

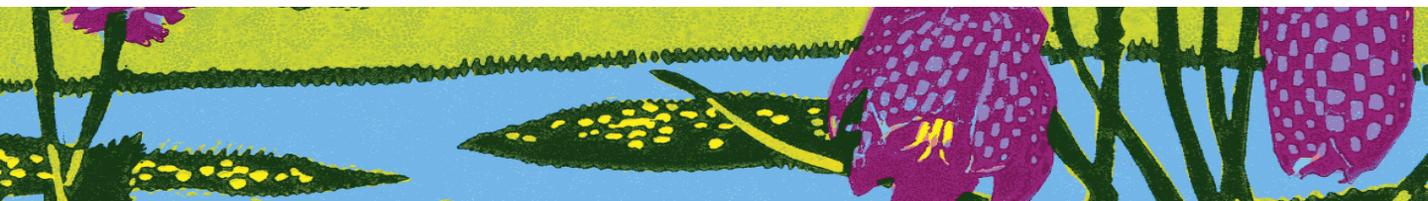


Case Study 3.5-Portholme Meadow, Cambridgeshire: an internationally important site for wildlife managed traditionally by auctioning hay lots and aftermath grazing



Portholme Meadow is designated as a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) for its Burnet floodplain meadow (MG4) plant community. It has been managed in the same way since at least 1772, and likely long before then. Lots (see maps in Figure 3.1.) are marked out today by mowing roadways in the hay before the annual auction, accurate through use of GPS and concrete slabs. Historically this was done by lining up local landmarks such as church spires and depressions in the ground to de-mark the lot allocations.

Today the hay and grazing for Portholme Meadow are sold at auction and the only appointee is the farmer, currently John Sewell (pictured), who marks out the roadways. © Pat Doody





The hay strips and aftermath grazing are sold each year at auction in mid June, by Brown and Co. with Alexanders (Huntingdon) who are responsible for ensuring that the hay is sold in an appropriate and open manner. Historical conditions are still adhered to including that hay is to be cut and removed by 8 August, and grazing rights are sold according to a set number of stock:

- 281 cattle from 1 September to 20 November;
- 334 sheep from 21 November to 28 February.

There are restrictions set by Natural England including no fertilisers or herbicides, and the hay is not to be cut these days before 15 June. There is some indication that the newer machines cut faster and closer to the ground and may be deleterious to elements of the breeding bird fauna. Hay values from Portholme vary from year to year depending on weather conditions, but the highest value hay tends to come from the more species-rich areas.

Case Study extracted from Doody (2007).

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Doody, J.P. (2007). Meadow, Brampton. History, Management and Wildlife. Just Print IT! Portholme.

