



Adcombe Wood & Woodram Copse

Management Plan

2018-2023

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.

Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland.

Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
10. Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Adcombe Wood & Woodram Copse
Location:	Blagdon
Grid reference:	ST222178, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 193
Area:	35.64 hectares (88.07 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Environmentally Sensitive Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Adcombe Wood is a beautiful and mystical ancient woodland overlooking Taunton Vale in the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and designated as part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The ancient wood is steeply sloping with a number of veteran small-leaf lime, oak and wild service trees. It has great displays of ancient woodland plants including bluebell, wood anemone and lesser celandine.

Adcombe Wood and Woodram Copse is principally ancient woodland and high forest with areas of once coppiced woodland, wide rides, and scrub. There are limestone grassland clearings with stunning views across the Blackdown Hills, and displays of wildflowers, orchids, and butterflies.

Note that some of the extensive network of paths and rides are very steep and may be wet and uneven underfoot.

2.2 Extended Description

Adcombe Wood and Woodram Copse is a steeply sloping, westerly facing woodland in the Blackdown Hills AONB. The wood is part of the scarp woodlands overlooking the Taunton Vale which form a distinctive landscape feature. The wood lies within the Blackdown Hills National Character Area (No. 147). There are excellent examples of several of the semi-natural broadleaved woodland types associated with the Blackdowns for which the wood has been designated as part of the larger Prior's Park and Adcombe Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is principally high forest with small areas of coppice and scrub woodland. A number of veteran trees survive in the wood including Small-leaf Lime, Oak and Wild Service.

The whole site is designated as Ancient Woodland. Part of the wood is ASNW, part was over planted with oak C1900 and part is abandoned common land dominated by dense stands of hawthorn with occasional mature open grown oak and ash. Additional interest lies in the unimproved grassland field at the southern end of the site (Compt 1b and not part of the SSSI) which was cleared of planted conifers in 1997-9, also rides and glades which have noteworthy plant and historically important butterfly populations. A range of bats have been recorded in the local area, including Bechstein's Bat *Myotis bechsteinii*, although it is unknown, which species in the wood and how the bats are using it. Historically the wood was an important area for butterflies as was the whole of the Blackdowns, with the nationally rare Duke of Burgundy and Wood White recorded (last in 1996) but not seen during the last plan period.

The area is greensand over White Lias limestone, which when it occurs on the surface creates patches with the potential for interesting flora. The soils are generally free draining, however there are many springs arising in the wood which have caused localised land slips. These conditions are typical of the Jurassic/Triassic ridges in Somerset.

There is an extensive ride network through the wood. A RUPP runs along the eastern boundary and a footpath, crosses near the northern end. The wood is at least half a mile from the surrounding villages of Pitminster, Blagdon Hill, Felton and Corfe; however footpath links to make the wood accessible and popular for active walkers. The boundaries of the woodland are quite indistinct in places where it adjoins other woodland, but small historic earth banks demarcate the WT ownership.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Adcombe Wood is set in a rural location between the villages of Blagdon Hill and Corfe, to the south of Taunton. There is an entrance at the south east corner of the wood with space to park 2 or 3 cars off Old Combe Hill, a narrow country lane without pavements running between Corfe and Feltham. A bridleway runs from this entrance along the eastern boundary which slopes to the north. Foot access can also be gained from public footpaths on the western boundary and a public footpath runs east to west through the wood whilst numerous permissive paths offer further routes through the wood. All of the paths are unsurfaced and can be uneven with large stones, sudden variations in level and tree roots. In general the wood lies on a steep west facing slope, and most path routes include walking up or down slopes - the east-west public footpath is particularly steep and can get very slippery in winter.

Nearest toilet- various in Taunton including Paul Street and Taunton Bus station - which have facilities for disabled people (RADAR key required), and baby changing facilities approximately 4.5 miles away. Information is taken from Taunton Deane council website December 2018.
www.tauntondeane.gov.uk

Nearest bus stop: Bus services in the area are limited but the nearest stop is at the Lamb & Flag Inn, Blagdon Hill - from where you walk approximately 1/2 mile along a dead-end country lane (Curdleigh Lane) and then follow a public footpath to the right across a level pasture field (stock often present) into the north east entrance at the bottom of the wood. Information taken from Traveline website December 2018 www.travelinesw.com or phone 0870 608 2 608

Nearest railway station: Taunton - approximately 4.5 miles away

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

To fulfil the Trust aim of protecting ancient woodland the intention is to maintain the wood as mixed high forest with a diversity of age and structure, with a healthy understory and ground flora together with plentiful deadwood habitat. Ride edges will have a varied structure to them through coppicing on rotation. The open grassland areas will be maintained as important habitat - the paddocks (compt 1b) through grazing.

In order to maintain the level of public access and enjoyment rides will be managed to keep them open; this will also benefit the ride edge habitat.

5.0 KEY FEATURES

The Key Features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the Key Feature.

5.1 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

Adcombe Wood is part of a complex of ASNW, PAWS and planted secondary woodland. Approximately quarter of the wood is thought to be ASNW, the remainder of the site has been planted or regenerated naturally, despite the Ancient woodland inventory states that the majority is. The wood is dominated by ash, pedunculate oak and an understory of hazel and thorn. There are scattered small leaved lime, hornbeam and wild service throughout and typical calcicolous shrubs such as spindle, wayfaring tree and dogwood. The ground flora contains abundant bluebell, dog's mercury and stinking iris as well as Somerset notable species tutsan and herb paris. Rides, glades, ponds, springs and wet boggy areas add diversity. Ride side coppicing has taken place over the last 10 years further adding structure and diversity to the wood. There is an open glade towards the north end of the wood which can be seen from a distance and is locally known as the 'bald spot'. Aerial photographs suggest that the size and location of this area has shifted through time. It has a calcareous flora which historically included the rare early gentian *Gentianella anglica* although this hasn't been recorded since 1992

Significance

Adcombe Wood and Prior's Park SSSI is designated because the woods include excellent examples of several of the broadleaved semi-natural woodland types associated with the Blackdown Hills. Adcombe is Unit 1 'The Northern Spar of Woodland' and is viewed as in favourable condition. This is compartment 1a in this plan. Adcombe links these areas of ASNW, PAWS and other semi natural habitats thereby contributing to WT aim of protecting ancient woodland. The alder dominated boggy areas of the site have caused its inclusion in the UKBAP Priority Habitat under Wet Woodland.

Opportunities & Constraints

The steepness of the wood makes access difficult and working it problematic, this is particularly true of the 'bald spot' area

Factors Causing Change

Deer Damage, ash dieback, other tree diseases and windblow. Natural succession will affect the bald spot so losing some of the diversity of the woodland if not managed. Holly could spread further through the wood limiting natural regeneration and shading out the rich ancient woodland ground flora.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The wood is maintained as predominately mixed native broadleaved woodland with varied native species and age structure. A diverse mix of woodland ground flora will be present throughout the wood. Some areas will be managed to allow notable trees to become veterans. Abundant dead and dying wood provide habitat for fungi and invertebrates. The bald spot will remain a part of the woodland but size and exact location may fluctuate over time.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

The woodland will be managed mainly through limited intervention except that:

1. Deer management will be carried out throughout the wood.
2. Some veterans and future veteran trees will be halo thinned to allow further development
3. The central ride through the wood will be managed for a diverse structure through ride edge coppicing (Zone 3 management). This will be done in 50m blocks either side of the ride on a 10 year rotation.
4. Holly will be controlled
5. Scrub regeneration will be managed on the bald spot and the edges expanded.

5.2 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

Description

A rough grassland field extending to 2.9ha. Although neglected for many years and planted with conifers, which have now been removed, the field contains a rich diversity of herbs and grasses, including orchids and cowslips. Wet flushes in the field support communities associated with unimproved marshy grassland. The field is a good butterfly habitat with the nationally rare Duke of Burgundy and Wood White recently present (1996) but not seen during the last plan period. The large meadow has been summer grazed and this has helped to keep the ground flora becoming dominated by rushes. Scrub is not grazed and has been cut on a rotational basis to prevent it dominating.

Significance

The Woodland Trust site supports a good representation of these, including many rarities, which add to the overall biodiversity of the area. This goes to fulfil the Trusts aims of benefiting all biodiversity.

Opportunities & Constraints

Factors Causing Change

A lack of, or too much grazing will change the composition of the grassland and potentially lead to succession to woodland.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

To maintain the field as species rich unimproved grassland.
Scattered trees and small clumps of scrub will be maintained for diversity, but covering only a small portion (to a maximum of 20% of the entire meadow at any given time).

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

The meadow will continue to be grazed over summer months to achieve a balance of desirable species, not dominated by coarse rushes.
The edges will be cut on a five year rotation to ensure a transitional woodland edge habitat. This is known to be suitable for the rare butterflies amongst many other species.
Scrub will be managed to not be more than 20% cover with no individual blocks greater than 20m x 20m.

5.3 Informal Public Access

Description

There are paths and rides throughout the wood which link into a wider footpath network. Due to springs and surface water a number of grips and stretches of boardwalk have been installed. The public footpath crossing the northern end of the wood is extremely steep. A RUPP runs along the eastern boundary. A long flight of steps is being installed to create a circular route around the wood connecting up the bottom paths with the RUPP towards the northern end of the wood. Several benches have been installed at viewpoints on the RUPP through the Woodland Dedication scheme. There is a small pull-in at the road entrance allowing parking for 2-3 cars. A designated Parish Council Circular walk adjoins the western boundary.

The paths are steep in places and at times slippery; they are un-surfaced and as a consequence uneven in places.

Significance

The Woodland Trust believes everyone should have accessible woodland within walking distance from their homes and the ownership and management of Adcombe Wood goes to help further this aim.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

Much of the site is steep and slippery especially at wet boggy areas.

Fly-tipping at the entrance of Old Combe Hill is an occasional nuisance.

Factors Causing Change

Surface water from springs causing erosion of paths, Some horse riding on the paths can affect the quality of surface.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The site will be well used and highly valued by many local people who enjoy a more challenging walk up the slopes of this wood to be rewarded by the fine views from the top

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

The wood will be welcoming for quiet informal recreation. To achieve this path and rides cut twice a year, with maintenance as necessary on the boardwalk and grip. Annual checks will be made to ensure this keeps the paths in suitable condition to meet objective.

Entrances will be maintained when paths cut with additional litter clearance as necessary to ensure that the gate does not become a fly-tip hotspot.

Tree safety surveys will be undertaken following Trust policy.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	32.80	Oak (pedunculate)	1860	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Environmentally Sensitive Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest
<p>Mixed high forest woodland, generally NVC W8 ash high forest with hazel understorey and occasional veteran small-leaved lime, hornbeam, and wild service tree. Part is ASNW, part was planted with oak in 19C and part is abandoned common land dominated by dense stands of hawthorn with occasional mature open grown oak and ash. A section was heavily thinned around 1990, the site now consisting of scattered standards of oak and ash with hazel understorey and young ash regeneration. An area near Curdleigh Farm was underplanted with mixed species which has generally failed but a few wild cherry survive.</p> <p>The ground flora is richest in the older parts of the wood, with bluebell, arum, dog's mercury, wood anemone, woodruff, moschatel, yellow archangel and Herb Paris. The more recently established woodland is dominated by ivy. Localised boggy areas and springs throughout cause the site to be listed as Wet Woodland under the UKBAP. There is a small glade in the wood which is notable for its calcareous grassland interest, this has the local name of the 'Green Patch'.</p> <p>The woodland is listed as a SSSI for the overall ancient woodland habitat.</p>							
1b	2.90	Other		Wood pasture	Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site, Services & wayleaves	Informal Public Access	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Environmentally Sensitive Area
<p>Unimproved calcareous rough grassland from which Norway spruce P1980 were removed under a WIG in 1997-9. Some small groups of native trees and scrub remain which are developing into individual parkland trees. Some felling under the powerlines in the winter of 2012-13 has pollarded some trees.</p> <p>Early Gentian was once recorded at this site, but has not been found for many years. Wood White and Duke of Burgundy Fritillaries have been recorded, although the poor summers of 2007 - 8 may have decimated these colonies as none have been recorded since then.</p> <p>Gentle north facing slopes dominated by grass but with rush and blackthorn regeneration abundant. Many interest wildflowers are to be found including orchids, moschatel, oxeye daisy and cowslips.</p>							

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland on all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established. Either by hand cutting or with carefully selected weed killers such as glyphosate.

Windblow/Windthrow

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.