

ECOLOGY REPORT – WILLS GILL BECK AREA 11A

Work carried out by - Jennifer Kirkby with support from ecologist Kay Easton - 2016

LANDSCAPE VALUE

- Classed in Leeds Landscape Character Review (2011) as Pastoral Plateau Farmland (MGP3) deemed as needing 'restoration of character'.
- In the past this area has been classified as having a special landscape character but this was declassified for reasons unknown in the 2006 UDP.
- The land sweeps up from the built areas of Aireborough to the Chevin "affording the strongest possible link between the whole of Aireborough's built area and true countryside. Tenuous but valuable green links exist between this open countryside and urban green spaces within the built area. This is considered fundamental to the character of Guiseley (ANDF Landscape Report 2016 - Lonsdale) and thus an area suitable for green belt enhancement re NPPF 81.
- Improvement/restoration suggestions are to promote farm management geared to biodiversity and especially watercourses and woodland, and to be careful of not letting the historic field patterns degrade. Leisure usage could benefit from footpath improvements and maintenance, with an accent maybe on foraging.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- Undulating, glacial moraine, on a base of Guiseley Gritstone, with a superficial layer of glacial till, sits in a basin between the dip slope of the Chevin and Yeadon Haw.
- Rises 200ft, south to north, from 450ft at the start of the Beck on Wills Gill Lane, to 650ft on The Hill at the top of the footpath: aspect is mainly, south to south east. From west to east it falls 50ft from 525ft at the Guiseley end of Carlton lane to 475ft on Wills Gill Beck across Dun Ing.
- Many becks and culverts, coming together in Wills Gill Beck, and Shaw Lane Beck both of which eventually run into Guiseley Beck west of Greenbottom.
- Some reasonably old trees especially sycamores and ash which show signs of historic 'management' (on a 1724 map areas with old trees are marked stubbed with scribbles representing trees/bushes – not so many oak or beech, as there are in other places around Aireborough – possibly a feature of the wet ground.
- There are some particularly old Ash trees at the top of Calfhole Beck on the Boundary of the Liberty on what was called ecology area 11b – but this area only had one May survey with pictures but not written up.
- Evidence of old woods and greenways – only two woods now remain Calfhole Wood and Deipkier (a designated local nature area). (Cow Hill Wood, Royd Wood and Shaw Wood have gone.)
- Past use – originally common pasture below the East Field (which sits on the top side of Carlton lane), then became the Milking Pastures for Guiseley and Yeadon with evidence of quarrying along Carlton lane map of 1724. Several woods, Deipkier, Calfhole Wood, Cow Hill Wood, Royd Wood and Shaw Wood. 1838 tithe map, lower fields named 'Ing' suggesting use as a wet meadow, small amount of arable on the higher margins, but mainly pasture. (Put in map of tithe names)

- Currently used for grazing mostly, sheep, cattle, horses – most does not seemed to be ‘seriously’ farmed at a professional scale now – rather used by smallholders.
- Stone walls and some hedges criss-cross relatively small fields. Stone features indicate use for grazing cattle historically eg squeeze stiles. Some of the old woodland has small ditches and banks in front.
- One main footpath from Church Lane, across Wills Gill lane to Upcroft on Carlton Lane. The path is old and has possibly been in use since pre 1066 as a connection from Otley Minster to the site of Guiseley church

ECOLOGY NOTED IN PAST REPORTS

1. July 1928 Walk up Carlton Lane (Yorkshire Evening Post)

The grass in the meadows is ready for cutting, and when the ‘hay weather’ arrives the quiet of the country will be broken by the swish of the scythe, the rattle of the mowing machine and the laughter of the hay makers. The fields are full of the gold of buttercups and wine-dark with the flush of sorrel..... North of Norland Farm there will be mushrooms soon for the gathering..... The bramble by the way is in bud, and about our feet are blue-eyed speedwell. And there rises to greet us the scent of yellow crosswort and white clover. Trees mentioned – sycamore, elm and ash. Birds – Swallow and larks.

2 Wills Gill Beck taken from Memory of Childhood F E Rogers (1992)

A footpath from church lane, across Wills Gill Lane, where there was a small sandy beach ideal for anglers and paddlers. The low banks beyond were a blaze of colour with the golden globes of the water-blobs. When I was a pupil at the now demolished Orchard Street School (1912 – 1918) we were frequently taken on nature walks along this path and were encouraged by our teachers to gather bunches of various wild flowers, which were put in jam jars on the school window ledges, to be used later as the subjects for elementary botany drawings and paintings. The path eventually finds its way out into Carlton Lane. It is now, alas, neglected, overgrown and almost impassable.

METHODOLOGY OF SURVEY

A community ecologist took one survey a month from May to August, primarily of plants, but any fauna or birds noted. Key area was the beck along the footpath from Wills Gill Lane to UpCroft. This area chosen as offered the most likely area for plants not being disturbed by farming procedures. All plants noted were photographed in order for identification to be clarified if required.

MAP AND AREAS (see diagram 1)

After several surveys, the area of enquiry appeared to be divided into several different sections . All photographs were taken on the same walk at the end of May.

A –Area alongside Wills Gill Beck from Wills Gill Lane to the old green lane/redundant squeeze stile. Part of a field named Dun Ing on the 1838 tithe map.



B – The area from the first stile, to the stile going into Cow Close (1). This runs by the beck which is in more of a gully at this point. The area of note is a line of old trees along the beck – maybe the edge of the old Royd Wood.



C – Here the footpath runs around the edge of Cow Close (1), between a fence and the wall. At one point it crosses a culverted beck. The East wall runs along the edge of a beck, and is intersected by the top edge of the old Royd Wood. There is little of interest on the South side.



D – A stile and a bridge across the beck take the path to the edge of a different Cow Close (2), which appears to be managed differently. The West side where the path runs, has a beck and hedge. The North side, where the path runs, has some older trees, the East side of this Cow Close has a line of very old Sycamores, that may have been pollarded (or stubbed?), and the South side has what looks like the remnants of the north end of Royd Wood.



E – Is listed in 1838 as a green lane between yet another Cow Close (3) and a field called The Hill on the West, and on the East what is called Cow Hill Wood (although in 1838 it is used as pasture). The green lane has two sections divided by a stile. The southern section has a line of old trees on the East, the northern section has a dry stone wall on the East, and more of a hedge on the West between it and The Hill. In 1838 the Hill was used as Arable.

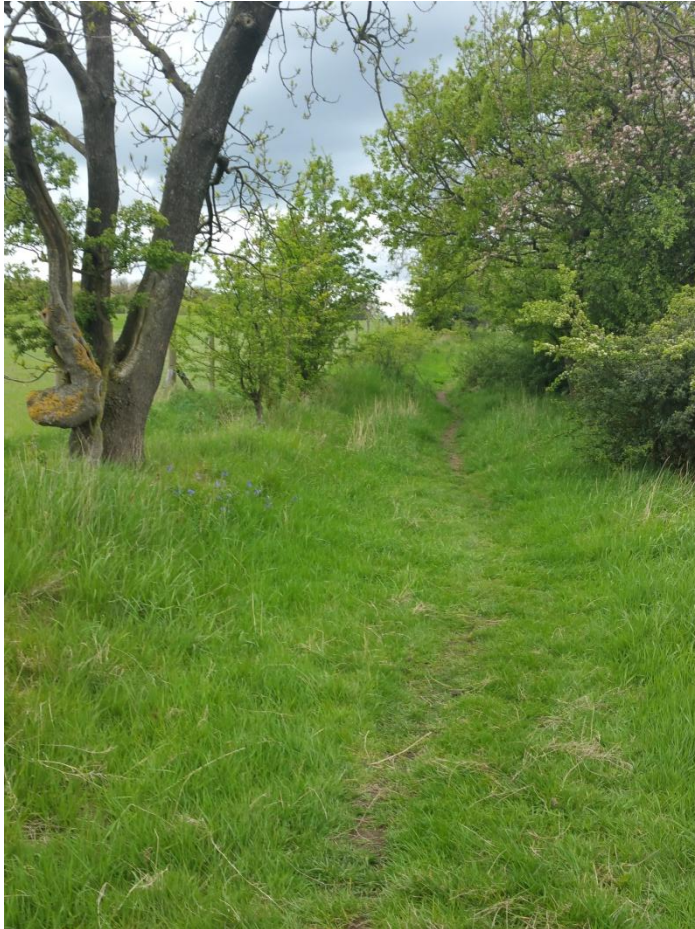
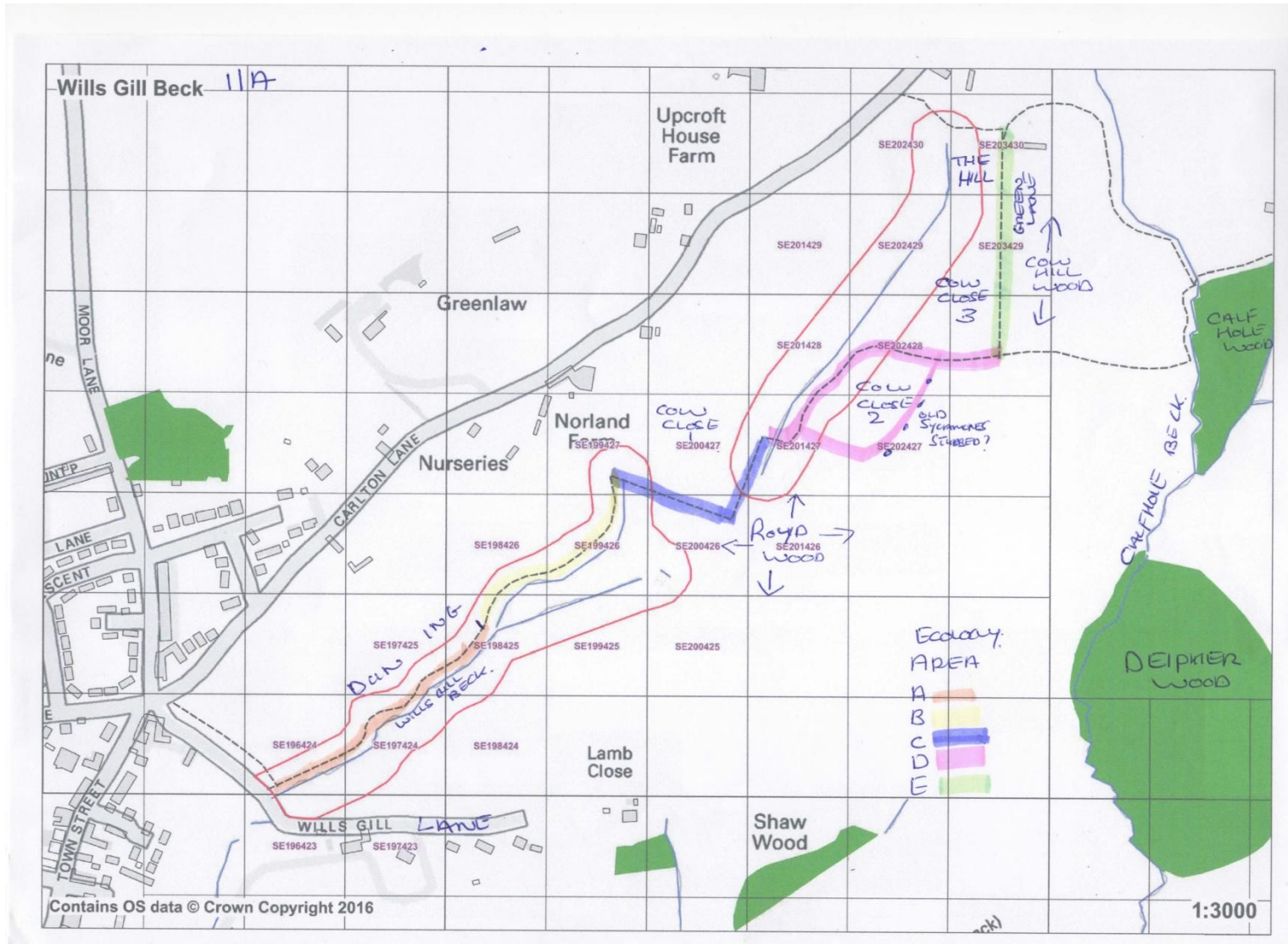


Diagram 1 – Map of Ecology Route 11a with Ecology Areas and kev points



A Dun Ing - all of these were by the edge of the stream. The note is for the first instance, in some cases the plant was in a number of the other boxes. The plants in the NE part of the stream, seemed to differ to some degree to those in the SW.

	SE196423	SE196424	SE197424	SE197425	SE198425
20 May 3pm 15 C Sun/Showers Light SW Breeze	Veronica beccabunga (Brooklime) Ficaria vernal (Lesser Celendine)	Ranunculus acris (Meadow Buttercup) Ranunculus repens (Creeping Buttercup) Foxglove Sheep's Sorrell Cerastium glomeratum (Sticky Mouse Ear) Cardamine flexuosa (Wavy Bittercress) Mole Hill Mallard Water skimming flies	Holly Hawthorn Small oak Forget-me-not Veronica chamaedrys (Germander Speedwell) Soft rushes Cardamine pratensis (Cuckoo Flower or Lady's Smock) House Martin Meadow Foxtail		Hawthorn
24 May 3pm 16C Sun, fluffy clouds East mod Breeze		Veronica serpyllifolia (Tyme Leaved Speedwell) House Martins			Toadstools
17 June 4pm 13c Cloud cover/drizzle Light westerly	Meadow Buttercup	Pignut Broadleaf Dock Cardamine amara (Large Bittercress) Large Sorrell Sheep's Sorrell Lots of white clover with bees.	Spear Thistle Purple Foxglove Bees nesting in an earth hole, Great Willowherb. Precumbent Pearlwort Soft rush Lots of different grasses including Yorkshire Fog and Timothy (have photos of some) House Martins, Moles	Pink Dog Rose A number of beige and white moths. Oak Hawthorn Spear Thistle Veronica beccabunga (Brooklime)	Fern Tiny fungi (have picture) Vetch possibly bitter maybe bush Soft Rush Herb Robert

			and Mayflies Lots of cuckoo spit		
3 July 4pm 17c Sun, fluffy clouds Brisk SW wind		Lots of white clover full of different type of bees	Lotus corniculatus (Birdsfood Trefoil)	Filipendula ulmaria (Meadow sweet) Hedge Woundwort	
15 August 3.30pm 19c Sunny Light	Epilobium palustre (Marsh Willowherb) Lots of Veronica beccabunga (Brooklime)	Lots of Creeping Thistle Epilobium hirsutum (Great Willowherb)	Many different kind of bees Pineapple mayweed Mound of Lotus corniculatus (Birdsfood Trefoil)	Sound of grasshoppers Great white butterfly Small moths Persicaria hydropiper (water pepper)	Valarian officianalis Epilobium hirsutum (Great Willowherb)
21 August 2pm 17c Partly sunny Moderate westerly	Lolium (rye grass) Glyceria plicata (Plicate sweet grass) Juncus bufonius (Toad rush) Timothy Grass Yorkshire Fog Poa	Polygonum aviculare (Knotgrass) Persicaria hydropiper (water pepper) Greater Plantain Epilobium palustre (Marsh Willow Herb) False Oat Grass Bent Common Ragwort	Juncus effusus (Soft Rush) Sheep's Sorrell Cander Bee Prunella vulgaris (selfheal) Epilobium montanum (Broadleaved Willowherb) Spear Thistle Reed Canary Grass	Yarrow Valarian officianalis Veronica chamaedrys (Germander speedwell) Moths Great white butterfly	Cocksfoot Bromus hordeaceus (Soft Brome) Alopecurus geniculatus (marsh foxtail)
23 August 7pm 23c Sunny Very light			Lots of moths and flies and other small insects		

B – Stream/Wood Edge – The beck here is deep and narrow and hardly visible. The area is dominated by a row of trees, which could be linked to the old Royd Wood. Many bear useful fruit or nuts.

	SE198425	SE198426	SE199425	SE199426
20 May 3pm 15 C Sun/Showers Light SW Breeze	Reedy field Mole hills Nettle Bank Large patch tall Reed Canary Grass Meadow Buttercups	Large patch tall Reed Canary Grass Ferns Stellaria holostea (Greater Stitchwort) Ficaria vernal (Lesser Celendine) Goosegrass Sycamore	Elder Ash Hawthorn Hazel	Dog's Mercury Possible Persian Speedwell) Wild Rose Bluebell Ivy Elder Ash Hawthorn Hazel Gelder Rose
24 May 3pm 16C Sun, fluffy clouds East mod Breeze			Alder	Field Horsetail Alder Pair of Robins Hover Fly
17 June 4pm 13c Cloud cover/drizzle Light westerly	Epilobium hirsutum (Great Willowherb) Cow Parsley		Herb Robert Ferns Foxglove Tall speedwell Dog Rose Brown and white moths	
3 July 4pm 17c Sun, fluffy clouds Brisk SW wind			Hedge Woundwort	
15 August 3.30pm 19c Sunny Light wind		Rosebay Willowherb		Rowan (Mountain Ash) Hazel, Alder, Glder Rose all beginning to ripen
21 August 2pm			Elm	Elm

17c Partly sunny Moderate westerly			Field Horsetail	Large White Butterfly
23 August 7pm 23c Sunny Very light	Ground was very muddy and slippery after the rain			

C Around Cow Close 1 - The footpath runs around Cow Close 1, which is used for grazing. On the south side there is a dry stone wall above a reedy field, and there always seems to be more flies and small insects here. In the summer the house martins seemed to swoop around this area from a close by couple of trees. On the East side is another dry stone wall, which again seems to have more insect activity. There seemed to be a slightly wider range of plants here. On the other side of the wall is a beck, which then becomes culverted under the fields. On the other side of the wall going west east, is another line of shrubs/trees which could well be the top of Royd Wood, these sit near a curved ditch and bank. .

	SE200427	SE200426	SE201427	SE202427
20 May 3pm 15 C Sun/Showers Light SW Breeze	Sheep's Sorrell Larger Sorrell Meadow Buttercups	Variety of grasses Timothy grass Sheep's Sorrell Blackberry bushes	Blackberry bushes by wall and stream On edge of what may be old wood. Large Bittercress Meadow Buttercups Bluebells Row of Hazel, Hawthorn and Blackthorn Rabbit	Line of very old Sycamores, going north south, some may have been pollarded. Some have hollow trunks
24 May 3pm 16C Sun, fluffy clouds East mod Breeze			Ladies Smock Nettles	
17 June 4pm 13c Cloud cover/drizzle		Flies and various insects Cuckoo spit Moths	Field Horsetail	

Light westerly				
3 July 4pm 17c Sun, fluffy clouds Brisk SW wind	Crane fly	Many house martins Foxgloves	Sound of curlews Bramble bushes full of bees Small heath or meadow brown butterflies. Maybe a ringlet. Ferns	
15 August 3.30pm 19c Sunny Light wind			Marsh woundwort Creeping thistle	
21 August 2pm 17c Partly sunny Moderate westerly	Couch Grass			
23 August 7pm 23c Sunny Very light			Lots of large, ripe, well rounded blackberries.	

D Around Cow Close 2 - This field rises to the north and is now used for grazing sheep, although in the past years it has been ploughed as well. It contains a beck running down the west side at the foot of a stone wall, and there is a line of very old sycamore trees running north south on the eastern boundary that may well have been pollarded or stubbed. Along the north is a wide grassy area with old trees and hawthorns, and very good views over Aireborough to Airedale, and up to Yeadon Haw. The area feels somewhat wilder, and there are more sounds of moorland birds and signs of mammals – it feels more serene, and ‘countryside’ than other areas of the path.

	SE201427	SE201428	SE202428
20 May 3pm 15 C Sun/Showers Light SW Breeze	Hawthorn hedge Finer Grasses than last field Ladies smock Meadow buttercups	Hawthorn hedge Bluebells Grasses	Line of sycamores and hawthorn Grasses
24 May 3pm 16C Sun, fluffy clouds East mod Breeze		2 Hares House martins	Fox kill – wood pidgeon
17 June 4pm 13c Cloud cover/drizzle Light westerly		White Dog Rose	Signs of rabbits and foxes
3 July 4pm 17c Sun, fluffy clouds Brisk SW wind	Meadowsweet	Meadowsweet	
15 August 3.30pm 19c Sunny Light wind		Yellow meadow vetchling	
21 August 2pm 17c Partly sunny Moderate westerly	Deschampsia (Tufted Hair Grass)		Red Kite

E Green Lane – Runs between Cow Close 3 and a field called Cow Hill Wood. It is divided by a stile with a dryish beck on the west side. South of the stile is an interesting run of old trees including apple or crabapple. North of the side is less interesting with the line of an old hawthorn hedge on the west and an old wall on the east. Over another stile near a stables, the lane meets another cobbled lane going west.

	SE203428	SE203429	SE203430
20 May 3pm 15 C Sun/Showers Light SW Breeze	Hawthorn Holly Hazel Ash Crabapple/apple Oak Blackthorn Bluebells	Hazel Ash Crabapple/apple Oak Blackthorne Hawthorn Holly	Holly Hawthorne Cellandine Wild Rose Ground Elder Rabbit Sound of skylark
24 May 3pm 16C Sun, fluffy clouds East mod Breeze	Alder	Alder 7 spot ladybird	
17 June 4pm 13c Cloud cover/drizzle Light westerly	Lots of small birds (blue tits?) in the trees		
3 July 4pm 17c Sun, fluffy clouds Brisk SW wind			
15 August 3.30pm 19c Sunny Light wind			
21 August 2pm 17c Partly sunny Moderate westerly		Spearthistle	Fescue

Order of trees
down green
lane

North Stile

Holly

Hawthorn

Ash

Hawthorn &
Ash

Ash & Apple

2 Apples

Hawthorn

Alder

