

Post 4

HEDGEROW & CLIMBING PLANTS

Continue down the path into the trees and turn right. Count the number of different trees and shrubs you can see in the first thirty metres of this hedge.

Dr. Max Hooper of the old Nature Conservancy Council suggested that the age of a hedge can be found by counting the number of species, the idea being that older hedges are colonised by more species over time. If you find one species then the hedge is likely to be about one hundred years old; if there are four it is probably Tudor in age, and if there are nine to twelve species it existed in Saxon times.

How many species did you find?

'Hooper's rule', as it is known, is only an approximate rule of thumb and doesn't apply to recently planted hedges, but it can be a useful way to identify and age historically important hedgerows.

You may notice a number of climbing plants in this stretch of hedgerow.

How many can you spot?



White bryony

Dull green deeply-lobed leaves, pale green flowers from May to September. Stems have spirally-coiled tendrils which the plant uses to climb. The fruit is a matt crimson berry 5-8mm across.

15 points



Old man's beard

Also known as 'traveller's joy', this woody climber is a wild clematis. It has peeling fibrous bark and can form thick vine-like stems. The flowers are greenish cream and have four petal-like sepals. Seeds form fluffy plumes in the autumn.

5 points

Black bryony

Unrelated to white bryony, this climber has long, heart-shaped, glossy leaves. Flowers are bell-shaped and yellow-green from May-July. Fruits are round scarlet berries, clustered along the stem. These are poisonous, so do not touch!

10 points



Continue following the footpath through the trees to the corner and turn uphill until you eventually emerge into the open. Cross over the horse ride onto a wide grassy path, turn left and walk along for approximately 140 metres until you see post 5 on the right (see map below).

NATURE TRAIL MAP

