



Higher & Lower Holmes House

Management Plan

2019-2024

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Higher & Lower Holmes House
Location:	Keighley
Grid reference:	SE038406, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 104
Area:	9.91 hectares (24.49 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Ancient Woodland Site, Site of Special Interest, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

The woodlands are situated on the bottom of an attractive, steep-sided valley. A large stream forms the northern boundary to both Higher and Lower Holme House Woods. Just to the north of the wood is a Wood Mill dating back to the early 19th century.

2.2 Extended Description

Holme House Woods are regionally important examples of valley or clough woodland and are recorded as Ancient Woodland on the Nature Conservancy Council's (now English Nature) inventory for West Yorkshire. The Woods are divided in to three parts; Higher Holme House Woods, which is owned by the Woodland Trust and Lower Holme House Woods which is divided in to two by North Beck. Woodland to the south of the beck is owned by the Woodland Trust and to the north is privately owned. This management plan deals only with the Woodland Trust site.

The majority of the site was acquired by The Woodland Trust on the 28th March 1991 from the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement. Contributions were received for its purchase by Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Barclays Bank.

A further 4 acres was acquired in 2016 which included the land between Lower Holme House & Higher Holme House and a further extension to Higher Holme House. This land was gained via a successful local fundraising campaign which included significant donations by local people. This

extension to the site now means the site is one complete land unit.

The woodlands are situated on north facing slopes in the bottom of a steep sided valley, to the south of the village of Laycock, and east of the small hamlet of Goose Eye. This attractive valley extends from Keighley to Newsholme Dean and is characterised by woodland / tree cover along its lower slopes and a patchwork of small grass field on the higher land. The large stream called North Beck forms the northern boundary to both Higher and Lower Holme House Woods. The woods are clearly visible from the Laycock and the surrounding area, including long distance views from adjacent hillsides to the east of Keighley. Just to the north of the Higher Holme House Wood is Wood Mill which was once a Worsted Spinning Mill dating back to the early 19th century.

The underlying geology is millstone grit overlain by boulder clay and alluvial drift in the valley bottom. The varied composition of these deposits has given rise to a diverse range of communities with acid and base rich communities present.

Higher Holme House Woods is accessible from the public footpath by a narrow footbridge. No circular footpath exists in the wood and visitor numbers are low. An informal path runs from the bridge, alongside the river, across private land to join the footpaths at the western end of Lower Holme House Woods. From there an infrequently used circular path runs around the wood. Sleeper bridges and some steps are present within the wood. The ground is very wet underfoot and suitable footwear is needed throughout the year.

Little history of the site is currently available although the steep slopes and wet ground conditions would make this area unsuitable for agricultural use except rough grazing. Lower Holme House Wood was designated as a Site of Special Interest for its rich ground flora. The woodland boundaries appear to have been unchanged in the last 150 years with the 1844 William Hopkinsons 'Tithes' map indicating the wooded area to be as today (2000). The 1852 and 1908 ordnance survey maps confirmed that the wood has suffered no recent changes with the exception that both Upper and Lower Holme House Woods were mixed broadleaves and conifers. No conifers are present on the site today. A high percentage of trees appear to be approximately 60-80 years of age. One possible scenario is that the wood was felled in the 1920's with the exception of some boundary trees and the odd beech. Natural regeneration, or possibly planting, of sycamore may account for the high percentage of sycamore now within the woodland. Higher Holme House Wood and the field side of Lower Holme House Wood have little ground flora. This could be as a result of cattle grazing within the woodland, a fact that has been reported in recent years with cattle getting through broken down sections of the wall.

Species list available for Holme House Woods from the surveys undertaken up to the 30th April 1997. Birds seen include sparrow hawk, great spotted woodpecker and dipper.

The main canopy of the woodland comprises of sycamore, beech, ash with lesser amounts of oak and birch. The shrub layer is sparse but includes holly, hawthorn and hazel. The herb layer supports *Holcus mollis*, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Rubus fruticosus* and *Oxalis acetosella* (Typical of NVC types W10e) In a survey undertaken in 1993 by English Nature the woods were found to have 89 vascular woodland plants, although this survey may have included the northern bank of the woodland which is outside WT ownership. The site has been designated as a Site of Scientific Interest.

Limited records are available of recent management but it would appear that the woods were mixed plantations with the conifers removed in the last 80 years. Since the Trust acquired the woods it has undertaken tree safety work and control of natural beech regeneration.

Boundaries

North Beck forms the northern boundary. Drystone walls run along the other boundaries with the exception of western boundary of Higher Holme House Wood which has no obvious boundary apart from a Woodland Trust sign, as similar woodland continues to the west and a mill dam for approximately 150m.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

ACCESS TO THE SITE

Holme House Wood is situated approximately 1 mile to the west of Keighley. The wood is in the bottom of a valley and is not directly alongside any highway. However, public footpaths lead to Holme House Wood from the village of Laycock to the north, and from Fell Lane, Keighley to the south.

From the centre of Laycock village a public footpath follows a small lane down the hillside before it meets a footpath which heads eastwards, through a field to join Holme House Wood. The footpath continues to descend and where it meets North Beck a footbridge allows access to Higher Holme House Woods.

From Fell Lane a footpath heads north through fields to meet North Beck. Just before North Beck a footpath crosses two fields to join the wood at its southeast corner.

ENTRANCE AND FOOTPATHS

Footpath access is via a tight stone squeeze for Higher Holme House Woods when approaching from Laycock or a wooden stile when approaching from the west along the public footpath from Keighley. A tight squeeze stile is at the eastern end of Lower Holme House Wood when approaching from Fell Lane. A circular footpath runs around Lower Holme House Woods, a distance of approximately 900m. In Higher Holme House Woods, a riverside footpath exists within the wood which then crosses open meadows that links up with Lower Holme House Wood. The footpath is rough and steep in places with steps and narrow sleeper bridges. The paths are also very difficult when wet due to the clay soils and steep slopes. Several sections can be very wet and wellingtons are often required.

PARKING

Roadside parking in Laycock and on Fell Lane.

PUBLIC TOILETS

None known within 5 miles of the site.

BUS STOPS

Nearest buss stops. Laycock and Fell Lane have a regular bus service from Keighley.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Further information about public transport contact Traveline on www.traveline.org.uk or phone 0870 608 2 608

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

The long term intention is to maintain the mature ancient woodlands as broadleaved high forest with the minimum of silvicultural intervention.

The open ground areas between two mature woods will be managed as open woodland and will contain a scattering of widely spaced trees, established through a mixture of planting and natural regeneration.

Public access which will be maintained in perpetuity at the site.

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 Informal Public Access

Description

Access to Lower Holme House Wood has been greatly improved with the WT's acquisition of land linking up both Higher and Lower Holme House Wood. This means that the footbridge at Higher Holme House Wood can be used to access Lower Holme House Wood without leaving WT property. A circular path has been created around the wood, which is being used on a regular basis by local visitors. Higher Holme House Woods has a narrow footbridge linking it to the public footpath on the northern bank.

Significance

Holme House Woods offer an attractive walking area for local residents with the village of Laycock and the town of Keighley only a short distance away..

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities exist to create better public access to the woodland and improve the condition of the footpaths within the woodland, especially over boggy ground.

1) Public access could be improved with an additional footbridge to the eastern side of Lower Holme House Wood meaning access to the site can be gained from both ends of the public footpath

2) Footpaths within the woods can be exceptionally wet and muddy at most time of the year. Improvement works to the worst sections could be undertaken. Another steep section on the circular footpath by the river of lower Holme House Wood could benefit from steps being installed. This work would also help to reduce footpath erosion of the ground flora as people would no longer look for the easiest route down/up the slope.

Factors Causing Change

Increased public useage of the site.

Dogs off leads, chasing wildlife and accessing neighbouring land via WT property, disturbing life stock and trespassing.

Stream flowing into the paddock during high rain fall, creating waterlogged conditions across the PROW.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Footpaths within the wood to be suitable for all year round access without being excessively boggy. Installation of a footbridge to the eastern end of Lower Holme House would encourage more people to visit the woodland off the public footpath, without having to take much of a detour.

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

Maintain the current levels of access provision with signs at the main entrances and paths, cutting of approx. 2.5km of paths at least once annually and boardwalks.

Maintaining and checking on the condition of the boundary dry stone wall along the newly acquired maintenance access track will prevent stray dogs and keep neighbours happy. Stock fencing can be used to patch up holes in walling and signs erected to encourage visitors to keep dogs under control.

Drainage work to divert any water that breaching the banks of the stream directly into the river.

5.2 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

Ancient semi natural woodland site. The underlying geology is Millstone grit overlain with boulder clay and alluvial drift in the valley bottom. The varied composition of these drift deposits has given rise to a diverse range of plant communities. NVC types W10a, W10e, W7 and W8f. The open areas buffering the mature woodlands are known to be species rich and semi-unimproved. They are therefore important as semi-natural non woodland habitats in their own right.

Significance

Holme House Woods are regionally important examples of valley or clough woodland which have a diverse ground flora. Higher and Lower Holme House Woods are recorded as Ancient Woodland on the Nature Conservancy Council's (now English Nature) Inventory for West Yorkshire. The site has also been listed as a Site of Scientific Interest (SSI) by the Ecological Advisory Service and the protection is administered by the Local Authority.

Opportunities & Constraints

Management of the natural regeneration could be undertaken to favour native species, however both beech and sycamore are already major components of the woodland canopy, and both occur throughout the woodlands in some percentage, as well as being a very common component of local woodlands outside Woodland Trust ownership. As such it would follow the WT policy to accept these non-native species within the woodland.

Factors Causing Change

Local deer populations are currently low but could increase. Local cattle grazing has occasionally intruded into the woodlands.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Natural processes will on the whole be allowed to shape the mature ancient woodlands. An element of tree cover will be allowed to gradually develop within the open space areas adjacent to the wood, but tree cover will on the whole be kept to a low level of no more a third of the land area. Grazing may be used to maintain this level going forward into the future.

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

The mature ancient woodlands will be managed with the minimum of intervention during this plan period. Concerns over tree safety along some of the boundary in Lower Holme House have been raised and as a result annual tree safety work in these areas will take place over the next few years. Woodland boundaries shall need to be regularly inspected for signs of cattle entering the woodland. Improvements were made in 2018 & early 2019 however this seems to be a recurring problem despite best efforts. Tree cover will be allowed to gradually take place on the open areas via natural means.

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	3.27	Beech	1900	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Special Interest, Tree Preservation Order
<p>Part of Lower Holme House Wood. Broadleaved high forest, 45 % beech, 35% sycamore, 10% ash, 5% oak, 5% rowan/birch. Tree ages vary but several specimens appear to be 100 years + these include mature beech, ash and the occasional oak. The sycamores appear to be slightly younger, approximately 60-80 years. Along the stream edge is the occasional alder. There is a scattered understorey of shrub species including hazel, hawthorn and occasional holly. However the main understorey is natural regeneration of beech which is approximately 5 - 15 years of age. In places the regeneration forms a dense thicket. The area also contains some ash, birch and rowan regeneration. Ground flora is predominately grasses with some willow herb, horses tails, hogweed, wild raspberry, foxgloves and bramble.</p>							
1b	2.13	Sycamore	1920	High forest	Mostly wet ground/exposed site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Site of Special Interest, Tree Preservation Order
<p>Part of Lower Holme House Wood. Broadleaved high forest, 55% sycamore, 15% ash, 10% oak, 10% beech, 10% alder /rowan/birch. Compartment dominated by sycamores of about 60-80 years of age but including some older beech, ash and the occasional oak. A small group of alder situated in a very wet area at the western end of compartment 1b. There is very limited understorey of shrub species but occasional hazel, elderberry and hawthorn are present. Natural regeneration is also very limited in this compartment in comparison with compartment 1a. The indistinct boundary between compartment 1a and 1b is defined by the edge of the natural regeneration area. Ground flora is predominately grasses with some willow herb, horses tails, hogweed, wild raspberry, foxgloves and bramble</p>							

1c	1.36	Sycamore	1920	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Tree Preservation Order
Part of Higher Holme House Wood. Broadleaved high forest consisting of 70% sycamore, 15% ash, 5% beech, 5% oak, 5% alder, birch, holly. The tree ages vary but predominately 60-70 years of age (P1930) There is no understorey an area of ash regeneration has developed in the centre of the wood. Ground flora comprises of mainly wavy hair grass with some bracken, bramble and fern.							
1d	0.21	Alder species	1970	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Tree Preservation Order
Part of Higher Holme House Wood. Broadleaved high forest consisting of 45% alder and 15% willow . 40% other species including sycamore, ash, oak, rowan, birch and hazel. Limited understorey shrubs. Compartment very wet in places.. Alder mainly confined to one area which is particularly wet and appear fairly young 20-30 years. Willows are also young specimens.							
1e	1.00	Sycamore	1910	High forest	No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Tree Preservation Order
Part of Higher Holme House Wood. Public footpath running through the centre of the compartment. Broadleaved high forest consisting of 50% sycamore, 30% Oak, 10% beech, 5% birch, holly. The tree ages vary with a number of mature Oak and Sycamore over 100 years of age as well as younger trees ranging from saplings to 50 years of age likely developed through regeneration. There is little understory beneath the mature trees however up the slope above the path and the closer to the river the understory begins to thicken with a range of species and regeneration, hawthorn, holly etc. Ground flora comprises of mainly grasses with some bracken, bramble and fern with bluebells in good numbers beneath the mature Oaks & Sycamore.							

2a	1.67	Open ground		Wood pasture	Management factors (eg grazing etc), No/poor vehicular access within the site, Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	
<p>Part of Higher Holmes House Wood. This compartment consists of 3 meadows and a narrow strip of land running from the maintenance assess point to the west of the site to the meadows. This land has been previously used for cattle grazing. A ford separates the two meadows to the south of the river, these meadows link Higher with Lower Holme House Wood. The 3rd meadow is to the north side of the river is wet and boggy in places. Wood Anemone along with grasses are the main species found.</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 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.