



***Salvia pratensis* (Meadow Clary) at Grintley Hill Survey on 23 June 2018**

Members of the Wychwood Flora Group present:

Sally Abbey, Gill Barrett, Jo Bell, Ken Betteridge, Brenda Betteridge, Genny Early, Jen Green, Jenny Harrington

At Grintley Hill *Salvia pratensis* grows on either side of the fence which separates Network Rail property from a meadow on the Blenheim Estate.

In the meadow

As in previous years the survey was started along the fence line separating the meadow from Network Rail property. Using the old square post, which is marked '0' as our reference point, quadrats were laid out and the total number of flowering stems counted and a note made of how many had been eaten off. We also counted the young and non-flowering plants. The results were entered on the plan created on a spreadsheet.

Total number of flowering stems = 186 (181 in 2017; 177 in 2016; 262 in 2015)

Total number of flowering stems eaten off = 8 (55 in 2018; 114 in 2016; 121 in 2015)

Total number of flowering stems untouched = 178 (126 in 2017; 63 in 2016; 141 in 2015)

Young and non-flowering plants = 52 (51 in 2017)

Total number of flowering plants/clumps = 64

The meadow had not been grazed or mown before our visit and the flowering stems showed up well in the sward. This year, it was notable that the flowering stems were largely undamaged, and not much evidence that rabbits or deer were eating off the flowering stems. Also little evidence of slug damage. The area in which Meadow Clary plants are found appears to be contracting. We did not find any plants in the last quadrat of the main area or at the far end of the slope. The majority of the field has now been planted with trees, fenced. The flatter plain at the bottom was cut for hay, but the slope where the Meadow Clary grows was untouched. Ideally, the meadow bank would be grazed in the autumn, after the Meadow Clary has set seed, to prevent the vigorous grass and other species outcompeting and crowding out the Meadow Clary.

Network Rail property

Again, as last year, it is getting increasingly difficult to see the Meadow Clary on the other side of the fence as the shrubs are closing in, and shading out the Meadow Clary. Some clumps are visible from the field; approximately 21 clumps can be seen from the field side. Sue Douglas (Network Rail Infrastructure Maintenance Protection Co-ordinator) has emailed suggesting putting this site in a programme of work to be trimmed once every 2 years during the winter months. This is very welcome, as the plants that have access to sunlight are thriving, and the site supports a significant number of Meadow Clary plants.

Genny Early
for the Wychwood Flora Group

copies to:

Lottie File (Blenheim Estate)

Sharon Williams (Director, Wychwood Project)

Andy Byfield (Plantlife's Conservation Adviser)

Sue Douglas (Network Rail Infrastructure Maintenance Protection Co-ordinator)