Holy Brook Meadows

2023 July

This survey was started in 2016 as a botanical list by Nicola Ley and Jenny Floyd
This recent update is by Nicola with help from her partner Spin, and help on the grasses from Bea Ayres. There was also discussion with Robin Toogood, a regular consultant.

First of all it is a pleasure to see the balance of conservation and biodiversity versus the use of the land being held with such care. It was a delight to be on site for the Rise up Singing camp and even in the damp weather to see the abundance of plants which in their turn welcomed insects, birds and certainly a variety of small mammals!

When it was acquired the land consisted of two semi-improved meadows with a minimal amount of botanical interest. Perennial rye grass and smooth grass and the usual suspects: broad leaved dock, ribwort plantain, dandelion and so on. The edges, however, were much more interesting. These zones have been expanded and the biodiversity connects to the ancient woodland.

This year several plants were not spotted but are kept in the list as they might reappear or have just been missed. These were:
plants of the sandy short grass such as century and yellow rattle - possibly because of the long grass and damp summer,
plants of the stream edges such as the monkey flower and pink purslane probably due to the changing nature of the stream, and
Others such as sneezewort, some of the willow herbs and the mayweed possibly just because of the different weather this year.

This survey consists of seven areas.
1 - The hedge and land next to Hembury Wood and unto and including the swale.
Here we found have a huge range of species including many ancient woodland indicator plants. (AWIPs). When the swale was dug it was delightful how it grew an abundance of chicory suggesting it was a wartime crop. There are many more grasses here and a lovely, tiny yellow sedge. A range of plants, some with medicinal use such as betony, live in the hedge. This also means there is a huge range of insects and other wild life. At one point eight species of butterfly were counted together on a patch of thistles.
The swale is alive with many plants. Unfortunately the willow and particularly the alder jostle the other plants. The water forget-me-not, the lesser stitchwort and many others brightening up what could be just a ditch. The presence of Angelica trying to outcompete the hemlock water dropwort is wonderful.

2 - The stream banks and the glade consists of the alder woodland which is between the main camping field and the stream Here are lots of spring flowers and a range of ferns. We found six ferns with Bracken elsewhere on the site. There are lots of unusual woodland grasses. Unfortunately there are quite a few rhododendrons in amongst the brambles in the little strip of wet woodland and they are gradually spreading. There are also Himalayan balsams all along the stream banks however they probably arrive with the stream.
Sadly the monkey flowers, the pink purslane and the sneezewort have disappeared from the stream edge. This is possibly because the stream banks have been washed away. And more probably the Alder proliferating along the stream banks have shaded their habitat.
There was no hint of the return the giant hogweed.

3 - The main camping field is still a semi-improved meadow. A few more hardy plants such as yarrow and buttercup are beginning to make a home in the dense rye grass. But around the edges of the field where it meets the edges, there is plenty of biodiversity.

4 - The boggy area is flourishing with a change of plants which is normal in bog areas. The bogs are similar to woodland in that they are brilliant carbon sinks and as such good for the world and the local area of this site and they improve the biodiversity.

The water pepper is flourishing. Here we found unusual grasses and interesting rushes which are a feature of the wetland. The marsh thistles are a welcome addition.

5. The rest of the second meadow. This area is looking lovely and attracting birds and insects. The proliferation of docks and the old grasses continues but new grasses and herbaceous plants are also present. For example it was a delight to find gypsywort in the long grass.

6 - The slope. This area has seen the most change with the trees that were planted on the slope growing towards being trees rather than saplings. They have attracted some interesting new species in the understorey, most notably hemp nettle which must have arrived from Henbury woods or the old seed bank. There are other spring plants such as hedge garlic in amongst the brambles and nettles. It is a haven for birds and who made use of the seeds on the the grass.

7 - The car park - this area has also benefitted from the tree planting. There are diverse hedgerow plants right at the edge of the ancient woodland. The flora here was ranged from the understory of the trees including cow-wheat to the hedge plants such as hedge bedstraw to some meadow plants such as dove's foot geranium.

July 2023 -
Areas listed after (eg Agrimonia eupatoria – Agrimony -1, 6, 7, means it was spotted in the land next to the wood, on the slope and in the carpark. A - stands for abundant in the area between the swale and the hedge. AWIP stands for ancient woodland indicator plant

New species spotted and possibly arrived:

Hemp nettle - Galeopsis tetrahit
Gypsy wort - Lycopus europaeus
Perforate St. John's wort - Hypericum perforatum
Pale Forget-me-not - Myosotis stolonifera
Dove's foot cranes bill - Geranium molle
Bluebell - Hyacinthoides non-scripta

The list:
Agrimonia eupatoria – Agrimony 1 6 7 ,
Allium ursinum - wild garlic - 2 AWIP
Anthriscus caucalis – Bur chervil 7
Artium lappa – Greater burdock -1 2 5 6 7
Anemone nemorosa - wood anemone - 2 AWIP
Anagallis arvensis – Scarlet pimpernel - 1
Angelica sylvestris - Wild angelica - 1A
Arum maculatum – Lords and ladies - everywhere shady 1 2 5 6 7
Bellis perennis - Daisy - in short grass everywhere
Betonica officinalis - Betony - 1 7
Calystegia sepium – Hedge bindweed 1 2 5 6 7 (the large white ones)
Cardamine flexuosa - Wavy bittercress 1 2 5 6 7
Not spotted Carduus crispus – Welted thistle

Not spotted Centaurium erythraea - Common centaury
Centurea scabiosa - Greater knapweed 1 2 5 6 7
Centurea nigra – Common knapweed 1 2 4 5 6 7
Cerastium fontanum – Common mouse-ear
Cerastium semidecandruim – Little mouse-ear 1 5 6 7
Chamerion angustifolium - Rosebay willowherb 1 7
Chicorium intybus - Chicory 2
Circara lutetiana - Enchanter's nightshade 1 2 7 9 AWIP
Cirsium arvense – Creeping thistle 1A 2 6 7
Cirsium palustre - Marsh thistle 4
Not spotted - Cirsium vulgare - Spear thistle
Convolvulus arvensis - field bindweed - 1 2 5 6 7 (pink ones)
Digitalis pupurea - Foxglove 1 7
Not spotted Epilobium hirsutum - Great willowherb
Epilobium palustre - Marsh willowherb 4
Epilobium rosum – Pale willowherb 1A 2 7
Eupatorium cannabinium – Hemp agrimony 7
Euphorbia amygdaloides – Wood spurge 1 7
Filipendula ulmaria - Meadowsweet 1 2 7
Galium aparine - Cleavers 1 2 7
Gallium mollugo - Hedge bedstraw 7
Gallium saxatile - Heath bedstraw 1 2 5 6 7 A
Geum urbanum - Wood avens 1 2 7
Geranium robertianum - Herb Robert 1 2 3 5 6 7 A
Geranium molle - Dove's foot cranes bill 3 7
Galeopsis tetrahit - Hemp nettle
Heiracium agg. - Hawkweed 1 7
Heracleum sphondylium - Hogweed 1 2 5 6 7 A
Hypericum androsaemum – Tutsan 2
Hypericum perforatum - Perforate St. John's wort 1
Hypericum montanum - Square stemmed St John's wort 1 2 7
Hyacinthoides non-scripta - Bluebell 2 AWIP
Impatiens glandulifera - Himalayan balsam 2 A - (vigorously being removed - but persistent)
Iris pseudacorus - yellow flag

Lamiastrum galeobdolon – Yellow archangel 1

Lapsana comunis – Nipplewort 1 2 5 6 7

Leontodon Hispidus – Rough hawkbit 1 6 7
Leontodon saxatilis – Lesser hawkbit 1
Lonicera periclymenum – Honeysuckle 12 6
Lotus corniculatus - Birds foot trefoil 1 2 4 6 7 A
Lysimachia nemorum - Yellow pimpernel 1 2 6 7
Lycopus europaeus - Gypsy wort -
Not spotted - Leucantheemum vulgare – Oxeye daisy
Not spotted - Matricaria chamomilla - Scented mayweed
Mentha aquatica - Watermint 2 4
Mentha arvensis – Corn mint 1 (in the swale)
Mercurialis perennis – Dog's mercury 1 2 7 AWIP
Not spotted - Mimulus x robertsii - Hybrid monkeyflower
Not spotted - Mimulus guttatus - Monkeyflower

Myosotis secunda - Creeping forget-me-not 1 7
Myosotis stolonifera - Pale Forget-me-not 1 7
Myosotis scorpioides - Water forget-me-not 1
Oenanthe crocata - Hemlock water dropwort 1 2 7 not as abundant as it was
Oxalis acetosella – Wood sorrel 2
Persicaria hydropiper - Water-pepper 1 4 A
Plantago lanceolata - Ribwort plantain 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Plantago major - Greater plantain 1 7
Potentila anserina - Silverweed 2
Potentila erecta – Tormentil 1
Potentila reptans – Creeping cinquefoil 2 7
Not spotted - Poterium sanguisorba – Salad burnet
Primula vulgaris – Primrose 2
Prunella vulgaris - Self heal 1 2 5
Ranunculus acris - Meadow buttercup 1 2 5 6 7
Ranunculus flammula - Lesser spearwort 4
Ranunculus repens - Creeping buttercup 1 2 3
Not spotted - Rhinanthus minor - Yellow rattle possibly because of the long grass
Rosa canina – Dog rose - 1 7 5
Rubus fruticosus agg. – Bramble 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A
Rumex acetosa – Common sorrel 1 3 5
Rumex acetosaella – Sheep sorrel 1 3 5
Rumex obtusifolius - Broad leaf dock 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A
Rumex sanguineus - Wood dock 1 7
Sanicula europaea – Sanicle 1
Scrophularia auriculata - Water figwort 1 2
Senecio jacobaea - Common ragwort 1 2 3 6 7
Not spotted - Silene flos-cuculi – Ragged robin
Silene dioica – red campion (and intermediate) 1 2 5 6 7 AWIP
Solanum dulcamara - Bittersweet 1 2 7
Solidago viraurea - Goldenrod 1 7
Sonchus oleraceus – Smooth sow thistle 7
Stachys arvensis - Field woundwort 1 7
Stachys palustris - Marsh woundwort 2 5 6
Stachys sylvatica – Hedge woundwort 1
Stellaria alsine - Bog stitchwort 2 4
Stellaria graminea – Lesser stitchwort 1 5 6 7
Stellaria holostea - Greater stitchwort - 7 (Greater and lesser hybridise so there are intermediates)
Stellaria media – Common chickweed -2
Taraxacum agg - Dandelion. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A
Teucrium scorodoma - Wood sage 2
Trifolium pratense - Red clover 1 3 5 6 7
Trifolium repens - White clover. 1 3 5 6 7
Ulex europaeus - Gorse 17
Urticaria dioica - Stinging nettle 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 A
Valeriana officinalis - Valerian 1 2
Veronica Montana – Wood speedwell 1 2 7
Viola reichenbachiana – Early dog's violet - 1 AWIP

Rushes, Sedges and Grasses –
(This is only just begun...)
The main sward is:
Lolium perenne – perennial rye grass
Poa pratensis – smooth meadow grass
There are several more grasses including unusual ones in the wetland

Agostis gigantea – Common bent grass
Anhoxanththum ordoratum - Sweet vernal grass - (helping the meadow smell delicious!)
Brachypodium sylvaticum – Wood false brome
Cynosures cristatus - crested dog's tail
Dactylis glomerata – Cocksfoot
Festuca ovina - Sheep's Fescue
Festuca rubra - Creeping Fescue
Glyeria fluitans - Floating sweet grass
Holcus lantus - Yorkshire fog - (the haze of the meadow)
Melica uniflora – Wood melick
Phleum pratense – Timothy grass
Phleum bertolonii – Small cat's tail
Poa nemoralis – Wood meadow grass
Poa annua - Annual meadow grass

Etc.

Sedges and Rushes
There are several others unidentified…

Carax pendula – Pendulus sedge AWIP
Carax sylvatica – Wood sedge
Carax demissa – Common yellow sedge
Juncus mollis - Soft rush
Juncus articulates – Jointed rush

Trees and shrubs of the existing hedgerows and woodland

Ash – Fraxinus excelsior
Beech – Fagus sylvatica
Birch – Betula pendula
Blackthorn (Sloe) – Prunus spinosa
Dogwood - Cornus sanguinea
Elder – Sambucus nigra
Guelder-rose – Viburnum opulus AWIP
Hawthorn – Cretaegus monogyna
Hazel – Corylus avellana
Holly – Ilex aquifolium
Horse chestnut - Aesculus hippocastanum
Ivy – Hedera helix
Oaks – Pedunculate and Sessile
Rhododendrum ponticum (naturalised in the glade, invasive and detrimental to native plants)
Spindle- Euonymus europaeus
Sycamore - Acer pseudoplatanus
Willows - Salix species

Trees recently planted in Holy Brook Meadows:

Apples - various,

Plums – various,
Birches- various,
Blackthorn (Sloe),
Chestnut (Sweet),
Crab Apple,
Guelder Rose,
Hawthorn, Hazel,
Oak,
Plum,
Rowan,
Spindle,
Willows