

Plant survey
Bradlaugh Fields
Northampton
May, June & July 2023

By Dr R G Field

Site description

Three areas previously either ponds or areas of wet grassland were surveyed in May and June 2017. Areas 1 and 2 were surveyed again in May and June 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. Plant species observed were recorded plus any other species present were noted. The three areas are now dry. This has been the case for the last several years since Anglian Water repaired a leak nearby. It is presumed that these areas will remain dry in the future, and this was the seventh year the study was conducted so future management could be agreed. Three surveys were carried out this year in May, June and July. This year has been wet early on and then very dry, so some species seem to have been badly affected by this.

Area 1

Small area which formally was a pond just to the north of the main building. Was cleared of vegetation (including scrub) in the winters of 2016/7, 2017/8, 2018/9, 2019/2020, 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23. This has been colonised by a range of wildflowers and grasses.

Area 2

Area formally a pond with ditch area to the south of the main building. Was cleared of vegetation in winters of 2016/7, 2017/8, 2018/9, 2019/2020, 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23. Edges of the pond and ditch were colonised by wildflowers, while the central section is more nutrient rich and is dominated by grasses and nettles. Some of soil was removed from this centre section over the winters of 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Area 3

Area formally a pond with wet grassland. To the south of the main building and within 50m of Area 2. Overgrown with grasses and scrub species. No management work carried out on this site for several years

Area 1 survey

Sweet vernal grass was seen again this year for the first time since 2019. Several new species were recorded and a few species which like wetter conditions were missing this year.

Area 2 Survey

Several of the species which were found in the wetter, more nutrient rich soil in the centre of the former pond were not recorded this year. On the July survey day Ringlet, Meadow brown, Marbled white, Small skipper, Large skipper, Small tortoiseshell and Gatekeeper were seen in this area. There was in excess of 50 Small skippers and 10 Marbled whites seen.

Suggested Management

The management for areas 1 & 2 is to cut and clear all the vegetation in late autumn each year. This will slowly reduce any nutrient levels and encourage wildflowers to spread. The central area of 2 could be cleared and the cuttings from the banks should be spread on the lower area once it has been cut and cleared. Area 1 has a problem with creeping thistle and willows which needs to be dealt with before the main cut back (AM already informed).

Area 3 needs a lot more work and it is suggested that it should be kept short for at least 12 months using a cut and collect mower. After that it may need extra cuts each year or can move to one late cut and collect each year.

Fixed point photography at the two areas (1 & 2) should be undertaken every two months starting in April 2024. March, May, July and September would be ideal to show the growth period. Several photographs were taken on the July visit to trial this approach (Plates 1-4).

Species list 2017 to 2023

Table 1	Area 1	species	
Smooth stalked meadow grass	Yorkshire fog	Red fescue	Small leaved timothy
Rough meadow grass	Hedge woundwort	Soft rush (not 2021/ 22/23)	Bittersweet (not 2023)
White clover	Sedge sp.	Greater plantain	Mugwort
Reed canary grass (not 2023)	Perennial rye grass	Sterile brome	Crested dogstail
Ribwort plantain	Cowslip	Yellowrattle	Common speedwell (not 2022)
Cow parsley	Cocksfoot	Common ragwort	Spear thistle
Common nettle	Bush vetch	Cleavers	Barren brome
Broad leaved dock	Creeping buttercup	Herb bennet	Hogweed
Birdsfoot trefoil	Dandelion	Ox-eye daisy	Great willowherb
Ragged Robin	Meadow buttercup	Crack willow	Black knapweed
Red campion	Yarrow	Creeping thistle	Creeping buttercup
Sterile brome	Meadowsweet	Great willowherb	
	New species 2018-21		
Salad burnet	Hedge mustard (not 2020 and 21)	Sweet vernal (not 2020,21 and 22)	Glaucous sweet grass
Tufted vetch	Wild sage	Meadow cranesbill	Cut leaved cranesbill
Field scabious	White campion	Wild carrot	Sow thistle
Greater knapweed	Wild rose	Hedge bindweed	Goatsbeard (not 2022)
Weld	Common ragwort	False oat grass	Ground Ivy
Daisy (not 2022)	Ladies bedstraw	Rough hawksbit (not 2023)	Pendulous sedge
	New Species 2022		
Soft fern (not 2023)	Bramble	Herb Robert	White dead-nettle
Hairy tare	Common catsear (not 2023)	Ladies bedstraw	Field bindweed
Hemlock (not 2023)	Italian rye grass (not 2023)		
	New species 2023		
Selfheal	Common Hempnettle	Meadow foxtail	

	Species list 2017 to 2023		
Table 2	Area 2		
Red fescue	Yorkshire fog	Red fescue	Soft rush (not 2023)
Rough meadow grass	Hedge woundwort (not 2021, 2022 and 2023)	Lesser stitchwort (not 2020 and 2022)	Lesser trefoil (not 2020)
White clover (not 2020)	Yellow oat grass	Greater plantain	Mugwort
Red clover	Perennial rye grass	Sterile brome	Crested dogstail (not 2023)
Ribwort plantain	Meadow foxtail	Salad burnet	Common speedwell
Cow parsley	Cocksfoot	White dead nettle	Spear thistle
Common nettle	Bush vetch	Cleavers	Barren brome
Broad leaved dock	Creeping buttercup	Common sorrell	Hogweed
Birdsfoot trefoil	Dandelion	Ox-eye daisy	Great willowherb
Ragged Robin (not 2021 and 2022)	Meadow buttercup	Germander speedwell	Black knapweed
Red campion	Yarrow	Creeping thistle	Spiked sedge
Yellowrattle	Meadow foxtail	Goatsbeard	False oat grass
Soft rush	Cut leaved cranesbill (not 2020)	Dovesfoot cranesbill	Tufted vetch
Small leaved timothy	Mouse ear	Bulbous buttercup (not 2020)	Common ragwort
Hedge mustard (not 2020)	Sweet vernal	Garlic mustard	Field bindweed
Germander speedwell	Velvet brome	White campion	Greater knapweed
Reed sweet grass (not 2023)	Soft brome	Cowslip	Great willowherb (not 2023)
Wild sage	Bittersweet (not 2022 and 2023)	Ribwort plantain	Hairy tare
Field scabious	Ladies bedstraw	Sow thistle (not 2023)	Nipplewort
Rough hawksbit	Hairy St. John wort	Ground ivy	Small-flowered cranesbill (not 2022)
Sheeps sorrell	Hairy tare	Common couch	Herb bennet
Wall barley	Goatsbeard		
	New species 2022		
Comment bent	Ivy	Yarrow	Common ragwort



Plate 1: Area I July 2023



Plate 2: Area 1 July 2023



Plate 3: Area 2 July 2023



Plate 4: Area 2 July 2023

