



RADIO

NEW ON RADIO ULSTER

... following straight after the repeat of **Gardeners' Corner** ...

Meadows & A Night In The Meadow

Written and read by Polly Devlin

Reading, Sunday, 26th August 2007 at 4.02 pm on Radio Ulster

Producer Anne Simpson

Published on 15 June 2007 by Frances Lincoln
www.franceslincoln.com.

Polly's story of her passion for bringing back to life the meadow at her home in

Somerset is inspiring and spellbinding and it is the introduction and epilogue to the book, **A Year In the Life of An English Meadow** which Polly reads here.

The reasons are so compelling for this project - anyone with an interest in gardening, environment or biodiversity couldn't fail to be enthralled. Polly's writing is unique and from the heart. Originally from Co Tyrone, Polly mentions that many of the species of plants and wildlife she has brought back to her meadow in Somerset were there all along and taken for granted when she grew up in Northern Ireland. Are they there now? If not, why not? What has our

history been in this regard and what plans are there for the future to halt the swift oblivion of once common plants and wildlife? This is a timely reminder and warning that if we continue as we have, once plentiful wildlife and plants will disappear under huge, hedge-less, flat green fields and concrete. This beautifully written and entertaining piece presents an opportunity for a timely look at how much we have taken for granted and are letting slip through our fingers in terms of plant and wild life, once common in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, now sadly fading into extinction.

Andy Garnett and his wife, the writer Polly Devlin, bought Cannwood Meadow in 1983. Realizing that this Somerset meadow, which has benefited from benign husbandry over many years, contains an amazing variety of wild flowers, grasses and rushes that provide feeding for moths, butterflies and other insects - some of them very rare - they asked English Nature if they would be interested in making a survey of the field. As a result of this survey Cannwood Meadow was nominated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by the Nature Conservancy Council. Their book, **A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF AN ENGLISH MEADOW** presents an illustrated record of Cannwood Meadow through the seasons, an account of its

ecology and a review of its plants, animal life and husbandry, compiled by the Garnetts with the assistance of botanist Dr Chris Smith. A special feature is that it includes reproductions of pressings of 108 plants, which can thus be examined in minute detail. It is an invaluable record of a year in the life of an English meadow.



Polly Devlin

Polly Devlin is a gifted writer, capable of making your mind stop in its tracks and spark a dormant thought or memory you hadn't realised you'd tucked away, but once brought into the open, held up to the light and examined, it makes perfect sense. You never see the world quite as you did before. Polly's background and writing skills offer a unique and enthralling insight into both worlds.

Polly is an author, journalist, broadcaster, film-maker, art critic and conservationist. Her remarkable career has taken her far from her rural roots in County Tyrone to the sophisticated world of Vogue in London, New York and Paris.

In 1994 she was awarded an **OBE** for services to Literature. She has been a

Judge of the Booker Prize in England and in Ireland a judge on the Irish Times Aer Lingus Literary award.

In 1983 Polly Devlin published two books, **All of Us There** and **The Far Side of the Lough**. They have remained in print since then and have gone into several editions and *All of Us There* is now a **Virago Modern Classic**.

In 1991 she bought a house in Dublin and finding she knew little about the city, set about finding out more. The result was a comprehensive guide book to **Dublin**.

She has broadcast many talks and has written a radio play for the BBC in London. Stories from *The Far Side of the Lough* are frequently broadcast. She is on the Northern Ireland team in the Round Britain Quiz on Radio 4. Her specially commissioned story, **The Hiring Fair** was produced by BBC NI Drama for broadcast in February on BBC 7 as part of a week of stories called THE LUNAR EFFECT.

Polly is currently a **Professor at Barnard College Columbia University New York**.

She also keeps fancy hens, plain geese, highland cattle, rare sheep, aged horses, assorted mutts and many cats.

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