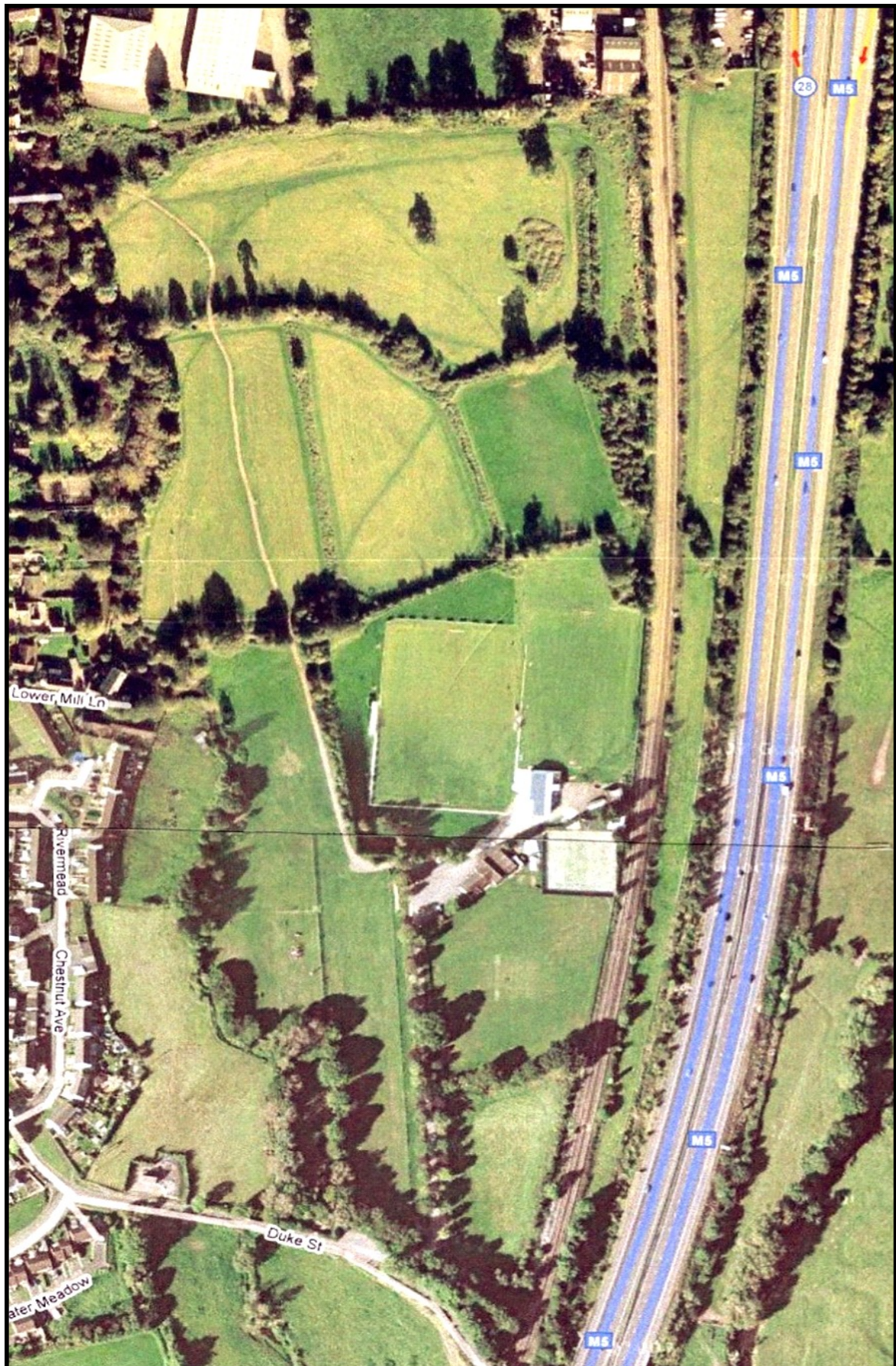


Map of CCA Fields





From the Chairman

Cathy Rutley

The Cullompton Community Association, CCA, own 32 acres of land, some leased to the Cullompton Rangers Football club. The Cricket club and the Bowling club both own their own land. The Whippet Club are currently negotiating a lease for the track.

The rest is public open space for all to enjoy. The Fields are used by many members of the community. It is a place to walk your dog or sit on a bench to listen and watch, whiling away a few moments in your hectic life. Fun football can be played in a dog free children's area and maybe have a picnic or barbeque on a warm summer evening.

As the present Chairman of the Association I feel privileged to serve on a committee which is dedicated to keep the Fields as an open space.

We are working toward making the Fields a wonderful haven for wild life and people alike. I understand it will be a lot of hard work and fund raising, but Cullompton is lucky to have these fields and they are well worth the effort.

The Fields are about 5 minutes walk from the town centre. There is a choice of several ways to get there.

- You can walk down Higher Mill, Middle Mill or Lower Mill lanes any of which will take you to the Leatside Walk and then on to the Community Fields.
- If you prefer to drive you can go down to the bottom end of town, along Meadow Lane, past the Sports Centre and turn right at the end of the road, over a small hump backed bridge then turn next left going down a small incline, along a track to a small car park.

What could be nicer than going for a stroll and enjoying the open space. It is there for all, so why not take advantage of it.

This document has been prepared to provide for a management, maintenance and development plan. It will take time, it will not happen overnight and it will need volunteers to bring it to fruition.

Introduction

This document has been produced as a follow up to the **Biodiversity Action Plan'** which was compiled by Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, FWAG, entitled 'Landmanager' to assist the Cullompton Community Association with the management and maintenance of their fields with particular emphasis on biodiversity.

Quoting Natural England, "Biodiversity is the amazing richness and variety of wild life and habitats on earth, from snow fields to rain forests and from mountain tops to the deep ocean floor. Even in twenty-first century England the range of biodiversity is extraordinary. In the busiest city park and quietest rocky cove there is an enormous number of individual species, each one superbly adapted for its own environmental needs.

No one organism lives in isolation. Each contributes to the balance of nature and the survival of the planet. Yet, the impact of man's activity is increasingly changing this equilibrium.

The Biodiversity Action Plan is the UK's initiative to maintain and enhance biodiversity. Natural England and other organisation from across all sectors are committed to achieving the Plan's conservation goals over the next 20 years and beyond.

FWAG identified within the CCA fields specific topics of differing biodiversity adding their recommendations for the management and maintenance of the fields. The topics are :-

- Hedgerows and boundary features.
- Grassland and wet grassland.
- Hay meadow
- Ponds ditches and Leat
- Wildlife scrape
- Woodland and Trees
- Species

This document has extracted these recommendations and formatted and included the points stressed into the locations within the CCA fields, namely :-

- Hay meadow and Bund
- Wet Grassland
- Dog pond
- Scrape
- Woodland and Trees
- Leat and Ditches
- Maintenance and Management
- Work plan (?)
- Assistance

If the recommendations by FWAG are carried out, could become an area that would make Cullompton famous for its habitats with rare species. It would also discourage those who wish to vandalise the CCA fields by building a road through it.

Natural England has an excellent and informative website **www.english-nature.org.uk**. They are the administrators of three schemes to help with Bio Diversity Plans. The scheme more relevant to us is the Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ES).

This scheme is a Government scheme open to all open to all farmers, **Land Managers**, and tenants in England to help them conserve and enhance England's countryside.

ES has ensured that thousands of farmers and **Land Managers** have the funding and advice available to help them undertake work to conserve and improve the countryside — delivering environmental benefits throughout England.

Before we make any applications to this scheme there is a lot of red tape and form filling to be carried out.

Hay Meadow and Bund



Wet Grassland

Hay Meadow

Bund

Tussock Grass

Area of Interest



Buttercups



Ragged Robin



Lady's Smock



Yarrow

Buttercups, Yarrow, Lady's Smock and newly arrived Ragged Robin all create a carpet of colour to this meadow.

It was thought at one time that the meadow was or could be classified as Culm Grassland, but the composition of the soil suggests it is not.

The website www.quoditch.org.uk/quoditchfoculm.htm provides more information about Culm Grasslands

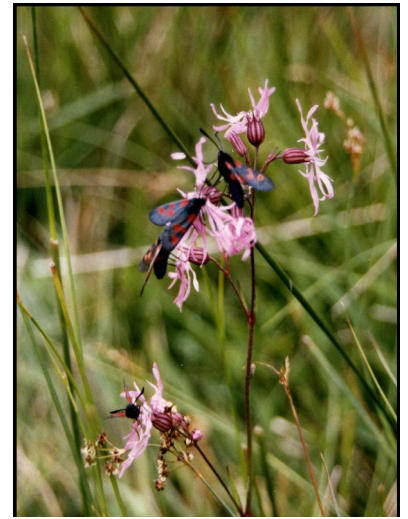
However I see no reason why we can not produce a similar type of grassland by introducing more wild flowers, for example Plantain, Devil's Bit Scabious, violets and Red Campion. Red Campion does not grow on wet Meadow but dryer ones and hedgebanks. There is some on the edges of the CCA field.



Devils Bit Scabious



Cow Wheat



Burnet Moths feeding on Ragged Robin



**Marsh Fritillary
Butterfly**

The Marsh Fritillary is in decline in Europe and one of 11 butterflies covered by the United Kingdom Biodiversity Action plan. It is listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and countryside Act, also the EC Habitats and Species Directive (Annex II).

Its habitats are damp and heathy grassland, dominated by tussock forming grasses. It feeds on Devils Bit Scabious.



Red Campion

Meadow Management and Maintenance

As recommended by FWAG:-

1. Replant parkland with 3 English Oak with a plaque in Memory of 'Percy' . It may be worth growing these from acorns from existing CCA. Perhaps involving local schools to grow some from acorns.
2. Replant gaps in hedge with Blackthorn and Hawthorn. Repairing and laying existing hedge rows.
3. Sow some wild flower seed across the meadow. Cow wheat, Birds eye Scabious, Violets and Plantain would all be 'at home' on the meadow. These would encourage butterflies such as rare Fritillary's to take up residence.

Other means could include spreading hay cut from Culm Grassland meadows.

4. Cut the meadow annually, August, after the wild flowers already on the meadow have seeded. A key issue is not to let the sword grow too tall as to swamp the flowers.
5. Cut narrow paths through the grassland to allow public access.

It has been my experience that in the event of the weather preventing the cutting, it can in fact benefit the meadow by not being cut for **one** year.

The Bund Wet grassland and Tussock Grass Area



The Bund



Tussock Grass



Tussock Grass



Wet Grassland

This area forms the barrier between the Meadow and the railway, see the map on page 4. The area is classified as 'Wet Grassland'. It is inhabited by a wide variety of wild life, including field mice, snakes (Adders and grass snakes) and frogs. Until recently there was also an active rabbit warren but since the floods in the winter of 2008/2009 the rabbits have not been seen but there is recent evidence that they have returned. It is also an area regularly hunted by dogs on exercise walks with their owners.

The Bund was built and planted with a variety of trees by 'Percy' and some local school children in 2000.

"Tussock grassland is a valuable habitat as it provides the ideal shelter for small rodents including the Dormouse that in turn are a source of food for owls and other birds of prey."

FWAG recommend :

- Cut 2/3 of the area in the first spring, before 31st March followed by the final 1/3 in August of the first year.
- Subsequent cutting should then be on a three year rotation of 1/3 per year in July/August.
- Cut reeds in December/January on a 3 year rotation of 1/3 per year.
- Hand tools may be used.
- Cut material should be removed and composted.
- Encourage community involvement.

Area of Interest on the CCA Meadow

This area is of interest because it is out of character with the remainder the Meadow.



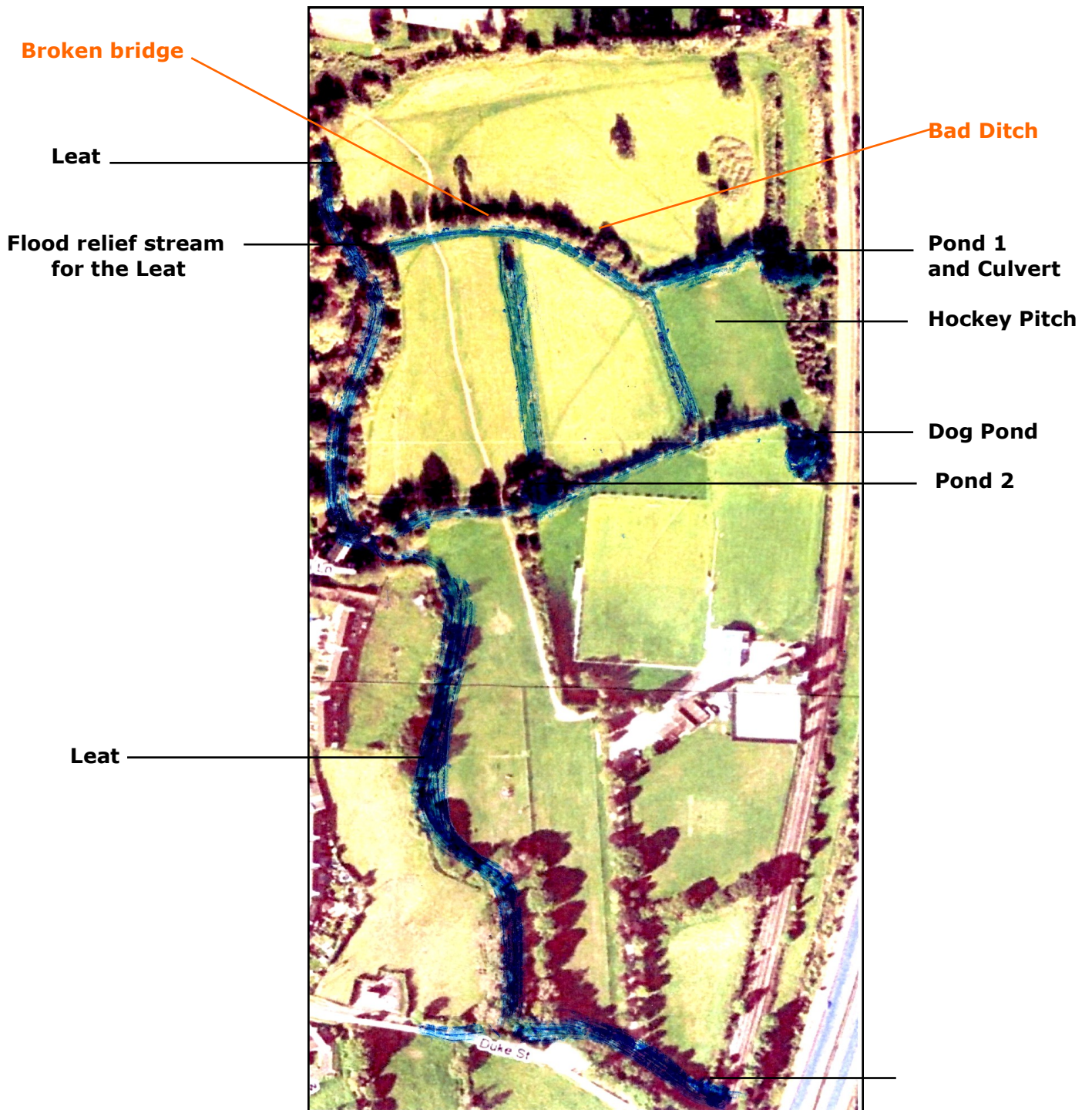
I have been advised that some years ago the Fishing Club started to create a fishing lake here but due to increasing costs the project was abandoned.

There are several 'rabbit runs' into the mounds of brambles, which my dog regularly inspects.

I feel this specific area has definite character and perhaps it should be left alone to develop into a habitat of its own in isolation thus increasing the biodiversity of the CCA fields. It may however be advantageous to cut the grass occasionally.

The aerial photograph suggests it shows what might be a pre-historic settlement and it might be fun to survey this area with a metal detector.

Ditches/Streams and Ponds



The presence of water in any form will always add interest to a site. It will attract all aspects of wild life and therefore it should be accessible to all. A wooden walkway could provide an interesting way of viewing and one of the ponds.

The photograph opposite shows one around a 'Biodiversity Pond' at Blundells School. Obviously consideration must be given to the safety aspects of such a construction.



Pond 1 and Culvert



Dog Pond



Pond 2



Wooden Walkway

Ditches/Streams



From the photographs on the opposite page, it can be seen that the clean up of the ditches on the fields has greatly improved not only the appearance but the performance of our streams. The occupiers of Higher Mill dug out the blockage at the bridge on the Leat path which has resulted in a far more effective flow threw the 'flood relief' from the Leat into the ditch.

The frogspawn was saved before the clearance operation was started and replaced after the clearance was completed. However all the frogspawn had disappeared the following day. There were many frogs to be seen in the ditch in the top right hand corner photograph.

However there remains some areas of ditching that need to be cleared.

Below are pictures of the worst examples. It is the ditch between the central pathway and the football field. The ditch is marked in red on the plan on page 8. It is overgrown with trees laying across its path. It would have been impossible to get any practical machinery into the growth. I found that the stream appears to be polluted and that there was some frog spawn in it. Another area is the stream that is on the Football Clubs area.



Polluted and Overgrown Stream



Damaged Bridge



Frog Spawn

Trees

There are some **ancient trees** of different species on the CCA fields. These trees need to be identified and cared for.

The Woodland Trust are asking the public to identify trees in their location so that they can in effect be registered and legally protected, thus securing their future. You can also record trees that are notable or have great stories even if they aren't yet ancient.

The Ancient Tree Hunt is a five year project led by the Woodland Trust in partnership with the Ancient Tree Forum and the Tree Register of the British Isles, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, the Esme Fariburn Foundation and Scottish Natural Heritage and supported by Forestry Commission Scotland. We are being asked to examine our trees and record any that we think could fall into the Ancient Tree Category. They will tell us if it is a record for our area and will not encourage people to come and look at it unless we want them to. This of course is what Cullompton would wish! They will help with advice and help us estimate the age of a tree.

"An ancient tree is one that makes you go WOW. It will be huge, fatter than any other tree. Trees start to be of interest to the Ancient Tree Hunt when the size is based on the **HUG METHOD OF MEASUREMENT**. A HUG is based on the finger tip to finger tip measurement of an adult, which is taken to be 1.5m.

Ancient trees are full of holes and dead and rotting wood. These provide the perfect homes for thousands of species of plants, animals, insects and fungi, including many rare and threatened species.

Ancient oak trees will usually be at least 400 years old and many be 100 or even more years old.

Below is a list of some Ancient Tree Hug sizes:

Oak - 3 adult hugs	Beech - 2 adult hugs	Scots Pine - 2 adult hugs
Rowan - 1 adult hug	Birch - 1 hug	Hawthorn - 1 hug
Field Maple - 1 adult hug	Sweet Chestnut - 4 adult Hugs	Ash - 2 adult hugs.

My wife and I have hugged some of the larger trees and below are photographs of 3 trees on the CCA Field that may well qualify as 'Ancient Trees'.



FWAG in their report recommend that we plant three oak trees in the meadow at the eastern end of the fields. If these are planted it is recommended that 'Honey Fungus' resistant trees are chosen. Honey Fungus is a tree and plant killer and is contagious. "Quercus Robur" an English Oak is recommended.

Thornhayes Nursery at St Andrews Wood, Dulford, Cullompton is a Nursery that gives advice.

'Shop Locally'!

Hedges

Together with the streams, hedges form the boundaries between the CCA fields. To quote FWAG "There has been little management over recent years resulting in many hedges becoming overgrown and gappy, limiting their habitat value.



Within the CCA fields each hedge or section of hedge has a specific species of tree with which it was originally planted.

Behind Tesco and the subsequent fields this is Hawthorn, between the Bund and the football field, Blackthorn, further down that hedge towards the Leat it is Hazel and Pussy Willow and then Alder. All of these hedges also have other plants interspersed amongst the dominant ones and these themselves can be found in other hedges. The less frequent ones are Elder, Witch Elm, Holly and Ash with Dog Rose, Honeysuckle and Bramble intertwining with the larger trees and ancient Oaks overhanging them all

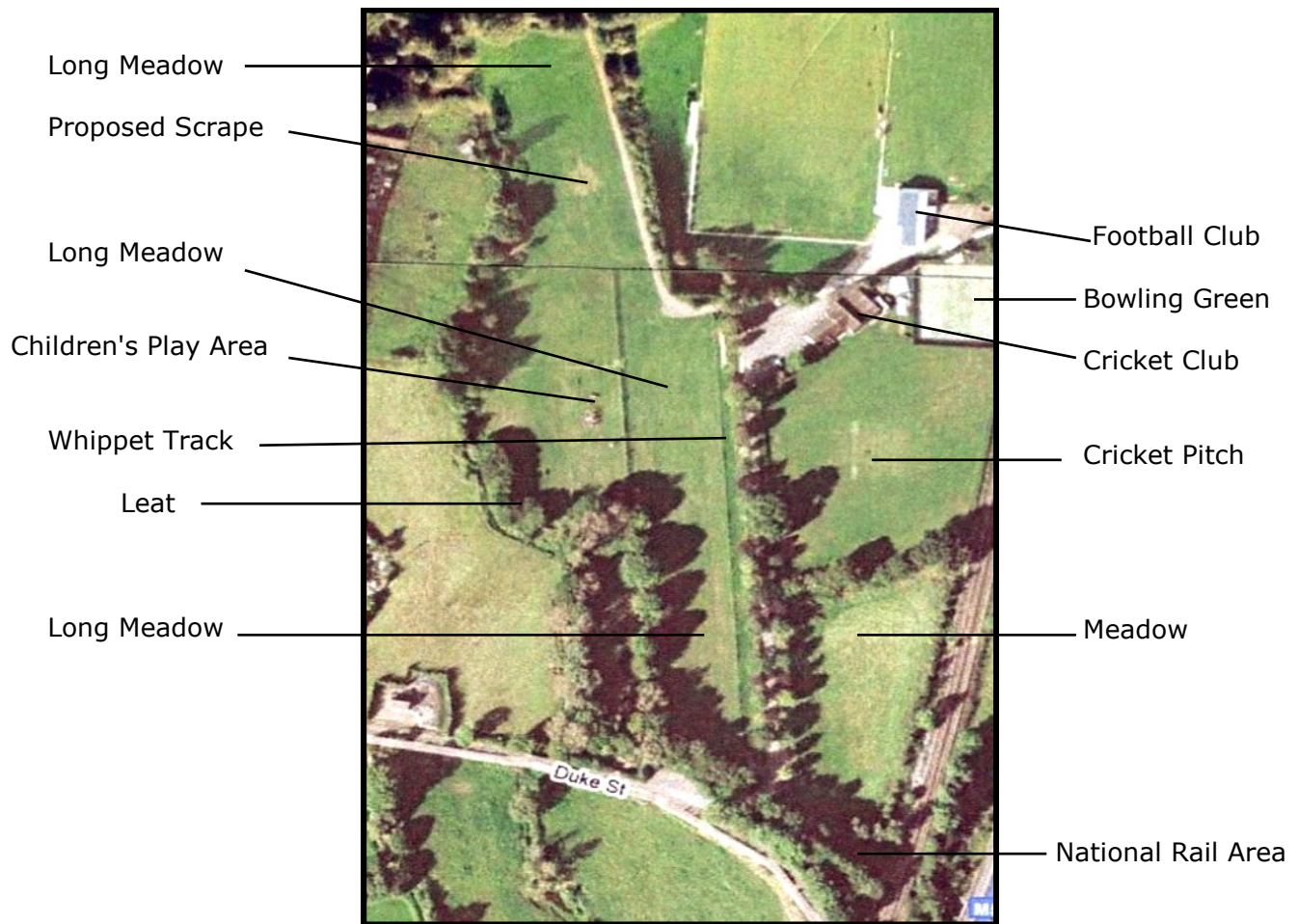
Some field boundaries have dense hedgerows as seen in the other three photographs. It would be a very difficult task to layer these hedges but best to lay if possible.

These hedges provide a very good habitat for wild life for their food, nests and burrows. as the dense growth of the hedge gives them ample food and protection from larger predatory wild life.

The wildlife and landscape value of hedgerows can be maintained and enhanced by good management.

- You should avoid trimming hedgerows between 1 March and 31 July. The main nesting season for birds. Exemptions apply if the hedgerow overhangs a public footpath.
- It is best to leave trimming until the end of winter otherwise trimming can be brought forward to early winter.
- Ground cover at the hedge base should be retained over winter for ground-nesting birds.

Long Meadow



"Wildlife scrape".

The creation of a wildlife scrape adjacent to the children's play area would offer an additional habitat and make good use of a wet area that has little amenity value for much of the year.



- Excavate an area roughly 220 m² to a depth of 20cm with sloping sides.
- Establish a buffer strip to prevent access from fdgs and people
- Cut buffer strip on a 3 year rotation with no more than 1/3 in a year.
- Prevent the dominance of soft rush
- Install interpretation boards

At least the dog thinks it is a good idea — free drinks!

The Leat in Long Meadow

The Leat provides Long Meadow with it's western boundary and is tree and bush lined. The community would gain great pleasure if a hardcore footpath was created along the eastern bank of the Leat and south boundary of Long Meadow.

Leat Pictures



The Children's Play Area



Although this area does not at the moment have much play equipment. The CCA have plans to increase this when financial resources are available. This is a large area that we hope will be fully utilised in the future.

National Rail Area

This area is located at the southern end of the CCA fields on the right hand side as you enter the fields from Duke Street. The ownership of this area is not clearly defined. This area has tremendous potential and could easily become an area of great interest. The overflow from the River Culm provides a waterway and as a result a habitat for a wide variety of wild life namely fish, waterfowl and even otter.

The otter has returned to the Culm so there is no reason why could not expect it to show up in this area. Moorhen have been seen recently here.

The areas next to the railway bridge could be resting areas with seats or picnic benches provided. Both areas would need clearing of weeds, mainly nettles. Just a path through the area and stop brambles overlapping it.

In this area a fair number of violet plants were found.



FWAG Recommendations

Tussock grassland and Margins

Areas of tussock grassland found along hedge boundaries and in field corners area a valuable habitat as they provide the ideal shelter for small rodents that in turn are a source of food for owls and other birds of prey.

- Encourage a 2m uncut margin alongside boundary features such as hedgerows and ditches.
- Leave awkward or unused corners uncut.
- Use a 3 year rotational cutting regime with no more than 1/3 cut in a single year.
- Cut during August with a strimmer or other hand tools.

Wet Grassland

These areas are mainly dominated by soft rush and common reed and can be found along the north east boundary of the site. Although these species are not of great significance they provide an additional habitat that has the potential to become florally diverse with careful management.

- Cut 2/3 of area in the first spring before 31st March followed by the final 1/3 in August of the first year.
- Subsequent cutting should then be on a three year rotation of a 1/3 per year in July/August.
- Cut reeds in December/January on a 3 year rotation of 1/3 per year.
- Hand tools may be used.
- Cut material should be removed and composted.

Hay Meadow

This area, north of the site, shows a high diversity of grassland species and would be worth surveying during the spring/summer months. In order to improve species diversity it is important that low nutrient levels remain in the soil preventing the dominance of common grass species.

- Continue with annual hay cut.
- Record any interesting floral and butterfly species.

Ponds and Ditches

Areas of open water and water courses are a valuable additional habitat on many sites. This site contains ponds, a number of wet ditches and the Leat.

- Clear directly overhanging willows to encourage light penetration, reduce leaf litter and lower nutrient levels.
- Remove vegetation within the ponds and dredge to a depth of 1m at the centre with graded sides, dredges should be left on the bank for a number of days and then removed for composting.
- Grade the bank to allow frogs, newts and toads easy access to the water.
- Allow tussock vegetation to develop around the pond on a 3 year cutting rotation.
- Try to prevent dog access to the pond as this will disturb wildlife.

The CCA fields have a good network of interlinking wet ditches throughout the site that can act in a similar way to hedges as wildlife corridors.

- Ditches should be managed on a 2 year rotation with no more than 1 side being cut in 1 year.
- All debris should be removed to prevent silting.
- Establish a 2m margin on either side to increase habitat value and cut on a 2 year alternative rotation to the ditch

Woodland and Trees.

The site has wooded areas and mature trees that provide valuable habitat for birds, bats and insects.

- Preserve old trees so long as it is safe to do so.
- Create log piles within wooded area for hedgehogs, insects and fungi.
- Allow areas of bramble to develop to provide a source of food for birds and small mammals and Install bat boxes.
- Plant 3 English Oak (*Quercus Robur*) within the hay meadow to restore parkland appearance. Protect with wooden post and fence.

Calendar for Maintenance Activities

The following advice has been extracted from FWAG'S 'Landmanager' and from Natural England web sites Land Management Advisory Service.

This advisory service helps land managers to improve their land management for the benefit of wildlife, landscape, public access and other environmental purposes.

It is best to leave maintenance and trimming of hedgerows until after Winter.

Annually/Periodically

Ditches should be managed on a 2 year rotation with no more than one side being cut in any single year, with a buffer strip cut on a 3 year rotation with no more than 1/3 in a year.

January

Cut reeds if not cut in December on a 3 year rotation of 1/3 per year

February

Remove debris from ditches.

March

Cut wet grassland - 2/3 of area in the first spring before 31st followed by the final 1/3 in August on the first year.

There should be no maintenance of hedges, from 1st March to 31st July other than for public safety requirements, this period being the main nesting season for birds.

Like wise there should be no maintenance of ditches that will destroy the frogspawn habitats.

April

May

June

Carry out small mammal, bat, bird and moth surveys

July

August

Cut 1/3 Tussock grassland and margins on a 3 year rotation. Remove and compost any clippings.

September

Cut Hay Meadow so long as the grasses have seeded.

November

December

Advice Directory

FWAG	www.fwag.org.uk	
Devon Hedge group	www.devon.gov.uk/devon_hedges	
Hedge Information	www.hedgelink.org.uk	
Blackdown Hill Hedge Association	http://blackdownhills-hedge.org.uk	
Devon Rural Skills	www.devonruralskillstrust.co.uk	
District/County Council Country side		
Environment Agency	www.environment-agency.gov.uk	
Devon Mammal Group	www.devonmammalgroup.org	
Devon Bat Group	www.dbg.me.uk	
English Nature	www.english-nature.org.uk/about/grant4.htm	
Natural England	www.naturalengland.org.uk	
	NE 36 — Hedgecutting, NE69 — Hedgerow Trees NE 70 — Hedgerow Planting NE 124 — Environmental Stewardship	
British Naturalists Association		
Involve @ Tiverton	www.involve-middevon.org.uk	
Devon Wildlife Trust	www.devonwildlifetrust.org.uk www.devonwildlifeconsultants.co.uk	
Quoditch Moor Nature Reserve	www.quoditch.org.uk/quoditchfoculm.htm	(VISIT)
Thornhayes Nursery	www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk	
Green Prints (England)	http://www.sitatrust.org.uk/greenprints	

Financial Assistance

We think that the CCA fields, if the recommendations by FWAG are carried out, could become an area that would make Cullompton famous for its habitats with rare species. It would also discourage those who wish to vandalise the CCA fields by building a road through it

Probable sources of assistance include:

ENGLISH—NATURE (Natural England)

Natural England has an excellent and informative website **www.english-nature.org.uk**. They are the administrators of three schemes to help with Bio Diversity Plans. The scheme more relevant to us is the Environmental Stewardship Scheme.

This scheme is a Government scheme open to all open to all farmers, **Land Managers**, and tenants in England to help them conserve and enhance England's countryside.

ES has ensured that thousands of farmers and **Land Managers** have the funding and advice available to help them undertake work to conserve and improve the countryside — delivering environmental benefits throughout England.

Before we make any applications to this scheme there is a lot of red tape and form filling to be carried out.

DEVON WILD LIFE TRUST

DWT's sister business provides an advisory service to farmers and **Landowners** to identify the current value of the holding and potential enhancement methods within the grant schemes available, including assistance in producing ELS, HLS. For further information on how we can help your business, contact us on 01392 455930 or email us at dwc@devonwildlifetrust.org.uk.

GreenPrints (England)

Green Prints (England) is a partnership of five of the country's leading not-for-profit organisations have come together to provide support and funding to help young people improve green spaces in their community.

The SITA Trust, v (the youth volunteering charity), BTCV, The wildlife Trusts and BBC's Breathing Places campaign, have all joined forces to develop a two year programme called **Green Prints** which will offer funding of up to £10,000, as well as support and practical expertise from the partners, to enable **16-25 year olds** to make a real difference to the communities in which they live by improving green spaces for people and wildlife.

The website for Greenprints is <http://www.sitatrust.org.uk/greenprints>.

A topic that justifies grants is that the project must be designed, created and actively led by volunteers aged 16-25. Could the CCA provide this?

Community Involvement

FWAG in their report say "In order for any management plan of the CCA fields to be successfully undertaken it is important that members of the public are able to engage with the work and understand the ultimate aim. Positioning interpretation boards around the areas of management explaining what is there, what you are doing and why you are doing it can be very useful method for enthusing the public and getting community involvement.

Specs surveys—it is recommended that a small mammal survey and a bat survey are carried out during the summer months to get a full list of the species present. It may be possible to find a local enthusiast who is able to undertake the surveys and also involve local children/schools. Other species surveys such as birds and moths may also be of interest to the public and could be carried out during the summer months.

Hedge restoration — the recommendation of replanting and restoring a number of hedges on the site could be undertaken during Devon Hedge Week (autumn school holiday). A local contractor, college or training group may be willing to carry out the work as a hedge week event involving the local community at a reduced cost rate.

Attachments

1. FWAG - Landmanager - Cullompton Community Association
Biodiversity Action Plan
2. SITA Trust - GreenPrints - Email from Paul Tucker Mid Devon Council.
3. SITA Trust - GreenPrints - Main Navigation - Mentors.
4. SITA Trust - GreenPrints -Is my project eligible?
5. SITA Trust - GreenPrints -Making your mark on the environment - project example.
More in Reserve. Potteric Carr Nature Reserve, Doncaster.
6. SITA Trust - GreenPrints - Making your mark on the environment—project example.
Birds need Friends, Market Bosworth.
7. SITA Trust - Green Prints - Apply for a Flagship project..
8. Woodland Trust - The Ancient Tree Hunt
9. Devon County Council - Devon Hedge Competition 2008 Results
10. Surveying Hedges according to the 1997 Regulations : A Guide.
11. Natural England - Look after your land with Environmental Stewardship.
12. Natural England - Contact details.
13. Natural England - Hedgerow regulations.
14. Natural England - Biodiversity Action Plans.
15. Natural England - Land Management Advisory Service.
16. Natural England - Environment Stewardship
17. Natural England - Grant Schemes.
18. Natural England - Find a grant.
19. The Marsh Fritillary Butterfly
20. Quoditch Moor Nature Reserve - an example of Culm Wet Grassland.