

MORE ON HAY MEADOWS

On 5th June I spent a day visiting sites of biological interest around the Parish with Steve Grover, a field ecologist from the County Council's Ecology Unit at Birstall. Steve is the man who knows the proper biological names of things; my job was to arrange our visits with the landowners, carry stuff around and provide tea and sandwiches as necessary.

I would like to thank all the landowners involved for their help and support, and for their willingness to talk frankly about the management of their land. It is one thing to regret the loss of hay meadows rich in wild flowers, but quite another to arrange the agricultural economic system so that it rewards farmers for looking after them rather than using the ground for more productive purposes.

These surveys confirmed that a total of 8.469 acres of hay meadow in the Parish is still of botanical interest, as opposed to 28.300 acres in 1985 (a loss of 19.8 acres or 70%). About half of the remaining 8.5 acres showed signs of degradation, so the future does not look rosy. Against this, one landowner is attempting to recreate a wild flower meadow out of 1.6 acres of improved grassland - in a couple of hundred years time it will be interesting to see how this experiment is shaping up.

The most interesting finding from the new surveys was that the small paddock on the east side of Barton Road and south of Bufton Cottage is a botanically significant site. This field is privately owned, and managed for hay and grazing, so please admire it from the roadside and do not trespass. The following plant species were identified in this field:

<i>Achillea millefolium</i> (Yarrow)	<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> (Meadow fox-tail)
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i> (Sweet vernal-grass)	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i> False oat-grass)
<i>Bellis perennis</i> (Daisy)	<i>Cardamine pratensis</i> (Cuckoo flower)
<i>Centaurea nigra</i> Black knapweed)	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i> (Common mouse-ear)
<i>Conopodium majus</i> (Pignut)	<i>Cirsium arvense</i> (Creeping thistle)
<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i> (Crested dog's-tail)	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i> (Cocksfoot)
<i>Festuca rubra</i> (Red fescue)	<i>Hypochoeris radicata</i> (Common cat's-ear)
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i> (Meadow vetchling)	<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i> (Autumn hawkbit)
<i>Leontodon hispidus</i> (Rough hawkbit)	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i> (Birdsfoot trefoil)
<i>Luzula campestris</i> (Field woodrush)	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i> (Ribwort plantain)
<i>Poa trivialis</i> (Rough meadowsweet)	<i>Potentilla reptans</i> (Creeping cinquefoil)
<i>Ranunculus acris</i> (Meadow buttercup)	<i>Ranunculus repens</i> (Creeping buttercup)
<i>Rumex acetosa</i> (Common sorrel)	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i> (Broad-leaved dock)
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i> (Ragwort)	<i>Stellaria graminea</i> (Lesser stitchwort)
<i>Taraxacum</i> agg. (Dandelions)	<i>Trifolium dubium</i> (Lesser trefoil)
<i>Trifolium pratense</i> (Red clover)	<i>Trisetum flavescens</i> (Yellow oat-grass)
<i>Urtica dioica</i> (Nettle)	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i> (Germander speedwell)

Parish Clerk

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