

Changes to the Plants of the Shakespeare Meadow between 2013 and 2015-16

Surveys in 2015 and 2016 demonstrated that the interventions involving late season cutting and raking and some weeding of coarse grasses had maintained much of the plant diversity. (53 spp in 2013 and 52 in 2015-16).

Red campion had had to be re-introduced and common tussock grass and the variegated leaved form of yellow archangel (both unrecorded in 2013) were completely removed along with hogweed being deemed potentially undesirable.

Natural losses appeared to be limited to cuckooflower, foxglove, cat's-ear, lesser celandine, thyme, lesser trefoil and germander speedwell. All are poor competitors with taller and denser vegetation. Creeping bent was not relocated but was probably still present. It should also be noted that the 2013 list is not confined to just the two areas of meadow creation but took in the whole compartment and some of these species may still be present in the hedge bottoms and path sides.

Apparent new welcome additions were field woodrush, field scabious and meadow cranesbill. Less desirable was the rapid spread from outside the plots of wood soft-grass.

With dense underground rhizomes and a rapid growth early in the year a late spring cut of the areas it now dominates is desirable. Large patches of the equally aggressive upright hedge-bedstraw that has not been previously recorded will also need to be checked by an early cut.

Nettle, a biennial willow-herb and soft rush complete the new additions.

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