



HERCOLOGICAL RECORD

SITE NAME & length (m)		Biddlesgate & Bratch Copse (1002 m)	grid ref. of ends (A) SU 07901.14502	ref. no. Ce1
Parish(es)		Cranborne / Damerham, Hants (Wilts until 1895) Alderholt / Damerham, Hants (Wilts until 1895)	(B) SU 08581.13851	
Date of boundary	Type: modern county; vc; parish; estate; field; ...		surveyor RMWalls + DCBG	Date 6 June 2012
			weather	time on site 4 h
Owner(s) Address(es)		various	tel. email contacted: y / n	

PROFILE SUMMARY hedge cross-section		bank / ditch cross-section	
			
height:	3 to >6 m.	eight:	m.
width:	~4 m.	width:	~ 4.0 m.
Condition: unmanaged and incorporated with the woodland where adjacent		adjoining habitats: arable and coniferous woodland	
standards: several; many of the shrubs reach up to this height		Gaps: <5 %	
SPECIES			
Trees and shrubs in hedge		Fauna	
Herbs and grasses on bank		Badger setts	
spindle	nettle	rough meadow grass	herb bennett
hazel	ivy	false oat grass	wood spurge
dog rose	burdock	red fescue	sanicle
dogwood	hedge woundwort	wood false-brome	figwort
blackthorn (damaged by moths)	goosegrass	cock's foot	ivy-leaved speedwell
hawthorn	cow parsley	sterile brome	yellow archangel
elder	dog's mercury	wood millet	herb robert
oak	black bryony	tufted hairgrass	wood dock
ash	white bryony	wood sedge	stichwort
field maple	old-man's beard	male fern	ground ivy
bramble	hedge garlic	scaly male fern	twayblade
wayfaring tree	red dead-nettle	bracken	
butchers broom	sow-thistle	Yorkshire fog	
sallow	bluebell		
goat willow	sweet woodruff		
holly	foxglove		

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The first 50m from the road (A) to the field corner has been ploughed out (in 1947 it was a hedgerow). The only sign of the boundary on the road is the cessation of markings and there is a gap in the hedge; it is not marked by either county. A large yew tree, isolated in the arable field to the W of the road, is clearly visible and on the boundary at SU0773.1463.

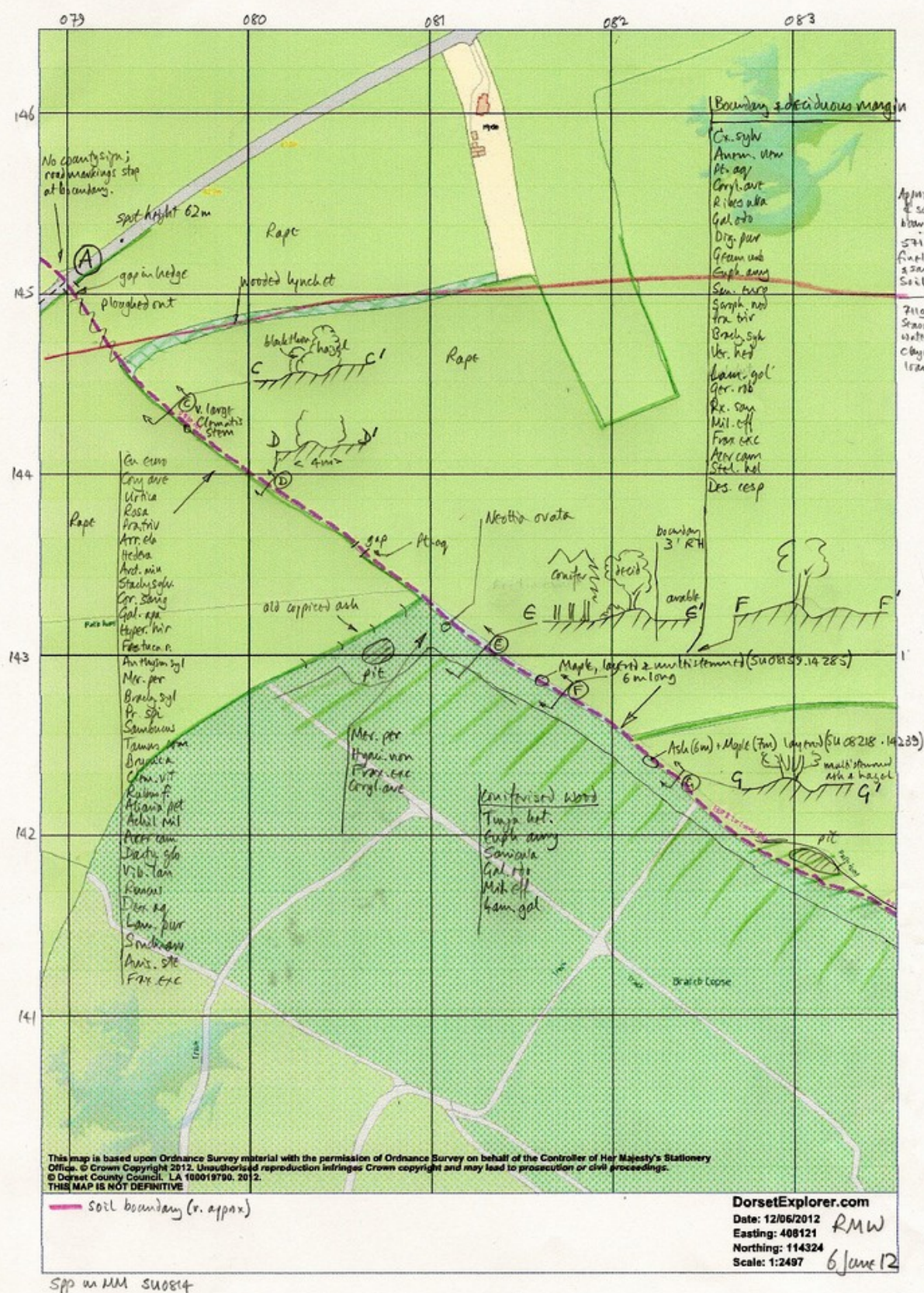
The next 200m to Bratch Copse is a wide, tall hedge between arable fields. The hedge is unmanaged and there is scant evidence of past management. The coppiced hazels are approaching the height of the standard maple and ash trees. At one point is an extremely thick stem of old-man's beard. The boundary is marked by a low bank, barely discernable in places, and the suggestion of a ditch on the Hampshire side (the notes had 3' RH this side).

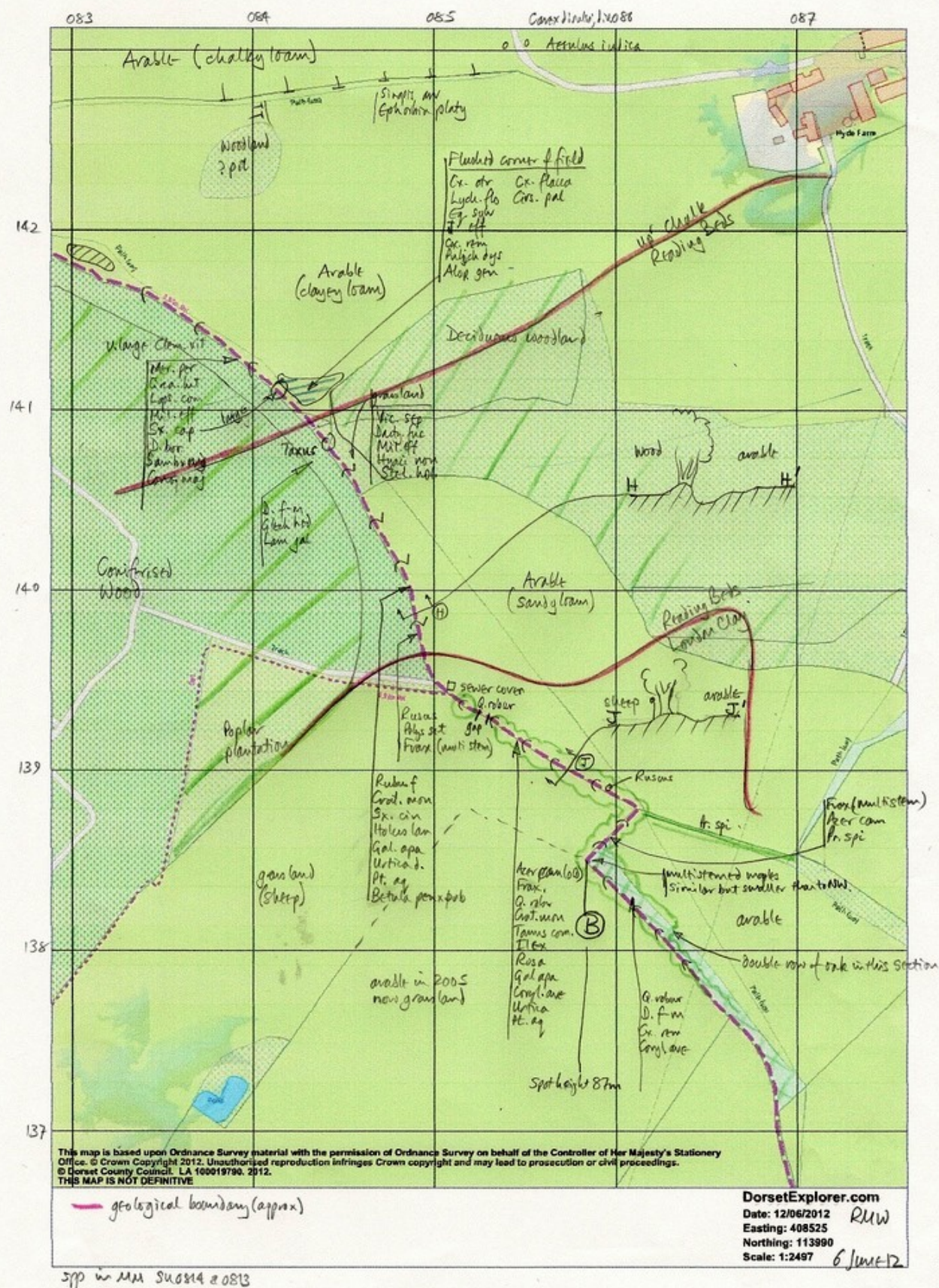
The boundary continues in the same direction along the NE edge of Bratch Copse. The bank is initially nothing more than a low lynchett, but it develops into a more definite bank and ditch structure after 150m or so. The returning NW border of the copse has a similar structure of bank and trees, although possibly not as old, at least in the first part. This is not a current administrative boundary of any sort. The trees and shrubs of the boundary hedge are old and any hedgerow characters have been lost except for evidence of very old plushing in a few maples and ashes. These are spectacular (fig.2); the longest reaching 7m along the boundary. Other ash trees and hazels were last coppiced long ago and are now multi-stemmed trees with stools of considerable girth. An extremely large *Clematis* has kept pace with the trees and now reaches the canopy out of sight from the ground (fig.1). At SU0844.1408 is a large yew, and about 100m further S, butchers broom. A pit has been dug on the Hampshire side at the low point along this length, as have others in the fields and elsewhere in the wood. The ground flora is sparse in places and includes several species that are typical of ancient woods in Dorset.

At the SE corner of the wood the parish boundary between Cranborne and Alderholt joins. From there the first 120m is a rather gappy hedge consisting of mature trees and few shrubs between arable fields. The classic boundary shrub, butchers' broom, is growing here and in the last part of the Bratch Copse hedge. Finally the boundary turns sharply to the SW and runs 40m to the top of a small hill marked by a spot height (87m) on the OS map (point B). Both these lengths have a low bank and similar trees to the rest of the hedge, with a wide fringe of low shrub and unmanaged herbaceous vegetation.

An interesting feature of the surveyed length, evident from the soils in the arable fields, is that the boundary cuts across three distinct geological strata. Initially the soils are loams over the Upper Chalk. At the point where the corner of the field is clearly damp (wetland species frequent) it crosses into the Reading Beds, which will have clay layers. Above that, at the SE end of Bratch copse it reaches the London Clay, although the field has a sandier loam, more typical of the upper strata of the Reading Beds.

Dorset Explorer Basemap with 100m grid lines and definitive Boundary Line. Add position of features, profiles etc.





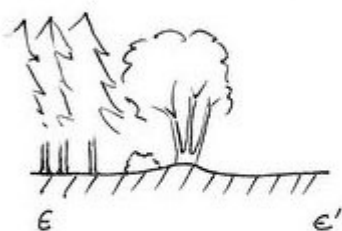
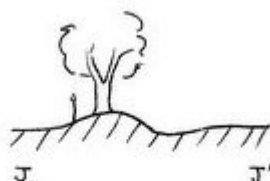
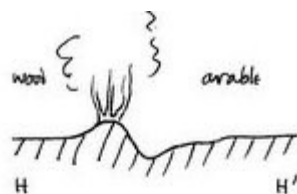
PROFILES

ref. no.

Ce1

vertical scale: 1 sq =

horizontal scale: 1sq =



Dorset Explorer Basemap with 100m grid lines and definitive Boundary. Add position and direction of photographs



Fig. 1. Large *Clematis* in maple (SU0839.1412).



fig.2 Maple, layered and multi-stemmed (SU0836.1414).

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND COMMENTS	ref. no. Ce1
<p>The modern boundary coincides with the vice-county boundary between Dorset and S.Wiltshire.</p> <p>Whilst this survey has been given a Cranborne reference number, the last 160m is in the parish of Alderholt and arguably should be separated. It has been reported as a single survey primarily because it was done on the same day by the same group of people. Also, there is a similarity of the character through out. This length of boundary shares characters with the Shire Rack in Chase Wood to the west. At the time of writing the intervening boundary has not been comprehensively surveyed, neither has a comparable length of the old Hampshire share. The hypothesis that this type of hedge is typical of the boundary in ancient chases or the Dorset / Wiltshire share could be critically examined when the data have been gathered.</p> <p>Bratch Copse is typical of many woods in Dorset; the peripheral strip derives from the original deciduous wood whilst the centre has been replanted with conifers in the last century. Thus the edge might be described as an assart hedge or border. The 20th century planting of conifers rarely extirpates the ancient woodland ground flora which usually survives along rides and in the deciduous margins, as is the case in Bratch Copse. It is fortunate, and perhaps not coincidental, that a wider strip than usual has been retained along the county boundary thereby preserving its character. When the crop is felled and replanted with native broadleaves, complete restoration of the ancient woodland structure is possible in time.</p> <p>The 1st Series OS map shows the County boundary to the east, around a more extensive Bratch (Brach) Wood and does not include the hack discussed below. If this line is an error and the county boundary ran along its present route, it would be running through woodland at the date of this map, and possibly for a century before when the maples were layered. It is not usual to create a 'hedge' within a mature woodland.</p> <p>The short length of boundary on the Reading Beds appears to have a different mix of species from the lengths either side. In particular, there are two species characteristic of boundaries on Cranborne Chase, yew and butchers broom.</p> <p>The boundary corner at the end of this length (point B) has a spot height of 87m on the OS map. That it has been surveyed implies a significance within the landscape, probably visibility from a wide area since it is also the top of a small hill. This could be the reason the boundary follows the shallow valley up from Crendall to this point. Projecting this line NW rejoins the county boundary on the corner of Bratch Copse and where the Cranborne / Alderholt parish boundary joins. Thus, the triangle of field created by the dog-leg in the county boundary is an anomaly for which the explanation is probably not due to land form.</p>	