

Title	A request to replace the stile in the western corner of the recreation ground with a swing gate.
Author	Member of Public
Meeting	Lands Committee Meeting – 16 th November 2023

Can the Parish Council please consider replacing the stile in the western corner of the rec with a swing gate? There would appear to be no good reason for it to be a stile, and, leaving aside [] having to lift tools etc over it for the Orchard group work as it's the nearest access, I don't think it would pass any safety inspection - the steps aren't the standard width and as you can see in the attached picture the two sides aren't level and the extra little step wobbles, thanks



Results of grassland survey, Harwell Cub Scouts, September 2023

Background:

As part of their naturalist badge, Harwell Cubs were tasked with going to a green space and seeing what changes they could observe in the wildlife over the course of 4 visits in a year.

We decided to do this close to home and chose the recently planted Community Orchard in Harwell Recreation Ground as our natural space.

Grasslands can be classified into 3 categories according to the Natural History Book Service: <https://www.nhbs.com/blog/the-nhbs-introduction-to-habitats-grassland>.

Improved – agricultural style grasslands

Semi improved – becoming more wild – no longer dominated by agricultural grass species and white clover

Unimproved – fully wild grassland habitat – 15 or more species of grass and broad leaf plants per square meter. 30% of a square meter covered with broad leaf plants.

We decided to do our survey with the goal of finding out which of these categories the grass in Harwell Rec Orchard falls into.

Methodology:

To keep the methodology simple enough for children of our age group to understand then we decided to simply count the species of broad leaf plants to see how many were present in each square meter using Hula Hoops of roughly that size.

After a quick recce the list of grassland plants provided by the field studies council was narrowed down to those that looked to be present – [full list here](#). The sheet used for counting can be seen on the final page.

Results:

Sample	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Oxeye Daisy								
Ribwort Plantain	✓		✓	✓			✓	
Greater Plantain	✓					✓	✓	✓
Hoary Plantain			✓					
Green Winged Orchid			✓					
Dwarf Thistle	✓		✓					✓
Rough Hawkbit	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Cat's-ear	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Daisy			✓				✓	
Dandelion			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Creeping Thistle								
Marsh Thistle								✓
Spear Thistle				✓				
Wild Carrot						✓		
TOTAL SPECIES	5	1	8	3	1	5	6	6

Discussion:

Most samples had 5 or more species of grassland broad leaf plants in them. In addition, we estimate that there were 3 species of grass in most samples giving a total of around 8 species. Therefore, we can say that the grass in Harwell Rec Orchard is semi-improved. Sample 7 and Sample 2 were taken outside the orchard, so we do not have a good indication yet of the difference between the orchard and other areas of the grass.

Further observations:

We have seen 12 of the hedgerow plants had lost their leaves by mid-September. This was in the southern section of the orchard perimeter. 2 of the apple trees (Apple Katy) were infested with caterpillars and so had lost many leaves to that. All other trees looked in great health, some with small fruits.

Next Steps:

We will continue to survey through the spring and summer, possibly inviting guest speakers who can help with species ID and provide any further tips on how the area should be managed.

Appendix:

Pictures of the plants that we were looking for and number of samples they were found.

