

Restoration of Species-rich Grassland from Intensively Managed Pasture at Denmark Farm Conservation Centre, Ceredigion

The Denmark Farm restoration project, near Lampeter in Ceredigion, was set up by the Shared Earth Trust in 1987 with the objective of demonstrating the reversal of agricultural improvement and enhancing the farm for wildlife. The farm had previously been intensively managed for at least 10 years by agriculturally improving the grasslands, draining the fields, sowing rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) seed mixtures and spreading fertiliser; this management created low structural diversity throughout the grasslands, reducing the habitat available for invertebrates and small mammals. The Trust took the opportunity

to allow the flora to regenerate naturally by reinstating traditional farming methods rather than reseeding the fields, so that wildflowers could colonise at their own pace.

The drainage channels created under intensive agricultural management were blocked to slow water flow and increase the diversity of the grasslands. No fertiliser was spread on the fields, and a traditional farming system was put into place, consisting of seasonal cattle and pony grazing. In some sections a hay cut further reduced the nutrients in the soil.

























A wider variety of grasses were able to establish as the soil fertility levels dropped and damp patches were created in the grasslands. Plants including bents (*Agrostis* spp.), fescues (*Festuca* spp.), sweet-vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), crested dogs-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) and various rushes and sedges started to colonise the grassland, and perennial rye-grass to decrease. Wildflowers either regenerated from the soil seed bank or germinated from seed carried in on the wind and by small mammals and birds.

After about five years, changes in the vegetation became apparent as yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) and eyebright (*Euphrasia* agg.) reduced the dominance of grasses in the sward and allowed other wildflowers to germinate and flourish.

Wildflowers that appeared included hawkbits (*Leontodon* sp.), cat's-ears (*Hypochaeris* sp.), and legumes such as

birds-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*).

Denmark Farm Conservation Centre is open to visitors, has holiday eco accommodation and runs regular courses on habitat restoration.

Further information:

Denmark Farm Conservation Centre Betws Bledrws Lampeter Ceredigion SA48 8PB



















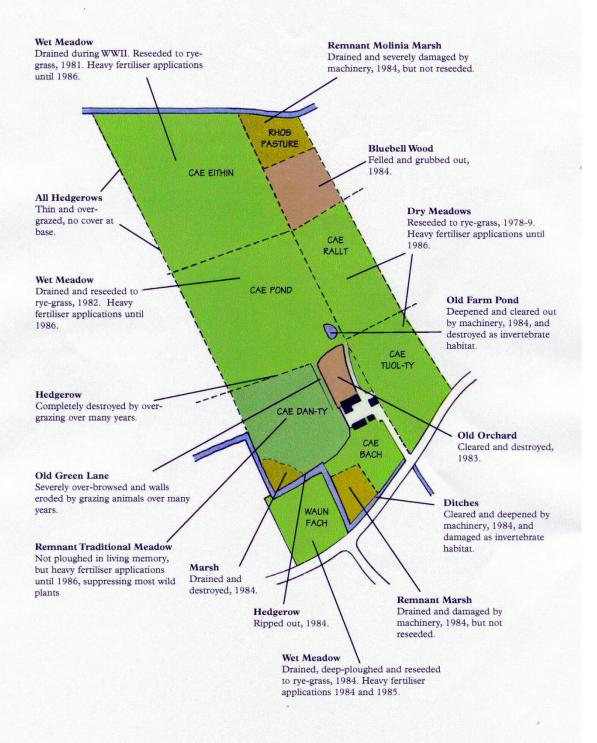








DESTRUCTION AND DEGRADATION OF DENMARK FARM 1978-84























RESTORING HABITATS OF DENMARK FARM

