

Road Verge Nature Reserves in Witney

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Introduction

It has been noticeable this year that a number of roadside verges have been designated as nature reserves with appropriate signage and mowing maintenance to encourage the native wild flower diversity to flourish. One site visited by this recorder while walking in Crawley near the junction with the Charlbury road on Leafield Road brought a number of (previously unknown to the recorder) native species to the fore. These were:

Meadow clary or **Meadow sage** – *Salvia pratensis*

Hoary plantain – *Plantago media*

Yellow mignonette – *Reseda lutea* (used to make a yellow dye called 'weld' since 1000BC)

The following document captures a species list of plants found along an extended section of the Burford Road that encompasses hedgerows and footpath on one side, light woodland adjacent to the Windrush Valley Road development and a middle verge separating a slip road to that same development.

On the hedgerow side, the cutting back in the Spring of ground-invading and copse-creating blackthorn, elder and brambles left space for the wild flowers to show their heads. The walk experience along the path on that side has become *almost* a delight... if you ignore the speeding drivers at commuting hours and in the early evening.

This document aims to collate the species seen at different times of the year, each section representing a different month captured.

Proposal

It is proposed that, following the clean-up that took place by volunteers in 2023 and subsequent timely spring coppicing in 2024 by the council, the verges and middle verge be classified as 'road verge nature reserves' to preserve their unique biodiversity and be maintained in the same way each Spring.

Section 1 — Species recorded 10 June 2025

Locations

Burford Road from Tower Hill to Deer Park Road junction on both sides of the road, including the verge running parallel to the main road on the slip road leading to Windrush Valley Road.

Species list

GMullein – quite a colony and spreading on the slip road ‘middle verge’ segment



1 Great Mullein field — *Verbascum thapsus*

Location: Heading west on Burford Road...

Wild snapdragon – common toadflax



2 Common or Yellow Toadflax — *Linaria vulgaris*

Knapweed

Yarrow

Lesser celandine

White campion

Hedge bedstraw



3 Hedge Bedstraw — *Galium mollugo*

Location: Heading East on way back from Deer Park Road traffic lights

Musk Mallow near the lights and Common Mallow



4 Musk Mallow — *Malva moschata*

Bird's Foot trefoil Hedge bedstraw Lady's bedstraw



5 Lady's bedstraw — *Galium Verum*

Creeping cinquefoil



6 Creeping cinquefoil — *Potentilla reptans*

Spiny Restharrow



7 Spiny Restharrow — *Ononis spinosa*

Scabious

Common toadflax – wild snapdragon

[5 hemlock plants before the bus shelter, of which 4 trampled down – poisonous and invasive. Should be dug out with protective clothing on]

Numerous grasses that would need an expert to classify

Section 2 — Species recorded 25 July 2025



Location: Middle Verge between Burford Road and slip road to Windrush Valley Road

The light woodland area on the south side of Burford Road nearest to the lights contains many **wild plum trees** that are laden this month with yellow and red plums.

In addition, these native flowers have come into bloom since this report was first compiled. They are...

Tansy and Caper Spurge



8 Tansy — *Tanacetum vulgare*



9 Caper Spurge — *Euphorbia lathyris*

Location: Hedgerow Verge between Tower Hill roundabout on Burford Road to traffic lights at Deer Park Road

Woolly Thistle and Mugwort (or wormwood)



10 Woolly Thistle — *Cirsium eriophorum*



11 Mugwort or wormwood — *Artemisia vulgaris*

Appendix: Nature Reserve species in Crawley

Location: Leaffield Road, Crawley near junction turn off towards Charlbury



12 Meadow clary or Meadow sage — *Salvia pratensis*



13 Hoary plantain — *Plantago media*



14 Yellow mignonette — *Reseda lutea*

This flower has been used since 1000BC to make a yellow dye called '**weld**'.