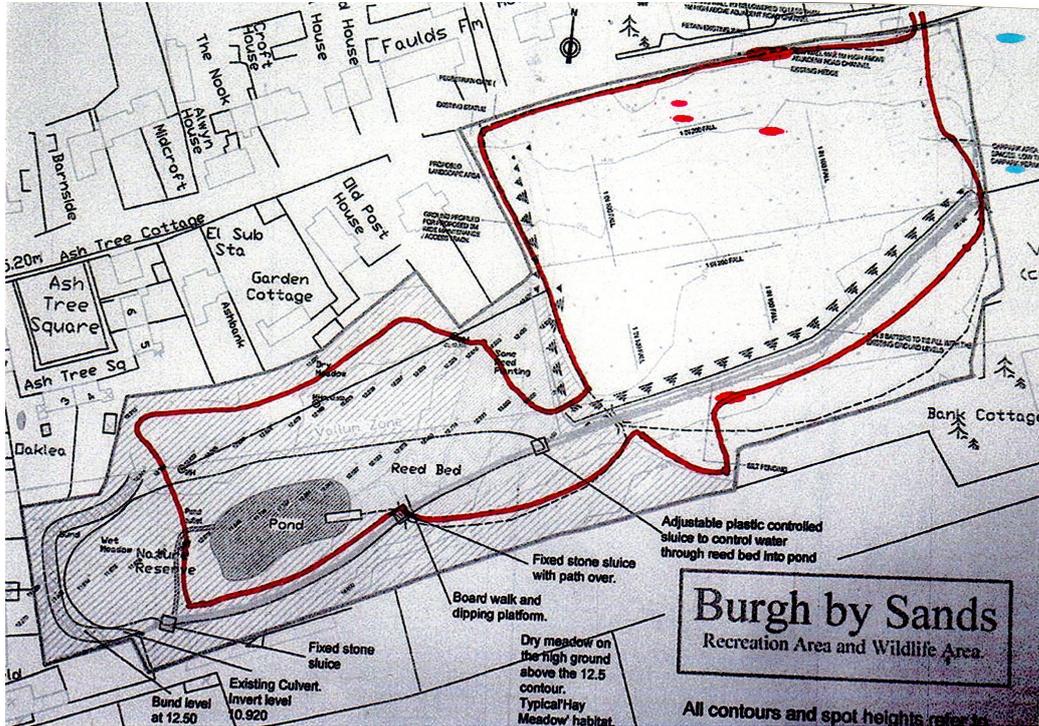


Visit 31st January 2020

As in previous years, I planned to visit the Village Green once a month and take a regular walk on a more or less standard route, making notes and taking photographs of any general observations or especially interesting features. My route was to be the same as that used in 2017 starting in the north-east (car park) corner.



From the beginning it was clear that the walk was going to be wet. The pathway to the bridge over the beck was flooded.

There wasn't a great deal to see in the Community Orchard section. I did note the activity of moles, it is interesting how their tunnels follow the line of footpaths (and roadsides), and Snowdrops were flowering beneath the fruit trees.





Despite being the middle of winter the view from the gate is inviting, the pathway is clear, the birch trees to the left of the path are growing well. My overall impression was that the reedbed had extended since my visits of two years ago.



The beck along the north side of the path is now supporting at least three large clumps of Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) which, although providing some interest and diversity would be difficult to remove (by hand) and could lead to problems with the drainage function of the beck. **Extreme care** should be taken over the timing of any waterway or pond clearance because of the presence of the Great Crested Newt.



The level of the pond is high, almost up to that of the dipping platform. In addition to a heavy growth of Burr reed (*Sparganium*) right across the pond, both reeds (*Phragmites*) and Reedmace are colonising the pond. It will be interesting to see how much (if any) open water is present this summer. The dipping platform itself was extremely slippery and certainly not suitable for use until it dries out.

Visible in the vegetation below the platform were three lumps of jelly, probably from frogs (or toads), either jettisoned in response to predation or discarded by the predator, possibly a heron. There were also the remains of a mouse or vole nest in the litter at the side of the platform.



The pathway onward from the dipping platform towards the south west corner of the pond and Wildlife Area was badly flooded and impassable without wellington boots.





I could not fail to notice a bright orange section of the beck just below the dipping platform. This is due to iron oxidising non-harmful bacteria. Although this might be considered 'unsightly' I understand that there is no evidence that it poses any threat to aquatic species.



Above the 'orange patch' the beck looked clear and at the south west corner of the pond where the drain from the pond area feeds into the beck the water was flowing strongly and again was clear .



Looking back over the pond, the spread of the reed bed was obvious, as was the growth of Burr reed, Purple Loosestrife and other species in the pond itself. This changing habitat should suit a number of bird species.



A common Snipe flew up from this area and I heard Great Tit calling. Blackbirds too were present. I have previously recorded Water Rail here and later in the year we can expect Sedge Warbler and possibly Reed Bunting.

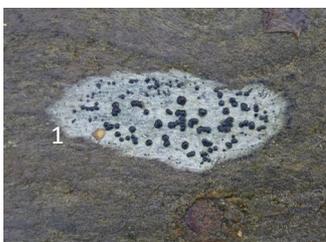
The path around the bottom end of the pond is very wet and difficult to negotiate. The boulder at the pond margin where I have previously found otter spraints has completely disappeared beneath vegetation. The mown path through the 'Dry Grassland' is difficult to see and it was not possible to force a way through the reeds and other tall vegetation to rejoin the main track above the pond.



I could not find my way to the concrete slab 'bridge' which is hidden under water and vegetation and I left the site by retracing my steps.



I photographed 3 lichens and will look for more on later visits



1. ? *Fuscidea lightfootii* on dipping platform. 2. *Parmelia sulcata* and 3. *Hypogymnia physodes* both on fence bars.