

the
species
recovery
trust

2022 Species Report

Starved Wood-sedge

The 2021-22 work programme was
generously part-funded by Natural England





Funders

We are hugely grateful to the following trust for supporting this project:

Natural England

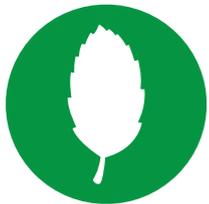
Cala Homes

Huge thanks also goes to the staff & volunteers of Somerset Wildlife Trust and Ethos Environmental Planning. In particular Sarah and Neil Williams for their help with the Cheddar Woods intro.

Summary



In 2021 all sites were monitored, revealing the highest count for this species recorded so far, with a population of 688 plants



Habitat management work has carried at the Axbridge site.



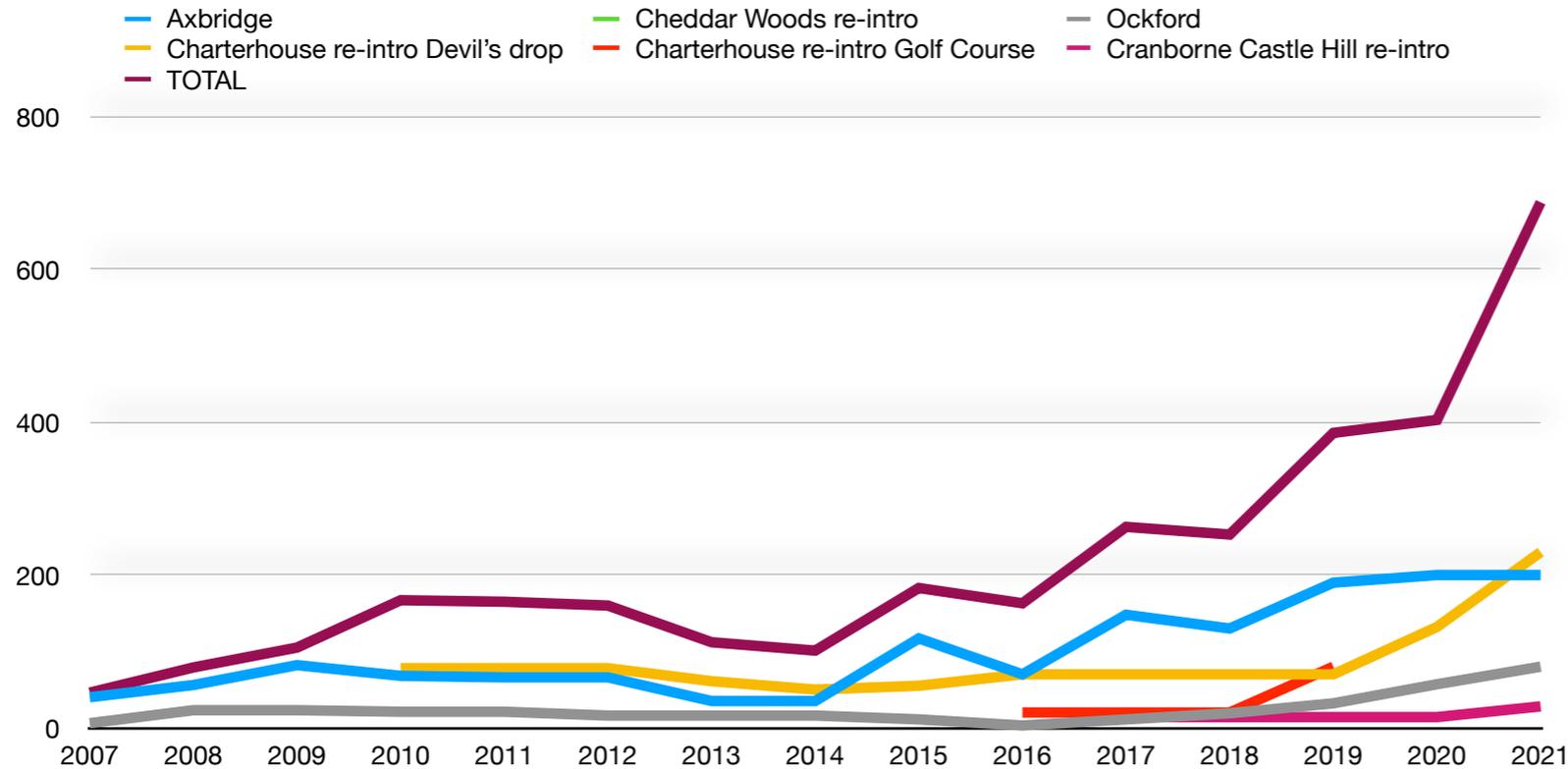
Plants were re-introduced into the extinct Cheddar Woods site, and the Cranborne Chase re-intro site was bulked up

This report should be read in conjunction with the [Species Handbook](#), which give a background to all the sites



Sites Summary

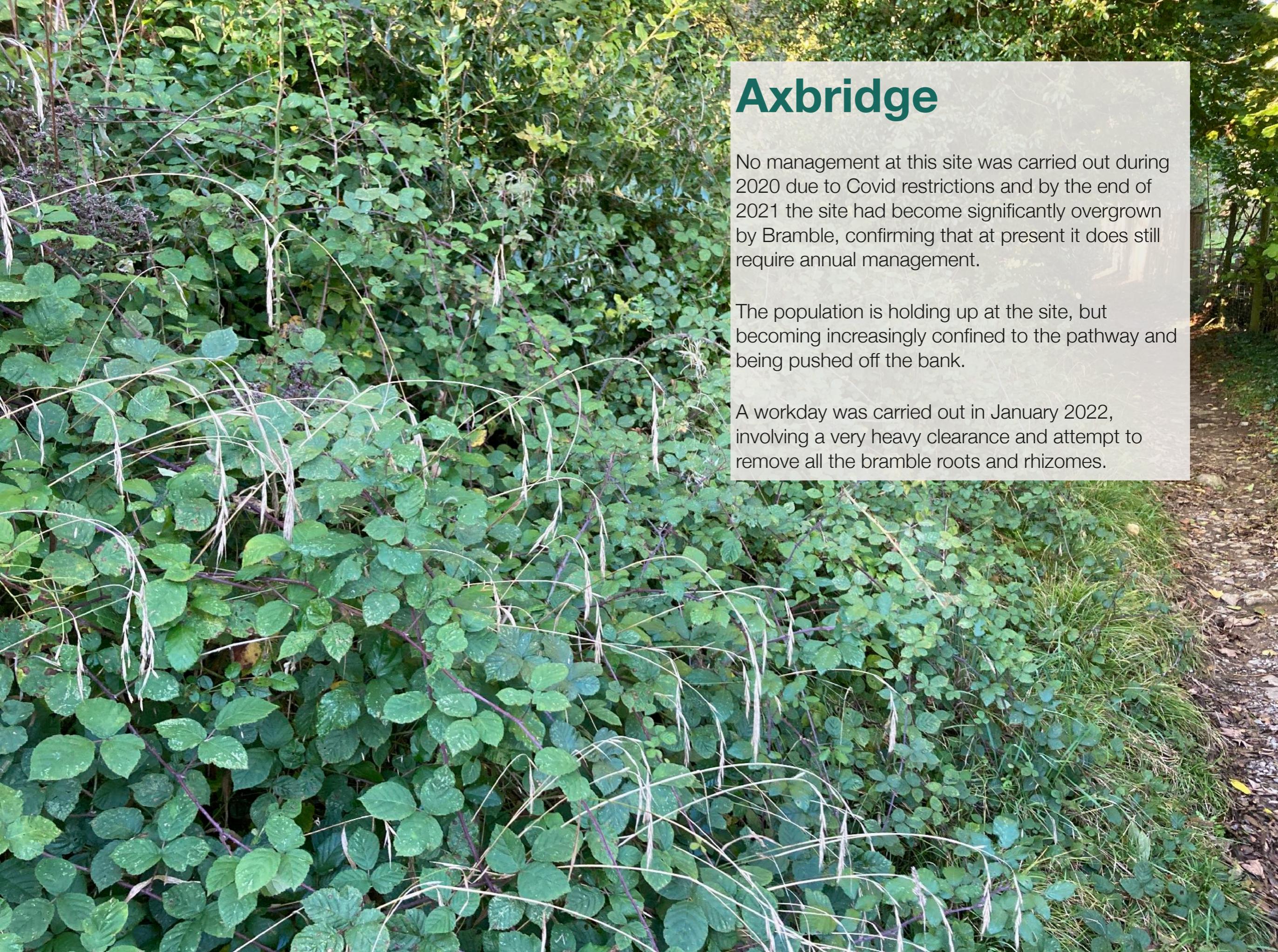
SITE	Axbridge	Cheddar Woods re-intro	Ockford	Charterhouse re-intro Devil's drop	Charterhouse re-intro Golf Course	Cranborne Castle Hill re-intro	TOTAL
2007	40		6				46
2008	56		23				79
2009	82		23				105
2010	68		21	78			167
2011	66		21	78			165
2012	66		16	78			160
2013	35		16	61			112
2014	35		16	50			101
2015	117		11	55			183
2016	70		3	70	20		163
2017	148		11	70	20	14	263
2018	130		19	70	20	14	253
2019	190		32	70	80	14	386
2020	200		57	132		14	403
2021	200	30	80	230	120	28	688



Sites Summary



NATIVE EXTINCT RE-INTRODUCED



Axbridge

No management at this site was carried out during 2020 due to Covid restrictions and by the end of 2021 the site had become significantly overgrown by Bramble, confirming that at present it does still require annual management.

The population is holding up at the site, but becoming increasingly confined to the pathway and being pushed off the bank.

A workday was carried out in January 2022, involving a very heavy clearance and attempt to remove all the bramble roots and rhizomes.



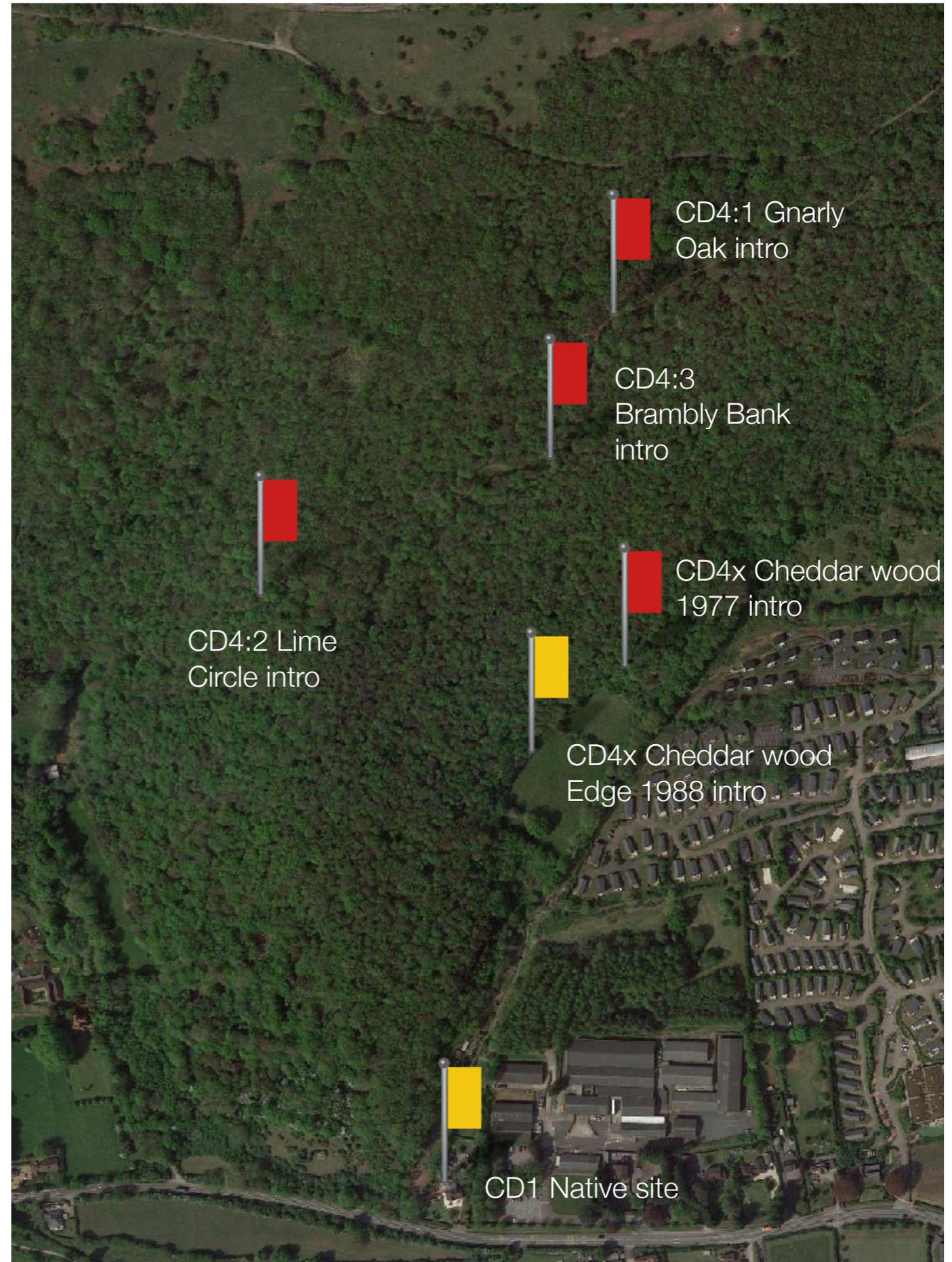
Axbridge workday January 2022, with volunteers from Ethos Environmental Planning (the consultants we have been working with at the Godalming site)

Cheddar

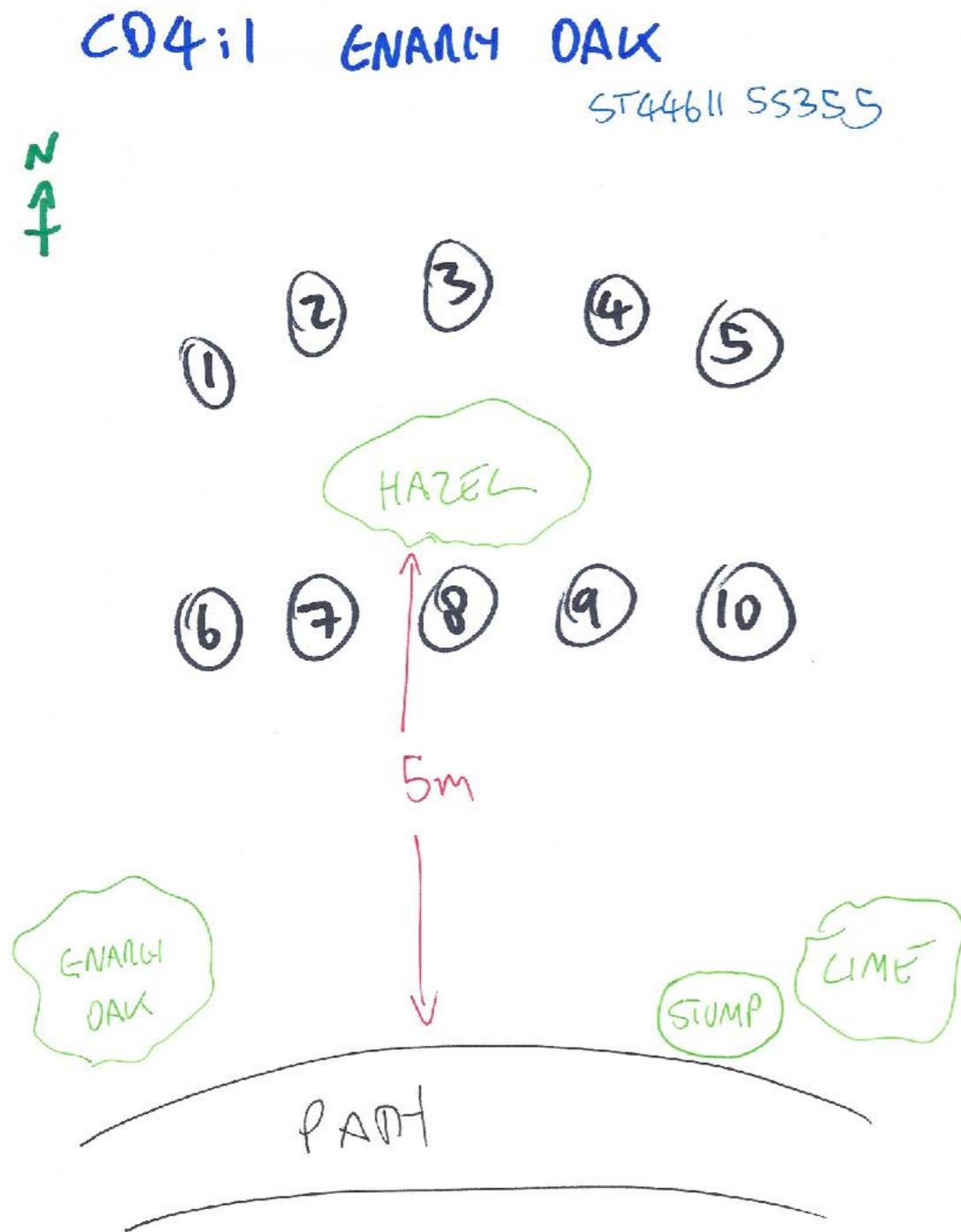
After three years of site meetings and planning 30 plants were re-introduced into Cheddar Woods in November 2021.

Three sites were chosen where recent woodland clearance (mostly related to Ash dieback) had created an open canopy. These sites were chosen in close collaboration with Somerset Wildlife Trust (& under consent from NE) in order to fit in with their woodland management plans over the next decade.

Details of the sub-sites are provided below.

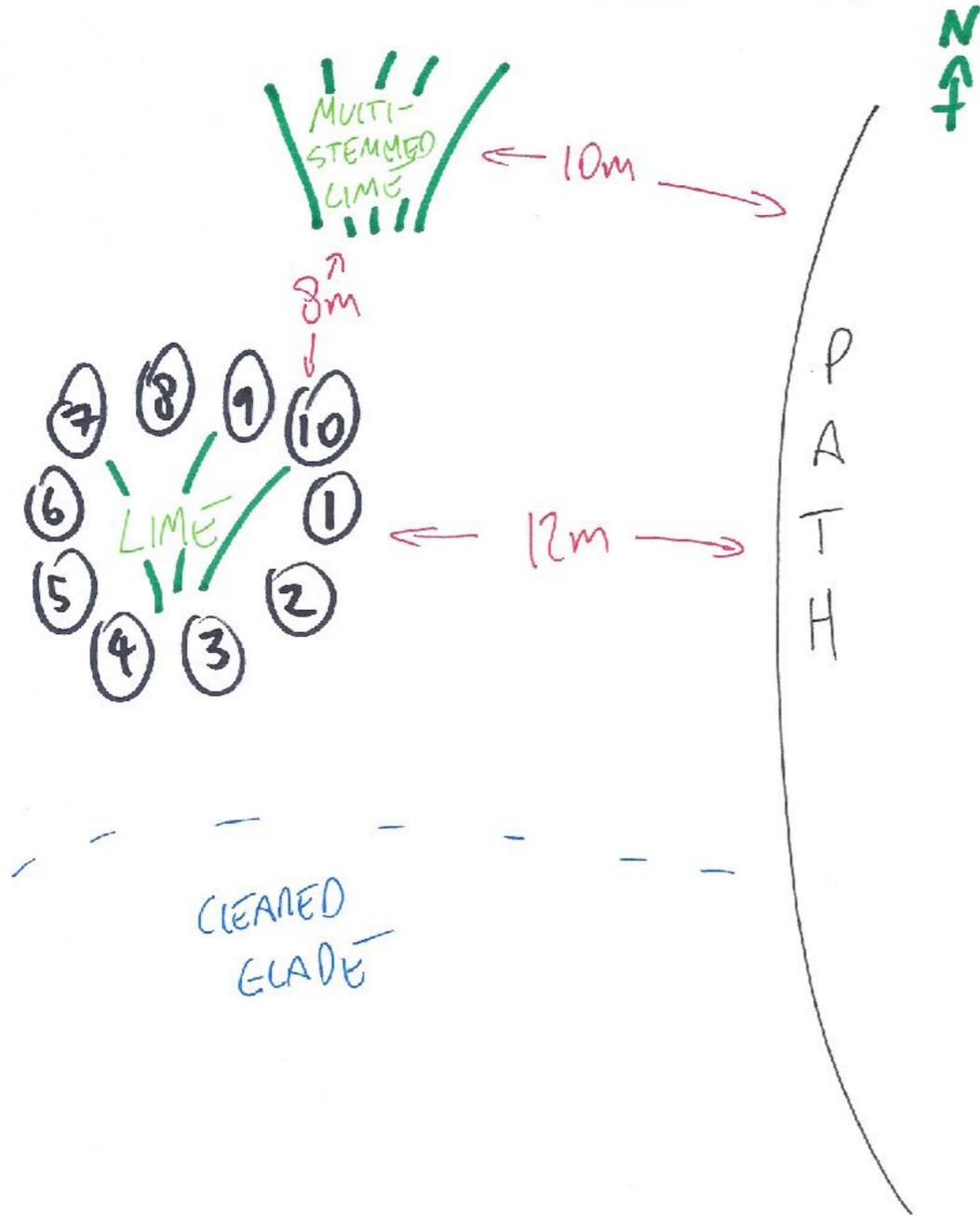


Cheddar



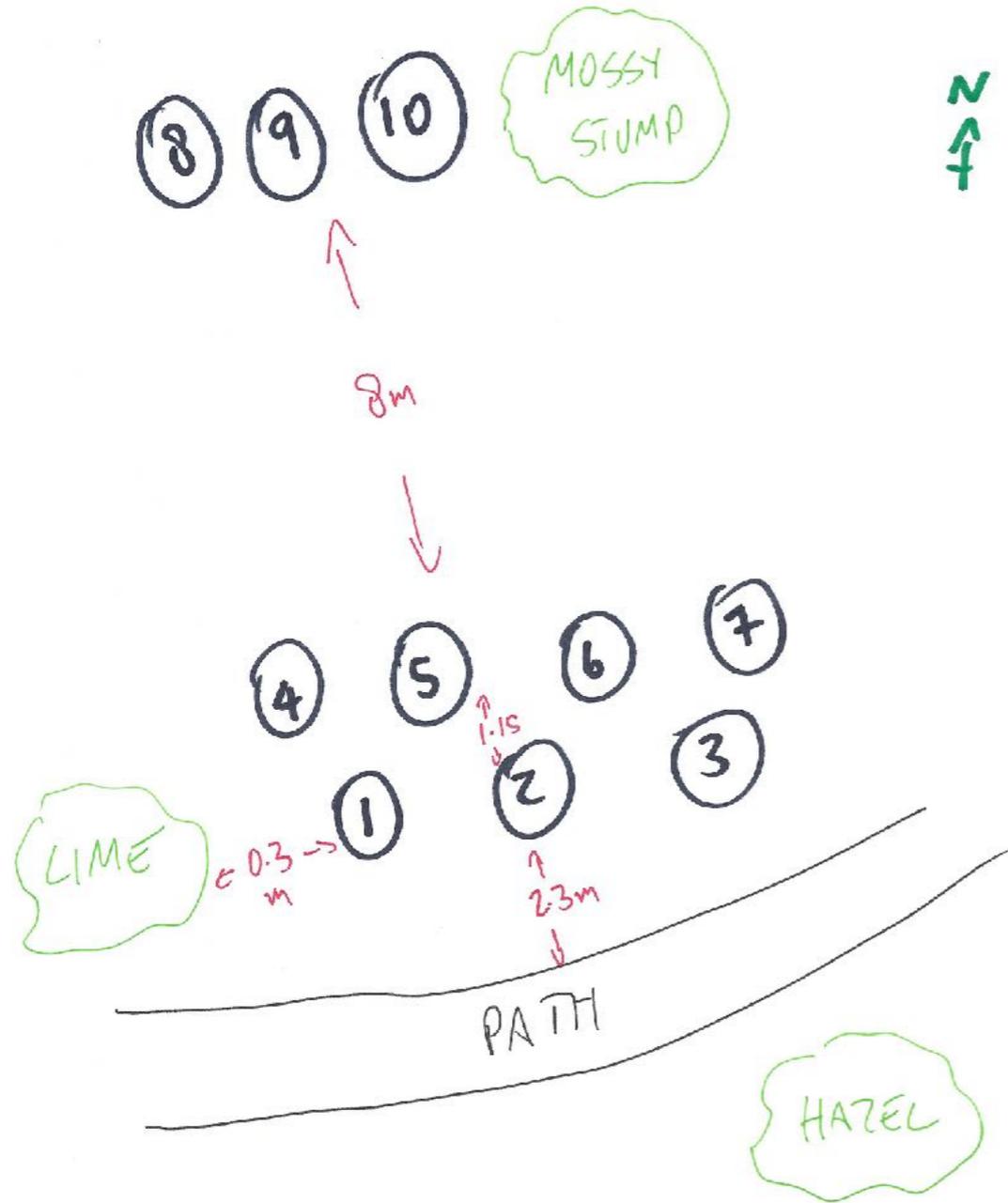
Cheddar

CD4:2 LIME CIRCLE
ST4431655124



Cheddar

CD4:3 BRAMBLY BANK
ST44557 55235



A photograph of a forest with many dead trees and fallen branches on the ground, indicating a dieback event. The trees are mostly bare, and the ground is covered in brown leaves and moss. The scene is a mix of living and dead trees, with some green foliage still visible on the right side.

Cheddar 1976 site

Having been provided with information on the location of the 1976 introduction, a re-survey was made of this area. While the habitat is largely suitable, it looks like overtime the canopy had closed over and reduced light levels. The high level of Ash dieback in these woods does mean this situation is likely to reverse, and we plan to keep monitoring this area in case there is re-emergence.



Castle Hill, Cranborne

Four years after the initial re-introduction the same 114 plants are fairing well, but in 2021 had failed to produce any offspring. In 2020 a large beech tree just to the northwest of the plants came down in a storm and there is now considerable more light at the site, which may have an impact on the plants.

In 2021 a further 14 plants were planted out in 3 additional locations, pictured overleaf.

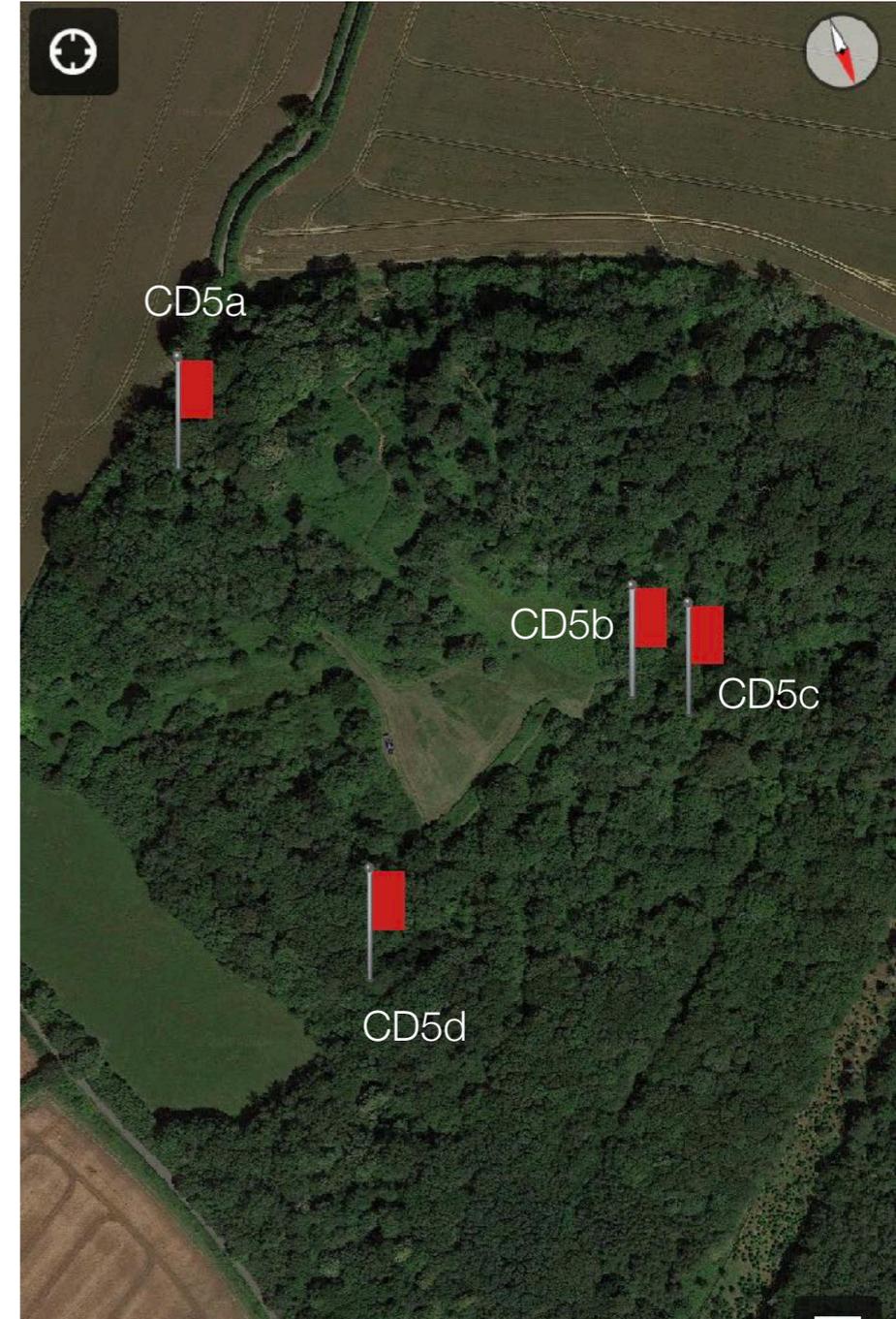
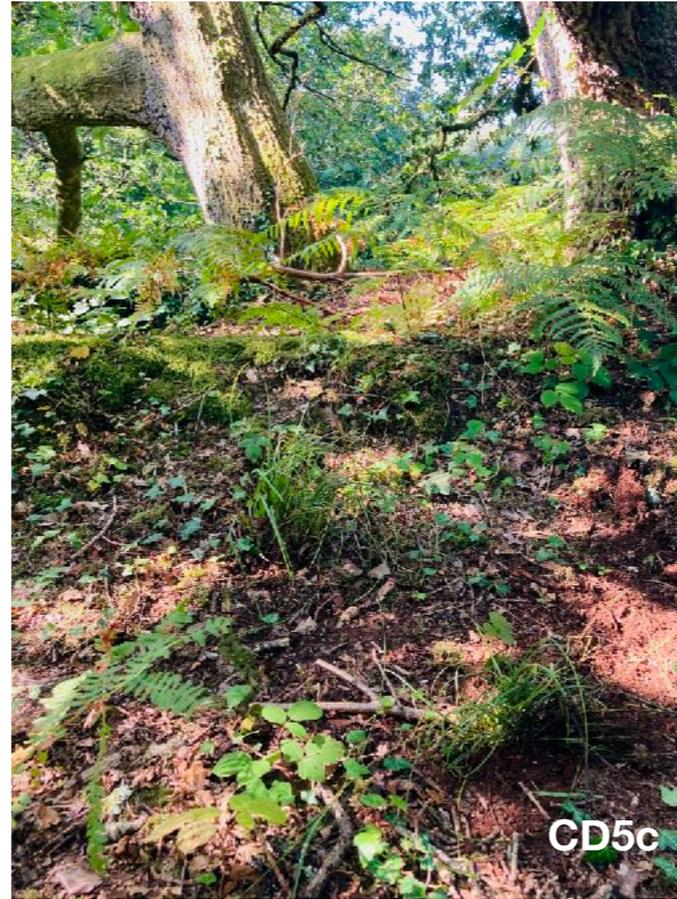


Canopy 2018



Canopy 2020

Castle Hill, 2021 re-intro



Ockford

This site has been subject to significant change over the last two years, with the construction of a tarmac path along the bottom of the slope, and the removal of two large lime trees as part of a Section 106 agreement with an adjacent housing development site.

The success of the Charterhouse re-intro (see below) led us to believe that the light levels here were sub-optimal, and that radical canopy reduction could lead to a huge improvement in the population, which has sat below 20 plants for many years.

Historically this site has always had problems with new plants germinating on the pathway, and with the construction of the new track and legal protection of the species, we were given cause to remove seedlings from the base of the site, grow them up ex-situ and replace them back at the top of the slope. In addition we have carried out intensive management in the woodland itself.



Ockford

The population here has gone from strength to strength in the last two years. From 1995 to 2018, the population remained below 20, but through pinpointed management this rose to 28 in 2019, 45 plants in 2020, and 80 in 2021.

Future plans involve further understory clearance to allow more light in and opportunity for germination, with additional supplementation using the plants removed from the edge of the path during track construction works.

Further intervention, including movement of plants from the track edge, is expected due to the position of the site on a steep slope. However, we anticipate that this will become less intensive as population numbers increase.



Lime trees before...



Moving young plants up the slope



..and after removal

(Note old footpath too)

Charterhouse

The main Charterhouse re-intro site has been going from strength to strength. From the 32 plants re-introduced in 2010 there are now 230 plants on the site.

Most encouragingly the plants are spreading way beyond the initial site of the plantings, with new individuals appearing over 20m away.

This area of the wood is currently intensely 'worked' by local volunteers. Their actions of letting light into the wood as well as potentially incidentally spreading seeds during works is having a huge positive impact on the population, as well as giving a glimpse of how the plant can succeed in actively managed woodland.

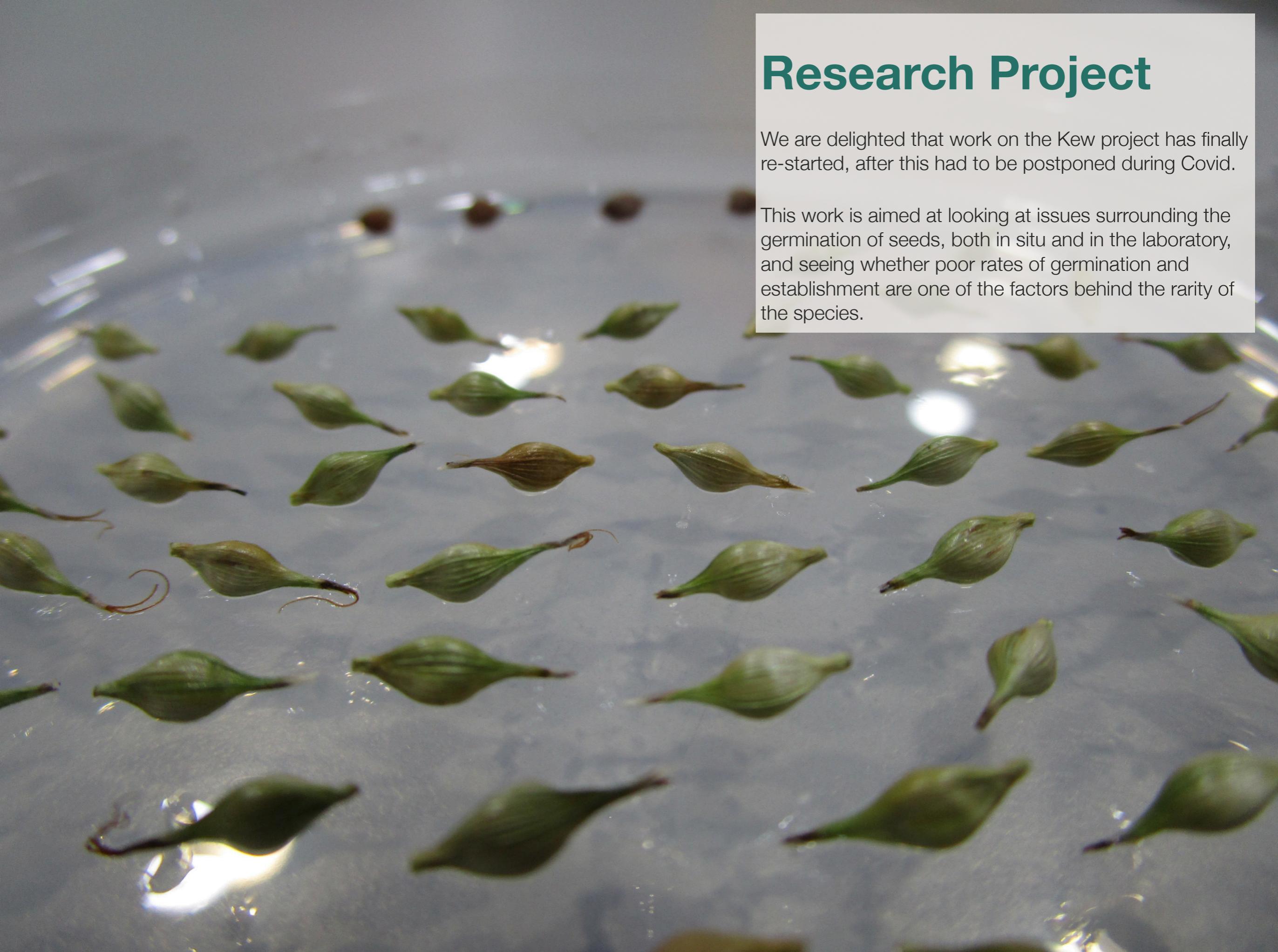
A second re-introduction site lies to the north-east and this population has wavered at around 20 plants since 2016. In 2021, however, 120 plants were observed many of which were young plants on the path edge. This site has not received any habitat management in the recent past, and the scrub cover was incredibly sparse given the open canopy. Light bramble removal was conducted at the time of survey in 2021 to provide additional opportunities for plant establishment and germination.



Research Project

We are delighted that work on the Kew project has finally re-started, after this had to be postponed during Covid.

This work is aimed at looking at issues surrounding the germination of seeds, both in situ and in the laboratory, and seeing whether poor rates of germination and establishment are one of the factors behind the rarity of the species.



Looking forward

Project aims 2020-2030



Continue to manage all sites, with follow-up in Axbridge in the Spring to catch bramble re-growth.



Close monitoring at all re-intro sites



Return plants removed from path side at Ockford



Coordinate with Kew once growth trails re-start (delayed due to Covid)



The Species Recovery Trust is a charity set up to tackle the loss of some of the rarest species in the UK.

There are over nine hundred native species in the UK that are classed as under threat, with several hundreds more currently widespread but known to be in significant decline. The countryside is now bereft of many species that were a familiar sight a mere generation ago.

A small number of these species are on the absolute brink of existence, poised to become extinct in our lifetimes; our goal is to stop them vanishing.

Our aim is to remove 50 species from the edge of extinction in the UK by the year 2050. In addition we are reconnecting people with wildlife and the natural world through training programmes and awareness raising.



A photograph of a forest floor in spring. The ground is covered with a dense carpet of purple bluebells. In the foreground, a large, moss-covered tree stump lies on the ground. The background is filled with tall, slender trees with fresh green leaves, suggesting a healthy woodland environment.

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