

The Trust's main focus of late 2022 and 2023 has been our land to the east of The Hollow Road leading up to the triangle on Yearlings Drove. Rather than see the conifer plantation there totally clear felled and replanted with more conifers, we purchased the land a few years back with a view to habitat restoration and diversification.

The western part of this land between The Hollow Road and the dividing footpath was once open heathland, then largely an open gravel pit, then partly colonised by native trees, but finally planted up with exotic conifers. We started by thinning out those exotic conifers to give more light to the surviving native or naturalised trees. These include oaks, some Scots pine and even a massive central coppiced sycamore. Especial care was taken to protect the old Estate 'saw bench' which is located within this woodland. In a few years time another thin of the exotic conifers will take place, and maybe in the fullness of time even another, until eventually the plantation will have morphed into a natural mixed woodland.

Then last autumn we turned to the land east of the dividing footpath where former virgin open heathland had simply been planted up with exotic conifers. The marginal broadleaved woodland strip was kept and is being encouraged to thicken and expand slightly, but the majority of this former heathland was clear felled and will be permanently managed as open heathland. Although much smaller than our main heathland block, it is just over 2.2 ha and has the benefit of linking directly to the SSSI heathland on the other side of the road already protected and managed by Henry Hogger.

West of The Hollow Road there has been some localised further removal of exotic conifers partly for habitat diversification but also because of their proximity to roads. Further localised works are planned for later this year.

In the meadow either side of the footpath we have simply removed most of the stock fence previously put into divide it with a view to selling it as two plots. We have just submitted most of our landholdings in Dorset into a new all embracing Countryside Stewardship Scheme which, if accepted, will assist us in doing more wildlife enhancing management there - and on all our sites. Fingers crossed on that outcome.

Lesley Haskins.