

Pillmere Meadow was originally the builder's yard for the housing development, and has been left undisturbed since 2009, just being cut once a year by Saltash Town Council Services. In 2019, local residents linked up with SEA to restore the meadow more fully. The grasses were strong and dominant, so to weaken them the grass-clippings are raked off each year after mowing, and yellow rattle has been sown, which feeds off the roots of grass, leading to it being called the 'meadow-maker'. Various other wildflower seeds and plug plants have been introduced, but only oxeye daisy and viper's bugloss have established themselves so far.

Surveys in Spring 2022 have identified 47 different species of wildflower, and probably the most dramatic of these is the bee orchid. Other attractive flowers include poppy and sainfoin. Some plants can't yet be identified, and many will flower later in the year, so the total tally of species in the Meadow will definitely reach well over 50. With such a diversity of flowers, the meadow is buzzing with every kind of wildlife, especially grasshoppers, which are most active in the morning.

To provide better access to the Meadow, curving pathways were cut in 2021, and are much used by dog-walkers. They make it easier to appreciate the various zones of the meadow which differ in the type of soil, and in the amount of light and moisture. As a result, different flowers grow naturally in each zone. The most common flowers include several kinds of vetch and trefoil; red and white clovers, buttercup, speedwell and thistles, and of course the yellow rattle, which seems to have become well established. Brambles are a problem: while some is important as a source of nectar for butterflies, brambles have invaded large areas over the years and will need dealing with.

Meadows can sometimes appear untidy to a human eye, but they do provide vital habitats for wildlife, and SEA's purpose in encouraging the restoration of meadows at Pillmere and other parts of Saltash is to help combat the drastic loss of habitat in this country, which has led to a 60% decline in the number of insects. When meadows are seen as a vital piece of the jigsaw for addressing climate change and the loss of biodiversity, then we can ignore any thoughts of untidiness and appreciate the amazing power of Nature to take every opportunity to provide us with such an amazing tapestry of colour buzzing with wildlife.

End of report

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