



Priory Paddock Wildflower Garden

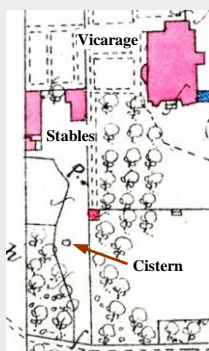


Priory Paddock is a wildlife garden created in 1996 which uses the wetland features of the valley bottom to provide an accessible area of biodiversity. It is maintained by volunteers.

History

This area was part of the lands of the monastic priory, founded in 1120. After closure of the monastery in 1539, it became the site of Low Abbey Farm.

In 1816 the grounds were made part of the new vicarage garden, as shown on the 1863 map on right. The vicar's horses would have been kept here as would pigs and chickens for the table.



In 1979-80 there were two archaeological digs preparatory to extending the church graveyard. Nothing of significance was found but the paddock was discovered to be far too wet for burials, so the garden was created in 1996.

Archaeology 1979/80



Landscaping was completed in 1996

The boardwalk was funded by the Old Millhillians Society - see stone at entrance.

Management

There are over 100 species of flowering plants, which have been established by natural self-seeding or selective introduction from seed or collected plants.

From this attractive food supply springs the diversity of its insects.

Husbandry is limited to an annual vegetation cut, removal of invasive species, coppicing, and keeping paths and boardwalk accessible.

Water life

The two water features are fed by a constant flow of water from the many springs on the site.

The circular cistern is thought to be Victorian; carved from one huge block of sandstone to make a dipping pool for domestic and agricultural use. It can be seen on the 1861 map.

The pond is simply an excavated hole in the ground which immediately filled with water and was soon teeming with wildlife and vegetation. There is a boardwalk so you can look at it closely.

The monster Gunnera rhubarb nearby is not a native plant, but loves wet ground and provides shady habitat.

Trees & Shrubs

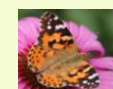
From its beginnings as a tree-less site, there is now a large variety of hardwoods and shrubs which provide both woodland habitat and a protective shelter belt.

Species include:

- Common Sallow
- Alder
- Birch
- Oak (Sessile)
- Ash
- Holly
- Horse Chestnut
- Wild Cherry
- Bird Cherry
- Whitebeam
- Hawthorn
- Blackthorn
- Crab Apple
- Wild Pear
- Guelder Rose
- Alder
- Buckthorn
- Elder
- Gorse
- Salix caprea - "Pussy Willow"

Butterflies

The Paddock provides a valuable habitat for many species of butterfly. This has been a main object of the area; by provision of shelter, by flowers which are attractive to butterflies, and by plants which are food for their caterpillars.



Painted Lady



Common Blue

Species

- Wall Brown
- Meadow Brown
- Ringlet
- Speckled Wood
- Orange Tip
- Green-Veined White
- Small White
- Small Tortoiseshell
- Red Admiral
- Peacock
- Painted Lady
- Comma
- Common Blue
- Holly Blue

Caterpillar food

- Grasses: Cock's foot, Couch grass, etc.
- Crucifers: Garlic Mustard, Lady's Smock.
- Nettles
- Holly, Ivy, Bird's Foot Trefoil

Layout

