

Made possible with
**Heritage
Fund**

SOUTH WEST PEAK LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

Glorious Grasslands: Case Study 2

Cowlow Pastures



Sheep grazing, Cowlow Pastures, November 2021

Ann Cantrell

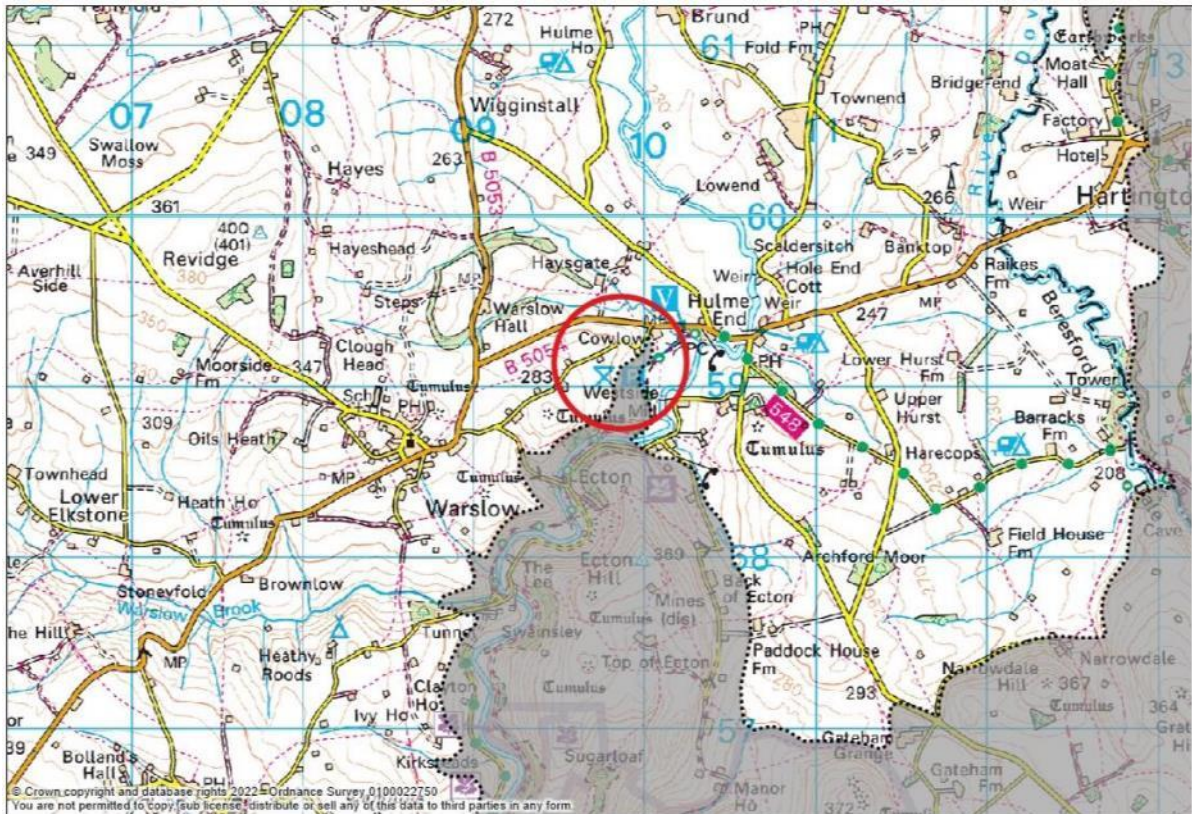
South West Peak Landscape Partnership Grassland Officer

October 2021

The farm

Cowlow Pastures is located just outside Hulme End, along the Manifold Way which is a popular public access route. It is situated close to the Warslow grassland target area, an area which has a high concentration of semi-natural habitats.

The site is 1.98 hectares of grassland, and is part of the Warslow Moors Estate.



The landowner

The site is owned by the Peak District National Park Authority and is rented on an annual grazing licence to a local farmer, who makes hay on the field, usually in late July, and follows this with aftermath grazing using sheep.

Glorious Grasslands: influence & interventions

In November 2019 work was carried out to introduce wildflower seed onto the field. Plots were strimmed and scarified to create areas of bare ground in the field. A total of five plots, each approximately 4 x 4 metres were created and seed spread onto the plots. Hand collected seed was combined with brush harvested material to create a diverse mix.



Countryside Worker Apprentice, Lloyd strims a plot at Cowlow, November 2019



Volunteers scarifying plots & seed sowing, November 2019

The restoration work was supported by the Countryside Worker apprentices (employed by the Peak District National Park Authority under the Future Custodians project) and by several volunteers. The apprentices, project officer and one volunteer had been trained in the use of brush cutters and so carried out strimming of the grass to create the bare plots. Other volunteers then scarified and sowed seed onto the plots and across the site.

Outcomes of working at Cowlow

The field was surveyed in 2020 and a return visit in 2021 showed that several species have successfully established. Hay rattle is frequent throughout the field and abundant within the plots. Oxeye daisy is scattered where the plots were created and the sward has a higher herb content than prior to the work. In 2021 common knapweed had grown, again largely within the plots and there were also seedlings of great burnet. Interestingly several greater butterfly orchids and common spotted orchids also appeared in May 2021. It is unlikely that the former was introduced by the seeding but the soil disturbance and reduced competition within the plots may have encouraged its growth, as it was not previously known at the site. This is an important find as this species of orchid is nationally threatened. It means this site is even more important to protect.



An abundance of wildflowers at Cowlow Pastures, June 2021



Greater butterfly orchid emerging, May 2021

Benefits to people

Cowlow was used as a training venue for volunteers in May 2021 to develop and consolidate skills in the survey methodology and grass identification. It's ideal for this use due to its location and it will make a great resource in the future.



Training event with volunteers at Cowlow Pastures, May 2021

Volunteers living in and near Hulme End have offered to continue to monitor the site and often take walks past the site and have started to notice changes to the field. One volunteer re-engaged with the project after spotting the restoration activities taking place in 2019 and on the spur of the moment helped to spread seed on the day. The volunteer commented that living so close to the site would enable her to participate, renew her love of wildflowers and surveying, and help the project.

As the field is in such a prominent location, there is opportunity to provide interpretation or information to visitors about the work and the specialness of wildflower meadows.