

HEDGEROWS AT TOTLEY MEADOWS

With the exception of the hedgerows along the eastern boundary of the site they are rich in woody species with a diverse range of both shrub and tree species. A total of 17 species were recorded including 2 different willow species. Guelder rose is present in a nearby hedge and elm is known from the locality. A more intense survey effort may locate these species within these hedgerows. Hazel is a conspicuous component.

The hedges along the eastern boundary of the site are generally less rich with a higher frequency of hawthorn and elder. They are also generally less well preserved. Rowan is infrequent bringing the total number of hedgerow species on the site to 18.

The hedges are largely unmanaged but with a history of management evidenced in the presence of many coppiced shrubs/trees, although a proportion of the coppicing in the central hedges which are open to grazing may have been created by browsing. Very rarely there is evidence that the hedge was layed in the distant past. This lack of recent management means that they tend to be made up of tall shrubs overtopped by mature trees, with the latter often forming an entire canopy over the shrub layer.

The hedges along the northern and southern edge of the site (1 and 6) have been protected from grazing to a degree by the presence of a stockproof fence. Here they are thick and locally dense without gaps. Elsewhere the hedges are at least locally thin, gappy and have lost their function as a stockproof boundary. Along the east and west of the site they have at least locally been subsumed into small areas of woodland. In the west this is associated with the streamside and its floodplain and includes a high frequency of alder; in the east it is found on steep slopes with oak as the dominant canopy species.

Together with the in-field scrub the hedgerows are important not only as landscape features and as evidence of the past historic landscape but also in the role they play in supporting a rich invertebrate, bird (at least 21 species) and small mammal fauna, the latter including a number of bat species. Oak, alder, hawthorn, blackthorn and elder are particularly important for birds because of the source of fruit including berries which attract winter visitors including fieldfare and redwing. The high hedges also provide birds and bats with corridors of connection and cover/protection. They provide shelter, screening from the wind and sun traps for butterflies - at least 17 species are known to use the site. The scrub/hedgerow habitat and rich ground vegetation is of particular importance to the presence of summer visitors like Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Garden Warbler.

The field pattern made up of small irregular fields is likely to be ancient in origin, possibly Anglo-Saxon, Norse or even earlier. The field names as well as the field pattern, also support this hypothesis.

HEDGEROW No 1

Form

A line of tall shrubs overtopped by mature trees.

Management

There is little evidence of recent or historic management but the density of the hedgerow makes it difficult to properly assess the growth form of the shrubs.

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between the field and an ancient hollow way linking Derbyshire to Sheffield. There is a similar boundary to the north of the hollow way which makes this a very important landscape as well as wildlife and historic feature.

Recent management

HEDGEROW No 2

Form

Coppiced shrubs (primarily hazel) overtopped by mature trees. Locally thin and with a large gap at the southern end which looks as if it is an extended gateway.

Management

There is little evidence of recent management but many of the shrubs have been coppiced in the past and the alder in the south appears to have been laid a long time ago.

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between two fields. At the northern end it is associated with a shallow ditch. The boundary is of no significance to the farm operation and is no longer functional. Along at least some of the length of the hedge blackthorn is spreading out into the western field.

HEDGEROW No 3

Form

Coppiced shrubs overtopped by mature, previously coppiced alder.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management but many of the shrubs have been coppiced in the past and the alder also appear to have been laid a long time ago.

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between two fields. It is a continuation of hedgerow 3 but at the bottom of the adjacent field. The boundary is of no significance to the farm operation and is no longer functional. At the southern end it merges into a small area of open woodland dominated by coppiced mature alder, hazel and holly.

HEDGEROW No 4

Form

Coppiced shrubs overtopped by mature trees. At the western (downslope end) it is essentially a line of trees. Further upslope to the east it is more entire (although with gaps) made up of mostly coppiced alder and sapling ash.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management but many of the alder and hazel have been coppiced in the past

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between two fields. The boundary is of no significance to the farm operation and is no longer functional.

HEDGEROW No 5

Form

Coppiced trees (mainly birch) overtopped by mature trees including an impressive over-mature/veteran oak in the east close to the top of the boundary. Thin and with gaps.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management but many of the birch have been coppiced in the past

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between two fields. The boundary is of no significance to the farm operation and is no longer functional.

HEDGEROW No 6

Form

Coppiced shrubs overtopped by mature trees. Thick and locally dense in the east it is thinner in the far west close to the stream.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management but many of the shrubs and trees have been coppiced in the past and some of the hazel also show evidence of having been laid

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between a single field to the north and two fields to the south. It is also the boundary between farm management units and is reinforced by a stockproof fence which ensures its functionality. Shrubs especially blackthorn are spreading out from the hedge into the field to the west.

HEDGEROW No 7

Form

Coppiced shrubs (mainly hazel) overtopped by mature trees. Thick and dense.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management but many of the trees and shrubs have been coppiced in the past

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between two fields. Whilst stock access the western field through the corner of this boundary they only do this infrequently. Shrubs especially blackthorn are spreading out from the hedge into the western field.

HEDGEROW No 8

Form

A line of coppiced shrubs and trees along a short length of fence

Management

There is no evidence of recent management but many of the shrubs have been coppiced in the past

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between the site and a wooded section of Totley Brook in the very northwest of the site.

STREAMSIDE

Form

A rough/loose collection of trees and shrubs above the stream at the bottom of the brookside field, including large mature sycamore, beech and alder.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management.

Position within the landscape

It is unclear whether this was ever a hedge. Cattle use this area to cross the stream so at least in the short-medium past there has been no need for a stockproof boundary. The trees and shrubs are, in the main, located along the top of old meander banks. Shrubs especially blackthorn and rose are spreading out from this hedge/wooded area into the brookside field.

HEDGEROW 9

Form

Thick line of predominantly blackthorn

Management

There is no evidence of recent management.

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between the southern half of the brookside field and a wooded section of Topley Brook (with coppiced hazel and birch).

HEDGEROW 10

Form

At the northern end the hedge is largely indistinguishable from the woodland into which it has been subsumed. In the central section it is more distinct and dominated by coppiced hazel.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management but many of the shrubs have been coppiced in the past

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between the large southern field and a wooded section of Topley Brook. In the north and south in particular it now forms part of an area of wet scrubby woodland within the floodplain at the bottom of the southern field. Maps imply that, in the past, the field boundary may have been the other side of the brook for a short section where it is now indistinct.

HEDGEROW 11

Form

Fairly continuous line of trees and shrubs except in the south where gaps allow access into the grazed woodland beyond.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management but the shrubs have been coppiced in the past.

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the western boundary of the small southern field.

HEDGEROW 12

Form

Ill-defined line of hawthorn and elder in the south petering out into a broader area of semi-natural woodland in the north.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management but the shrubs have been coppiced in the past.

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary between the Wildlife Site and a hilltop improved field to the east. It isn't functional as a boundary and there is no associated fence. It is located towards the top of a steep slope. Down-slope is an area of semi-natural woodland dominated by oak. Up-slope is a line of conifers on the crest of the brow. A large badger sett with c 20 holes, at least 6 of which appear to be active straddles the boundary line. There is a large mature/over-mature field maple at the northern end.

HEDGEROW 13

Form

Indistinct line of shrubs at the edge of a small area of semi-natural woodland.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management.

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary of the wildlife site separating it from a small area of woodland. It doesn't form a functional boundary but the woodland is on a steep slope and only accessed irregularly.

HEDGEROW 14

Form

A double row of trees and shrubs with the true hedge, thin and gappy along the trackside and a line of birch set back from the trackside within the field.

Management

There is no evidence of recent management.

Position within the landscape

The hedge forms the boundary of the site lying alongside the track to Woodthorpe Hall. There is an associated fence. The line of birch may be associated with some concrete building bases, possibly of world war origin.