

Wildlife Site Survey Report for: Melissa Field

Site Ref:	n/a	Site size (ha):	0.87		
District:	St Albans	Central Grid Ref:	TL 166 145		
Surveyors:	Andrew Harris				
Spp list by:	AH	Form by:	AH	Map by:	AH
Date of survey:	03/08/2013	Weather:	Warm, sunshine	Duration on site:	1.5 hours

Geology:	Bedrock:	Chalk
	Superficial Deposits:	Alluvium – Clay, silt, sand and gravel

Original criteria:	N/A	Habitat:	grassland
Criteria met:	none		

Overall General Site Description:	<p>Former playing field to the west of Wheathampstead sloping gently to the River Lea with a south facing aspect. Surrounded by horse paddocks and residential areas. The grassland has a reasonable mix of grasses though overall it has a rather low diversity. A neutral-acid grassland indicator, Common Bent (<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>) is frequent, particularly on the higher ground to the west of the site which has the most acidic character. Smaller Cat's-tail (<i>Phleum bertolonii</i>), Perennial Rye (<i>Lolium perenne</i>), and Red Fescue (<i>Festuca rubra</i>) are also plentiful throughout, while False Oat grass (<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>), Tall Fescue (<i>Schedonorus arundinacea</i>) and Cock's-foot (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>) are most common on the margins. The most plentiful herb is Lesser Stitchwort (<i>Stellaria graminea</i>), Three further grassland indicators also occur - Black Knapweed agg. (<i>Centaurea nigra</i> agg.) Germander Speedwell (<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>) and Bird's-foot Trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>).</p> <p>The riverside margin is rather ruderal but there is a notable White Willow (<i>Salix alba</i>) with a girth of c3.3m. There is a line of planted Common Lime (<i>Tilia x europaea</i>) and Horse Chestnut (<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>) on the northern margin bordering the road.</p>
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Compartment 1:	<p>Grassland – despite being an amenity area this is more of a SING but with a rather low diversity. Grasses: <i>Agrostis capillaris</i>, <i>Phleum bertolonii</i>, <i>Lolium perenne</i>, <i>Festuca rubra</i>, and <i>Holcus lanatus</i>. The taller margins have more <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>, <i>Schedonorus arundinacea</i>, <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> and <i>Dactylis glomerata</i>. Herb ratio excluding negative indicators = 15% of sward composition; Most common are Lesser Stitchwort (<i>Stellaria graminea</i>), and Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>). Also Creeping Cinquefoil (<i>Potentilla reptans</i>), Field Bindweed (<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>), Common Cat's-ear (<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>) Black Knapweed agg. (<i>Centaurea nigra</i> agg.) and Smooth Hawk's-bit (<i>Crepis capillaris</i>) only one plant of Bird's-foot Trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>) was found.</p> <p>Of the negative indicators Creeping Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>) forms large patches on the lower damper slope.</p> <p>Though it has a low species diversity generally (too few indicators for WS status) conversely negative indicators away from the margins of the river are</p>
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	generally of low abundance with the exception Creeping Buttercup on the lower slope.
Compartment 2:	Riverside and western margin: rather ruderal including Stinging Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>), Creeping Thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>), Cleavers (<i>Galium aparine</i>), Hogweed (<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>) Great Willowherb (<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>) Ground Ivy (<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>) and Lesser Burdock (<i>Arctium minus</i>). There is a small amount of Greater Pond-sedge (<i>Carex riparia</i>) Thistles and Burdock provide good nectar sources for butterflies, bumblebees and other insects. There is a notably large White Willow (<i>Salix alba</i>) with a circumference at breast height of approx. 3.3m.
Planted Trees	Common Lime, Horse Chestnut and Norway Maple recorded in separate column on spreadsheet but abundance calculated as % of site area

Fauna:	Birds:	Green Woodpecker, Mallard (on river)
	Mammals:	Rabbits (field signs)
	Invertebrates:	Butterflies: Comma, Gatekeeper, Large White, Peacock, Small Skipper. White-tailed Bumblebee, Red-tailed Bumblebee, Early Bumblebee, Tree Bumblebee Banded Demoiselle (pair flying in tandem) Anthills
	Other:	

Invasive species:	None
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Current Management:	Once a playing field, a management regime to leave the grass tall during the growing season (but with paths s cut through it) was begun in 2012 but to meet local concerns a larger area was mown this year. The situation observed was this: The central area is mown. Most is cut high c10cm with shorter mown paths through it. The mowings are left. Two areas at both ends and the edges are left to grow tall. Paths and access points are kept shorter
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Recommended Management:	
Compartment 1	The current management seems to be a good compromise between the competing demands of local aspirations and ecology with different heights maintained for the sward – tall medium and short. Hopefully it will increase in diversity with this regime; Ideally the mowings which are currently left in the central area should be removed. If not already done so, they certainly should be taken off after the taller areas are cut at the end of the season to maintain a low nutrient status If it is difficult to take off site perhaps raked into a compost heap beneath the scrub on the western edge. If False-oat grass became too dominant, two cuts a year might be necessary. Maintain and enhance southern margin as a graded edge, good for insects.
Compartment 2	Best to leave the river margin/western edge as it is. The burdock and thistles are valuable nectar sources but it might be necessary to cut the thistles immediately after flowering and before they have set seed. Maybe coppice Hazels (note already considered in management plan).

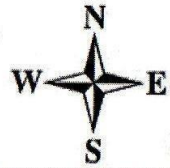
Surrounding landuse (briefly describe):	Road and residential properties to the north and east. Horse paddocks to the west and south. The grassland here is heavily grazed and difficult to assess but the paddocks to the south are undulating and show some variability so may have wet hollows with some worth.
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TABLE 2: Grassland habitat condition assessment – for information



This is broadly based on Natural England's Common Standards Monitoring 2005 which has been used to assess the condition of the main habitats present on Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

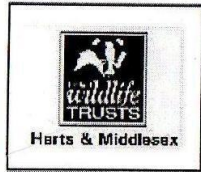
To help with the identification of grassland-type habitats and their condition, please use the following list of Negative Condition Indicators (species) for the typical open habitats found in Hertfordshire. They are divided in to three different ecological groups as below:

<p>Agricultural weeds (indicating increased soil nutrient levels in previously low-nutrient swards, and high levels of disturbance)</p> <p>These species are particularly negative from both the agricultural and ecological perspectives, and usually indicate both disturbance and increased nutrient levels.</p>	<p><u>Including these herbs:</u> Creeping and Spear Thistle, Broad-leaved and Curled Dock, Common Ragwort, Nettle, Greater Plantain, Cleavers, Cow Parsley and Field Horsetail, Daisy, Common Mouse-ear, Rosebay Willowherb, Sow Thistles.</p>
<p>Agriculturally favoured species (indicating increased eutrophication)</p> <p>These species are positive from the agricultural perspective. Ecologically however these species represent high soil nutrient levels, but not disturbance. While a few of these species are a normal component of ecologically valuable communities, a high frequency of these species indicates negative condition.</p>	<p><u>Including herbs:</u> White Clover, Creeping Buttercup; <u>Grasses:</u> Perennial Rye-grass, Yorkshire Fog, Soft Brome, Timothy, Floating Sweet-grass, Rough Meadow-grass</p>
<p>Rank grasses, rushes and sedges</p> <p>if very abundant, these species indicate lack of appropriate management and/or waterlogging.</p>	<p>Including False Oat-grass, Cock's-foot, Tufted Hair-grass, Perennial Rye-grass, large-leaved sedge species, Reed Sweet-grass</p>



17/07/2013

District Boundary

 HCC Wildlife Site




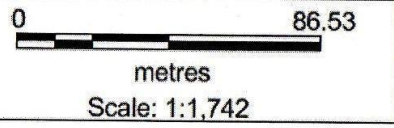
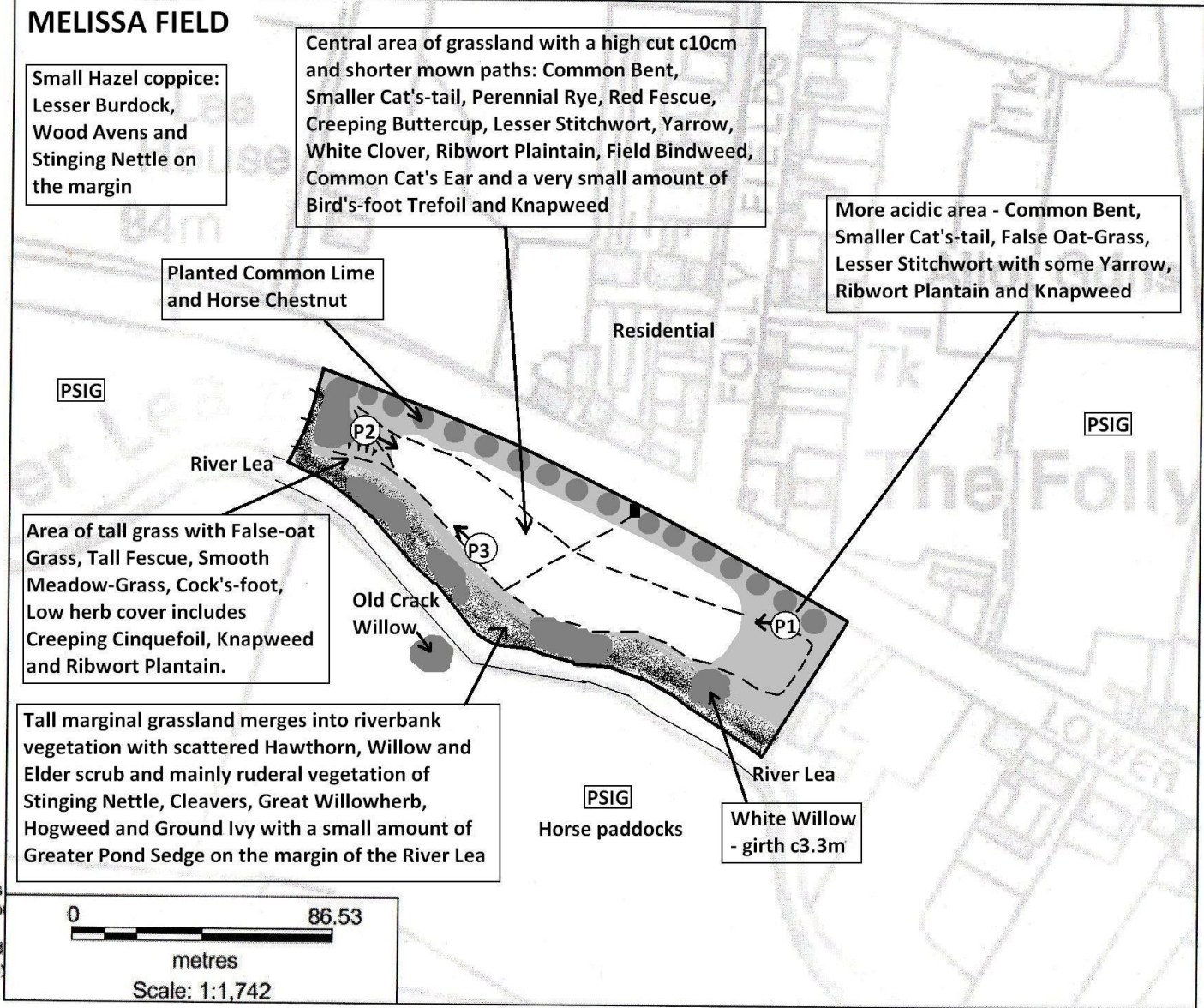
LEGEND


-  COMPARTMENT 1
Mown with high cut (white), Short mown paths (dashes) and taller grass areas (grey)
-  COMPARTMENT 2
Riverside ruderal (stippled) with scrub and trees (dark grey)
-  Planted trees

Surveyor Name: Andrew Harris













Survey Date: 03/08/2013



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

 **WS boundary** (NB use a red line to denote anywhere boundary changes should be made)

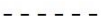







WOODLAND
&
SCRUB

-  BW Semi-natural broadleaved woodland
-  PB Plantation broadleaved woodland
-  PC Plantation coniferous woodland
-  MW Mixed woodland
-  DS Dense-continuous scrub
-  SS Scattered scrub (NB: notate grassland type beneath)
-  SB Broadleaved Parkland/scattered trees (NB: notate grassland type beneath)
-  SC Coniferous Parkland/scattered trees (NB: notate grassland type beneath)
-  SM Mixed Parkland/scattered trees (NB: notate grassland type beneath)
-  FB Broadleaved recently felled woodland
-  FC Coniferous recently felled woodland
-  FM Mixed recently felled woodland





-  CBW Coppiced broadleaved woodland
-  RCBW Relict coppiced broadleaved woodland

GRASSLAND



-  UAG Unimproved acid grassland
-  SIAG Semi-improved acid grassland
-  UCG Unimproved calcareous grassland
-  SICG Semi-improved calcareous grassland
-  UNG Unimproved neutral grassland
-  SING Semi-improved neutral grassland
-  I Improved grassland
-  MG Marsh/marshy grassland
-  PSIG Species-poor semi-improved grassland

-  Path
-  Track/lane/road
-  Hedgerow
-  Ditch
-  Bank
-  Feature (annotate)
-  Stream
-  Fence






Tall herb and fen

-  CB Continuous bracken
-  SB Scattered bracken (NB: notate grassland type beneath)
-  TR Tall ruderal vegetation
-  NR Non-ruderal vegetation (fen, e.g. reed/sweetgrass dominant stands)

WATER

-  SW Standing water
-  RW Running water

CULTIVATED

-  A Arable land
-  AM Amenity grassland /  U Urban
-  ESP Ephemeral/short (e.g. herbal pioneer communities/weedy species)
-  IS Perennial introduced shrub (eg snowberry, rhododendron, laurel, cotoneaster, bamboo etc)

Species List

Scientific Name	Common Name	WS inds (*a/n/c/w/f) & neg inds ('-')	Comp1	Comp2	Comp3
			DAFOR	DAFOR	DAFOR
<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Maple, Norway*				+
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow		R		
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Chestnut, Horse*				+
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Bent, Common	a/n	F		
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Bent, Creeping		R		
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Parsley, Cow	- c/n/w		R	
<i>Arctium minus</i>	Burdock, Lesser			R	
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy	- a/c	R		
<i>Bryonia dioica</i>	Bryony, White			+	
<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Bindweed, Hedge			R	
<i>Carex riparia</i>	Sedge, Greater Pond			R	
<i>Centaurea nigra</i> agg.	Knapweed, Blk/Cmn/Chalk~	c/n	R		
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Mouse-ear, Common	- a	+		
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Thistle, Creeping	- a/c/n/w	R	R	
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Thistle, Spear	- a/c/n/w	+		
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Bindweed, Field		R		
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel	*		O	
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn			O	
<i>Crepis capillaris</i>	Hawk's-beard, Smooth		R		
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cocksfoot	- a/c/n/w	R		
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Carrot, Wild		+		
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Willowherb, Great			R	
<i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.	Fescue, Red (family)		R		
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers	- c/n		R	
<i>Galium mollugo</i>	Bedstraw, Hedge		+		
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens		R		
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground Ivy		R	R	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy			O	
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed			R	
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire Fog	- a/c/n/w	R		
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Cat's-ear, Common		R		
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Rye-grass, Perennial	- a/c/n/w	O		
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Bird's-foot-trefoil, Com'n	c/n	+		
<i>Phleum bertolonii</i>	Catstail, Smaller		O		
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Plantain, Ribwort		R		
<i>Plantago major</i>	Plantain, Greater	- a/c/n	R		
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Meadow-grass, Smooth		R		
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Cinquefoil, Creeping		R		
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Oak, Pedunculate (seedling)		+		
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Buttercup, Creeping	- w	O		
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Dock, Broad-leaved	- c/n/w	R		

Scientific Name	Common Name	WS inds (*f/a/n/c/w/f) & neg inds ('·')	Comp1	Comp2	Comp3
			DAFOR	DAFOR	DAFOR
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Dock, Wood			+	
<i>Salix alba</i>	Willow, White			O	
<i>Salix x fragilis</i>	Willow, Crack			+	
<i>Schedonorus arundinaceus</i>	Fescue, Tall		R		
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Ragwort, Common	- a/c/n	R		
<i>Sonchus asper</i>	Sow-thistle, Prickly		R		
<i>Stellaria graminea</i>	Stitchwort, Lesser	a/n	O		
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.	Dandelion family		R		
<i>Tilia platyphyllos x cordata = T. x europaea</i>	Lime, Common*				O
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	Clover, White	- a/c/n/w	R		
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Nettle, Stinging	- a/c/n/w		R	
<i>Verbascum nigrum</i>	Mullein, Dark		+		
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Speedwell, Germander	c/n	R		
*=planted/introduced/escape	per compartment totals:		36	17	3

Total species (all comp.s)		total indicators					
	54	6					
Comp1	AWI	Neut	Acid	Calc	Wet	Fen	c/a/n/w
	0	5	2	3	0	0	5
Comp2	AWI	Neut	Acid	Calc	Wet	Fen	c/a/n/w
	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comp3	AWI	Neut	Acid	Calc	Wet	Fen	c/a/n/w
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All Compartments:	AWI	Neut	Acid	Calc	Wet	Fen	c/a/n/w
	1	5	2	3	0	0	5
Thresholds:	AWI	Neut	Acid	Calc	Wet	Fen	c/a/n/w
min size (ha)	1	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
min indicators	10	8	5	8	5	5	12
Criteria met							

DAFOR Scale:

D	Dominant	>75% cover
A	Abundant	51-75% cover
F	Frequent	26-50% cover
O	Occasional	11-25% cover
R	Rare	<11% cover, >=5 individual plants
+	Very Rare	<5 individual plants

Photos:



P1



P2



P3