

**Kemerton Conservation Trust**

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## **Kemerton Woods Wildflower Project Report**

### **29<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

### **Project Background**

Kemerton Conservation Trust helps to oversee and manage Kemerton Wood – 110 acres of young woodland surrounding Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. Most of the woodland has been planted within the last 40 years and so has not yet had time to develop a rich ground flora. The Trust has experimented with various techniques to speed up the process. Some years ago, trials were successfully undertaken to see if it would be possible to encourage the spread of wildflowers by importing seed-rich leaf litter from nearby ancient woodland into specially prepared enclosures. In 2009, a five year project saw native bluebell and wild daffodil bulbs planted in several unprotected areas within the woodland to determine if they could survive grazing by deer, hare and rabbit. Both the enclosures and the unprotected areas have done well (although inevitably, more grazing damage has been seen in the unprotected areas). Following on from this success, the Trust wanted to plant bluebells and wild daffodils across a much wider area.

In April 2017, the Trust received £500 towards the project from a generous donor who prefers to remain anonymous. The Trust was to provide the balance of funds required and manpower in the form of our warden John Threadingham and our volunteer work party attendees to assist with the project by planting the bulbs.

### **Project Aims**

The main aim of the project was to increase the ground flora in the woodland by introducing native bluebells and daffodils. Mature native woodland usually consists of three herbaceous layers: the tree canopy, shrub layer and ground flora. Each of these layers has its own importance for the species dependent on it, and a fully functioning woodland ecosystem needs all three layers to be well established.

Improving ground flora by using nectar rich flowers would particularly benefit pollinator insects, a group that is broadly in decline and considered a priority conservation target.

As the woodland includes permissive paths, the bulbs would also increase visitor enjoyment of the amenity, hopefully encouraging more locals to get close to nature by visiting the wood and adjacent nature reserve.

## **Overview of Works**

The project was planned for autumn 2017. The aim was to plant out 1000 bluebells and 500 wild daffodil bulbs across selected areas within the woodland to maximise the potential for the plants to spread unaided in the future. The Trust would use volunteers to plant the bulbs at one of our monthly work parties, supervised by Warden John Threadingham and Support Coordinator Kate Aubury.

The bulbs were ordered in the spring and arrived as planned in mid-November. A photo of the bulbs can be seen in Appendix A – Project Photo Montage.

On 25<sup>th</sup> November, our Warden John, Support Coordinator Kate and 8 volunteers spent a morning planting 1500 bulbs in the woodland. The bulbs were planted in mixed groups of 5, each patch approximately 5 meters apart, and planted to a depth of 10cm as per the planting instructions. The bulbs were planted through several compartments of Kemerton Wood; Bishops, West Cherry Orchard, South Cherry Orchard and Welsh Furlong (see Appendix B – Kemerton Woods Map. A sharpened stake was used as a bulb dibber. Photos of the volunteers in action can be seen in Appendix A – Project Photo Montage.

The bulb planting took 19 hours in total; a rate of 1.3 bulbs a minute.

## **Project Results**

All works planned were carried out successfully by end of November 2017.

The bulbs should help to fill the woodland with colour and early nectar for the pollinators. Hopefully in time these bulbs will spread within the woodland, adding to the developing ground flora.

Thanks to the generosity of our funder and the hard work of our Warden John Threadingham, our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury and our enthusiastic volunteers, the project was completed on time and on budget.

## **The Future**

The Kemerton Woods Wildflower Project has now officially finished and all funds have been spent. However, the bulbs planted will hopefully flourish and spread over the coming years. The work of this project will also be complimented by a larger scale woodland flora project which is being planned for autumn/winter 2018, assuming funds can be raised. The Trust sees enhancing the woodland as a long term project.

## **Acknowledgements**

Kemerton Conservation Trust would like to thank our generous project funder, who wishes to remain anonymous, without whom this work could not have been carried out.

We would also like to thank all those who assisted in the delivery of the project, particularly our hardworking volunteers.

## Appendix A: Project Photo Montage



1. Bluebell and Daffodil bulbs ready for planting, November 2017



2. A group shot of some of the volunteers with our warden John Threadingham, November 2017



3. Support Coordinator Kate Aubury planting bulbs, November 2017



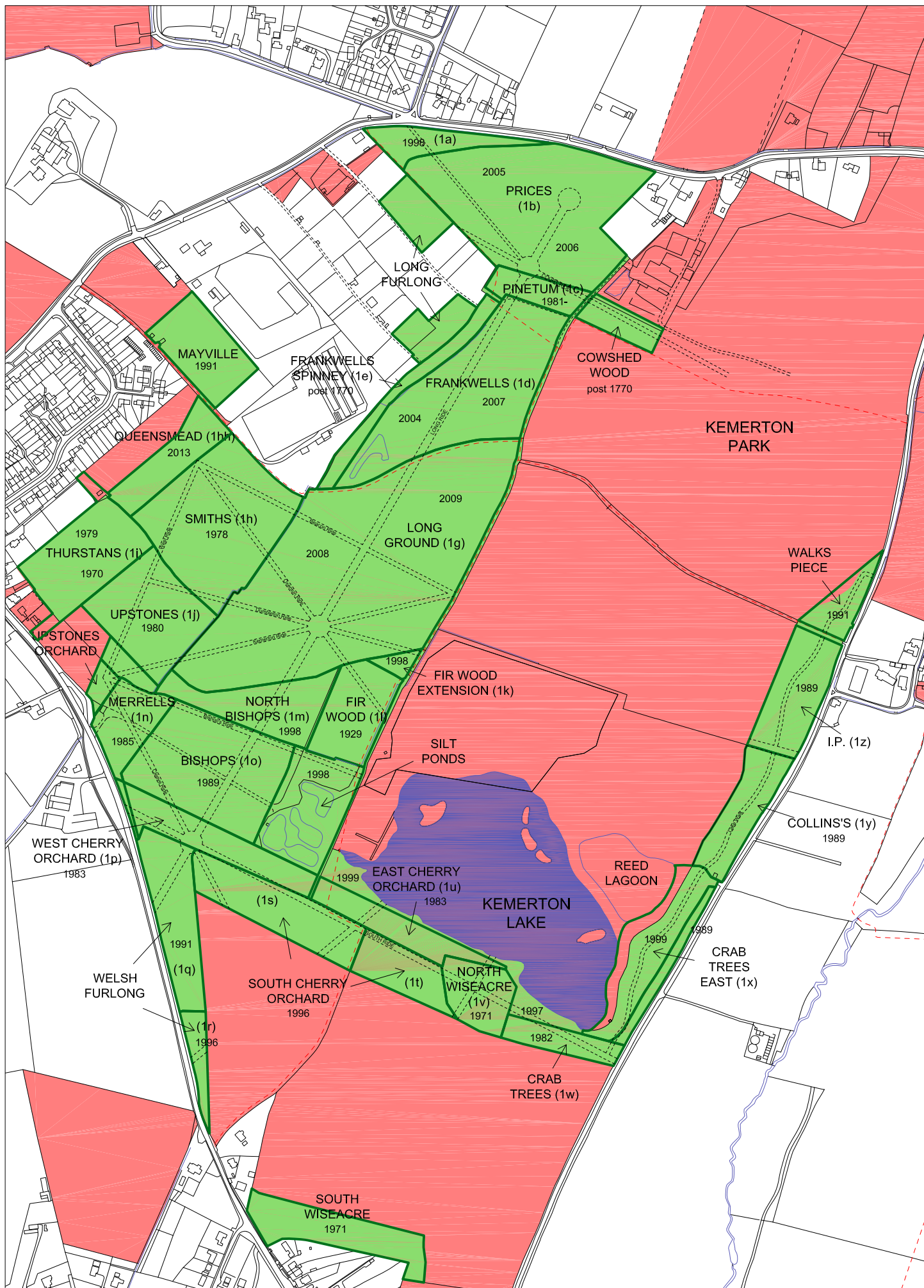
4. A newly planted patch, November 2017



5. Volunteers planting the bulbs using the makeshift 'dibber', November 2017



# Appendix B - Kemerton Woods Map



Title	Kemerton Wood	Date	2013	Scale	1 : 6,500 @ A4	OS data based on 1:2500 Land-Line or 1:25000 Mid-scale with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. © Crown Copyright
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