

A New Space for Nature



Proposal - A Traditional Orchard in the Bourdillon Field, Goring-on-Thames

Rationale:

The primary purpose is net biodiversity gain. In addition, an orchard will create a community space for local residents and others to enjoy, including the children at Goring Primary School next to the field.

This new proposed space is c.500 sqm, equivalent to about 2 tennis courts. (See 2 graphics on page 3). An Interpretation Board nearby would explain the purpose and environmental benefits of the orchard.

Traditional Orchards are a BAP Habitat of Principal Importance, a pollinator-friendly habitat and sequester of carbon.

The September 2023 publication of the 212-page Landmark Report 'State of Nature 2023' states:

- the UK is now one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth.
- 16% (one in six) of 10,000 species assessed are at risk of being lost from the UK
- This figure is much higher for some groups, such as birds (43%), amphibians and reptiles (31%), fungi and lichen (28%) and terrestrial mammals (26%).
- The distribution of pollinators, including bees, hoverflies and moths, has decreased by 18% on average, while species providing pest control, such as the 2-spot ladybird, have declined by 34%.
- The abundance of all UK species studied has declined on average by 19% since 1970.
- Halting and reversing biodiversity decline is vital, but it is only the first step towards a healthy environment with resilient species populations, thriving habitats and functioning ecosystems.

An 'Orchard habitat' is unusually special, in that it is a composite of several different habitats:

1) A 'Tree habitat', which provides the blossom and fruit for food for birds and humans. Fruit trees are particularly good habitats for wildlife because they display 'early senescence'. They get old relatively quickly and develop veteran features such as cracks, crevices, hollow trunks, rot holes, dead wood and sap runs. These features are of particular value for a large range of specialist invertebrates, bats, such as the noctule, and hole-nesting bird species, such as lesser spotted woodpeckers. Also, fruit tree blossom is an important source of nectar for pollinating insects.

2) Trees will be spaced widely enough for the sunlight to penetrate the ground, so a small 'Grassland habitat' will be developed for wildflowers, insects, small rodents and fungi.

3) The orchard will adjacent to an established 'Hedgerow habitat', another BAP Priority Habitat. The hedges in the vicinity could be regenerated as a separate project, to increase biodiversity further.

4) This particular location in the SW corner of Bourdillon field was selected as it joins up with the existing Wild Space of the School the other side of the open wire fence to make it a more significantly size and biodiverse 'Space for Nature'.

Creating bigger spaces for nature by joining these two spaces in this way is directly in line with one of the most important and fundamental principles adopted by the government, based on its 'Making Space for Nature' strategy set out by Professor Sir John Lawton, known as Lawton's Principle - Bigger, Better, More Joined Up'.

This new community amenity has important secondary benefits:

1) Being sited adjacent to the school's wildlife area across the wire boundary fence, the orchard will become effectively an extension of the habitat of the wildlife area in that corner of the field.

2) When the trees become mature, the canopy will eventually provide a useful area of shade for children and others. There is currently no shade on the field, as noted by Goring Parish Council's *Thirlwall Open Spaces Strategy Report*.

3) The children of Goring Primary School may like to take an active part in the project, eg helping with the planting and following the progress of the orchard over the seasons and years.

Also, teachers could consider using the project to supplement their curriculum as real-life subject matter when teaching about habitats, pollinators and nature generally. (In some schools developing an orchard is an extra-curricular project to get children more connected to nature - see [Tree Council website on School Orchards](#)).

Outline development plan:

i) Planting should be ideally be between Dec 2023 - March 2024 avoiding periods when the ground is frozen or too cold and when it should reduce watering need unless there is a prolonged dry spell.

ii) One year old maiden trees provide a good balance between cost and increased survival rate over using whips.

iii) Under-sow between the trees with a native flora-rich seed mix. This grass needs to be cut at least once annually to prevent large woody plants establishing and creating scrub to preserve the grassland species. It is important to remove the grass cuttings as if they are allowed to rot down, they will enrich the soil, which can lead to a loss in plant diversity.

iii) Fruit could be picked by users of the recreation ground, children and parents of Goring Primary School. Windfalls can be collected for use by anyone and unwanted ones disposed of to avoid attracting wasps near the school and play area. These will be scattered in a suitable place to provide a valuable resource for over-wintering bird species such as redwing and fieldfare.

iv) The orchard could consist of a single fruit or a mix of several types with an option to use traditional apple varieties from Oxfordshire. Number/density of trees (on MM106 or MM 111 rootstock) calculated by the [Tree Council](#) @ c.5/100sqm. 500sqm: 20-25 trees could be grown (varieties and mix of fruits tba)

v) This particular location would require the relocation of the basketball net which currently occupies this space (see photo below). Hopefully, this change could be incorporated into any reconfiguration of the field's play facilities as part of the council's implementation of its Open Spaces Strategy.

School's Wildlife area behind boundary fence looking West View of boundary and basketball net in front of fence



LOCATOR - BOURDILLON FIELD, GORING-ON-THAMES

Approx location and area proposed for Orchard shaded in red
(See next map for close-up and detail of area)



Close-up of location and close proximity to existing wildlife area to 'join up' two habitats



The cost of the project will be borne by GGEO, assuming the council would include any reconfiguration of the play area, including the relocation of the basketball net.

Request to plant a 'Coronation Oak' to commemorate the Coronation of HM King Charles III on 6 May 2023

May I suggest an oak tree is planted to commemorate the King's Coronation on 6 May 2023. As you may know, there is already Coronation Oak planted in the Gardiner field which was planted on 31 May 1953 to commemorate our late Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation a few days later on 2 June 1953. It seems appropriate, that there is a corresponding one established to mark our King's Coronation seventy years later.

The 1953 tree has no commemorative plaque and its existence wasn't widely known about until it was brought to light by a recent GGN article (see below) by our local history society.

(The 1953 oak is not one of our native species, as it states in the article, it's a Red oak (*Quercus rubra*) a native of North America).

Did you know we have a 'Coronation Oak'?

For the Local History Society's Annual Journal, this year about Life in the 1950s, I investigated what Goring and Streatley did for the Queen's Coronation which was on Tuesday 2 June 1953. One of the fascinating things I discovered was that there was a 'Coronation Oak' in Goring, planted nearly 70 years ago. On Sunday, 31 May, the start of Goring Gap's coronation celebrations began at three o'clock with an open air united church service in the Rectory Garden. The singing of hymns was led by the choir of St Thomas' church together with members of the Goring Music Society. After the service, a Northern red oak tree (*Quercus rubra*) was planted in the Gardiner Recreation Ground as a 'Coronation Oak' and can still be seen today, close to the front of Lyndhurst Care Home. It is a lovely tree and few people are aware of its existence. Although it has few leaves at present, it will grow large pale green leaves in the spring which turn a fantastic red and orange colour in autumn. It's well worth keeping an eye open for it next time you are in the area.



Alan Winchcomb

Chairman Goring Gap Local History Society



Photos: Alan Winchcomb

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The archives of the Goring Gap Local History Society includes the following excerpt:

1953 Goring Gap Coronation Celebrations

*On Sunday, 31st May, the Goring celebrations began at three o'clock in the afternoon with an open-air united service in the Rectory Garden. The singing of hymns was led by the choir of St Thomas's church together with members of the Goring Music Society. After the service, a Northern red oak tree (*Quercus rubra*) was planted in the Gardiner Recreation Ground as a "Coronation Oak" and can still be seen today, close to Lyndhurst Care Home.*

My suggestion is that one of our two indigenous oaks is planted (preferably the one pictured below, the English oak (*Quercus robur*), which likes well-drained soil and a sunny position.

The only alternative native species is the Sessile oak (*Quercus patraea*).



The council would obviously decide on the most suitable location for such a new tree, but it would be good if it could be sited in the Gardiner Field as it was the location of our Coronation celebrations on 7 May this year. During the celebrations, there was an announcement that this idea would be put forward.

There is a suitable space, opposite 'Carlton' along Lyndhurst Road, the same side of the field as the 1953 oak tree, and a small tree planted by the Goring, Woodcote & District Lions Club to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, where there is a gap between the large trees and no telephone poles. (There is, however, a young Horse chestnut tree, which could be replanted elsewhere to provide more lateral growing space for the English oak in question). This would allow all three trees commemoration major Royal events to be along one side of the Gardiner field.

As the 1953 Coronation tree has no commemorative plaque by it and is hardly noticed by many people, it would be good to have two commemorative plaques made and placed in front of the new tree and the existing one. (The 3rd one along, opposite Rest Harrow and unfortunately rather squashed in between two larger trees each side of it)

The cost of an English oak would be around £15 and 2 quality commemorative tree brass plaques, maybe around £100 each, so a budget of £250 would be sufficient.

To be able to plant the tree in this year of the Coronation would be ideal.