

JUBILEE MEADOWS – A HISTORY

Long Meadow.

In 1999, the newly formed Wootton Conservation Trust (WCT) purchased this long, narrow, 4.5-acre strip of land south of the river Glyme from the Blenheim Estate as a wildlife site to commemorate the Millennium. This area had been left unmanaged for some years and had become overgrown with scrub and brambles. Work was undertaken to cut back the overgrowth, clear the river of fallen branches and open up the bridleway, the only public right of way on the whole site. An Otter holt was constructed in a fenced off area of the river bank, and steps undertaken to control foreign Mink with the hope of reintroducing the native Water Vole. In 2003, after the purchase of Jubilee Meadows, a bridge was built over the Glyme, connecting the two parts of the reserve.



Jubilee Meadows.

This, the Trusts larger 28-acre site, was purchased in 2003 to commemorate the Queen's golden jubilee. It is the second largest of ten new wildlife spaces created as part of the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire's initiative. The intention was to create a wildlife reserve as well as an amenity for the village, and it is accessible by way of permissive footpaths. The County ecologist was keen to see the flood meadows and sedge bog preserved, and the unimproved limestone grassland banks managed to preserve the flora of that scarce habitat.

Management changes over recent years have seen the meadows topped and grazed by sheep in a manner that has seen the proliferation of those wild flowers on all the limestone slopes, with Pyramidal Orchids particularly flourishing on Dorn Warren Bank (over 200 counted in 2022) and returning to Round Top flanks and Long Meadow. There are now at least four species of orchid on the site – Pyramidal, Bee, Common Spotted and Common Twayblade, while Bird's Foot Trefoil, Wild Thyme, Salad and Common Burnet and many more key species flourish.