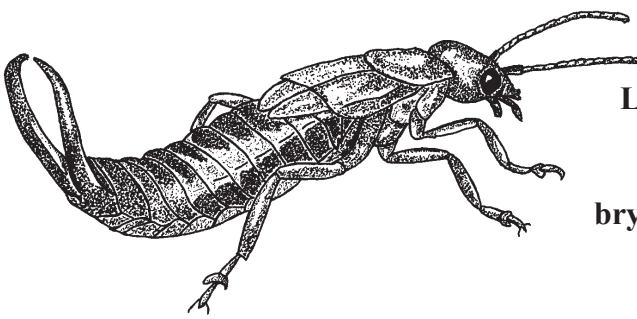
Barton Common

Insect Survey 2026

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1.1 Summary

This report summarises the results of survey work to record the terrestrial insect species present at Barton Common, Barton-on-Sea, Hampshire during 2026.

A half-day visit was made to the Common in each month during April, May, June, July, August and September to record the terrestrial insects present. This survey replicates previous surveys undertaken in 2022, 2024 and 2025.

Survey largely involved sweep-netting the vegetation with some direct searching for species at flowers. All insect groups covered by the survey are presented in Section 1.3. Tables showing all species recorded are presented in Section 1.4.

No Red Data Book, Nationally Scarce or Section 41 (BAP) species were recorded.

One species which hasn't previously been recorded was added to the site species list.

A map showing the survey areas and management compartments is presented in Appendix 1.

Species were identified in the field wherever possible, but due to identifiction difficulties with some species 'voucher/reference' specimens were retained and identified with the aid of a microscope. Reference material has been retained in the collection of the surveyor, surplus material will be donated to the collections of the National Biodiversity Data Centre, Waterford, Eire and/or Portsmouth City Museum Service.

This survey was commissioned and funded by New Milton Town Council.

1.2 Introduction

Barton Common was surveyed for terrestrial insects during April, May, June, July, August and September 2026 to assess and record the insect species present, This follows similar surveys undertaken in 2022, 2024 and 2025. (Pinchen 2023, 2024 &2025). Areas for survey are a mix of unimproved acid grassland, grass-heathland/heathland, woodland and an acidic wet seepage/flush. A map showing the survey areas and management compartments is presented in Appendix 1.

Each survey visit took half a day to complete to record the species present. The data collected from these surveys forms the basis of this report. Survey visits were undertaken in favourable weather conditions for insects (warm, wind-free and sunny) on 16th April, 23rd May, 16th June, 13th, July, 13th August, and 14th September.

Each survey area was generally walked in a zig-zag fashion from one end to the other (covering the entire width of the survey area) sweep-netting and general searching for insects all the while.

Specimens were identified in the field where possible with a small number being retained for identification at home.

Appendix 1 shows the management compartments, the compartments covered by this survey are those of heathland/grassland (compartments 5 and 9) and the woodland (compartments 2 and 3) the seepage/wet flush is compartment 6.

1.3 Survey Groups and Methodology

Survey was largely undertaken by means of sweep-netting the vegetation with the aim of dislodging insects resting on foliage or feeding at flowers. Occasionally direct-searching (where species with known plant hosts may be present) was employed as the main survey technique. Some species, such as the lepidoptera (butterflies) and odonata (dragon- and damselflies) were primarily recorded flying through/around each survey area. Without thorough searches for their larval stages many species in these goups, it is often difficult to determine which are breeding on site and those which are casual users of a site for feeding, roosting or hibernating.

The following insect groups were surveyed/recorded and their reason for attention in this survey highlighted:

Mecoptera: Scorpion flies
Only three species are recorded in Britain all can be found in most habitats, adults are often recorded in abundance. Larvae feed on decaying matter.

Neuroptera: Lacewings and allies
The majority of species are aphid feeders in their larval stage, adults can usually be found resting on vegetation during the day.

Odonata: Dragonflies and Damselflies
All species develop in water where they are predatory on other invertebrates. Adult males fly long distances, often away from water to feed, females stay close to water courses and pools. While adults are easy to record in any habitat, breeding on a site can only be proven if searches are made for the larval stages or exuviae.

Orthoptera: Bush Crickets, Grasshoppers and allies
Many species are specific to grassland habitats with some scrub element.

Heteroptera: True Bugs (terrestrial species)
Many species in this group are host plant specific where they feed on plant sap, a number of species are predatory on other insects, as a group they are best surveyed by sweep-netting vegetation.

Trichoptera: Caddisflies
All species are aquatic in their larval stage with adults flying in suitable terrestrial habitat nearby.

Lepidoptera: Butterflies
A number of species are specific to grassland habitat but are usually reliant on established and relatively undisturbed habitats, all species were recorded on a casual basis.

Diptera: Hoverflies
A number of species are specific to wetland, grassland and scrub habitats but the majority are generalist in their habitats.

Diptera: Larger Brachycera (Snipeflies, Horseflies, Soldierflies, Robberflies and Beeflies)
A number of species are more specific to wetland habitats. In the larval stages they live either as parasites in and on other insects, within decaying plant matter or in mud.

Diptera: Snail-killing Flies
All of the species feed within the shells of specific snail species and occasionally on slugs, usually in wetland habitats, only a few species live in drier habitats where they develop in terrestrial snails.

Diptera: Picture-winged Flies
All of the species are plant host specific developing as maggots within plant stems, flowerheads or seed heads.

Diptera: Conopid Flies(Beegrabbers)
All of the species in this family parasitise solitary and social bees and wasps, either at their nest sites or by searching for adults foraging at flowers.

Diptera: Tachinid Flies
All of the species are parasites that spend their larval stages feeding within or on other insects e.g. lepidoptera caterpillars and shieldbugs.

Hymenoptera: Aculeates
Many bee and wasp species nest in bare soils in warm sunny locations, each female bee or wasp excavates a series of burrows to provision them with nectar and/or pollen or live prey for their growing larvae to feed on. All species feed at flowers for nectar or pollen, while many species also feed on terrestrial invertebrates which are captured at flowers. Ants often nest in warm, highly thermophilic sites in grassland or bare and sparsely vegetated substrates.

Coleoptera: Only a limited number of coleoptera groups were surveyed for, these were Ladybirds. Soldier Beetles, Malachite Beetles, Click Beetles and Longhorn Beetles, no other beetle groups were encountered during the survey.

Ladybirds
Ladybirds occur in a range of habitats with few species being specific to this habitat. Due to the ease of recording and identifying the group they were recorded largely on a casual basis.

Soldier Beetles
This group of mainly predatory species contain a number of brightly-coloured adults which can be found often in numbers at flowers and are often encountered in sweep-net samples.

Click Beetles
A large group of often brightly coloured insects which develop as larvae in the soil or in decaying timber, adults often occur in sweep-net samples.

Malachite Beetles
A small group of attractively coloured beetles that are predatory as larvae but feed on pollen as adults, they are often common in sweep-net samples.

Longhorn Beetles
A large group of often brightly coloured beetles that in most species develop as larvae inside dead timber or plant stems. Adults are often encountered nectaring at flowers.

1.4 Species Recorded

The following tables show all insects recorded during the survey. The species lists and nomenclature follow the most recently available checklists for each group where possible. The hoverfly checklist is currently in the process of being reorganised so for ease, species are presented here in alphabetical order. As a prelude to the species lists major forage resources (for nectar and pollen) and notes on each survey area are provided.

Species recorded as new for the site are highlighted with #

1.4.1 Dry Grassland/Heathland (compartments 5,9 and 11)

Compartments 5, and 9 are similar-sized areas of generally quite level ground with some gentle sloping aspects, compartment 5 is predominantly grassland and stunted Gorse with bare ground as a result of heavy footfall on the pathways that criss-cross the area, compartment 5 is dominated by heathers and heaths with significantly less bare ground than compartments 9 and 11. Dominant forage resources(for nectar and pollen) during the first two months of the survey were Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), Milkwort (*Polygala* sp,), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Sorrel(*Rumex acetosa*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Speedwell(*Veronica* sp,), Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Ragwort (*Senecio* sp,), Buttercup (*Ranunculus* sp,), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) Black Knapweed (*Centaura nigra*), and Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*). During the middle part of the survey as a result of the grazing by a number of ponies the vegetation had become close-cropped and resulted in few flowerheads being present, what few forage resources were present comprised a few clumps of ragwort (*Senecio* sp,) a small amount of Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) and tiny quantities of Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) this remained the situation through to the final two months of the survey at which point due to a series of heatwaves vegetation across the whole Common had become dessicated, parched and withered. A number of ponies were grazing the Common throughout the duration of the survey period. Yellow composites (*Crepis* sp, *Hieraceum* sp, *Hypochoeris* sp, *Leotodon* sp,) which usually dominate the forage resources in these compartments were largely absent as forage resources throughout the survey period as a result of the pony grazing. Due to the heavy grazing pressure these compartments received during the entire summer there was little appreciable vegetation and few flowerheads to sweep-net (much of the sward was barely a few millimetres high (Plate1)), resulting in a reduction in the number of insects recorded in comparison with previous surveys.

Group/ Visit Date	**16 Apr**	**23 May**	**16 Jun**	**13 Jul**	**13 Aug**	**14 Sept**
Odonata; Dragonflies						
Aeshna cyanea				*		
Anax imperator					*	
Orthoptera; Grasshoppers						
Chorthippus brunneus				*		
Heteroptera; True Bugs						
Nysius senecionus #				*		
Coreus marginatus		*				

Group/ Visit Date	**16 Apr**	**23 May**	**16 Jun**	**13 Jul**	**13 Aug**	**14 Sept**
Lepidoptera; Butterflies						
Gonepteryx rahmni		*				
Pieris brassicae				*		
Pieris rapae				*		
Lycaena phlaeus				*		
Aglais io		*				
Vanessa cardui				*		
Pararge aegeria		*				
Maniola jurtina				*	*	
Pyronia tithonus				*		
Diptera; Hoverflies						
Episyrphus balteatus			*			
Eupeodes corollae				*		
Helophilus pendulus			*			
Sphaerophoria scripta				*		
Larger Brachycera						
Tolmerus atricapillus				*		
Hymenoptera;						
Ants						
Lasius niger				*		
Social Wasps						
Vespula vulgaris						*
Solitary Wasps						
Oxybelus uniglumis				*		
Solitary Bees						
Halictus tmulorum		*				
Lasioglossum morio				*		
Andrena bicolor	*					
Andrena haemorrhoa	*					
Nomada flava	*					
Social Bees						
Bombus jonellus	*					
Bombus lucorum	*					
Bombus lucorum/terrestris[1]			*	*		
Bombus pascuorum	*	*				
Bombus pratorum				*		
Apis mellifera		*	*			
Coleoptera; Ladybirds						
Coccinella 7-punctata		*				

1.4.2 Woodland (compartments 2&3)

The woodland comprises much young birch (*Betula pendula*) with a few older trees including Oak(*Quercus robur*), there is also a mixture of birch and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice, there are two large clearings, generally the woodland is on a mix of level and gently sloping ground, a small runnel courses through the wood but this had dried out by the time of the May visit and remaind dry throughout the survey period. During the first months of the survey forage resources were dominated by Greater Stitchwort, Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Bluebell, Foxglove and buttercup (*Ranunculus* sp,). During the middle and final months of the survey Bramble, ragwort (*Senecio* sp),and Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea luteiana*) were the dominant forage resources. Many of the forage resources had been grazed off by the ponies leaving most of the available sward barely a few millimetres high and devoid of flowerheads, this remained so through to the end of the survey resulting in very few insects being recorded. A number of ponies were grazing both compartments throughout the duration of the survey leaving little by way of forage resources.

Group/ Visit Date	**16 Apr**	**23 May**	**16 Jun**	**13 Jul**	**13 Aug**	**14 Sept**
Odonata; Damselflies						
Calopteryx splendens				*		
Lepidoptera; Butterflies						
Pieris brassicae				*		
Pieris rapae					*	
Celastrina argiolus				*		
Aglais io	*					
Vanessa atalanta					*	
Maniola jurtina					*	
Pararge aegeria	*	*		*		
Diptera; Hoverflies						
Episyrphus balteatus			*	*		
Epistrophe eligans	*					
Eristalis pertinax	*					
Eristalis tenax	*			*		
Syrphus ribesii			*	*		
Syrphus torvus	*	*				
Larger Brachycera						
Tolmerus atricapillus					*	
Hymenoptera;						
Solitary Wasps						
Cerceris arenaria					*	
Solitary Bees						
Andrena clarkella		*				
Andrena haemorrhoa	*	*				
Social Bees						
Bombus lucorum/terrestris[1]			*			
Bombus pascuorum						*
Bombus pratorum		*				

1.4.3 Seepage/wet flush (compartment 6)

A small area of generally north-west facing ground previously with a seepage of water running to the surface and formerly creating a near-permanently wet flush, the area contains areas of bare exposed soil, the ground flora is dominated by sphagnum moss (*Sphagnum* sp,) and Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*). Dominant forage resources during the first months of the survey were reduced to a small amount of Tormentil and Gorse.

This area was dry underfoot during the April visit and barely recognisable as a wet flush but this visit did come towards the end of an unusually dry and warm period of April weather, the whole compartment continued to be dry throughout the remainder of the survey as a result of the weather conditions (the driest spring and summer on record) but had also become shaded and covered by encroaching birch saplings, bramble and gorse rendering it unsuitable for some of the species which have been recorded in previous surveys. As a result of the drying out, scrub encroachment and grazing pressure few insects with a dependence on nectar and pollen were recorded during the July, August and September visits. A number of ponies were grazing this compartment throughout the duration of the survey.

Group/ Visit Date	**16 Apr**	**23 May**	**16 Jun**	**13 Jul**	**13 Aug**	**14 Sept**
Odonata; Dragonflies						
Sympetrum striolatum				*		*
Lepidoptera; Butterflies						
Pyronia tithonus				*		
Pararge aegeria		*				
Diptera; Hoverflies						
Episyrphus balteatus			*			
Syrphus ribesii		*				
Hymenoptera;						
Social Wasps						
Vespula vulgaris						*
Social Bees						
Bombus lucorum/terrestris[1]			*			
Bombus pratorum		*				

Note: *Bombus lucorum/terrestris*^ workers of these two species cannot be separated, for identification purposes queens and/or males need to be seen.

1.5 Discussion

The summer of 2026 was an exceptional one in terms of weather experienced during the survey period with five heatwaves and a number of 'Red Heat Alerts' declared by the Met Office as temperatures regularly exceeded 30^{O}C. Temperatures in excess of 35^{O}C in June and into early July appeared to have a negative impact on insect populations as the vegetation they are dedpendent upon struggled to cope in scorching conditions.

It was disappointing again to arrive on site in April to find the whole Common being grazed by a large number of ponies, this had the continuing detrimental affect of removing any structure (which was already quite lacking after the Common had been grazed all year in 2025 by a similarly large number of ponies) there had been in the sward and resulted in virtually no forage resources(flowerheads) being available for pollen and nectar dependent insects throughout the survey period and a loss of varied vegetation height and structure. During this survey the whole Common continued to be grazed so closely to the ground as to make it a barren unsuitable wilderness for insects through lack of vegetation structure and available forage resources(something that was commented on to me by a number of dog walkers during the course of the survey). As a result insect numbers were exceptionally low (both individual species and numbers of anything caught) and during most of my visits sweep-netting the vegetation (what little there was usually resulted in nothing in the net as is well illustrated by the small number of species listed in the above tables with even species typcally considered 'common and widespread' being totally absent). It is unfortunate that a combination of the hard grazing pressure through the increase in pony numbers in 2025 came in combinxstion with succession of heatwaves during 2026 to impact plant growth which was probably largely responsible for the drop in insect numbers.

The BAP/Section 41 Small Heath butterfly (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) was not recorded after previously having appeared to have an established and sustaining population on the Common,albeit seemingly clinging on in low numbers. Similarly, the Grayling butterfly (*Hipparchia semele*) which is also a BAP/Section 41 species first recorded in 2022 but not in 2024 or 2025 was again absent during this survey and may have been impacted by the grazing pressure on the sward. Both species typically feed as caterpillars on grasses and overwinter in the thatch layer. It is highly likely these species have declined here as a result of the disastrous decision to introduce year-round pony grazing which has seen the sward across much of the Common reduce from one of a mixture of short and low level heights to one of short and hard grazed with little or none of the flora having a chance to flower to provide a food resource for the adult stage. The heavy grazing pressure here has removed and reduced much of the vegetation and the important micro-habitat of thatch within the sward along with removing the actual grasses. Plate 1 illustrates the overgrazed, barren nature of compartment nine in August; during previous surveys prior to the introduction of year round pony grazing this area was a 'sea of yellow composite flowers'.

It is concerning to note the absence again of the Nationally Scarce Cepero's Groundhopper (*Tetrix ceperoi*) from the wet flush after recording it in abundance during 2022 (but not in 2024 or 2025), whether this is down to the encroachment of birch saplings causing the drying of the wet flush is unclear but the ground underfoot was notably baked dry throughout this survey and no longer resembled a wet flush or seepage as it did during the survey in 2022 the favoured habitat of this species, this may be as a result of the hot summers since 2022 and certainly a series of succesive heatwaves during 2026. Winter work to remove the scrub encroachment may help the area to retain moisture and enhance the growth of the ground flora of mosses and liverworts this species often feeds on is essential to ensure the wet flush continues to be suitable for this species and continues to be a wet seepage/flush.

It is unfortunate that the increase in livestock number coincided with the warmest and driest spring and early summer on record which resulted in the vegetation being grazed so low to such an extent that in combination with the parched nature of that by the time of the June and July surveys there was so little vegetation to sweep-net it made recording insects in the majority of the target groups difficult to the extent that few species were recorded at all in comparison with previous surveys. It was alarming to record no grasshoppers at all during the July visit when numbers should have been at their peak for all four species recorded in the previous surveys, a combination of the hard grazing and parching weather conditions is likely responsible for this.

To remedy the disastrous effects of the summer-long pony grazing a switch if possible to winter grazing (covering the months November to March)only by a smaller number of animals (ideally cattle if they are available)would be my preferred option, this should benefit not only the insect populations, but also hopefully see some restoration of the seepage/wet flush as a more open habitat with a varied combination of bare ground and mixed height vegetation.

Despite how poor the habitat on the Common now is for insects one new and previously un-recorded species was discovered; the ground bug *Nysius senecionus* a small but relatively disinctive species that first colonised Britain in around 1992 and has been spreading rapidly since. This is a species with an association with the compositae (daisy)family. It was recorded in Compartments 5 and 9 in July and could have been expected given how relatively abundant it has become on other southern survey sites during recent years although many of the composites it may favour have been grazed off here with the exception of Ragwort that still persists.

1.7 Acknowledgements

I would like to thank New Milton Town Council for commissioning and funding this survey and Bob Lord for useful discussions regarding the Common throughout the duration of the survey. I would also like to thank Ann Gorman for kindly driving me to and from the Common each month in order that I could complete the survey.

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The following references were used for identification of species recorded during the survey and their national statuses. The NBN Atlas website was also accessed at various times during the survey www.nbnatlas.org

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Appendix 1 Map showing management compartments

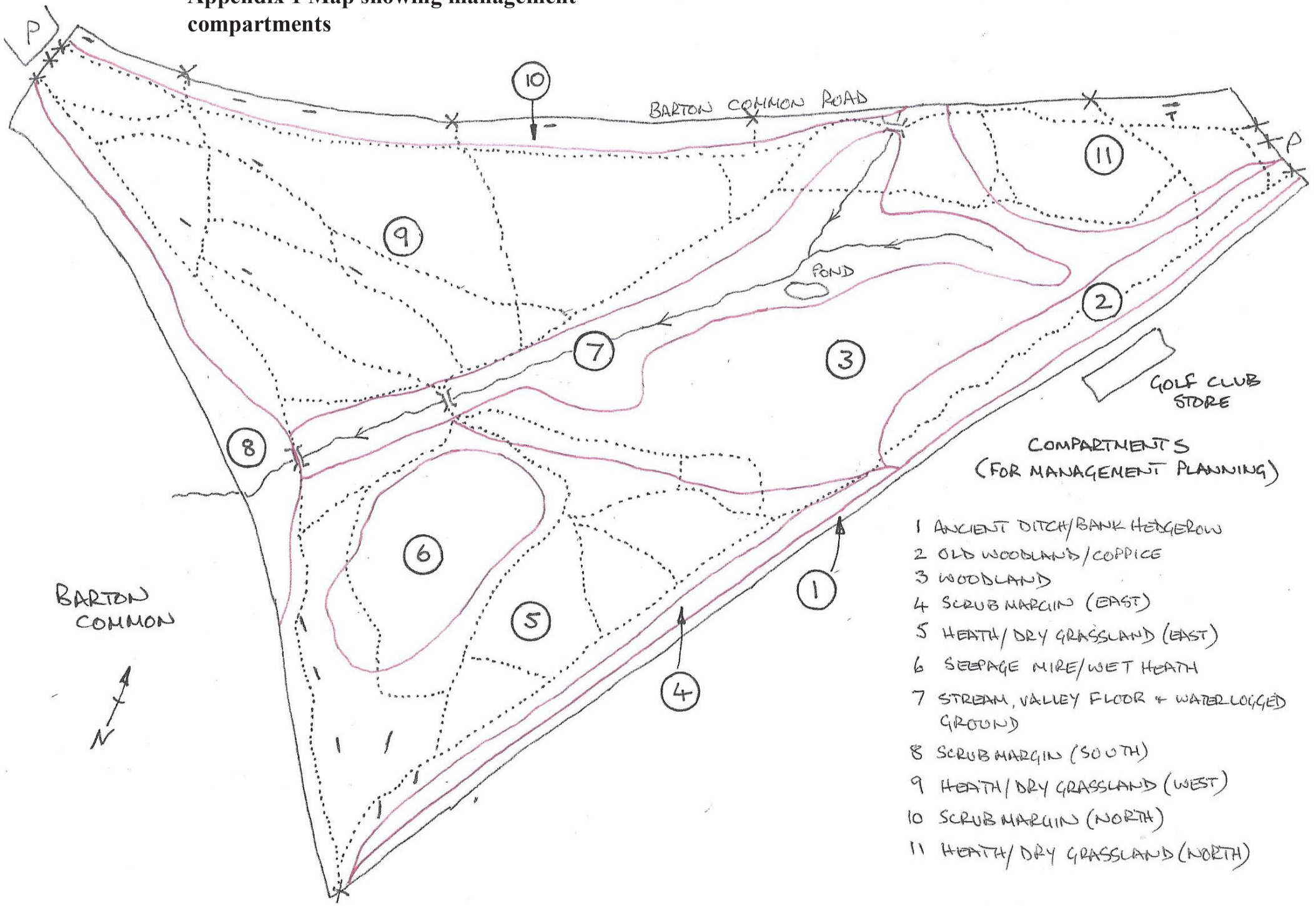


Plate 1

Compartment 9 in August looking west showing hard grazed, parched and dessicated sward with no structure and noforage resources for insects. Before the introduction of year-round pony grazing this area was a ‘sea of yellow composite’ flowers throughout the summer months.

