



Studham Parish Local Hedgerow Census Report

Hedgerow at Bury Farm, Studham Parish
Photo by Heather Webb



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1 Summary

1.1 Objectives

- To collect information about the quantity, quality and distribution of hedgerows in Studham parish in order to inform future action to restore or maintain habitats for target species in the area
- To survey the whole of Studham parish using a **census** survey
- To contribute to several of the actions identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Bedfordshire to:
 - update environmental databases and support the development of the Bedfordshire Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre to handle information
 - monitor changes in extent and quality of priority habitats
 - determine appropriate management regimes to encourage restoration of priority habitats and species through review of national information/guidance to provide advice specific to Bedfordshire
 - identify the most suitable locations for restoration/recreation of priority habitats
 - identify “hot spots” for priority species to enable targeting of advice/habitat creation.

1.2 Findings

- The study covered an area of 971.2 ha, encompassing the 212 hedgerows in Studham parish and representing a total hedgerow length of 48.23 km. Hedgerows that form the boundary of fields, either currently or at one time, rather than garden hedges were included in the survey.
- 67.9% of hedgerows contained more than 4 woody species per 30m section and were species rich, according the Natural England definition for Eastern England. The most frequently occurring species were hawthorn, blackthorn, elder and hazel. A total of 34 woody species were recorded.
- Of the 1380 isolated hedgerow trees recorded the most common species were pedunculate oak and ash.
- One hundred hedges were found to be in favourable condition under the six criteria given in the hedgerow survey handbook, accounting for 47.2% of all the hedges surveyed.
- Almost half the hedges were found to be untrimmed at the time of the survey, over a quarter were trimmed and dense and few hedges were found to be intensively managed. 87% were recorded as having been managed in some way in the last 10 years.
- Associated features in Studham were relatively few, with banks constituting the largest proportion of features. Ditches were scarce due to the geology of the parish, situated on the Chiltern chalk downland.
- The land use adjacent to hedgerows in Studham was mixed, with the largest proportion being arable. The main land uses included arable, pasture and woodland. Nutrient enrichment indicators were found in a large proportion of the adjacent vegetation.
- The study has provided a basis from which to implement action for the natural environment of Studham parish. Through the data captured the project will inform further study of surrounding parishes and contribute to biodiversity action plan targets for the region.

2 Introduction

Hedgerows are an integral part of the British landscape and they remain one of the most important habitats on farmland today. They provide food, shelter, and breeding sites for a wide range of wildlife including birds. It has been estimated that at least 65 species of British bird use hedgerows (Bickmore 2001). However, in 1996, ten of these species appeared on the red list of Birds of Conservation Concern (produced by the major conservation bodies) for the first time. This list included species that were once thought to be common such as grey partridges, bullfinches, corn buntings and linnets.

Surveys carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology show that, during the last 20 years, total hedgerow length in England has fallen, albeit more slowly in the last ten years (Barr et al. 1993). The Hedgerow Regulations, made under the Environment Act 1995, were introduced in 1997 in England and Wales, preventing the removal of hedgerows without first submitting a removal notice to the local planning authority. The current Environmental Stewardship Scheme provides incentives for good management of existing hedgerows and planting of new ones.

Two sample surveys of hedgerow cover have been conducted in Bedfordshire using data recorded over 50 years. These showed that hedgerow loss was 24% for the period 1945 – 1976 and 2% in the period 1976 – 1991 (Bedfordshire and Luton Wildlife Working Group 2001). A previous survey of the Whipsnade and Studham area revealed that up to 50% of the hedgerows are ecologically significant and contain populations of the protected species Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). Dormice can survive in a variety of habitats including ancient semi-natural woodlands with hazel coppice, scrub, plantations on ancient woodland sites and new plantations. They also inhabit hedgerows, particularly those close to existing woodland sites, but they do need a variety of woody and climbing species to provide nuts and berries for food, and bark for nesting. Dormice do not travel across the ground and so a continuous canopy, including important hedgerow networks, is needed to allow them to move around in search of food (Bright, Morris, Mitchell-Jones 2006).



Hazel dormouse, *Muscardinus avellanarius*
Photo by Bjorn Schulz

Bedfordshire County Council on behalf of The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) proposed to undertake during 2006 and 2007 a survey of hedgerows in South Bedfordshire. A bid was submitted to The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in April 2006 by the Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator for Bedfordshire and Luton for funding to carry out a survey of Studham parish in August 2006, and Whipsnade and Kensworth parishes in August 2007. An agreement was made between DEFRA and The Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Partnership on 16th June 2006 to carry out year 1 of the proposal, a survey of hedgerows in Studham parish. The contract commenced on 26th June 2006 and ended on 31st December 2006.

It was agreed that the standard procedure for local surveys, as set out in the Hedgerow Survey Handbook, should be used. Training was provided by DEFRA to the FWAG project officer and the Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator on 20th July 2006. The skills learned were passed on to remaining surveyors in a short workshop and during field

work in August. At the time of training and field work the Hedgerow Survey Handbook was being updated and a draft copy was available to the surveyors.

The standard MS Access database for local surveys, to be used to record results of the survey, was also being updated and a version was created by the Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator for use in the absence of the standard database.

Consent was obtained from all landowners in the survey area prior to commencement of the survey. This was undertaken through local contacts already established by Bedfordshire FWAG and by cold calling.

A health and safety risk assessment was carried out by the project manager prior to the start of the survey and steps taken to mitigate risks identified.

3 Definitions

The survey uses the following definitions (Bickmore 2006):

- Hedgerow is defined as any boundary line of trees or shrubs over 20 metres long and less than 5 metres wide at the base
- Species rich hedgerow is one that has four or more native woody species on average in a 30m length (for Eastern England)
- Nodes are where other boundary features and adjoining hedges occur or there is a gap of more than 20m in the woody structure of the hedgerow. A gap of less than 20m is included as part of the hedge.

4 Methodology

The survey area was 971.2ha and covered the whole of Studham Parish. Studham is the southernmost parish in the county of Bedfordshire, and is located southwest of the town of Luton. A census survey was carried out including all hedgerows within the parish.

Survey Methodology

The survey followed a methodology for local hedgerow surveys as set out in the Hedgerow Survey Handbook draft second edition prepared on behalf of the Steering Group for the UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Hedgerows.

Bedfordshire County Council provided maps and Aerial photographs which were used to identify the location of boundaries likely to be hedgerows and give some idea of the extent of the hedgerow network in Studham. A desktop study was carried out before the survey was undertaken. The route to be taken to carry out the survey was planned.

Consent of most landowners and occupiers was sought prior to starting the survey. Where this could not be done consent was requested during the survey, and where no landowner could be contacted the survey was carried out from public rights of way.

The survey was carried out by the project officer, one field surveyor and several volunteers during August and September 2006.

A field survey form (Appendix 1) was completed for each hedgerow. All hedgerows were surveyed except for garden hedges of non-native species such as *leylandii* sp. and domestic privet.

The length of each hedge surveyed was identified as extending between two nodes (as defined in section 3). A reference number was allocated to each hedgerow and recorded on a 1:10,000 map and sides were also allocated to each hedge (A and B). A 30m section of each hedge was selected by measuring 30m from one end of the hedge and using the second 30m section as the sample. Where the hedge was less than 60m long, the sample section included one end of the hedge.

The following information was collected and recorded in the field survey form:

- Length, width and height of hedgerows
- Continuity of hedgerows
- Adjacent land use
- Number of connecting hedgerows
- Associated features (i.e. bank, verge, ditch)
- Hedgerow shape (trimmed, untrimmed, tall, laid)
- Woody species per 30m section
- Number and species of hedgerow trees found in the whole length of the hedge. These were part of the hedge line and were no further than 1m from the edge of the hedge
- Nutrient enrichment indicators (dock, cleaver, nettle)
- Hedgerow and verge management
- Bare ground
- Veteran trees

Data storage

Survey data were entered into an MS Access database created by the Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator. At the time of the survey and data entry the standard database developed by English Nature was being updated and was unavailable for use.

Data were digitised by the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre and the location of hedgerows was mapped using MapInfo GIS.

5 Results

The total number of hedgerows surveyed in Studham Parish was 212 representing a total length of 48.23 km. 144 hedgerows were species rich, indicating that 67.9% of hedgerows contained more than 4 woody species per 30m section. This assumes that Bedfordshire is in Eastern England where 4 species per 30m is deemed species-rich.

Hedgerow condition and management

- One hundred hedges were found to be in favourable condition under all six criteria, accounting for 47.2% of all the hedges surveyed
- 94% passed the criteria for height (at least 1m) and width (at least 1.5m)
- 81% passed the criteria for continuity (<10% gaps and no gaps more than 5m wide)
- 81% passed the criteria for basal canopy height (at least 0.5m for shrubby hedges and 2m for a line of trees)
- 78% passed the criteria for undisturbed ground immediately adjacent to the hedge (at least 2m)
- 88% passed the criteria for herbaceous cover immediately adjacent to the hedge (at least 1m)
- 98% passed the criteria for introduced species (maximum 10%)
- 1% passed the criteria for nutrient enrichment indicators (dock, nettle and cleaver less than 20% of adjacent vegetation)
- Almost half the hedges were found to be untrimmed (46.7%), 27.8% were trimmed and dense, and 11.3% were tall and leggy
- Few hedges in Studham were found to be intensively managed at only 3%
- The remaining types of hedge made up a small proportion of the total number, including untrimmed with outgrowth (4.7%), recently coppiced (0.5%), recently laid (0.5%) and other at 7%
- 87% were recorded as having been managed in some way in the last 10 years



A species-rich hedge at Hill Farm, Studham
Photo by Heather Webb

Hedgerow species

A total of 34 hedgerow species were recorded in Studham. Garden hedges of non-native species were not surveyed. The proportion of hedges containing more than 50% native species (including archaeophytes and sycamore) was 99.5%.

The following table shows a list of species recorded during the survey:

Table 1 Woody species and climbers found in the hedgerows of Studham Parish, Bedfordshire

Apple, crab (<i>Malus sylvestris</i>)	Hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>)
Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	Horse chestnut (<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>)
Aspen (<i>Populus tremula</i>)	Lime, small-leaved (<i>Tilia cordata</i>)
Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)	Maple, field (<i>Acer campestre</i>)
Birch, silver (<i>Betula pendula</i>)	Oak, holm (<i>Quercus ilex</i>)
Blackthorn (<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>)	Oak, pedunculate (<i>Quercus robur</i>)
Cherry, wild (<i>Prunus avium</i>)	Pine, Scots (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)
Dogwood (<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>)	Plum, wild (<i>Prunus domestica</i>)
Elder (<i>Sambuca nigra</i>)	Rose (<i>Rosa</i> sp.)
Elm (<i>Ulmus</i> sp.)	Rose, dog- (<i>Rosa canina</i>)
Elm, English (<i>Ulmus procera</i>)	Rose, field- (<i>Rosa arvensis</i>)
Gorse (<i>Ulex europaeus</i>)	Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)
Gelder rose (<i>Viburnum opulus</i>)	Spindle (<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>)
Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus</i> sp.)	Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)

Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)
Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*)

Traveller's-joy (*Clematis vitalba*)
Wayfaring-tree (*Viburnum lantana*)
Willow, goat (*Salix caprea*)



Wayfaring-tree, *Viburnum lantana*
Photo by Heather Webb

The most common shrubby species found during the survey were hawthorn (86% of hedges), blackthorn (60%), elder (60%) and hazel (50%). Hawthorn-dominated hedgerows (where more than 50% of the species content was hawthorn) constituted 27% of all hedgerows. 97% of hedgerows contained mixed species and 1% of hedgerows were lines of trees.

Hedgerow trees

Of the 1380 isolated hedgerow trees surveyed, the most common species were pedunculate oak (41%) and ash (23%).

The diameter at breast height (DBH) of all hedgerow trees was recorded and 2.1% were more than 100cm. 11.4% were between 60 and 100cm, 51% between 20 and 60 cm, 6.4% between 10 and 20cm and 4.5% less than 10cm. Details and location of all trees with DBH greater than 100cm were recorded in the veteran tree section of the survey form.

Associated features

Associated features in Studham were relatively few, with banks being the largest proportion of features at 25.9%. Ditches were scarce due to the geology of the parish, situated on the Chiltern chalk downland. Only 6.1% of hedges had associated ditches.

Adjacent land use

As expected, the adjacent land use in Studham was very mixed, with the largest proportion of land use adjacent to hedges on at least one side being arable. The main land uses included arable, pasture and woodland.

The following figures are expressed as percentage of hedges that show the feature on at least one side and number of hedges that show the feature on at least one side. It was not possible to survey all hedges on both sides, although most were surveyed on both sides.



Arable fields in Studham Parish
Photo by Heather Webb

- 51.4% of hedges (109) had arable cropping as an adjacent land use with 41.5% of hedges (88) having grassland (improved, semi-improved and unimproved) on at least one side.
- There were no water features adjacent to hedges, such as canals, lakes, ponds, rivers or streams.
- 8.1% of hedges (17) had woodland on one side, both mature and semi-mature woodland. There was no young woodland adjacent to hedges.

- Roads, tracks and footpaths were a major feature associated with hedgerows. 2.4% of hedges (5) had footpaths, 15.6% (33) had tracks, 2.8% (6) had major roads and 23.6% (50) minor roads.
- Uncropped margins were recorded for 7% of hedgerows (15).
- Other adjacent land uses, such as gardens, were recorded for 13.7% of hedges (29).
- Nearly all hedgerows had adjacent vegetation containing species indicative of nutrient enrichment, such as nettles, cleavers and docks.

Important fauna

Although dormice are known to occupy the study area and dormouse boxes have been placed in some of the hedges, no direct signs of dormouse activity were observed. However some important species were found. These included brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), a national priority species and red kite (*Milvus milvus*), a UK amber list species recently reintroduced to the Chiltern Hills AONB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 2006). A badger latrine was also spotted.



Brown hare, *Lepus europaeus*.
Photo Wikipedia.org

Other species spotted during the survey included the comma (*Polygonia c-album*), common blue (*Polyommatus icarus*), red-legged partridge (*Alectoris rufa*), and unidentified species of deer and frog.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Practicality of using the procedures for local surveys as set out in the Hedgerow Survey Handbook

The Draft Hedgerow Survey Handbook provided a useful tool when planning and undertaking the survey, although the following points arose at different stages of the process:

- Some initial problems arose when trying to define some of the criteria on the survey form. Clarification was needed to determine what distance from the hedge vegetation height should be recorded i.e. whether the 'margin', if there is a recognisably different one, should be used rather than the area further away.
- Clarification was also needed to determine which parts of the survey should be carried out in the 30m section and which parts in the whole length of the hedge.
- It was unclear whether trees that were within 1m of a hedgerow but that were also part of adjacent woodland edge should be included as isolated hedgerow trees.
- The standard MS Access database was unavailable for data entry for the duration of the project and a database had to be created for the survey.
- It would have been useful to have a completed field crib sheet at the time of the survey and it is understood that this may be available for future surveys.

6.2 Comparison of survey area to local and national biodiversity action plans

- The national biodiversity action plan identifies the current status of hedgerows in the UK (Joint Nature Conservation Committee 2006). Ancient hedgerows are regarded as being those in existence before the main enclosure period of 1720 to 1840. Access to historic records from Bedfordshire County Council show that by the end of the Middle Ages roughly half of Bedfordshire's countryside was enclosed (Bedfordshire County Council date unknown).
- The main loss of hedgerows in Bedfordshire was between 1945 and 1976 with a very much lower level of loss after 1976. The level of loss was much higher during the latter period for the rest of the UK (Bedfordshire and Luton Wildlife Working Group 2001).
- A high proportion of hedgerows in the survey area (67.9%) were found to be species rich, compared with a relatively low national proportion of species rich areas.
- The hedgerow network in Studham will provide corridors for movement between habitats of BAP species, particularly dormice which are known to inhabit the area.
- Sympathetic management and restoration of hedgerows will safeguard and enhance dormouse-supporting habitats and their links.
- It may be possible to produce information for landowners providing advice regarding hedgerow management for dormice. The survey will help to inform this process.

7 Map

See attached.

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Appendix 1 Field survey form

Veteran Tree Features Recording Form

To be recorded on any tree ≥ 100 cm dbh, or any tree smaller that are in the truly ancient class for that species

Date: _____

Surveyor: _____

Hegerow number: _____ Grid ref: _____

Species: _____ dbh (cm) to nearest 5 cm: _____

Percentage of canopy live, to nearest 5%: _____

Dead wood attached to the tree > 1m long and 8 cm in diameter:

Major rot sites, any more than 15 cm across

Maiden tree (i.e. no evidence of pollarding, coppicing etc)

Pollarding evidence

Notes (e.g., form, photo numbers):

Local Hedgerow Field Survey Form



Date: _____

Surveyor 1 Grid ref end 1:

Surveyor 2 Grid ref end 2:

Hedgerow no: _____

Side surveyed (circle one): **N | E | S | W | Both**

Hedgerow type (tick one): shrubby line of trees shrubby with line of trees hedgerow remains

PART A - ESSENTIAL ASSESSMENT (To be completed for all local hedgerow surveys)

1 DIMENSIONS

1a - length (m):

1b - average height (m):

1c - average width (m):

between ends or intersections with other

Excluding bank to nearest 25 cm

Estimate at widest point of canopy; excluding hedges, to nearest 5 m bank to nearest 25 cm

2 INTEGRITY - Continuity and height of canopy along hedgerow

2a - percent gaps

2b - are there any gaps > 5 m (tick if yes)?

2c - average height of base of canopy (m) to nearest 25 cm:

Estimate percentage gaps along total hedgerow length to nearest 5%

3 UNDISTURBED GROUND

3a - average width of undisturbed ground (m) to nearest 50 cm:

Side A

Side B

6 CONNECTIONS

Total number of other hedgerows connected to survey hedgerow (both ends)

3b - average width of perennial herbaceous vegetation (m) to nearest 50 cm:

5 ADJACENT LAND USE

		Side A	Side B			Side A	Side B
Arable	Arable crop			Road/Route	Major road		
	Uncropped margin				Minor road		
Grass	Improved				Track		
	Semi-improved				Footpath		
	Unimproved				Rail		
Woodland	Young				Canal		
	Semi-mature			Water	River		
	Mature				Stream		
Other - state				Lake/pond			

7 ASSOCIATED FEATURES

Bank - height (m) to nearest 25 cm:

Side A

Side B

Verge - width (m) to nearest 1 m:

Average vegetation height (cm) to nearest 5 cm:

ditch - external - wet
 ditch - external - dry
 ditch - internal - wet
 ditch - internal - dry

Fence

8 HEDGEROW SHAPE - Circle diagram of cross-section that most closely resembles hedgerow.



a) trimmed and dense



b) intensively managed



c) untrimmed



d) tall and leggy



e) untrimmed, with outgrowth



f) recently coppiced



g) recently laid

h) other (sketch)

10 NUTRIENT ENRICHMENT INDICATORS			
Estimate % cover within the verge of each species			
	Side A	Side B	
Nettles:	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	
	Side A	Side B	
Cleavers:	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	
	Side A	Side B	
Docks:	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	
4 RECENTLY INTRODUCED NON-NATIVE SPECIES			
	Species	Side A	Side B
4a - % cover of introduced species in the shrub layer to nearest 5%, or just the name if < 5%	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
4b - % cover of introduced species in the hedge-bottom to nearest 5%, or just the name if < 5%	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Fauna (evidence of RDB species, in particular dormouse):			
<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>			
Features (including evidence of recent planting):			
<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>			
Photo numbers:	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>		

PART B - ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENTS

13 HEDGEROW/VERGE MANAGEMENT

Signs of hedgerow management	flailed/ trimmed	coppiced	laid	planting/ gapping	pollarding trees	none
Signs of recent mgmt < 2 yrs	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Signs of mgmt 2-10 yrs	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Signs of older mgmt > 10	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Signs of hedge-bottom management	mowing/ cutting	herbicides	cultivation	none		
Signs of recent mgmt < 2 yrs	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>		
Signs of mgmt 2-10 yrs	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>		
verge management	grazed	cut	none			
Side A	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>			
Side B	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>			

verge/headland average width (m)	
Side A	Side B
<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

14 BARE GROUND (Estimate percentage to nearest 5%)

Under canopy : Bank: Verge: Field edge: