



## A Month by Month Look at Millie Bank - September 2021

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*We're heading towards the time when new flowers are increasingly rare, but we think we have just about managed a Full House for September....*

Along the beck-side, there are a few delicate **Water Forget-me-nots** still in flower. They are usually a lovely light-blue colour, but don't be surprised if you spot yellow or white petals. Trying to survive next to what can at times become a raging torrent isn't easy, but like many plants, this one has runners deep in the ground which might just survive the next flood.

On your left just before the gate into Common Wood, there is a good patch of **Hedge Woundwort**, and we should have mentioned it earlier when its small red/purple flowers were more obvious. Unfortunately for the plant, its leaves look a lot like those of the stinging nettle, and, as a result, it is often a victim of collateral damage as it tends to grow in areas colonised by nettles. If you crush one of its leaves you will immediately become aware of its astringent-like aroma. Apparently, the London based herbalist John Gerard used Hedge Woundwort to treat injuries received in pub brawls during the 1600's!

Next up is the Flower of the Month, **Devil's-bit Scabious**. It may be common in those few areas of the countryside not destroyed by intensive agriculture, and that's just as well as it is an essential plant for pollinators, heading into Autumn. It is a classic feature of old unimproved pasture, but, of course, is absent from hay-meadows as it really wouldn't enjoy being cut in July every year, several months before it sets seed.

Another generally common late-flowering plant is **Yarrow**. It is usually white, but pink and purple variants are not uncommon. Surprisingly given what else thrives on Millie Bank, there seems to be very little yarrow, but what there is will be much appreciated by insects looking for an Autumn take-away.



Even professional botanists struggle with hawk's-beards and hawkbits, those small yellow daisy-like flowers which crop up in all sorts of places, both urban and rural. As plants go, they must be high up on the resilience scale. This picture (expertly taken by the one of us who doesn't usually travel with a camera) will have to remain unidentified for now, until the other half is able to have a close look at its bits (and don't hold your breath, as this plant is not easily accessible).



No prizes for identifying **Bramble** (unless you are one of the experts able to say which bramble out of the 400+ microspecies it is!). They really shouldn't be growing in an unimproved pasture, and they will need to be controlled, but they are a very popular plant with all sorts of insects as they develop, and humans are not the only ones who enjoy their fruits in Autumn.



We featured **Meadow Vetchling** a month or two ago, and we rather liked this very late-flowering specimen.



And finally, here is a fine pile (one of several) of scythed **Creeping Thistles**. For many years, Millie Bank was over-grazed by sheep, and this allowed our spiky 'friends' to colonise the bare patches in the ground. Since year-round grazing has ceased, they have rather come into their own, and it will take a concerted effort over the next few years to get them under control.



**Nigel and Lois Harbron**