

Bathford Village Trails No 4: Nature spotting around the Folly Field/Rec

NB: Health and safety- some plants are poisonous or have thorns and some insects can sting. Ticks are widespread in the area so always maintain 'tick awareness' and check yourself after being outdoors. Do not eat anything found outside and wash your hands before eating and drinking.

Start at the gates in Ashley Road



1. Go through the metal gates and turn right through the hand gate into the field keeping to the right hand edge.



2. What is the stone structure just inside the gate? Look out for the white patches of lichen on the front of this structure. A lichen is a fungus and simple plant living together. They are early colonisers of stone and bark. There are other patches of lichen nearby- can you spot them?



3. Where the grass hasn't been recently mown look out for wild flowers such as Ground Ivy, Dandelion and Speedwell in the photos or others such as Red Deadnettle and Groundsel. How many different coloured flowers can you spot?



4. Look up and around. How many pylons can you see? Can you work out which way is North? Are there any birds flying overhead? Often there are Jackdaws feeding in the field. If you are lucky you might spot a large bird of prey called a Red Kite with its distinctive forked tail. They are becoming frequent visitors to Bathford and are often chased by other birds such as crows.



5. Now kneel down and look at the ground- What can you see? Grass? Anything else? Sometimes there are other plants growing which can be recognised by different shaped leaves. How many different leaf shapes can you spot? Can you see any insects? Sometimes there are little piles of soil where mining bees have been busy (photo).



6. Cricket square- this is kept closer mown than the rest of the field- If you look closely you may be able to see circular dark green patches- these are 'fairy rings' marking where a fungus is growing under the ground. Towards the end of summer/early autumn watch out for toadstools coming up on the edge of the rings! (if the square isn't disturbed too often!)



7. At the far end of the field turn left and follow the hedge around. Notice that it is made up of several different species of trees and bushes. Can you spot the one in the photo -Holm Oak, which is evergreen so keeps its leaves all year. Can you recognise any others? Sycamore, Horse Chestnut, Blackthorn/sloe (take care with thorns)? Hawthorn, Elm?



8. Notice the Bramble bushes here with their fierce thorns. If they are in flower look out for bees, hoverflies, and butterflies which visit to feed on the Bramble nectar.



9. What other plants are growing along here? Can you find Lady's Smock and Common Nettle like in the photo?



10. No one likes being stung by nettles but they are a food plant for several butterfly caterpillars so it is worth looking carefully to see if you can spot any of them such as the Comma shown in the photo.



11. At the corner turn left again to follow the edge of the field back towards the rugby club. How many trees are growing along the boundary with the public footpath? How many stiles are there? Can you find the Horse Chestnut tree that produces conkers in the autumn? It has easy to recognise leaves (photo).



12. Several of the trees along here are Common Lime. Look at the leaves and see if you can spot any of the red nail galls caused by a tiny invertebrate mite growing in the leaf tissues. Notice the bark of some of these trees have patches of moss and grey, yellow and white lichens growing on the trunks.



13. Look out for the white wild flower in the photo. It is called Shepherd's Purse- why do you think it is called that? Also here is a green plant which is a common weed known as Goosegrass, Cleavers and several other country names. It has lots of tiny sticky hooks on the leaves and seeds. These can attach to clothing or animals which helps the plant to spread to new places.



14. Returning to the Rugby Club look up to spot a mythical creature!

