

The WCV July task concerned undertaking a simple botanical survey of the flora of Top Field combined with a practical entry-level flowering plant recognition training session.

The initial results from this simple survey have been included in the task report for July. However the general features of Top Field were not described and certain species, such as grasses, were omitted for convenience even though they constituted the bulk of the growing plants. As a consequence a further, and informal, visit to Top Field was made by Michael Edwards to enlarge the coverage and produce a overview photographic record of Top Field.

Top Field once formed a part of Vokes' holding in about 1824 and later formed a part of Woodhams Farm. Subsequent changes in land use isolated the field, possibly in the 1960s or 1970s, which then became stranded between two railways and substantial housing developments. Currently the land is part of a developer's land-bank and the centre flat area is farmed as set-aside by Hookpit Farm. Consequently it is understood that little or no intensive use of this land has been made for the past several decades, apart from one-annual cutting. Development plans are in hand for peripheral parts of the site but the meadow area is currently designated for eventual use by the village as recreational land for dog-walking and the like.

This land-use history has resulted in the development of a diverse meadow-land flora which is attractive to both local residents and to a great variety of insect life including many species of butterfly and countless grass-hoppers.



There are very substantial areas of Canadian Goldenrod and Rosebay Willowherb across the site and especially on the rough land adjacent to Hookpit Farm Lane. This overabundance would diminish if the field were even more sympathetically managed.

There are also fair numbers of Ragwort plants but these are a positive asset as they attract Cinnabar moths and other interesting insects. As the field is not grazed and not suitable for horse-riding, no action would require taking despite it's presence attracting possible adverse comment.

Several well-grown Buddleja bushes are dotted about thus further improving the potential for a wide variety of Butterflies.

The field is about 9 hectares in extent (about 22 acres) with a substantial area sloping off at the northern edge down to Hookpit Farm Lane. This area is part of an ongoing housing development plan. The set aside land tapers off along a line a little west of the rear boundary of the properties bordering Springvale Road, and here the tall meadow area, partly marked out by wooden posts hidden in the grass, is somewhat overgrown and dotted with scrub species such as Hawthorn. It seems likely that this eastern area was last cut some years ago, if at all recently. Below this point the field degenerates into a considerable area of scrub woodland which then melds into the back gardens of adjacent properties. There is also a considerable amount of scrub over to the south eastern corner of the field and bordering the old Mid-Hants railway line.

Scrub areas consist largely of Hawthorn, Buckthorn, Blackthorn, Dogwood and other local hedgerow species mingled with Elder, Sallow and some Hazel. Many of the trees and scrub bushes are well grown and present a fairly impenetrable thicket much used by birds and other fauna. Local

**Kings Worthy, Top Field
Botanical Survey
Sunday 20th July, 2006**



home-owners are known to use the thicket for recreational purposes going to and from the field and also for gathering in-season blackberries and the like.

Provision is due to be made for the designation of already well-used paths as official footpaths for recreational purposes including dog walking.

The flora of Top Field, both in the set-aside area, and elsewhere is interesting but contains no rare or unusual species. This is not unexpected in relatively recent meadow land somewhat isolated from similar fields and grassland seed banks. It is however of considerable value as an attractive recreational resource and will in due time, and with due care, develop an even more varied and interesting flora.



Despite reports of its existence in certain Hampshire County Council publications, especially in a recent wild-life diversity report, there is no evidence of Carr woodland. It is hardly surprising that this is the case as there is unlikely to be standing water and fen-conditions on chalk down-land. It is of course possible that it reflects a transient water-logging that could perhaps have occurred in an area trapped against the Mid-Hants railway embankment at some point in the past.

The plant listing attached represents a snap-shot view only of a two day period in mid July. Many other species doubtless occur but would not have been recorded in such a narrow and specific time-frame. 6 representative and common grass species have been included. Most of the tree and shrubby species are to be found in the scrub areas, but some isolated shrub species are dotted about towards the margins and away for the mown area.

Michael Edwards

Top Field July 2006

A brief survey.

Common Name	Species	Comment
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	
Ground Elder	<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	
Agrimony	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	
Garden Lady's Mantle	<i>Alchemilla mollis</i>	1 plant seen
Scarlet Pimpernel	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	
False Oat-grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	Grass
Mugwort	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	
Butterfly Bush	<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Several well-grown bushes towards margins
Hedge Bindweed	<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	
Musk Thistle	<i>Carduus nutans</i>	
Rough Chervil	<i>Chaerophyllum temulum</i>	
Rosebay Willowherb	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	In patches and extensive to north edge of field
Creeping Thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	
Traveller's Joy	<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	
Wild Basil	<i>Clinopodium vulgare</i>	
Field Bindweed	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Extensive thicket to eastern edge of field
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Grass
Wild Carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>	
Teasel	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	
Great Willowherb	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	
Broad-leaved Willowherb	<i>Epilobium montanum</i>	
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	In scrub woodland
Hedge Bedstraw	<i>Galium mollugo</i>	
Wood Avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>	
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum spondylium</i>	
Yorkshire-Fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Grass
Perforate St. John's Wort	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	
Smooth Cat's-ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	
Autumn Hawkbit	<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>	
Toadflax, common	<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	
Perennial Rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Grass
Pineappleweed	<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>	
Ribbed Melilot	<i>Melilotus officinalis</i>	
Red Bartsia	<i>Odondites vernus</i>	
Evening Primrose	<i>Oenothera biennis</i>	
Wild Marjoram	<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	
Wild Parsnip	<i>Pastinaca sativa</i>	
Timothy Grass	<i>Phleum pratense</i>	Grass
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	
Greater Plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>	
Smooth Meadow Grass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Grass
Selfheal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	

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Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Extensive thicket to eastern edge of field
Plum Species	<i>Prunus spp</i>	
Common Fleabane	<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>	Very local to east
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	
Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus catharticus</i>	In mixed thicket to eastern edge and
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>	
Sweet-briar	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>	
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg</i>	
Curled Dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>	
Broad-leaved Dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	
Goat Willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>	
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	In scrub woodland, and dotted about lower
Common Ragwort	<i>Senecio Jacobaea</i>	Scattered throughout in open field
Field Madder	<i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	
Canadian Goldenrod	<i>Solidago canadensis</i>	In patches and extensive to north edge of field
Hedge Woundwort	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	In south eastern corner
Dandelion	<i>Taraxum agg</i>	
Goat's-beard	<i>Tragapogon pratensis</i>	
Hop Trefoil	<i>Trifolium campestre</i>	
Common Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	

Michael Edwards

July 2006

