



## CONSERVATION ADVISOR SITE VISIT REPORT - Broom Hill, Coddendam

Advisor's Name: Cathy Smith, Community Wildlife Advisor

Tel. 01473 890089

Date of visit: 18/08/2021

Name of Project leader: Andrew MacPherson, chair - The Coddendam Centre CIO

Email: [andrew.macpherson@thecoddendamcentre.co.uk](mailto:andrew.macpherson@thecoddendamcentre.co.uk)

Attendee: Ian Jeffrey, volunteer

Ownership: Coddendam Parish Council.

Location of site: Accessed by footpaths through St Mary's Churchyard, the High Street and path adjacent to Hemingstone Hall.

Grid Reference: TM136538

Approximate area: 1.31 hectares

1.04 hectares is broadleaved deciduous woodland

0.2699 hectares is steep sloping grassland

## Contents

Enquiry .....	1
Summary of the site .....	2
Species noted .....	3
Woodland.....	4
Glade .....	5
Grassland .....	6
Wildlife Recording.....	7
Ecological Consultancy.....	8
Important Considerations .....	8
Resources .....	9

## Enquiry

We are a local Community Group made up of several organisations, details of which you'll find at [www.coddendam-parish.uk](http://www.coddendam-parish.uk)

We are concerned about the deterioration of Broom Hill bought several years ago with SWT involvement (1987). The annual volunteer clearing day was missed because of COVID and there are concerns about bracken inroads. The scaling back of contracted maintenance has also been an issue.

Parish Council representatives were invited to the site visit and consented for it to go ahead.

## Summary of the site

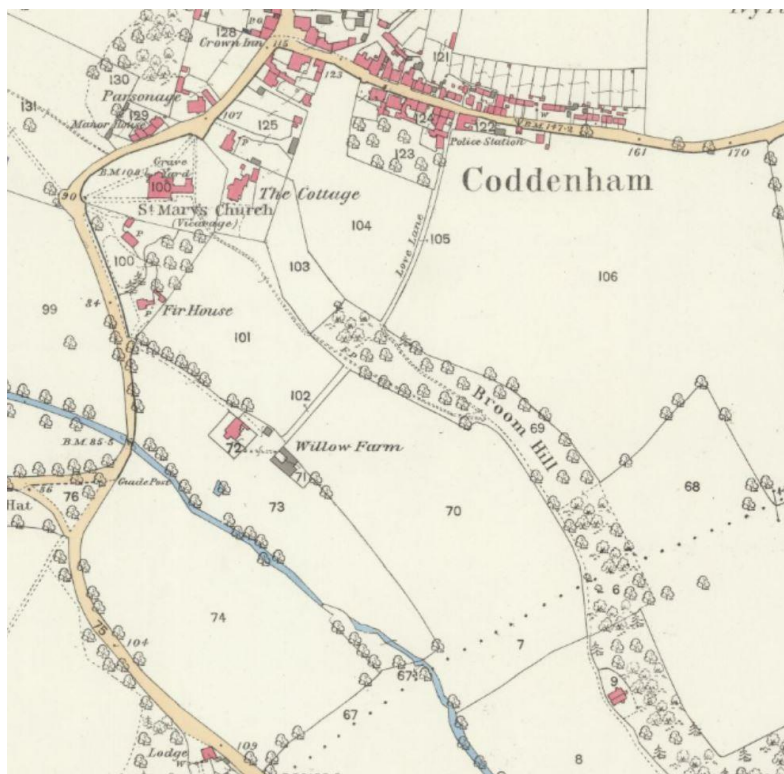
Soilscape 5: Freely draining lime-rich loamy soils. Herb-rich chalk and limestone pastures; lime-rich deciduous woodlands.

The woodland is identified as priority habitat deciduous woodland on MAGIC, maps supplied by DEFRA. Broom hill contributes to the woodland and parkland within the wider landscape.

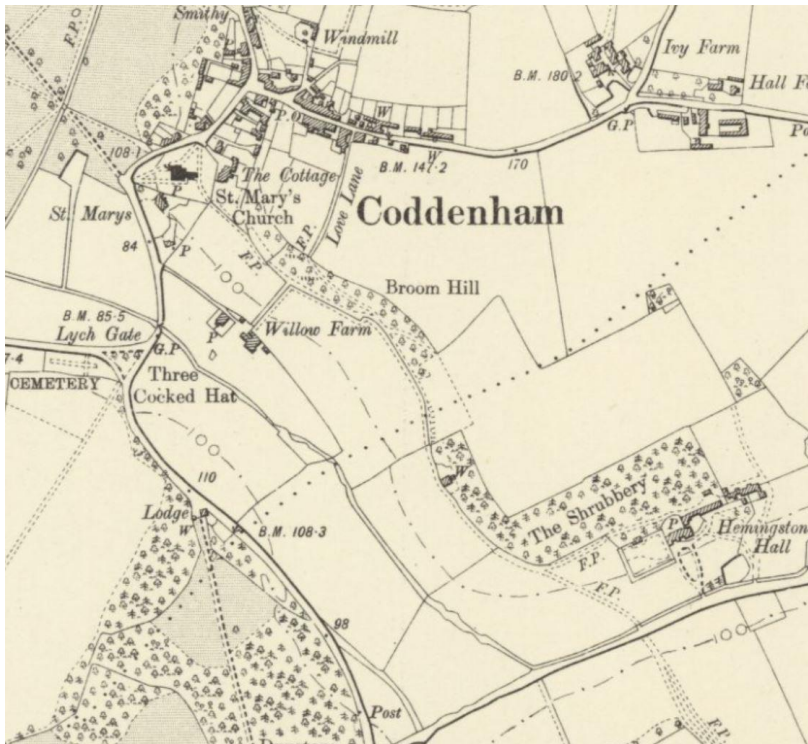
The small area of steep south facing grassland is approximately 60metres from at St Mary's churchyard with the woodland of Broom Hill forming the linking land in-between. Coddenham churchyard as one of the best examples of unimproved species rich grassland in Suffolk is a County Wildlife Site. The flora is influenced by the underlying chalk geology being close to the surface. (Grid reference TM133541).

Broom Hill was purchased in 1988 by the Parish Council, the first pocket park in the Country.

Woodland is indicated on the OS maps dating back to 1884 show the woodland in existence although it shows the tree cover continuing into the currently open grassland. Whether this is due to inaccuracies or reflects a true picture is difficult to ascertain. Subsequent maps from 1904 onwards all show the current vegetative cover at Broom Hill.



*National Library of Scotland OS Map published 1884*



National Library of Scotland OS Map published 1905

## Species noted



Harebell  
Small Scabious  
Nettle leaved campion  
Knapweed  
Yarrow

*Campanula rotundifolia*  
*Scabiosa columbaria*  
*Campanula trachelium*  
*Centaurea nigra*  
*Achillea millefolium*

A large number of pyramidal orchids were also reportedly seen in the grassland this year.



### Tree Species:

Elder, Hawthorn, Ivy, Bramble, Dogwood, Ash, Oak, Hazel, Field maple, Sycamore, Holly, Yew, Beech

Species recorded locally include; hedgehogs, swifts, tawny owl, little owl.

Butterflies are particularly well recorded; small heath, brown argus, holly blue, white Itter hairstreak and purple hairstreak amongst others.

(Source: NBN Atlas)

Note, a full botanical survey was not undertaken.

## Woodland

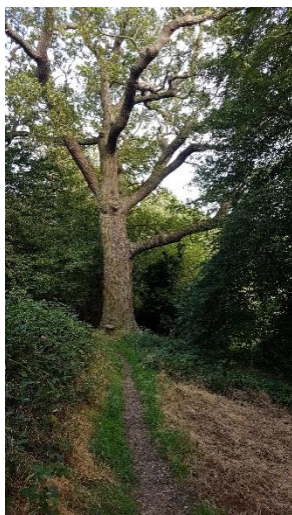


The woodland is mixed deciduous woodland with a good range of species and appears semi-natural in character. The majority of trees are of a similar age but with a more significant oak tree to the eastern corner. There are a few saplings and young trees suggesting a degree of natural regeneration. From a cursory view, the trees look in good health, there is little standing dead wood although some fallen deadwood.

1. Concern has been raised about the increasing extent of bracken, *Pteridium aquilinum* and the impact it might have on other ground flora such as bluebells. The aim should be for dense bracken to cover to be no more than 10% of the ground.

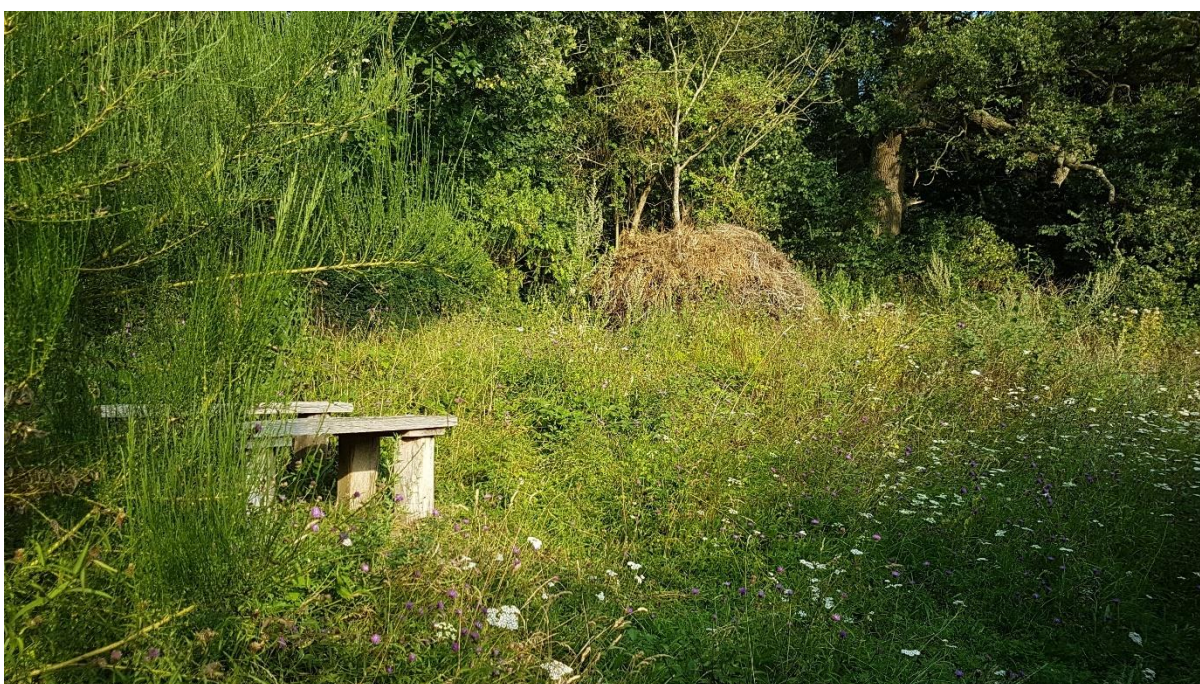
The most feasible option for controlling bracken within this woodland setting is cutting. The first cut is taken in mid-June - late June, when the bracken is 50 to 75 cms high followed by a second cut six weeks later. The litter needs to be raked and either stacked or removed and composted. Whilst a proven method of suppressing bracken, effort will need to be maintained for several years to see results.

2. A variety of wildlife resources are provided by bramble, these include both food (nectar, pollen, flowers, fruit, leaves) and physical structure that provides habitat for birds and hedgehogs. However, if it is unmanaged, bramble can have negative effects on the ground flora. To manage bramble development areas cut on rotational basis every 3-5 years during September – early October. This timing avoids the bird breeding season and is before hedgehogs enter hibernation.
3. Bird boxes could be placed on some of the mature trees. It is good practice to clean out bird boxes between 1st September-31st January (outside the breeding season), so choose boxes which can be easily opened for the purpose. To prevent overheating, face the box away from full sun, ideally in a north-east orientation.
4. The landmark tree is a candidate for the veteran tree register. A community survey could record such trees across the parish and enter them on the Ancient Tree Forum website or via their app. see wildlife recording.



5. Whilst bats can take a little longer to take up residence in boxes they are still worthwhile considering. As with bird boxes, woodcrete or wooden versions are available. The Bat Conservation Trust provides the best guidance on the topic. Unless from dawn or dusk bat detector surveys from the path, inspection of bat boxes can only be carried out by a licensed bat worker.

## Glade



The small glade to the east of the wood is a prelude to the larger meadow beyond. Within this small area, where sunlight floods in, the wildflowers are in evidence, including the nettle leaved campion pictured above.

The focus in this area should be to retain open habitat, limit scrub invasion and continue with annual mowing.

Typically, scrub is managed by coppicing, the cutting of scrub back to near the ground which encourages regeneration from the rootstock and when used in small areas, enhances scrub stand. Coppicing produces large volumes of arisings. Some could be stacked in the wooded area to provide

dead wood habitat and shelter, others chipped prior to removal. Note chipping is preferable to burning.

A habitat pile is a good way of managing arisings. Try to locate this away from the most floristically rich areas to prevent swamping with brash and the addition of nutrients which tend to favour less-desirable plants such as nettles.

## Grassland



Elsewhere in the County there has been loss of semi-improved grassland, so this is an important habitat constituent of Broom Hill. On the day of the visit, the wildflowers looked stunning and no doubt within the meadow there was a great deal of invertebrate activity. A circuit to the brow of the hill gives great views of the wider countryside.

The proximity to St Mary's churchyard a County Wildlife Site and underlying geology adds merit to the suggestion of a full botanical survey, either by volunteers or paid for.

I understand that Ian has been using a wheeled strimmer for annual cutting, this must be some undertaking given the steep slope but is important to help maintain the biodiversity value of the meadow.

1. Traditionally meadows are cut and rake in mid-late July followed by a second cut and rake in September-October where aftermath grazing is not an option. I understand that a single cut in October has been taken, which whilst there can be a risk of plants such as knapweed dominating, at present this seems to be sufficient.
2. It is important that arisings are removed to prevent a thatch forming and to reduce soil nutrient levels which favour more competitive weeds and grasses. If possible, cuttings can be left to dry for a couple of days before removing to allow any ripe seed to be shed and insects to make their escape.
3. Hedgehogs and reptiles can be found in long grass habitats during summer months (reptiles can be active until the end of October and re-emerge in March). To reduce the chance of injury, cut out from the centre of the meadow, or across from one edge, to give things time to move away.
4. See factsheet 'Land management for Hedgehogs' in resources.
5. Regular mowing of the footpath should continue to maintain access to the site for visitors, to highlight that the area is being cared for and will provide additional habitat structure.

## Wildlife Recording

1. Wildlife recording provides a route to engaging with nature but also provides valuable data to assess the effect changes in management. There are many forms it could take but can be more widely beneficial if lodged with Suffolk Biological Records either directly or through i-Record.  
The i-record platform allows for groups to set up their own space for collective records and has a process for verification. We do also receive hedgehog records placed on the People's Trust for Endangered species website.
2. iNaturalist is an app-based Identification platform.
3. Targeted wildlife recording could be employed.
  - The British Trust for Ornithology has a nest box recording scheme, see resources.
  - The People's Trust for Endangered Wildlife has information about footprint traps and trail cameras for recording hedgehogs
  - The pollinator recording scheme could be applied to the wildflower meadow.
  - The Ancient Tree forum runs a scheme for recording ancient and veteran trees

- Reptile surveys could be undertaken. The best times to look for reptiles is early morning or late afternoon in April-May and late August- late September for juveniles. Top tips for searching are given in the Froglife publication.
4. SWT run a number of Wild Learning Courses on habitat management and wildlife recording with expert tutors, see our website for details.

## Ecological Consultancy

Our Ecological Consultancy provides a professional ecological service that specialises in ecology, conservation and biodiversity. All work is carried out to a high professional standard in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) code of practice and BS42020. All profits are passed to Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

The cost for a survey (species list focussing on the grassland) and management notes is £350 + VAT.

## Important Considerations

1. Some of the more mature hedge trees may be providing bat roosts. Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended) and Conservation of species regulations 2017 (amended). The protection makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat or group of bats in their roost or to damage or destroy a place used by bats for breeding or resting (roosts) (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time). Any tree surgery carried out to the mature trees should follow the guidelines from the Bat Conservation Trust.
2. It is illegal to damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built. Activities which can disturb wild birds, particularly during the breeding season include trimming or cutting trees, bushes, hedges and rough vegetation. As a rough guide the bird breeding season is considered as March – end of August.
3. Badgers and their setts (tunnels and chambers where they live) are protected by law. Activities which can harm badgers include (but are not limited to) destroying or damaging their setts, noise, additional lighting, tree felling, construction or repair to water courses. See Government website.
4. There is a possibility that bracken spores are carcinogenic. The H&S Executive recommends that a suitable face mask should be worn while cutting or working in spore-producing bracken (ie during late July, August and September).

It was a pleasure meet yourself and Ian, this is an interesting site with careful management has great potential for wildlife.

We would love to hear how you get on, do share any results of your project.

Yours sincerely

Cathy Smith  
Community Wildlife Advisor



## Resources

NBN Atlas

<https://records.nbnatlas.org/>

Habitat data, MAGIC

[Magic Map Application \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)

National Library of Scotland

[National Library of Scotland - Map Images \(nls.uk\)](#)

National News article regarding the designation as a Pocket Park

[Broom-Hill-The-Times-1988.pdf \(coddendampc.org.uk\)](#)

Bat Conservation Trust: [Roosts in trees - Bat roosts - Bat Conservation Trust \(bats.org.uk\)](#)

Hedgehog ecology and land management: <https://ptes.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/HEMP.pdf>

Wildlife recording

[Suffolk Biological Recording Online | Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service \(suffolkbis.org.uk\)](#)

[iRecord | Manage and share your wildlife records \(brc.ac.uk\)](#)

This is a useful video: [Setting up an iRecord activities for local groups - YouTube](#)

iNaturalist

[A Community for Naturalists · iNaturalist United Kingdom](#)

Ancient Tree Inventory

[Ancient Tree Inventory - Woodland Trust](#)

People's Trust for Endangered Species, hedgehog surveying

[Guidance-for-detecting-hedgehogs-using-tracking-tunnels.pdf \(ptes.org\)](#)

Nest box recording scheme

[Nest Record Scheme | BTO - British Trust for Ornithology](#)

UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme

[Welcome to the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme \(PoMS\) | PoMS \(ukpoms.org.uk\)](#)

SWT Wild Learning Courses

[Events | Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#)

Suffolk Wildlife Trust Ecological Consultancy

[Ecological consultancy | Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#)

### **Accompanying factsheets:**

Woodland management, Scrub and its management, Managing meadows for wildflowers, Reptiles piles and mowing techniques.