

The Habitats and Management of Monkwood Green by Dr Christopher J Betts PhD FBNA MRSB MIEnvSc

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Monkwood Green is an exceptional site in terms of its landscape, ecosystem/ecology and biodiversity. It is of great scientific interest and value, and has an extraordinarily rich fauna and flora (see my separate lists), all the more essential to conserve in these times of land development, pollution, traffic and climate change.

Habitats on site include a substantial area of National Vegetation Classification Mesotrophic Grassland MG5 (*Centaureo-Cynosuretum cristati*), most of which has been lost nationally since 1945. More detail on this habitat type is available in the technical note which can be accessed at <https://shorturl.at/6C5AQ>. Other habitats present include ponds, ditches, marshy areas, hedges, scrub (encroachment is being limited), species-rich verges and woodland (*NB.* Ancient semi-natural woodland abutting). The area of anthills is of particular note as well as the population of petty whin and several other notable species of flora (large areas of green-winged orchid) and fauna (hares, barn owl, glow-worms). In landscape terms, there are superb views towards the Malvern Hills and beautiful local scenery enhanced by the local Monkwood Nature Reserve, famous for its butterflies and other wildlife.

The Green is owned by Grimley Parish Council who operate a written Management Plan, and there are several residents with properties adjacent who have commoners' rights. Much of the Green is a registered Site of Special Scientific Interest about which details can be found at <https://shorturl.at/n9WgV> and <https://shorturl.at/pvEE8>.

Since the hugely damaging Brexit decision to leave the EU where we were at the top table and enjoyed leading participation in, and huge benefits of, the EU environmental policies, and following the shocking Planning and Infrastructure Act passed (in my view foolishly) by the UK parliament as well as the exemption of development sites of 0.2ha and below from biodiversity net gain (BNG) regulations., there have been justified concerns that the previously strict legal protection of sites like Monkwood Green has been undermined or will be eroded.

Major efforts are therefore now being made to ensure that data on the ecological importance of Monkwood Green SSSI and its peripheral small areas of greenspace are current and available. This will help defend it or parts of it from corroding biodiversity status in the hopefully unlikely case that any developer should consider new housing or other significant construction on or near the Green which would be a serious adverse impact on the area's green infrastructure assets.

Photos © Dr Betts



One of the green-winged orchid areas



One of the petty whin bushes with its marker post.



View from Monkwood Green to the Malvern Hills at sunset.



Betony and lady's bedstraw flowering on Monkwood Green.



Gorse flowering in early Spring by the former bus stop on Monkwood Green.



An area of neutral *Centaureo-Cynosugetum* neutral grassland on Monkwood Green.



Standing dead wood on Monkwood Green left for saproxylic invertebrates.



View across the Green on a wet day.



Rainbow over the Fox public house on Monkwood Green.



Glow-worm larva rescued crossing the Green's central road.



Spring view across Monkwood Green towards Monkwood.

