

# AN ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF SELECTED SITES AT MARSHWOOD

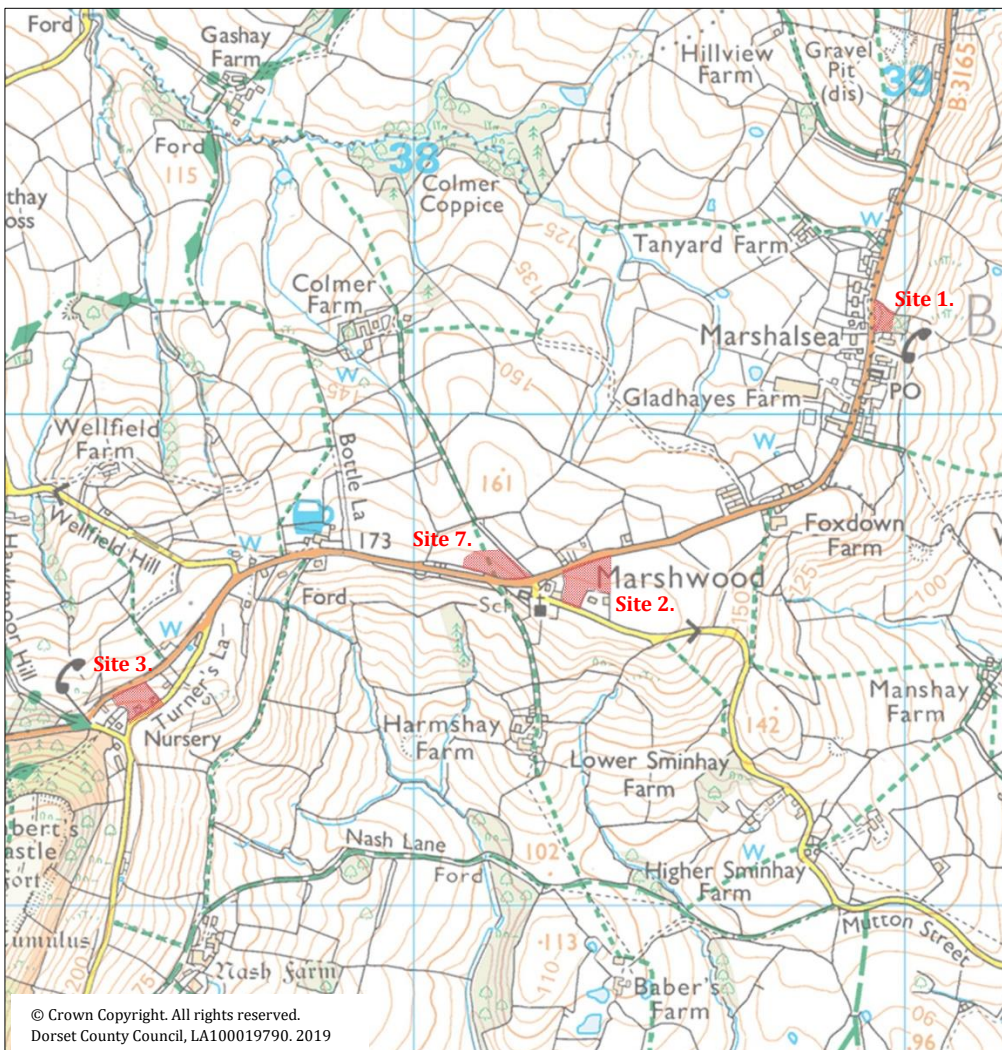
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25<sup>th</sup> February 2019

## BACKGROUND

An ecological survey was undertaken of four areas that have been put forward for development within the Marshwood Neighbourhood Plan. The sites were surveyed on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019. In addition a search was made for Protected Species and Biodiversity Priority (BAP) Species from the DERC database.

The following conclusions relate specifically to the brief supplied at the time of writing, if the proposals should change a re-appraisal or appraisal amendment may be required.

**Map 1.** Location of sites surveyed



## **SUMMARY**

- The grasslands at all are improved or semi-improved and of little ecological interest with no Red Listed, Nationally Scarce or Dorset Notable Plant species present.
- The length of older hedgerow on significant hedgebanks within Site 3 and 7 are the most important ecological features and may qualify as Important Hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations Act (1997).
- No Protected or Red Listed species were recorded from the four sites surveyed, although time of the year was not ideal for some species.
- There are no records of protected species on the DERC database directly on any of the four sites surveyed, but there are records of Bats, Dormouse close to several of the sites.

### Site 1; 'Dungeon', ST3895 0019, 0.20 ha

This site is situated on the east side of the B3165 within the village. Part of the site is used for parking vehicles, but most is coarse grassland with scrub along the northern edge, a garden hedge along the boundary and a wooden fence along the road. The eastern edge is not delimited but slopes very steeply and has tall herb vegetation.

The grassland is species-poor and dominated by Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* with smaller quantities of Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* and False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, along with the mosses *Brachythecium rutabulum* and *Calliergonella cuspidata*. On damper compacted ground Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* and Hard Rush *J. inflexus* are both present. Herbs include frequent Bristly Ox-tongue *Picris echioides* and Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata* but few other species attain any significant abundance. Occasional plants of White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*, Lesser Trefoil *Trifolium dubium*, Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*. Along the northern and southern boundaries are bands of tall ruderal vegetation with abundant Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Cleavers *Galium aparine*, plus in damper areas Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum* and Greater Horsetail *Equisetum telmateia*.

In the north there is a band of dense Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. scrub with abundant Stinging Nettle and Cleavers. There is one small Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* tree and several Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* saplings

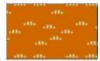
MAP 2. Habitat map, Site 1, 'Dungeon'.



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Bramble scrub



Species-poor grassland



Tall ruderal vegetation



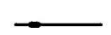
Bare & sparsely vegetated ground



Trees & shrubs - broadleaved



Hedgerows



Fencelines

**Site 2; SY3834 9967, 0.65 ha**

Situated between Mutton Street and B3165 this is an improved agriculture field that had recently been grazed by Sheep. The grassland is dominated by Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, with scattered Meadow Foxtail *Alopecurus pratense*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, with smaller quantities of Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* at the margins. There are very few herbs apart from Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and White Clover *Trifolium repens*.

The road hedge is dominated by Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* with small quantities Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. The ground layer is dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. The field and road margins have frequent Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Cleavers *Galium aparine* and Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*. Other species present in small quantity include Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*, Male Fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum*, Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*, Red Champion *Silene dioica* and Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum*. On the small retaining wall at the western end facing the road the local Navelwort *Umbilicus rupestris* is present.

The shorter hedge bordering Mutton Street is tightly flailed and there are few woody shrubs of any size with just scattered Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and rare Elder, Hazel and Field Rose *Rosa arvensis*. Bramble and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* are abundant with Ivy locally abundant on the lower banks. The ground layer has abundant Yorkshire Fog, plus frequent Cleavers and Stinging Nettle, plus scattered plants of Male Fern, Broad Buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, Red Champion, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Dog's Mercury, Hedge Bedstraw *Galium mollugo* and Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*.

MAP 3. Habitat map, Site 2 and Site 7



### Site 3; 'Three Counties Nursery' site, SY3744 9941, 0.45 ha

This site was formerly a plant nursery and occupies sloping ground between Turner's Lane and the B3165. Around a quarter of the site, nearest Turner's Lane, is occupied by old greenhouses and the associated hard standing. The remaining area has planted exotic trees and shrubs and part has been levelled and was presumably at one point cultivated. Just over half the site is rough grassland dominated by Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* with abundant Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and the moss *Brachythecium rutabulum*. Few other species are present except for rare Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum* and Common Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*. Where drainage is impeded Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* is abundant along with the moss *Calliergonella cuspidata*.

Parts of the site are now reverting to scrub with dense stands of young Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and some Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*, with an understorey of Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and Ivy *Hedera helix*. There is a very poor ground flora largely comprising patches of the mosses *Brachythecium rutabulum* and *Kindbergia praelonga*. There is also a stand of mature conifers through the middle of the site which cover a significant area of ground.

The short stretch of hedge and hedgebank adjoining Turner's Lane has frequent Hazel *Corylus avellana*, with smaller quantities of Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and Rose *Rosa* sp. The steep hedgebank is typical of west Dorset and supports a varied flora including Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*, Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum*, Western Polypody *Polypodium interjectum*, Red Campion *Silene dioica*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Yellow Archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*, Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* and Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum*. Of particular interest is Wall Pennywort *Umbilicus rupestris* which is a local plant in Dorset and most frequent on vertical hedgebanks in the west of the county.

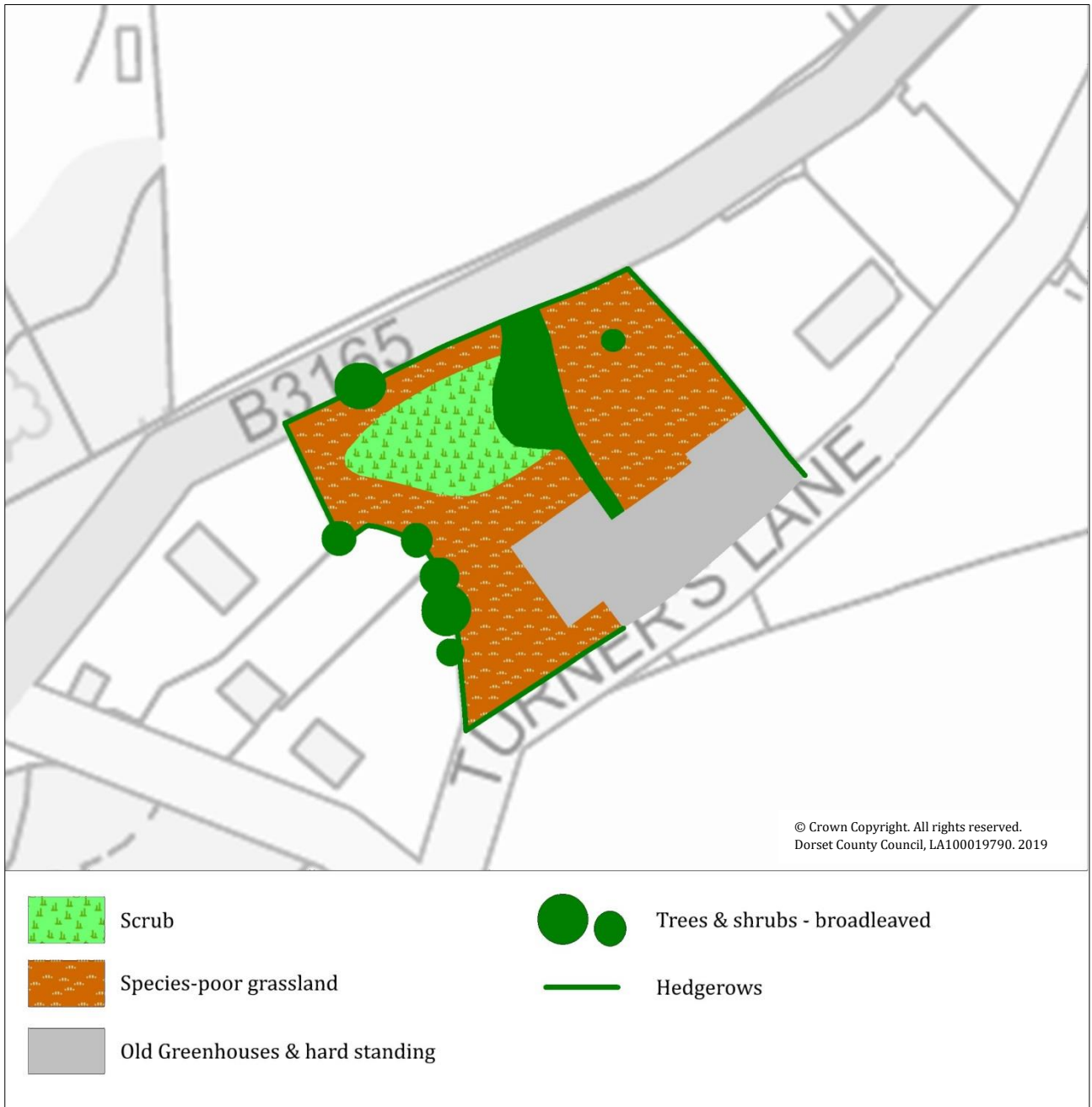
The hedge adjoining the B3165 has Hazel, Hawthorn, Holly and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, plus plant Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and Poplar *Populus* sp. The ground layer is dominated by Bramble and Ivy *Hedera helix* with Western Polypody, Broad Buckler Fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, Red Campion, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and small quantities of Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*.

The western boundary is an overgrown hedge with some mature trees on a bank. Trees and shrubs include Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, Yew *Taxus baccata*, Hazel and Holly, plus planted Beech and Garden Privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium*. The ground layer is dominated by Ivy with Soft Shield-fern, Hart's-tongue Fern, Bramble, Herb Robert and Red Campion.

The DERC database shows a record from Dormouse from 65 metres to the northeast and the mature hedgerows on the site certainly provide suitable habitat for this species.



**MAP 4.** Habitat Map, Site 3, 'Three Counties Nursery' site





### **Site 7; opposite School, SY3818 9968, 0.50 ha**

This comprises the south-eastern corner of a field which adjoins the B3165 opposite the school. There is a hedgerow along the southern boundary and fence along the eastern boundary where there is also a track with planted trees either side which goes to Colmer Farm (Stud).

The field is improved agricultural grassland which is used for grazing horses. The short sward comprises Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, with Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, plus scattered Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* towards the margins. Herbs are largely restricted to Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and White Clover *Trifolium repens*, with a few scattered plants of Curled Dock *Rumex crispus* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*.

Along the B3165 is a hedgerow. The part directly opposite the school looks to be more recent with no bank and comprises Goat Willow *Salix caprea*, Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, Poplar *Populus* sp. and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*. The ground layer is dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix* with abundant Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, plus more scattered Male Fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. Further west, and where the hedge then splits, it appears to be older and is on a significant bank with Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Blackthorn, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and Grey Willow *Salix cinerea*. As well as those species mentioned above the ground flora and banks support Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*, Broad buckler-fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Primrose *Primula vulgaris*, Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea* and Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*.

## **PROTECTED SPECIES**

No signs of protected species were seen during the survey, however this does mean that they are not present as the time of the survey in late winter was not ideal for nesting birds, reptiles etc. A search for protected species was made on the Dorset Important Species layer on the Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) GIS system.

A summary of the suitability of the sites for protected species is given below.

**Bats:** None of the sites support roosting habitat for bats. There are bat records from around the village including Lesser Horseshoe and Long-eared. There is also foraging habitat along hedgerows in Site 7 and the mature trees and overgrown hedgerows in Site 3.

**Birds:** The survey was too early in the season for nesting birds. Suitable habitat does exist in some of the older hedgerows, mature trees and scrub.

**Badger:** No Badger setts or latrines were found within the sites and very few signs with just minor 'mammal' tracks noted through hedgerows in Sites 2 and 7. There are records of Badgers dead by the road on the DERC database, but the nearest recorded sett is nearly 1-km to the southwest at the southern end of Lambert's Castle.

**Hedgehog:** There are no records on the DERC Important species layer of Hedgehogs from the immediate vicinity of the sites. There is however suitable habitat present in Site 1 and Site 3.

**Dormouse:** There is a 2014 record 65 metres northeast of Site 3, and a 2013 record 150 metres west of Site 7. Suitable habitat exists in the older and more overgrown parts of the hedgerows at Site 3 and Site 7.

**Reptiles:** The survey was too early for reptiles and there are no records on the DERC database but suitable habitat for Common Lizard and Slow Worn at Sites 1 and 3 in particular.

### **Otter, Water Voles and Great Crested Newt**

These are wetland species with no suitable habitat on any of the sites or generally within the village area which is on a dry ridge.