Hedgerows

Fryent Country Park represents one of the best surviving hedgerow landscapes in London. The Kingsbury parish side of the Park provides an example of the 'ancient countryside' of fields created by assarting (Medieval / Tudor woodland clearance). Hedgerows are being restored using the 1597 Hovenden map as a guide. On the Harrow parish side of the Park, the landscape is of the 'planned countryside', with regular shaped fields, created by inclosure of open fields and subsequent sub-division by further hedgerows. On the line between the two systems, is a one-kilometre green lane and section of parish boundary, much of which is also on the route of Hell Lane or Eldestrete. A shorter section of another green lane is on the south side of Masons Field. (See also the Green Lanes section of the Management Plan). The Park has examples of ditches, banks and lynchets. The hedgerows contain a variety of trees, shrubs, herbaceous flora and wildlife including butterflies, birds and bats. The hedgerows at Fryent Country Park support populations of Wild Service Tree and the Brown Hairstreak butterfly. Fryent Country Park is the only location in London and for some distance of the Narrow-leaved Bitter-cress (*Cardamine impatiens*). Re-found in about 1985, the previous Middlesex record had been 'near Harrow' in 1901. The species is found in hedgerow edges, some scrub and other habitat.

There are over 12km of hedgerow within the Country Park. Within the hedgerows are over 350 standard (timber-sized) trees. Details of each hedge are available on a spreadsheet (2013) and in a text inventory.

Task	Notes
Conserve, restore and create a diverse hedgerow landscape that is structurally, ecologically and visually diverse. The hedgerow landscape includes examples of laid hedges, parish boundary hedgerows, green lanes; woodland belt hedgerows, hedgerows of different widths, standard trees, and frequent intersections which are more valuable for birds. Preserve the associated earthworks including ditches, banks and lynchets.	
Standard trees: Increase the number of hedgerow standard trees. Standard or hedgerow trees are the timber-sized trees that grow above the height of the hedgerow. These contribute significantly to the landscape. Species are of Oak, Ash, Elm or Field Maple with other species occurring less frequently. All of the English Elm trees at Fryent Country Park were lost to disease in the 1970s though their suckers continue to survive. Ash is now at risk from Ash Dieback Disease. Oak is affected by Oak Processionary Moth, though the trees survive. From a low point in the 1980s, the number of standard trees has started to recover, though numbers would decline if Ash were lost. Projects aim to encourage potential new standards growing naturally in hedgerows; and to plant potential standards of suitable other species to increase diversity and to reduce risk.	
On the Kingsbury parish side of the Park, restore and manage the hedgerow system as near as practical to that on the 1597 Hovenden map.	
Encourage productive uses of the hedgerows, for example, for fruit including wild fruits and for old varieties of apple and bullace/damson/plum; for wild crafting; for timber; and as routes for recreational walking.	
Blackthorn, became dominant in the park hedgerows, possibly following severe cutting of the hedgerows in the late 1960s. While it supports much wildlife, it also suckers into the hedgerow edge and adjacent meadows and paths, while out-shading other wildlife within the hedgerow. To achieve a better balance between wildlife benefits and dominance, a number of conservation techniques can be used:	
Methods for the control of Blackthorn include: • Mowing of paths at field edges. Spring, summer and early autumn cutting of hedgerow edge (and cross-field paths) by flail. Ensure that the cutting is close to hedgerows where Blackthorn is present (but otherwise a herbaceous edge is beneficial). • Cutting of suckers in hedgerows. • Shade: While Blackthorn casts shade over other species, it is not itself shade tolerant. Cutting Blackthorn where it grows	

adjacent to trees of other species can help the other tree species to compete. Controlling Blackthorn in single-species stands is seldom effective at control. • Scalloping: Scalloping involves the partial reduction of Blackthorn. Three scalloping techniques are used at Fryent Country Park to improve habitat diversity. More recently, one of the aims is to encourage an establishing population of the elusive and scarce Brown Hairstreak butterfly. The butterfly lays eggs on young Blackthorn growth where the woody material is between 1-4 years of age. To achieve that, Blackthorn needs to be cut to achieve regrowth, though that activity in itself, is at the risk of removing eggs and caterpillars. The corundum is partially solved by providing Blackthorn at a variety of ages.	
Scalloping: the original method removes a swathe or scallop of Blackthorn to the centre line of the hedgerow. This creates open and sheltered areas of herbaceous hedgerow edge and rough grassland. The technique is adapted from a conservation technique for improving the wildlife of paths through woodlands. First check as far as practicable that there are no Brown Hairstreak eggs on the section to the cut. Working from inside the hedge, the Blackthorn is cut back, ideally to the original edge of the hedge-bank and ditch. The cut material is stacked in voids in the shade of the hedge, to create another habitat for wildlife. The cut scallop can be from a few metres to many metres in length. This provides an open area of hedgerow edge valuable for rough grasses, herbaceous hedgerow plants, butterflies, invertebrates and birds. The cleared area also enables visitors to see the original hedgerow and standard trees such as Oak. Tree species other than Blackthorn are retained. Re-emerging Blackthorn suckers are cut back to retain the hedgerow edge vegetation.	
Scalloping: for Brown Hairstreaks As above, but rather than cut the regrowth of new Blackthorn suckers, those are allowed to regrow. That provides young Blackthorn for egg laying by Brown Hairstreak butterflies. New scallops are created elsewhere and so the result is a series of scallops of differently aged Blackthorn.	
Scalloping: field entrances As for the original method, with the aim of creating wide, sunny field entrances. Creates typical habitat for Gatekeeper butterflies.	
Hedge-laying A traditional craft that involves making or re-making a living stock-proof barrier from a line of young deciduous trees. Similar, biologically to coppicing, the tree produces new re-growth the following spring at just below the cut, while the laid stem (pleacher) lives for a number of years. If repeated at intervals, the hedge can be	

renewed indefinitely and hedge-laying was widely used before the advent of fencing. Hedge-laying renews the hedge and enables light to reach the hedgerow bank. As a craft, the result can be a work of art. At Fryent Country Park the style is of conservation hedge-laying. This is quicker than traditional hedge-laying, as little if any of the total length of the pleacher need be cut off, so also reducing the time for managing the cuttings. Research elsewhere indicates that the conservation benefits are similar to traditional hedge-laying.	
Timing: Work on hedgerows should be timed for September to February inclusive. This is to avoid disturbing breeding birds (and a legal requirement) and to comply with national Cross Compliance standards (see Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition standards on the DEFRA website). The standards enable a dispensation for hedge-laying into March (and April?) but always check for birds.	
Fruit trees: Promote the wild and other fruit trees in hedgerows.	
Elm: Conserve the English Elm growth. At Fryent Country Park, English Elm (*Ulmus procera*) is associated with the internal and boundary hedges of Hill Farm and of Barn Hill and some of the west side hedgerows. Elm is going through overlapping cycles of regeneration following re-infestations by Dutch Elm Disease. Elm is valuable for wildlife as a tree, suckers and as decaying wood. The suckers are able to out-compete young or small trees of many tree species including Blackthorn.	
Aftercare of all recently planted and restored hedgerows.	
Hill Farm: Maintain the path and hedges between the park hedge and the Hawthorn hedge of the neighbouring residential flats, to provide light for both hedges, a footpath, and access for works.	
Grazing land hedgerows: restore where practical in the future.	
Eastlande: restore path alongside the hedge at the western apex of the Park, to enable inspections and to increase light.	
Species conservation: All species including Narrow-leaved Bitter-cress (*Cardamine impatiens*), the Calamagrostis grass (Half Yardes Meade hedge), Wild Service Tree; and refuge banks for the Common Lizard.	
Monitoring: The hedgerows in the Country Park have been surveyed on a 10 year cycle as at 1983, 1993, 2003 and 2013.	

More information

See also the ‘Green Lanes’, ‘Woodlands’ and ‘Footpaths’ sections of this management plan.

Barn Hill Conservation Group. www.bhcg.btck.co.uk

The Conservation Volunteers. Hedging.

The Conservation Volunteers. Trees and Aftercare.

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