

Flowery Track-sides on the MDNIA

Identifying existing flowery tracks from existing botanical records

The MDNIA Wildlife Sites Delivery Group would like to improve the management of track sides so as to encourage wildflowers. Sue Everett is running a workshop on managing track-side banks on 1 May 2014.

This analysis follows a request at the at the Delivery Group meeting at Jindabyne on 17 February 2014, attended by Richard Aisbitt, Simon Smart, Rob Large and Jemma Batten. I proposed that tracks with flowery banks could be identified from existing botanical records. I had already walked many of the byways and bridleways on the NIA and had recorded any plants of interest. As the dominant species on most of these banks were False Oat-grass, Cock's-foot and Hogweed, these records were often of common species. We suggested the following as indicators:

<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Agrimony
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Common Knapweed
<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>	Greater Knapweed
<i>Galium verum</i>	Lady's Bedstraw
<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	Field Scabious
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Meadow Vetchling
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Common Bird's-foot-trefoil
<i>Poterium sanguisorba</i> (inc. subsp. <i>sanguisorba</i>)	Salad Burnet
<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>	Small Scabious

I added to these:

<i>Galium album</i>	Hedge Bedstraw
<i>Geranium pratense</i>	Meadow Cranesbill
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medick
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red Clover

The group suggested that species from the lists for calcareous grassland and neutral grassland in the Environmental Stewardship Farm Environment Plan manual should be added to the list of indicators. However, I did not do this, either because the extra species were more exacting in their habitat requirements or because they were not typical of track sides.

I then counted the number of these species recorded in each 100 metre grid square over the MDNIA since 2010 and plotted these as red squares over a 1:25,000 OS map, as shown on Map 1. Any red square coinciding with a byway or bridleway showed a track which had potential flowery banks. The area of each square is proportional to the number of species found, with a minimum of two species shown by the software used. The actual count of species was extracted and shown as annotations on the map. This count gives an indication of the "floweriness" of the banks.

The tracks identified as having flowery banks are shown with orange highlighter on Map 2.

Map 3 shows GPS tracks of my routes, in various colours, walked or cycled, on the MDNIA during 2012 and 2013. The tracks not yet covered are shown with green highlighter and I aim to survey these during 2014.

Cautions

Not all the tracks have been surveyed, as shown on Map 3.

This analysis is based on incidental records rather than a systematic survey of track-side banks. The common plants chosen as indicators may not always have been recorded with 6-figure grid references (the minimum to show up in this analysis) or they may have been missed or even ignored.

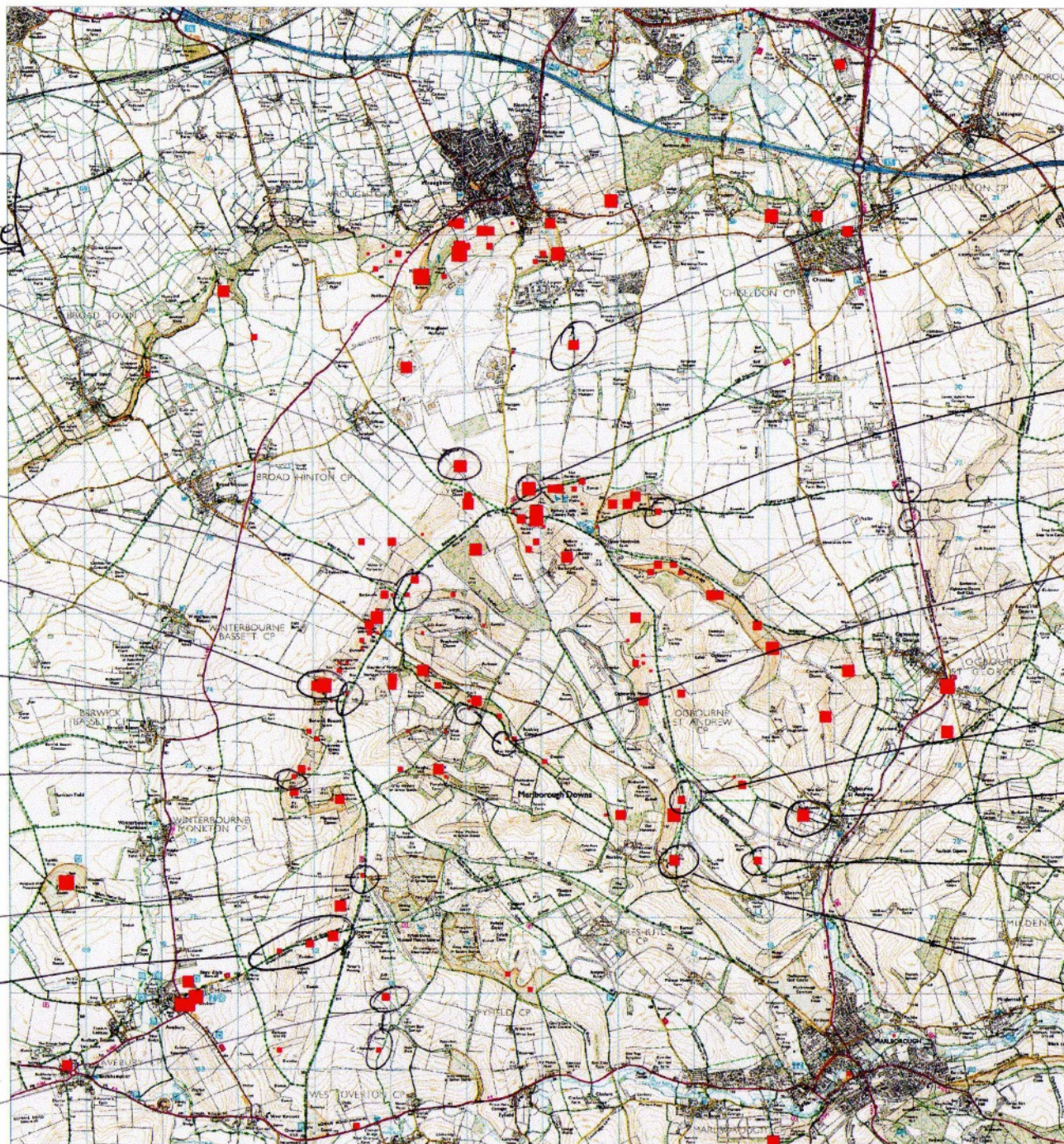
This suggests that flowery banks on some of the tracks covered may have been missed. Conversely, some tracks may have been identified because of a small flowery patch which is not typical of the rest of the track.

Richard Aisbitt, 5 March 2014

Map 1

25 Feb 2014 - RA

MDNIA Wildflower Species Density 100m



Tracks showing significant numbers of common wildflower species.

Dot size relates to the species count within a 100m square

⑨ Steep part of byway, Affett Down

Smallest dots - 2 species
One species does not show

⑥ Ridgeway

⑪ Sunken byway through Horton Down

⑤ Ridgeway

③ Grassy track through Benick Bussett Down

③ Ridgeway

⑨ Wessex Ridgeway
⑨ flowery in parts

④ Down Burn
"track & field edges"

Brilway + aale field edges ⑧

South bank of brilway - Orchids to ⑥

End of Down - chalky track down slope ④

Flower-rich patches at intervals along byway at bottom of Wick Down etc.

Byway - ⑤

Track through ⑨
Aale + horse grazing

⑤ - Note: conflict between grid ref and site name which puts it on the road.

⑦ Grassy banks at Old Bage and northwards

Map 2

DMS-GB OS 1:25,000. Copyright © 2008 Crown Copyright. Ordnance Survey Licence Number PU 1000341 84

www.memory-map.co.uk

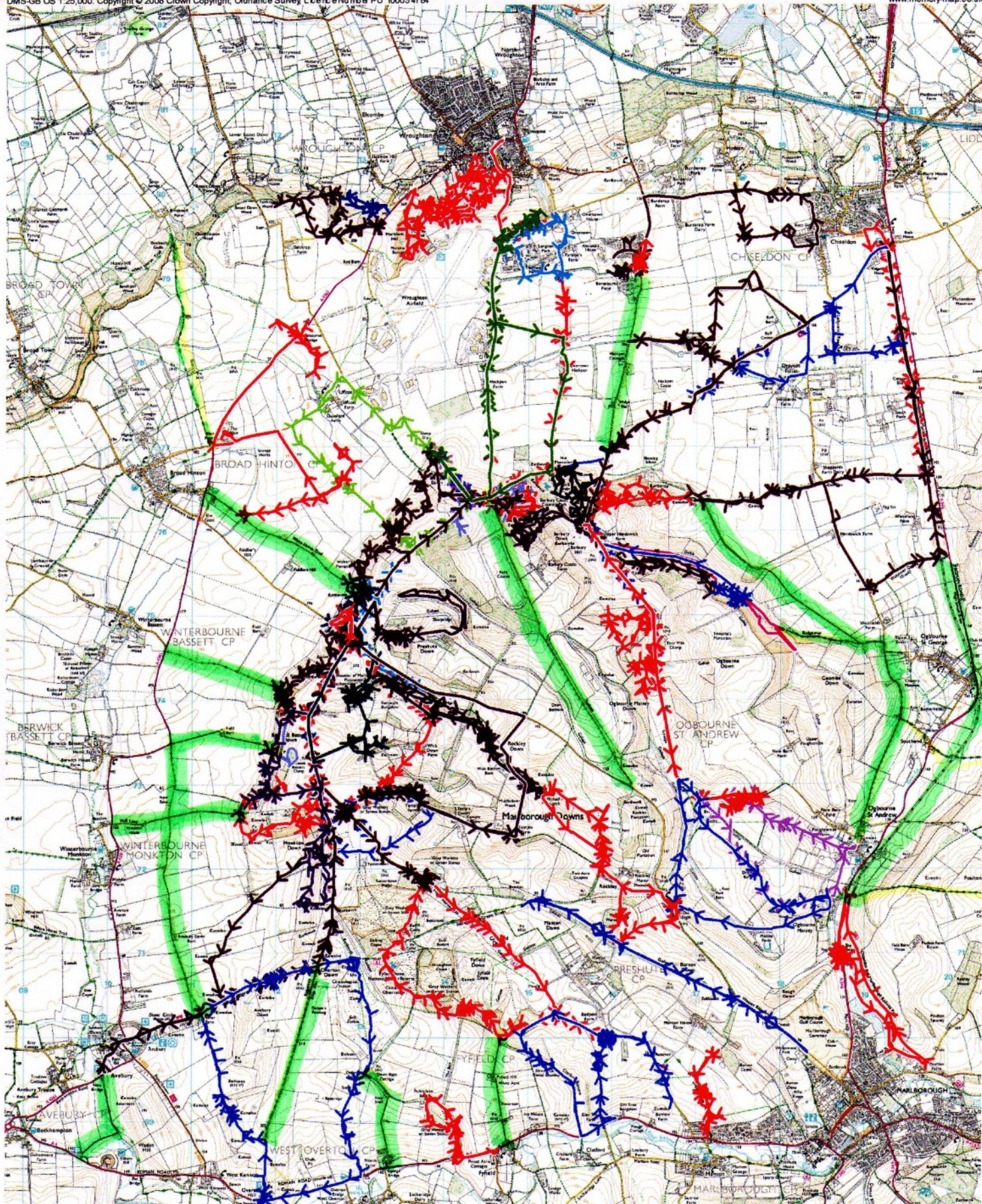


Sections of byway or bridleway with flowery banks.


Map 3

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25.02.2014.

 Rights of Way not yet walked.

Also shown (various colours) - GPS tracks from 2012 + 2013.