from Beamish Museum will also be on hand to share their expertise and exhibit old hay timing tools and implements.

**Our Marvellous Meadows Exhibition**  
**Allendale Village Hall**  
**19-20th June 2010**

## Our new 'stats' star!

A new member has joined the existing Hay Time team of Rebecca, Fiona and Neil. Ruth Starr-Kedde joined the project in February 2010 and comes to us from Newcastle University where she has been studying for her PhD in grassland management of roadside verges. Despite her studies, Ruth still found time last year to survey some meadows as part of our volunteer botanist scheme. Ruth will be working closely with Fiona surveying the meadows and arranging seed harvesting and spreading schemes. Furthermore, she has brought the valuable new skill of statistical analysis to the team. With several years' surveying and monitoring data under our belt, this skill will prove invaluable as we start to evaluate the status of the meadows and the impact of our work.

## Bumblebees and meadow flowers



Bumblebees feeding on melancholy thistle (NPAP)

Bumblebees are dependent on flower-rich habitats to feed and, sadly, as this habitat has declined, so have these enchanting creatures. But with a rich resource of hay meadows remaining, the North Pennines is still likely to be a welcoming place for bumblebees. What species visit our meadows? Which plants are they feeding on? What do they do after the hay is cut? To help answer these questions, we will be commissioning a special bumblebee survey this summer.

### What's the buzz?

Like to know more about bumblebees and how to identify them? We are running two events in the North Pennines on 12th & 13th June in partnership with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

Call Rebecca on 01388 528801 for more details.

## Restoring lost diversity

If you walk through the fields in the North Pennines in spring and early summer you may notice that they have a uniform appearance: they are tightly grazed and the vegetation is short. This lack of structure in the vegetation means that there are few places for birds and insects to feed and hide. Though still managed as hay meadows, many fields in the North Pennines are of limited

botanical interest and have low potential for restoration from the perspective of plant species diversity. As part of the Hay Time project, we are seeking to establish small-scale habitat plots in and adjacent to meadows which have limited or no botanical interest. These will restore small pockets of vegetation for wildlife to feed and take shelter in and should benefit species which are declining rapidly across the country such as twite and other seed-eating birds, grey partridge and brown hare.



Hay Time project officer, Fiona Corby, surveying a meadow (NPAP)

Grey partridge  
(Mike Langman)

Sneezewort  
(S. Ingwersen)

## Year 4 achievements

- 151 meadows surveyed
- 14 meadows surveyed in detail by 12 volunteer botanists
- Advice offered to 34 farmers
- Seed spread on 20.5ha of meadows being restored or enhanced
- All harvesting and spreading funded through agri-environment schemes
- 26 meadows monitored to record the impact of seed harvesting/spreading
- More than 200 individual hay meadow plants, grown by volunteer seed collectors, planted out in 4 meadows
- Hay meadow activities run for 6 primary schools
- 8 volunteers involved in transcribing hay time oral histories



Ragged robin  
(S. Ingwersen)



Hay Time volunteers planting out great burnet plants they have grown from seed (NPAP)

## Learning from farmers

Opinions differ concerning the ideal management of upland hay meadows, especially those that experience more extreme climatic conditions at high altitudes. In order to advance our understanding and benefit from the knowledge and experience of key farmers, we have developed an information-gathering programme called 'Best Meadows'. Following four years of botanical survey, we have identified the 30 most species-rich upland hay meadows in the North Pennines. Fiona is interviewing the farmers that manage these sites to establish, in detail, how they manage them. We hope we will be able to draw from this some useful conclusions which we will then be able to discuss and disseminate more widely amid both farmers and conservation professionals.

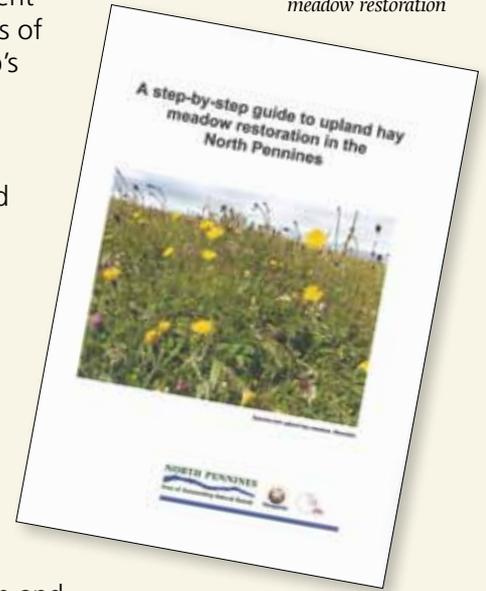


Carrs farm in Weardale - one of our 'Best Meadows' (NPAP)

## Hay Time on the web

The forthcoming year will see further development of the Hay Time pages of the AONB Partnership's website ([www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk)). We are keen to encourage visitors and those living outside the North Pennines to enjoy and learn about our meadows by developing a series of attractive and inspirational materials that can be easily accessed on-line. We are also keen to share our experience to date and with this in mind, have produced 'A step-by-step guide to hay meadow restoration in the North Pennines'. This details the approach taken by the project in planning and delivering hay meadow seed harvesting and spreading schemes and can be accessed via our website.

*A step-by-step guide to hay meadow restoration*



For more information about the Hay Time Project please visit the North Pennines AONB Partnership website: [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk)

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Working together for the North Pennines

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