

MOOR LANE AND NEAVES LANE, RINGMER - THE HEDGES

by

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This project concerns the area between Laughton Road to the north and the Ringmer/Glynde parish boundary to the south, and between Ashton Green and Oldhouse Farm to the west and the fields towards the Ringmer/Laughton boundary to the east. A botanical survey was made of Moor Lane and Neaves Lane roadside hedges including two in the parish of Glynde, and of field hedges near Oldhouse and Moorlands Farms. The old drove road east of the junction of the two lanes was also examined.

In medieval times much of this terrain was parkland or forest. The south east tip of the Broyle extended to Moor Gate south of the Laughton road, and More Park, one of Ringmer's smaller deer parks, lay to the south east (1). The old settlement of Ashton was probably in the western part of the area. The word More (or Moor) derives from the Old English 'mor', originally meaning a barren wasteland, but it came to be used to describe marshland (2). Apart from the chalk slopes near Oldhouse Farm the whole area lies below 50 feet OD. It is traversed by several streams flowing eastwards to Glynde Reach, and before recent improvements in drainage the land must have been even more water-logged than at present.

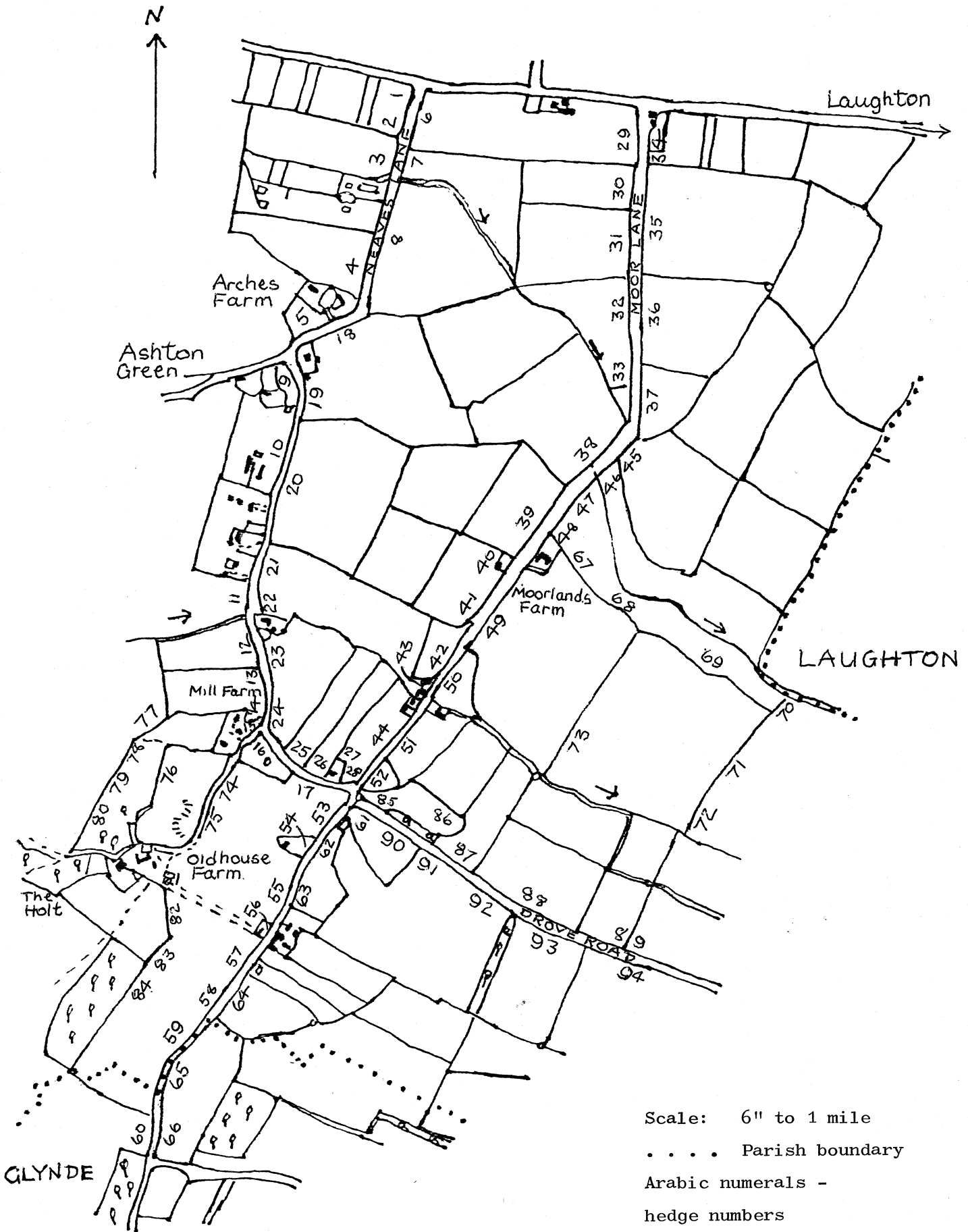
Geology

The northern part of the area is on Gault Clay, except for a narrow strip of Lower Greensand at the north end of Moor Lane, and deposits of alluvium and 'head' in the stream valleys. 'Head' is made up of superficial deposits of chalky and flinty loams which cover the junction between Lower Chalk and Gault Clay. These deposits extend northward from the lower slopes of the Caburn block as far as the stream which passes by Neaves Cottages and Moor House. The southern part of the project area is thus on 'head' except for Lower Chalk above the 50 foot contour south of Oldhouse Farm, and Gault Clay east of Moor Lane (3).

Use of Land

Today this is mainly a sheep-farming area, with some cattle and arable.

PROJECT C. RINGMER. MOOR LANE - NEAVES LANE AREA



The Tithe Schedule (4) shows that in 1840 many more of the fields were arable, especially in the northern section and west of the south end of Moor Lane. The rest of the land was mostly meadow.

The Roads

Moor Lane runs south from Laughton road for approximately 700 m and then turns south-west past Moorlands Farm and the junction with Neaves Lane for c. 1.5 Km to the Ringmer/Glynde boundary. The lane then forms the parish boundary for c. 200 m before turning south into Glynde parish. In perambulations from 1618 onwards the lane is described as the highway from the Broyle to Glynde (5). The course of Neaves Lane is more devious, running south-south-west for 500 m from Laughton road to Arches Farm, where it turns west for 180 m to the junction with Potato Lane at Ashton Green. Neaves Lane then curves more or less south as far as Mill Farm, from which it bends south-east to its junction with Moor Lane, a distance of about 1 Km from Potato Lane.

The northern sections of both roads are quite straight with wide verges, and date from the Broyle enclosure of 1767. A map dated 1771 names this part of Neaves Lane as "Ashen Lane" and that of Moor Lane as "New Moor Lane" (6), so before the enclosure the roads presumably terminated near the southern ends of these sections. A survey of 1649 shows that there were gates into the Broyle at these two points, Moor Gate in Moor Lane and Testers (or Festons) Gate in Neaves Lane (7). The routes may have continued north as woodland tracks, one of which could have been on the line of the footpath shown on the 1961 OS map from the site of Moor Gate to the Laughton road a little west of Broyle Place. The remainder of Neaves Lane is winding and variable in width, as is the southern section of Moor Lane; the central section of Moor Lane is comparatively straight but also variable in width.

The Hedges

Method

The survey was carried out on the basis of Hooper's method of hedge dating, in which the number of woody species in 30 yard stretches of a hedge is counted, and an average is taken. The approximate age of the hedge is considered to be 100 years per woody species; for example an average of five species would represent an age of 500 years (8). However, in order to obtain

more detailed information the woody species were in most cases counted at one metre intervals, as in our other projects in Ringmer. Thus the percentage of metre counts at which each species was present could be calculated.

The hedge-lengths were based on the field divisions as shown in the Tithe map (4), but were divided into separate units where there was a marked difference in composition or structure. Atypical hedges by farmyards, orchards, etc., were noted but not included in the analysis. Garden hedges were included if they appeared to consist of the original roadside hedge with perhaps the addition of introduced species.

1. Roadside hedges

(i) Composition

66 roadside hedges were recorded, and in 37 of these there were eight or more woody species present. Hawthorn and Blackthorn were the most constant, both being present in nearly all the hedges. Blackthorn was the dominant species in ten hedges and Hawthorn in eight, while in several high average hedges the two were present in about equal quantities. Thorn hedges are naturally the most effective barriers, and probably in the past the two shrubs were often planted together.

Rose, Elder and Ash are considered to be colonising species, as they are the first to establish themselves in a young hedge. Elder in particular quickly takes advantage of any gaps, to the detriment of slower growing species. Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Privet can also be regarded as colonisers, but only when present in small quantities and so not part of the original hedge planting.

Rose appeared in 57 hedges. The next in order of frequency were Privet (in 51 hedges), Field Maple (in 46) and Dogwood (in 44). Privet grows abundantly on chalk and is also associated with habitation. In five hedges Privet and Hawthorn together were dominant, and a length of 17 m (No. C.14), just north of the track to Mill Farm, contained only Hawthorn, in 100% of counts, and Privet, in 90%, suggesting recent re-planting with these two shrubs. Dogwood, also a chalk lover, was the dominant species in four hedges (Nos. C.20, 39, 57 and 66) and in others was co-dominant with Blackthorn or Privet. Dogwood is commonly found in older hedges (8), but in some stretches its distribution pointed to deliberate planting. Maple is thought to indicate an old hedge and seldom appears with less than four other species, while Spindle is usually found with at least six others (9). Maple

was present nearly everywhere except in the straight northern sections, and it was in over 30% of metre counts in ten hedges. Spindle appeared in 20 hedges, usually in 3% or less of metre counts, but in over 10% in hedges Nos. C.44, 45 and 51. It was noticeable that almost all hedges with high totals of species contained both Maple and Dogwood.

Elm was present in 21 hedges, dominant in five and co-dominant with Hawthorn in two. From very early times Elm has been planted by man because of its value for animal fodder and for timber (10); where planted in a hedge it spreads very quickly by suckering and tends to suppress other species. All the hedges with high percentages of Elm were associated with existing or former habitations. Hedge No. C.5 adjoining Arches Farm, for example, had Elm in 85% of counts, and the adjacent field hedges consisted of many stumps with long gaps between, and some Hawthorn and Elder bushes, probably the relics of hedges dominated by Elm. This area has to date not been very seriously affected by Dutch Elm Disease, but in a few places stumps of recently felled trees, probably Elm, suggested that the disease had taken its toll. Elsewhere, particularly in hedge No. C.50 in Moor Lane, there are stumps of Elm trees felled several years before the disease struck, but here it has already regenerated owing to vigorous suckering.

Species found only occasionally were Oak, Hornbeam, Sycamore, Willows, Wayfaring Tree, Hazel, Bullace and Crab Apple.

(ii) Averages

The average number of species per 30 m was calculated in 47 hedges of sufficient length; as shown below, more than half had averages of between five and seven.

<u>Average no. of species</u>	<u>No. of hedges</u>
Under 4	2
4 to 4.8	10
5 to 5.8	14
6 to 6.8	14
7 to 7.8	5
8 to 8.5	2

(iii) Types

The roadside hedges can thus be divided into three main types:-

(a) Those dominated by one or two species with the addition of ready colonisers but without Maple or Spindle. The ten hedges of this type had

PROJECT C. Table 3.

Hedge number	FIELD HEDGES NEAR MOORLANDS FARM			TRACK, MILL FARM TO OLDHOUSE "			DROVE ROAD		
	71	72	74	75	77	78	79	80	91
Date	on 1840 map			pre 1783					
Hedge length m.	134	253	82	111	87	141	150	118	
Average sp./30m.	5	3.2	4.3	5.7	5.6	8	8.2	7.5	
Frequency per cent of metre counts									
Ash	-	-	-	3	5	7	5	1	
Blackthorn	74	93	93	50	47	95	28	84	
Dogwood	38	16	-	-	2	58	43	78	
Elder	1	-	-	7	34	-	-	-	
Elm	-	-	-	39	17	-	-	-	
Hawthorn	28	11	13	4	2	51	83	92	
Hazel	-	-	-	2	8	20	41	23	
Maple, Field	14	1	26	33	8	17	18	5	
Oak	-	-	23	-	-	2	-	-	
Privet	-	-	-	1	3	17	29	24	
Rose	10	14	18	7	5	24	32	27	
Spindle	2	-	-	-	2	-	11	8	
Sycamore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Wayfaring Tree	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	
Willow sp.	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	3	
Holly	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	
Hornbeam	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	
Total species	7	5	6	9	11	11	12	10	

Location	E. of Moorlands Farm	S. of Mill Farm N. hedge	S. hedge
Soil type	all. & loam loam	clay & loam loam	clay & clay loam
Ditch	1 m. 1 m.	0.5 W. 0.3 m. shallow	0.5 none
Height m.	1.5 1.5	1.5 +t. 1.5	1.5 1.5 1.5
Comments	curving	curving h.on b. h.on b. D,B,P,	h.on b. h.on b. B,P, B,

Notes: h.on b. hedge on bank
+ t. plus trees
all. alluvium
* too short to assess
D, Dogs Mercury present
B, Bluebell "
P, Primrose "
V, Violet, Sweet "

Scientific names of species
Additional to those given in "Ringmer History" No. 1, p. 62 and No. 2, p. 55.
Gooseberry Ribes uva-crispa
Spurge Laurel Daphne laureola

PROJECT C. Table 4. Species dominant in Type (b) road hedges

Dominant species	Hedge No. C.	Location
Blackthorn	19	Neaves Lane, nr. Ashton Green
	32	Moor Lane N.
	36	Moor Lane N.
	37	Moor Lane, nr. Moor Gate
	38	Moor Lane, nr. Moor Gate
	44	Moor Lane mid
	47	Moor Lane mid
	64	Moor Lane S.
Hawthorn	11	Neaves Lane S.
	41	Moor Lane mid
	51	Moor Lane mid
Blackthorn and Hawthorn	45	Moor Lane, nr. Moor Gate
	49	Moor Lane, nr. Moorlands Farm
Hawthorn and Privet	2	Neaves Lane N.
	13	Neaves Lane, nr. Mill Farm
	15	Neaves Lane, nr. Mill Farm
	16	Neaves Lane, nr. Mill Farm
Elm	5	Neaves Lane, nr. Arches Farm
	9	Neaves Lane, Ashton Green
	23	Neaves Lane S. (inc. former house plot)
	24	Neaves Lane, nr. Mill Farm
	50	Moor Lane, nr. Moor House
Elm and Hawthorn	42	Moor Lane, nr. Moor House
	52	Moor Lane, nr. Spring Cottages
Dogwood	20	Neaves Lane mid
	39	Moor Lane mid
	57	Moor Lane S.
	66	Moor Lane S. (in Glynde)
Dogwood and Blackthorn	58	Moor Lane S.
	60	Moor Lane S. (in Glynde)

averages between 2.5 and 4.8. Nos. C.3, 4, 6 and 8 in Neaves Lane, and Nos. C.29, 30, 31 and 35 in Moor Lane, all in the northern sections, probably date from about the time of the Broyle enclosure. Of the two remaining hedges of this type No. C.26, a short stretch west of cottage gardens in the south-east end of Neaves Lane, consisted mainly of Blackthorn, and No. C.59 is discussed below under "Parish boundary".

(b) Mixed hedges with high averages dominated by one or two species which probably represent the original planting. In view of the averages, mostly between 5 and 8, and the presence of Maple and often Spindle, an age of at least 400 years is suggested. Table 4 shows the location of these hedges and the shrubs which were dominant in them. It will be seen that three type (b) hedges were in the northern sections of the lanes. No. C.2 in Neaves Lane contained Oak and a high percentage of Hornbeam of fairly recent origin, which brought the total to 8 and the average to 6.5. Nos. C.32 and 36 in Moor Lane contained most of the species present in No. C.33, a roadside copse south of C.32.

(c) Mixed hedges with high averages but no species dominant. The difference between types (b) and (c) was less marked than between types (a) and (b), but there were 13 hedges which had high percentages of three or more species accompanied by several other species in varying amounts, including Maple and/or Spindle in nearly all cases. These are probably the oldest hedges along the roadsides, and the distribution of the species suggests woodland origin. This type included seven hedges - Nos. C.10, 12, 17, 18, 21, 25 and 27 - in the southern part of Neaves Lane and five - Nos. C.53, 55, 62, 63 and 65 - in Moor Lane south of the junction with Neaves Lane. No. C.7 in the northern section of Neaves Lane, high in Dogwood and containing Willow, may have been influenced by the stream at its southern end. The averages were between 5.5 and 8.5 except for No. C.55, which had 9 species but an average of only 4.6.

The composition of examples of the three types is shown in Table No. 1. Some hedges were either too short to assess or atypical.

(iv) The Parish Boundary

Hedges Nos. C.59 and 65 include part of the Ringmer/Glynde parish boundary, which enters from the east along a field hedge, follows the road south-west for c. 200 m, then turns west across a field. The point at which it left the road was marked, according to the perambulations (5), by a "Foreapple", but there is now no indication of the exact spot. The hedge along the

north-west side of the lane (C.59) was of type (a), dominated by Blackthorn and Dogwood with colonising species and an average of 4, while that on the south-east side (C.65) was type (c) (see Table No. 1), having high percentages of Blackthorn, Dogwood and Hazel, eight other species including Maple, and an average of 6.1. South-west of the parish boundary there was no obvious difference in the composition of the remaining 100 m or so of these two hedges. From the parish boundary north-eastwards towards the junction of the lanes the north-west side of Moor Lane had hedges with averages of from 4.6 to 5.5, whereas those on the south-east side varied between 5.7 and 8.5, each side having both (b) and (c) types. It is possible that this part of the south-east side of the lane was hedged earlier than the other side, or that the north-west side was at some stage replanted with Blackthorn and Dogwood which are still dominant.

In considering roadside hedges it should be borne in mind that they tend to contain a higher number of species than field hedges, owing to increased opportunities for colonisation and the effects of the movement of animals and man (11).

2. Field Hedges

(i) Moorlands Farm area Hedges Nos. C.67-73. (Table No. 3)

All the hedges were dominated by Blackthorn, and though Hawthorn was present it was nowhere in more than 29% of metre counts. Dogwood, Field Maple and Rose were in most of the hedges in varying proportions, but Privet, Ash, Elm and Hazel were absent, and Spindle only appeared in C.68. There were Oak trees in the south-west ends of Nos. C.72 and 73. Averages ranged from 2.8 to 5, and the highest total of species was seven. This is the only farmstead in the area with which Elm is not associated; it is also the only farm not indicated in Yeakell and Gardner's map of 1783, though it appears on the Tithe map of 1840, so it may be that Elm was not commonly planted at the time when Moorlands Farm was established.

The exact position and extent of Moor Park is not recorded, but documentary sources indicate that these fields would have been within its boundaries. There is also some uncertainty about the date of disparkment, but it was probably cleared some time during the sixteenth century (12). Enclosing the fields may have been a gradual process, but the composition of the hedges indicates that they were planted with Blackthorn, while Dogwood, Maple and Oak could have come from the original woodland.

(ii) Oldhouse Farm area Hedges Nos. C.74-84. (Tables Nos. 2 and 3).

Hedges Nos. C.81-84 south of the farm were all dominated by Hawthorn with high percentages of Privet; Blackthorn was virtually absent, and there was no Dogwood, Hazel or Oak. Elm was present near the farm and also in No. C.84 at the edge of the wood. The land now occupied by this wood is shown as an arable field on the Tithe map and schedule (4) and the 1878 OS map indicates only a few trees roughly along the hedge-line. Also, if the Tithe map is correct No. C.82 was re-aligned between 1840 and 1878. This hedge was probably planted with Hawthorn and Privet and contained Ash, Elder and Rose (colonising species); in addition there were Maple and Spindle at the south corner and Elm near the farm, so that the average of 5.6 per 30 m did not necessarily indicate an old hedge along the whole length. No. C.83 is in the same position as shown on the Tithe map. It had an average of 6.6 and was basically a Hawthorn hedge, but with more Maple and with species probably derived from the neighbouring woodland. No. C.84, the short stretch bordering the wood, had a total of nine species including Spurge Laurel and Gooseberry.

Nos. C.74 and 75 border the east side of the track between Mill Farm and Oldhouse Farm. The northern section, C.74, consisted mainly of Blackthorn, Elm and Maple with six other species and an average of 5.75, while the southern section, C.74, was high in Blackthorn and Elder and had a total of eleven species including Maple and Spindle; the average was 5.6. South of this section the track ascends steeply below a high tree-covered bank with Elder predominant and also Ash, Dogwood, Elm and Maple, ending in an impenetrable thicket below Oldhouse Farm. Although this is marked as a track on the 1961 OS map it is now completely grass-covered, with only a slight ridge discernible on the west side of the former track; nearby at the south end is a steep-sided hollow, possibly of archaeological significance, in which stand two large Ash-trees.

Roughly parallel, to the west, No. C.76 ascends the hill slope ending in a steep curving tree-covered bank to the south. This was a mixed hedge also dominated by Blackthorn, with a total of nine species and an average of 7. Further west again is a long line of hedge ascending to The Holt, part of the Glyndebourne game preserve. This hedge was divided into three sections, Nos. C.78, 79 and 80, which showed marked differences in structure and composition. The north-east section, No. C.78, with deep curves and sharp bends, was a mixed hedge of eleven species and an average of 6.6 including Maple and Spindle. The other two sections were quite straight. No. C.79

was dominated by Hawthorn and Privet, with colonising species, average 4.3, while No. C.80 had 100% Hawthorn and 51% Privet, but included Spindle and had an average of 7.3.

The Tithe map shows no hedge on this line, but only a shaw towards the north-east end. No. C.78 probably consists of the relics of this shaw with a short length of hedge connecting it to No. C.77, a mixed hedge with eight species. No. C.79 could be less than 200 years old if planted with Hawthorn and Privet and added to by colonising species, but the high average of C.80 is more puzzling, although it is probably influenced by the woodland at its south-west end; also there may have been scrub on the hillside before the hedge was planted.

The hedges in the Oldhouse Farm area emphasise the need to take into account factors other than the average number of species present. Consideration must be given to the type of species - whether early colonisers, species indicative of age or those of nearby woodland origin.

(iii) Field hedges observed from roads

The above were the only field hedges to which we had access, but it was possible in some cases to guess the probable composition of others by observation from the roads with the aid of binoculars. Several field hedges shown on the Tithe map had been removed, re-aligned or replaced by fencing, and in some instances the ridge of the former hedge-line was plainly visible. Many of the hedges between the northern sections of the two lanes appeared to be similar to the poor Hawthorn hedges of the Broyle enclosure of either side of Green Lane.

Of the hedges bordering the three narrow fields north of the junction of the lanes only the western one could be observed. The centre hedge had been removed since the issue of the 1961 OS map, leaving a prominent ridge, and visibility of that to the east was obstructed by a garden hedge. The western hedge, between Nos. C.24 and 25, was degenerate with many gaps and tree-stumps but contained Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Elm. The short hedge between Nos. 16 and 17 opposite No. C.25 was mostly of Elm, with Spindle, Hawthorn and Elder, while the South hedge of this small field was predominantly Hawthorn, with Elm at the end near Mill Farm.

The northern hedge of Black Croft, between Nos. C.20 and 21, consisted of Hawthorn with a little Rose. In Moor Lane the field hedge between Nos. C.39

and 40 was basically Hawthorn with Maple, Elm and Blackthorn, whereas that between Nos. C.41 and 42 contained Blackthorn with some Privet. These were both poor hedges with long gaps. It will be appreciated that the above statements are only tentative.

3. The Drove Road Hedges Nos. C.85-94. (Table No. 3)

The wide grassy track known as the drove road runs in a south-easterly direction for approximately 900 m from the junction of Moor Lane and Neaves Lane to the meadows west of Glynde Reach. All the hedge-lengths contained a high number of species, with averages ranging from 6 to 8.25, except for Nos. C.89 and 94 at the south-east end near the wood, where the presence of Elm probably suppressed other species. Most sections were dominated by either Blackthorn or Hawthorn, with high percentages of Dogwood and Maple, the latter especially near the shaw in No. C.92. Spindle was present in seven out of the ten hedges, and Hazel in six. Sycamore, though found elsewhere in the project area, was not present, but as it was not introduced to Britain before the 15th century (13) Sycamore is not indicative of ancient hedges.

The composition of these hedges and those of the reputed drove road leading west from Little Norlington showed a marked similarity, and all have the characteristics of hedges dating back 600 years or more.

4. Woodland Herbs

The incidence of herbs indicative of woodland origin and ancient hedgerows (14) is set out below. All the hedges in which these plants were found were of the older mixed types and there were none in the northern sections of the two roads, supporting the concept that the hedges there were more recent.

PROJECT C. HEDGE NUMBERS				
	Neaves Lane	Moor Lane	Fields	Drove road
Dogs Mercury		38, 39, 41, 45	74, 76, 80, 84	94
Bluebell	10, 12, 15, 19, 20, 21	39, 41, 63	74, 76, 78, 80	86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93
Primrose	10, 12, 15, 20, 21	39	74, 76, 77, 78, 80	87, 90
Violet, Sweet			76, 77	

We should like to acknowledge the assistance of the late Cyril Holden, who worked with us in the early stages of this project before his sad death in May 1983.

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