

Ecological Survey Report – Yew Tree Cottage land exchange

Date of survey: 11/02/16

Forest-owned land

The area currently owned by the Forest has clearly been used as a parking area/turning circle for some time, and is of no ecological value.

Yew Tree Cottage-owned land

The main area – referred to as the former fruit garden – is a roughly square area of land sloping gently towards the east, where it is bounded by a small stream. The southern boundary has a raised bank with a scattering of mature holly (*Ilex aquifolia*) trees. Daffodils (*Narcissus*) were present at the foot of the bank, most likely planted. Bare areas of the bank support colonies of a liverwort.

Roughly 90% of the area is dominated by bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and clearly heavily used by deer. Scattered bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) were visible where deer pressure had pushed down the bracken, and it is likely that more bluebells are present, suppressed by the bracken. A patch of nettles (*Urtica dioica*) also reflects the past human use of the site, indicating higher soil nutrient levels perhaps resulting from a fire- or composting- site.

To the east are scattered *Rhododendron ponticum* bushes, showing signs of mechanical removal, though re-growth was present. Old bottles present on the surface suggest former use as a dump.

To the north are more scattered mature hollies and one old hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) supporting good colonies of epiphytic lichen.

Overall, the site is typical of much of the Forest, particularly the boundary areas where human activity associated with dwellings has impacted the ecological value over many years.

The small former cart shed was not surveyed.

Steve Alton

Conservation Officer

For the Conservators of Ashdown Forest