

Ancient Woodland Inventory update: Information for surveyors

Background

Ancient woodland in England is defined as a site which has been continuously wooded since 1600. The conditions created by centuries of undisturbed woodland growth and decay have created a rich and complex habitat. The species that have evolved to live in these environments are often slow to colonise, unable to survive in other conditions and are subsequently increasingly rare. It is therefore important to identify and protect the remaining ancient woodland for the future.

The Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) is an existing register compiled in the 1980s to provide a record of ancient woodlands over two hectares. It was originally produced as reports and paper maps on a county basis, which have since been digitised to create a national dataset. It is a valuable resource for conservation and planning but has some inaccuracies from the initial mapping, the digitisation process and subsequent woodland loss, especially when used at the local scale. While areas of the inventory have been intermittently updated, the widening gap between the standards of the data and its use in determining the outcome of development or woodland management proposals can create significant problems for the authorities involved.

The aim of the update is to standardise and update the data held on the AWI across the country. The initial stages of the process involved using modern aerial photographs, Ordnance Survey MasterMap, and 1st Edition Ordnance Survey maps (1:2500 Epoch 1, published 1843-1893) to identify areas shown as woodland in both the late 1800s and the present day. These are considered to be 'Long-Established Woodland'. The results from this were compared with the existing Inventory to identify areas that may be additions to the inventory and to check the previously designated areas.

The Local Update

Work on the second half of the project in Beds, Cambs and Northants started in June 2022. We have been working on woodland identified as Long-Established Woodland and tracing its character through time to establish whether it has persisted from before 1600 and could be assigned 'ancient' status. We have been locating, accessing, and georeferencing historical maps (OS drawings, tithe maps, estate maps etc.) to provide evidence for each area. We are also using more recent maps and photographs to ensure that the areas were not cleared and replanted at a later date. While some larger areas of woodland are easy to track through history, new additions to the inventory are likely to be smaller areas (since the original inventory only went down to two hectares whilst the update goes to 0.25 hectares) and those with a sparser historical record. The accumulation of evidence from multiple sources will therefore enable us to have the best knowledge of a woodland's continued presence since 1600 and produce an accurate map of this rare habitat across the three counties, to support its better management, protection, and understanding.

To supplement this desk-based research we would like to survey as many of the woods as we can to help determine their status. Woodland often has physical indications of age, such as coppiced

trees, banks and ditches to mark boundaries or signs of buildings and settlements in more recently established woodland. The plant species found within a woodland can also provide additional evidence. Certain species naturally occur near-uniquely in older woodland and colonise new areas slowly, therefore the presence of these indicator species suggests that an area of woodland is more likely to be ancient. The presence of several can provide increased confidence.

We have devised a relatively simple survey which is something which could easily be incorporated as part of a walk. Because of the hundreds of sites involved and the short time frame getting landowner permission to visit most woods has not been possible, therefore please restrict surveys to sites with public access or crossed by or visible from a public right of way.

Changes since last year's survey season

For those who undertook surveys for the ancient woodland project last year, there have been a few changes.

- We would like people to survey woods between the beginning of March and the end of April 2024.
- There are fewer sites available for survey. Thanks to the surveys from last year and the additional time spent researching the woodlands there are fewer sites to look at this year. The ones available to survey this year are those with remaining uncertainty about their age or the continuity of woodland.
- The maps use the same colours as last year. Yellow sites are the highest priority for a survey, then orange sites. Sites with a green outline do not require a survey but are included on the maps in outline to help you locate any joining yellow or orange sites. The sites in green do not have an ID number as they do not require a survey.
- Some of the areas have been split into multiple smaller areas or only have small sections of a larger wood which require surveying. Where these are too small to see clearly on the maps, or if you are struggling to work out the location, do get in touch as I may be able to provide more zoomed-in maps of the location you plan to survey.
- On the Woodlands for Survey spreadsheet you will see that there is a new column named 'Questions'. These are specific questions for this site and can be answered in Question 29 of the survey form.
- This year in addition to woodlands you will have the option to survey wood pasture. These are found on the same maps as the woodland and can be completed in the same way using the same survey form as the woodlands. Additional guidance on wood pasture habitats can be found in Appendix 1.
- Caution - ash dieback. Ash dieback is now well established in many woods and diseased ash trees are more likely to fall and/or drop branches. So as always, please don't survey in windy conditions, but also just be aware on any survey that ash trees can be a particular hazard and avoid stopping/standing underneath them.

Completing a woodland survey

We would like people to survey the woods between the beginning of March and mid-April 2024.

We have sent you a link to a webpage which gives you links to:

- Ancient Woodland Survey Guidance (this document). This includes essential information about how to carry out the survey and guidance on the identification of Ancient Woodland features.
- A woodland survey form (Word).
- An online version of the form which can be completed using a smartphone (if preferred) or on a computer following the survey.
- Maps showing woodland locations for your local county (links to webpages for all three counties are listed at the bottom of this document)
- A spreadsheet listing woods which need surveying, each with a unique identification number, name (where known) and location information (Parish, Ordnance Survey grid reference and What3Words)

Select a site for surveying. These can be identified on county maps as follows:

How to access the maps

1. On the selected County woodland survey webpage go to the **Key to Woodlands** map and identify the part of the county you are interested in. Note the corresponding 10km square (TL06 for instance)
2. Locate the map for the selected 10km square by scrolling through the list of maps below the key. For some areas there are more detailed maps to help separate woodlands
3. Click on the maps to enlarge them. They can be downloaded and saved on your computer by right-clicking. A map with higher clarity can also be downloaded from the Dropbox link. We recommend only downloading the 10km square maps that you intend to visit.
4. On the map, each wood is labelled with a Unique Identification Number (UID). Some larger woods are divided into parts each with a separate UID. Note: they are small, so look carefully!
5. Select a site for surveying. Woods are coloured to indicate their priority (see below).
6. Prioritise sites as follows:
 - I. Priority survey site (yellow)
 - II. Survey site (orange)

Sites outlined in green do not require a survey. They are included for reference as woodlands which we are looking into. These include sites which are ancient woodland but also sites which may not be, but have sufficient survey information from last year (green)

It does not matter if more than one person visits each wood. **Sites should only be surveyed if they are open to the public or are crossed by a public right of way or are visible from a road or other public right of way or if you have permission from the landowner/manager to visit.**

The maps show designated public rights of way. **Please stick to designated paths and do not trespass.**

If you would benefit from a close-up map of a certain area with sites which are difficult to separate or locate then do get in touch.

Find the woodland on the 'Woodlands for Survey' spreadsheet

Use the UID to find the woodland on the spreadsheet. This will give you its name (if known), location information, including parish, Ordnance Survey Grid Reference and What3Words and any specific questions for that site. Confirm the location on a paper or digital map (Google, Bing or Apple maps). If you are unfamiliar with grid references or What3Words, instructions can be found here:

1. To confirm the location on a paper map using the OS grid reference: [A beginners guide to finding grid references | OS GetOutside \(ordnancesurvey.co.uk\)](#)
2. To confirm the location on a phone or laptop enter the grid reference or What3Words into Grid Reference Finder: [Grid Reference Finder](#)
3. To confirm the location on your phone with What3Words download the App: [Download the free what3words app | what3words](#)

Before starting:

- Plan your route
- Assess weather conditions and go equipped accordingly (wet weather gear, appropriate footwear, sun cream, water, food etc)
- Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return
- **Read through the survey form** so that you are familiar with the types of features you need to be looking out for
- Read the Health and Safety information

What to take with you:

- Some way of recording information: notebook or recording form and pen/pencil; or smartphone
- Map or some way of accessing Google satellite, Bing or Apple maps
- Binoculars (if you have them) for looking at sites from a distance
- ID guides if required - guides to features and trees and sources of further information are given at the end of this document (Appendix 1). Expert plant identification is not essential, but we ask for sightings of ancient woodland indicators if you can identify them.

Survey

- If there is unrestricted access, criss-cross the wood to visit all parts before filling in the survey form as this will give you a better idea of the nature of the site.
- If you are restricted to a public right of way, do not leave the path but note what you can see as you pass through.
- Where there is no public access and you are looking from an adjacent right of way or road study the wood from several points where possible to get as much information as you can without entering the wood.
- Fill in as much of the form as you can, either on-site or later from notes you have made.
- If there are noticeably different areas of the wood – for instance with or without ancient woodland features – you might want to complete forms for each section. (This mainly applies to larger sites).
- If you have a smartphone or camera take one or more photographs which illustrate features of the wood and indicator plants. Check the clarity of your images before moving on. If the direction of the light is obscuring features, try changing position and taking another image – small shifts can make a big difference.

Notes on using the online recording form on your phone in the field

- The online recording form opens by clicking on the link on the webpage or in the links section below. The link can be used multiple times to submit surveys for different sites. (Links are also given at the end of this document – check you select the appropriate county.)
- You cannot progress through the form without entering the site UID, which is the number of the wood marked on the 10km square map
- If using the form in the field, please note that a period of inactivity can result in the form shutting down. Just re-click on the link and it will open again at the point you left off. **However, longer periods of inactivity or switching your phone off will result in your data being lost.**
- The form can also be filled in from notes either on your phone or laptop/desktop computer once you get home as an alternative to using the Word document.

When you get home

- Complete the form making sure that you have added the unique site identification number
- Return the form:
(Completing the smartphone/online form returns it automatically)
Email or return the form by post to:
Katharine Flach, Katharine.flach@wildlifebcn.org
The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire
The Manor House, Broad Street, Great Cambourne, CB23 6DH.
- Send any photographs to Katharine. Remember to include sufficient information to identify the wood (including UID number). This can be done by email or by uploading to a file-sharing program such as Dropbox or WeTransfer.

Please feel free to visit as many or as few woodlands as you like.

Local knowledge

Have you carried out any research into Local History or are you a member of a Local History Society? If you have knowledge of or access to Estate Maps, Enclosure Awards and similar maps dating from before the early 1800s which show woodlands, then we would be interested in hearing from you. Such maps can help to determine if a wood is ancient by providing evidence of the continuity of woodland cover through time.

Survey links

Bedfordshire woodland survey webpage: <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/bedfordshire-ancient-woodland-inventory-surveys>

Cambridgeshire woodland survey webpage: <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/cambridge-ancient-woodland-inventory-surveys>

Northamptonshire woodland survey webpage: <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/northamptonshire-ancient-woodland-inventory-surveys>

Bedfordshire on-line survey form: <https://forms.office.com/e/UVHMv6XxHn>

Cambridgeshire on-line survey form: <https://forms.office.com/e/NTDm9Hueax>

Northamptonshire on-line survey form: <https://forms.office.com/e/0u2gWe8dH6>

Bedfordshire Maps Dropbox link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/ir4fk61r8kq162f4pctx/h?rlkey=9389sjujp9kn1o6lhivc7v1nm&dl=0>

Cambridgeshire Maps Dropbox link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/yltvr13wqai42d5k0op50/h?rlkey=bg8ff8s1alyv6fpnrb1r33tfk&dl=0>

Northamptonshire Maps Dropbox link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/8dxi6447akz80ug8657v9/h?rlkey=v6f4pjazgsde7z7lav8tx4x9m&dl=0>

A Word version of the survey form and the Woodland for Survey spreadsheet are available on the County webpages accessed via the link above.

Your health and safety:

- If you encounter any issues during any surveys, let Katharine know as soon as possible. If on any visit, you note any new risks or areas of concern, please contact us to discuss and review the risk assessment.
- Ensure you have read the Surveying risk assessments before you carry out your surveys
- Ensure you have suitable clothing and footwear for the site and weather conditions
- Do not carry out monitoring work in a wood on very windy days.
- Be aware of trip hazards, such as rabbit holes, tree stumps, lying branches and bramble
- Be aware of low branches from trees and shrubs (e.g. at head height)
- Be particularly aware of eye hazards from vegetation etc whilst you are working
- Be aware of dangers from Ash die-back. Ash dieback is now well established in our area and diseased ash trees are more likely to fall and/or drop branches. In addition to avoiding surveying in windy conditions, be aware on any survey that ash trees can be a particular hazard and avoid stopping/standing around underneath them.

Lone working

- You may wish to survey in pairs, for safety and to make the recording of data easier and to promote the exchange of shared knowledge and experience.
- If you are lone working, make sure you have a "buddy", who knows where you will be, what you are doing and what time you plan to leave the site. You should check in with your buddy when leaving the site, and if you don't check in, your buddy should follow up.

Risk assessment

A Risk Assessment is appended to this document (Appendix 2)

Thank you

Thank you for taking part. We hope you find the survey enjoyable. Any information you provide will be useful for updating the Ancient Woodland Inventory. Without volunteer help we would only be able to visit and verify a small fraction of potential sites and the supporting information would be less comprehensive.

Katharine Flach, Ancient Woodland Inventory Officer

Appendix 1: Identification guides

You may first like to look at the later sections of the record form to see which flowering plants we are interested in.

The Field Studies Council have produced two handy guides for use in the field:

Ancient Woodland Indicator Plants: Hotchkiss & Harper 2016; ISBN 9781908819277

The Tree Name Trail: Oldham & Roberts 1999; ISBN 9781851538614

Other tree identification resources:

[Tree-Identification-guide-8pp-chart_corrected.pdf \(imperial.ac.uk\)](#)

[A-Z Guide - British Trees - Woodland Trust](#)

Woodland Trust Tree ID App:

iPhone: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/british-tree-identification/id1112564089>

Android: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.woodlandtrust&hl=en_GB

If you want to know more about identifying ancient woodlands, you might find the following of interest. (Please note some of this information relates to SE England – not all species mentioned are indicators in Beds, Cambs and Northants).

[Ancient Woodland - British Habitats - Woodland Trust](#)

[Free Open University woodland course](#)

Ancient woodland features and indicators:

[file.html \(highweald.org\)](#)

[Identifying Historic Wood Banks in Ancient Woodland - YouTube](#)

[Ancient Woodland Indicators - YouTube](#)

[How to Identify woodland flowers in Ancient Woodland - YouTube](#)

[Identifying Woodland Plants - YouTube](#)

Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland

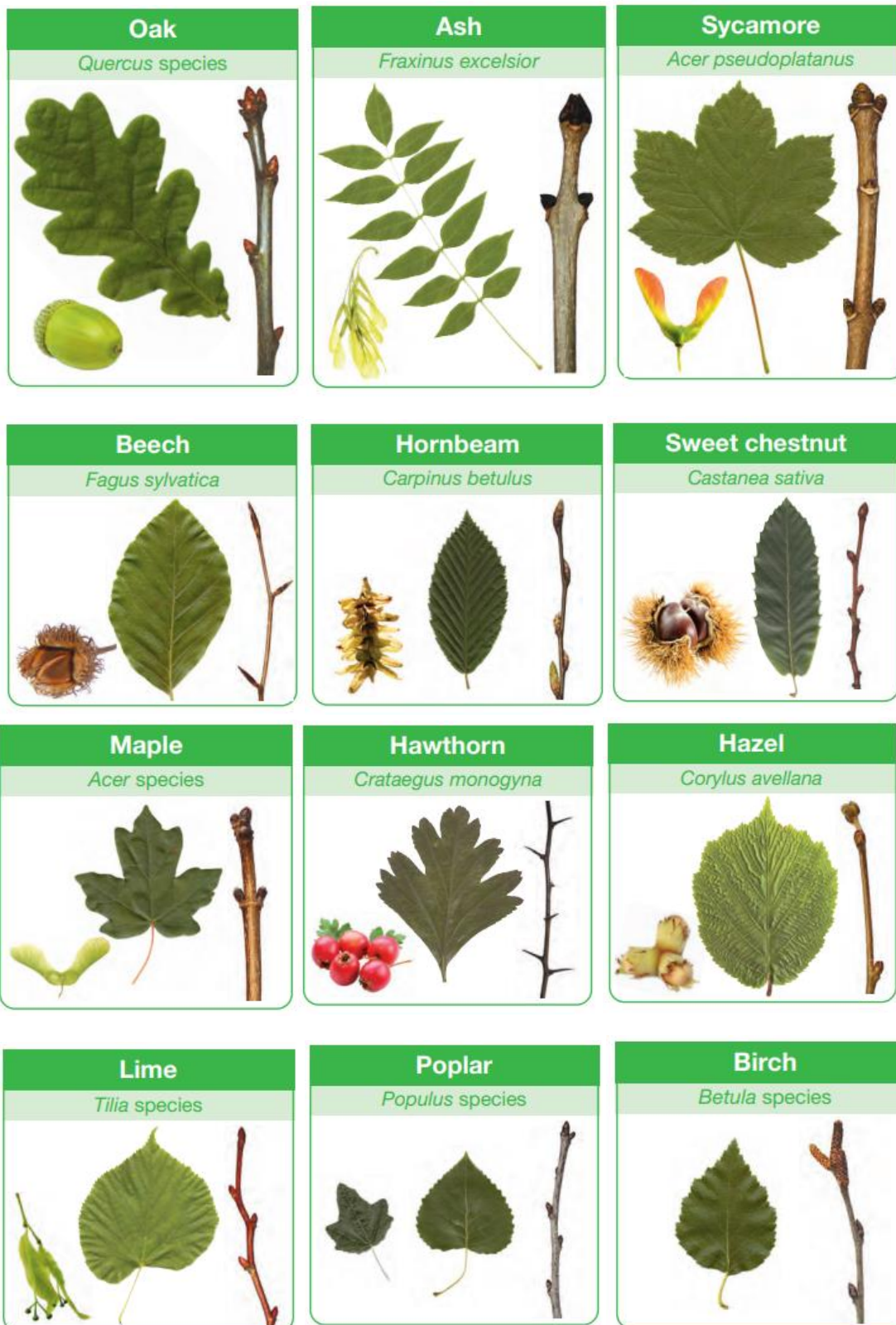
[Wood Pasture and Parkland – British Habitats - Woodland Trust](#)

[Wood Pasture Ecology - People's Trust for Endangered Species \(ptes.org\)](#)

[Open Grown Trees - People's Trust for Endangered Species \(ptes.org\)](#)

[Wood Pasture and Parkland Network - YouTube](#)

Common Trees

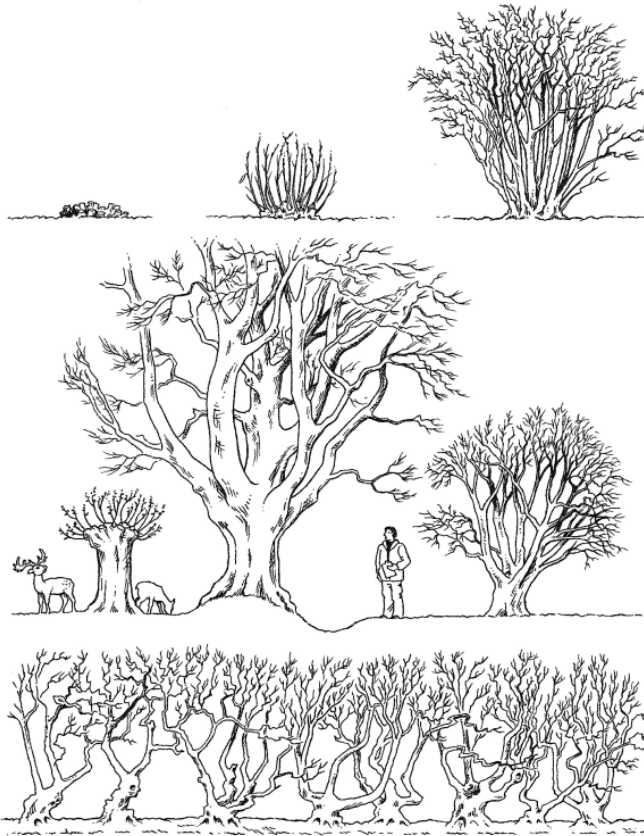


Images taken from the OPAL Tree Identification Guide:
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/opal/surveys/treehealthsurvey/>

AW Identification guidance

Features

Coppice and pollard trees



SIGNIFICANT TREES

Top:

coppice stools, l to r – newly cut, young re-growth, mature re-growth

Middle:

left – pollarded tree, new re-growth out of reach of grazing animals

centre – outgrown pollarded tree

right – a 'stub', cut at a height between coppice and pollard often used as a boundary marker

Bottom:

grown out laid hedge

Taken from: *Feature Identification Charts – a toolkit for wooded landscapes* East Sussex County Council 2012 <https://www.highweald.org/downloads/publications/33-feature-identification-toolkit-final-feb-2012.html>

Medieval woodbanks

Medieval woodbanks can be up to 1.5m tall (around shoulder height or the height of a shorter adult) and up to 3m wide and tend to be sinuous with the ditch on the outside of the wood. Internal banks are usually less tall and wide. They may also be topped with large trees, either pollarded or not. Post-medieval banks tend to be straight and less substantial.

For more information on woodland archaeology see: [Woodland archaeology toolkits \(highweald.org\)](https://www.highweald.org)

Risk Assessment Form

Activity: General Surveying		Assessment Date: pre 10/02/2023	
Original Author: Martin Baker		Assessment Type (Delete as appropriate)	
Reviewer: Mischa Cross	Review date (if Generic RA):08/02/24	Generic (see Note 1)	
<p>Activity/Process: general surveying of outdoor areas, not involving any specialist equipment or procedures. Supporting Information (for example, case of need, explanation of activity): relevant site RA SOP Titles: Lone Working RA & SOP, Lone working FISA info leaflet 004-0415 Who will be at Risk (e.g. staff, volunteers, visitors)?: volunteers/ staff</p>			

Hazard (See Note 2)	Adverse Consequence Associated with Hazard (e.g. lacerations/amputations from blades, wounds from blackthorn/hawthorn etc)	Existing Control Measures (what are you already doing or what is already in place?)	Risk Rating (Likelihood X Consequence) (See Notes 3 & 4)	Are Additional Controls Required? (state these if so)	Residual Risk Rating (See Note 5)
Uneven ground, obscured structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuts/ bruises, broken bones etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep to paths where possible Avoid steep slopes or obscured ground esp. in wet/slippery conditions Avoid deep mud If necessary for access, climb over locked gates at hinged end Wear suitable footwear for the ground conditions 	2x2=Medium	Check for uneven ground, stumps and other trip hazards and remain vigilant	2x1=Low
Biological eg) poisonous plants/ sap, bites, stings, dog faeces, Weils/Lyme disease, tetanus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reactions causing localised swelling to severe anaphylactic shock breathing difficulties Disease/ infection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General awareness of site conditions Share any known allergies with work colleagues Have first aid kit or appropriate medicine available Observe good hygiene practices Wear long sleeves/ trousers where appropriate Be aware of own tolerances to bites/ stings etc 	2x2=Medium	If known allergic reactions, try to avoid lone work, follow lone work procedures. Check mobile signal and know	2x1Low

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				emergency access routes	
Sharp objects eg) blackthorn, barbed wire/ litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puncture wounds/ lacerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be vigilant while working • If injured, keep wound clean and seek medical assistance – be vigilant for signs of infection/ tetanus 	2x1=Low		
Extreme Weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of falling trees / limbs or lightning strike in storms. • Sunstroke/ sunburn, heat exhaustion • Exposure/ hypothermia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have sufficient water in hot conditions • Advised to wear sun hat/ long sleeves/ trousers and suncream when UV index exceeds 3 • Advised to wear warm/ waterproof clothing in cold/wet conditions • Do not work or shelter under trees in storms • Be prepared to change work plans. 	2x1=Low		

Notes:

- 1 If using a 'Generic' risk assessment, Assessors and Line Managers are to satisfy themselves that the assessment is valid for the task and that all significant hazards have been identified and assessed. If additional hazards are identified they are to be recorded and attached to the Generic assessment.
 - All generic risk assessments **must** be used in conjunction with a site specific hazards and risks for the activity being undertaken.
 - If this is a Generic Risk Assessment , the Document Control information must be filled out and it must be formally approved by an authorised reviewer
- 2 A **hazard** is something that can cause harm, e.g. electricity, chemicals, working at height, noise, hand-arm-vibration, sawdust, stress, etc
- 3 A **risk** is the chance, high or low, that any **hazard** will actually cause somebody harm.
4. Scoring explanation:

LIKELIHOOD	HIGH	Common, regular or frequent occurrence.	3	3 Med	6 HIGH	9 HIGH
	Medium	Occasional occurrence.	2	2 Low	4 Med	6 HIGH
	Low	Rare or improbable occurrence.	1	1 Low	2 Low	3 Med
Risk Matrix Likelihood X Consequence				1	2	3
				Minor injury or illness.	Serious injury or illness.	Fatalities, major injury or illness.
				Low	Medium	High
				CONSEQUENCE		

Note: When recording the Risk Rating ensure that both the Likelihood and Consequence scores are included.

HIGH	Improve control measures; consider stopping work. Conducting work at this level of risk is to be reported up the Line Management chain.
Medium	Review control measures and improve if reasonably practicable to do so, consider alternative ways of working.
Low	Maintain control measures and review if there are any changes.

5. Record the residual Risk Rating to demonstrate that the risk has been reduced, or is at an acceptable level; record Likelihood and Consequence scores. You should always attempt to reduce the risk to the lowest that is reasonably practicable – preferably below a score of 4.
6. Risk Assessments are to be reviewed in the following circumstances:
 - If “Generic” (see note 1 above)
 - If there is reason to doubt the effectiveness of the assessment.
 - Following an accident or near accident.
 - Following significant changes to the task, process, and procedure.
 - Following the introduction of more vulnerable personnel (e.g. Work experience, disabled, under 16)
 - At least annually if there has been no other reason for review in the meantime