South Yorkshire Ancient Woodland Inventory Update: Central Guidance Document

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1 Before you go

1.1 Data Agreement

Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust requires volunteers doing surveys to sign the data agreement. This states that the data you record belongs to the trust, and that we have the responsibility of storing and processing it. If you've volunteered with Data 4 Nature before you should have signed this already. This can be found on the web page, or email us for a copy.

1.2 Surveyor Release Form

There is also a Google Form to complete with some extra information. This essentially is your permission to share your email address with other volunteers, and your permission to use any photos of yourselves and any photos you take during the project in our publicity and publications (with proper credit where appropriate). This also asks you where you're based, to give a rough idea of geographic spread. The form can be filled in here:https://forms.gle/HZqYExKFRrBJyRes5

1.3 Risk Assessment

The risk assessment can be found below and on the webpages. Please read it through before starting surveys. This is a general assessment of fieldwork risks, so may not cover specific risks found on your site. As always, be sensible! If something seems risky, don't feel as if you have to continue the survey. We'd much rather have healthy volunteers than an extra survey.
Link to Risk Assesment:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-mcepQviDxQ54khfH4_tI_9u8COv_jCc/edit

1.4 Lone Working and emergency contacts

For these surveys, we expect that some of you may wish to undertake them alone either for practical reasons or simply because you prefer to do so. This is acceptable within SRWT - we simply ask that you follow our Lone Working policy. Firstly, we ask that you always take a mobile phone - this is your way to call for help if needed.

Secondly, we ask that you have a 'buddy' - this is someone to check up on you, and can be a friend or family member. Before going on survey, let them know **where you're going** including the (rough) route you'll take, **your car reg and description** (if you're driving to site) and your **parking location**, and your **return time**. If you've not checked in by the stated time, they should try to contact you. If this fails, they should check your parking location if possible. If this isn't possible, or your car is still at the location, they should contact SRWT/us.

There are many ways that this can work - it doesn't have to be overly difficult. An example could be: tell your partner/housemate where you're going in the morning and to expect you back for tea at 7pm. They should already have your car description and reg, and will be expecting you back.

As before, if your site has increased risks e.g. steep slopes or a highway to cross, consider choosing a different site. This also applies if there is no signal across the site.
Some numbers:

SRWT Office: 0114 263 4335
David Botcherby: 07766829665
Nick Clarke: 07925123939

1.5 Time Worked

Please keep a track of how many hours you spend on this project. This helps us secure funding for volunteering and means we can celebrate how much effort you guys put in.

For surveys, we've added a Time Started and Time Finished field - this should allow us to calculate your hours in the field. For non-field hours (e.g. if you've offered to do

some archival work) please email us separately. We've already registered who was at the trainings, so don't worry about that.

As with other communication, just email us at ancientwoodland@wildsheffield.com

1.6 Expenses

As a SRWT volunteer, you're entitled to expenses for each day you work. This could cover both travel and food up to £10 a day. Just keep the receipts from any purchases and email volunteering@wildsheffield.com

2 Choosing a site

2.1 Online Map

All of our sites are shown on an online map, accessible through the link below:

https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/ac07daa0b698459a8e7f9d62c31f39fd/page/Page/

To show you area, either pan and zoom the map with your mouse and the buttons, or search for an address in the top left (clicking on the address will zoom you very far in, so just zoom back out). The South Yorkshire and Local Authority boundaries are shown on the map, as well as current and potential Ancient Woodland sites. The legend is visible by clicking on the circular green list button at the bottom: CRoW Access Land is shown in orange, and public footpaths in dashed lines. The woodlands are categorised by priority as follows:

AWI Survey Priority (view)

0 - Already on the inventory

1 - Priority for investigation

2 - Ancient Wood Pasture

3 - Infilled AWP

To be determined - leave for now

Once you've identified a woodland that you'd like to visit, note down the UID (the number that appears on the woodland e.g. Barn512j) and go to the spreadsheet to check the information.

You can also toggle layers on and off using the layers button (like stacked squares) at the bottom of the screen. Finally, you can print a map using the print button at the bottom. **You can also use this to save a pdf map** of the area. This may be useful when in the field to see the extent of the area.

For Ancient Wood Pasture and Infilled AWP, don't worry about these sites at present. The survey for Wood Pasture is very different, being focused on ancient/veteran trees, and the Infilled AWP is likely to lack many of the indicators that we're looking for due to its history of being wood pasture progressing to woodland.

2.2 Spreadsheet

The spreadsheet contains basic information on each site, arranged by Local Authority and UID. It is accessed here:

[Survey Priority Spreadsheet](#)

To find your site, either scroll to the UID (they're arranged alphabetically), or search for it with Ctrl + F . There is a column for name - these are not all filled in, or may have an older name, as they're based on the 1840s OS 1st Series maps. The What3words and Grid Reference will be visible to the right - these are simply the centre of the wood, not a parking place! There is also a column marking whether it's already been surveyed - we'd like to cover as many of these sites as possible, but we also welcome repeat surveys as different areas may be covered, or some things that were missed e.g. due to flowering times.

2.3 Access

We don't have specific access to any of these sites due to cost and time restraints. This means that we're largely limited to those sites with public access. As many of our sites are smaller woodlands, we are expecting many to be privately owned. The interactive map shows CRoW Access Land (where you have a right of access across the whole area) and public footpaths - use this to plan where you can visit within a site. A survey from a public footpath is still very useful to us!

For sites local to you, you may know the landowner or have an idea who it may be. In this case, feel free to get in contact with the landowner to get permission or go door knocking. If you plan to do this, contact us for a release form that they can sign, and we can give you some advice on what to say (e.g. that the survey will not guarantee one way or the other whether it goes on the inventory, and that it may be put on the inventory regardless). Don't feel obliged to do this, but it would be very helpful if you have the time/inclination.

2.4 Finding other surveyors

If you'd like to find other people to go out with to survey these woods, there are a couple of options. Once you've given us your permission, we can share your email address with other volunteers. You can also join the whatsapp group for ancient woodland survey that we've created [here](#)

If you're still looking for someone to join you, or aren't sure if you're confident with the surveys, get in touch with us. You should be able to join David or Nick on a survey (weekdays only, unfortunately), and we can get you started

3 Surveys

3.1 Survey Form

The survey form is a google form, and should be loadable on your phone. You don't need to be signed into a google account to use it. Currently, the form has issues being loaded offline, so a printed paper version for use in case of no signal would be useful - though it does seem to handle intermittent signal well. If you need printing access, we can do this at the office. The form can be accessed here:

https://forms.gle/TcAExWDXq6a9fj9eA

[Here is a PDF version](#)

The form is simple enough to fill in. Most of the questions are not required, so if you're not sure of the answer to a question, feel free to skip it. The only required questions are: your name, the date, the survey start and finish time, the UID of the woodland, the access information, and if you took any photos.

It's split into sections: First, general information about yourself and the wood; next the access information; then information on the type of wood (woodland/wood pasture, plantation/semi-natural); then on woodland structure, including coppice/pollard trees; then the general tree species cover; then the general understory; then woodland archeological features; then the ancient woodland indicator species; and finally additional information.

The form will be automatically sent to us when complete.

3.2 Photos

For features and plants that you're unsure of, or that are particularly interesting, please take a photo and send it to us. The general rules of taking a photo apply:

- Make sure the feature is visible and in focus. For smaller plants this is often difficult with a phone, but possible if you have the knack. Placing the plant against a flat background (clipboard, book, your leg) and then tapping on it (on the screen) to focus can help. You should see a little square appear where you tap - this is where it's

focusing (you can often then slide up or down to alter the brightness). If you have the focus as you like it, you can also hold down the press to lock the focus depth (the square should go orange). This enables you to remove the flat background and keep the plant in focus
- Avoid over- or under-exposing the photo
- For archaeology, check the photo after to see if the identifying features (banks/ditches) are visible
- For plants, get a picture of the flower and leaf if possible
- Take notes:
  - Where were you?
  - Where did you find it? What was it growing on / next to?
  - What do you think it might be?
  - Key features (size, direction of facing)
- Stay safe! Don't climb up things for a photo, and watch your footing while taking it

Once you're back from the survey, you can send us the photos by email or direct to Google Drive. To email, just send to the ancientwoodland@wildsheffield.com email with your name, the UID of the wood, and the date. Be careful with file sizes, as they're limited in emails. To upload to the Google Drive, go to the folder [here](). Unfortunately for this, you'll need to be signed into a Google account. Once in the folder, you should be able to create a folder for you wood with the UID, then a folder for your survey with your name and the date, then put the photos inside.

4 Resources

4.1 Ancient Woodland (including local work)

An excellent introduction to the concept and local AW is Mel Jones' *Sheffield's Woodland Heritage* (4th ed 2009). This covers a lot of the background as well as local history, place names, and unique features. It's short and inexpensive from online second hand book sellers (and can often be found in local charity shops). The same goes for his other publications, including *Rotherham's Woodland Heritage* (1995) and *Trees and Woodland in the South Yorkshire Landscape* (2012).

Mel Jones also collaborated with Ian Rotherham and Christine Handley on the *Woodland Heritage Manual* (2011), which is a good introduction to identifying ancient woodland.

There are also many other books on the concept and definition of ancient woodland, though they are generally longer and more academic in tone. I would recommend Oliver Rackham's books if you have the time and want to learn everything there is to know about UK woodland history and ecology. I enjoyed reading his *Woodlands* (2006) towards the start of this project.

4.2 The Ancient Woodland Inventory Update Project

To understand a bit more about the project and our methodology, you could start by reading our webpages here: https://www.wildsheffield.com/discover/ancient-woodland/

If you want to really understand the fine detail, our guidance manual is online here. It's quite the beast at 121 pages (before examples, appendices, and references), but it's our main source for the methodology.

4.3 Our Resources

All of the documents and resources we've created are available through the webpage, or in the emails we've sent you. They can be found in our volunteer resources folder here. These include:

A guide to our main plant indicator species

A guide to archeological indicators

Slides from the all-day training session on March 18th

Slides from our online methodology training session on April 4th

A recording of the online methodology training on April 4th