

## The Loffhouse Glade, Horse Close Wood, Management specification

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Horse Close Wood<sup>a</sup> lies at the northern edge of the public Wimbledon Park. In March and April 2007, an area of the wood was cleared by National Grid to enable works on their underground infrastructure. Following further disturbance by National Grid in the winter of 2015-16, rather than restore woodland, it was decided by the Friends of Wimbledon Park and LB Merton to establish The Glade, a grassy area which would present less of an obstacle to any future works and which could be restored more readily afterwards. This change was reflected in the revised management plan for the wood. The potential of The Glade is illustrated by the 142 species that occurred there, as it developed after the last disturbance up until 2022 and by the informal use of the area by park users.

When all the National Grid kit was removed in July and August 2020, the Friends of Wimbledon Park and LB Merton decided that The Glade would be kept as a woodland meadow<sup>b</sup>, a habitat otherwise lacking in the park.



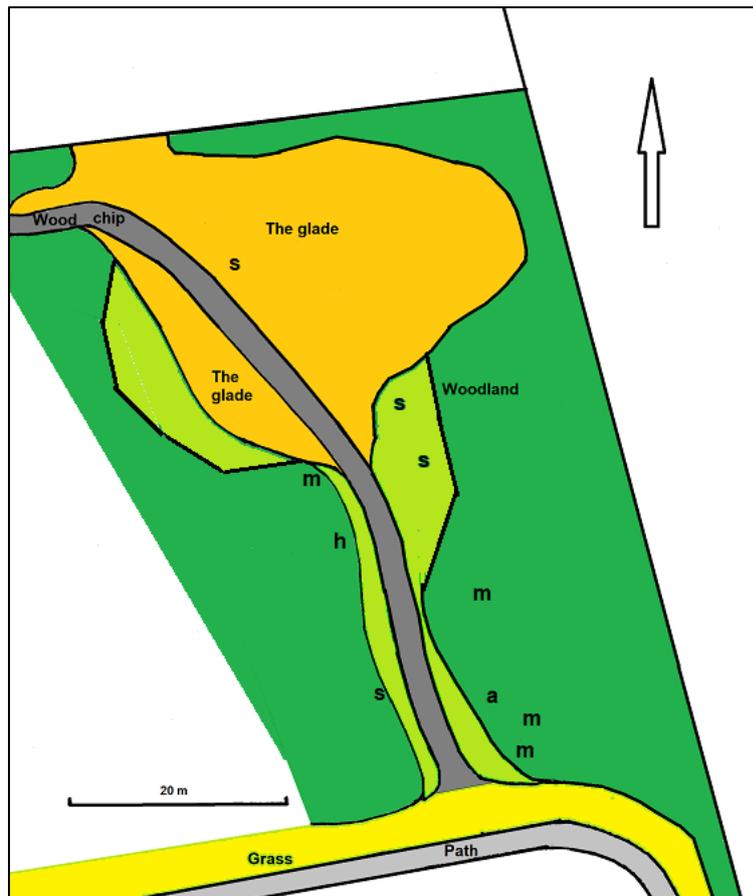
**The Loffhouse Glade within Horse Close Wood<sup>c</sup>**

To maintain the Glade, it should be managed as a traditional meadow<sup>d</sup>, the grass and other species being cut twice a year, first in early Spring and second in late Summer or early Autumn, with the arisings raked off. The cut can be done with a

scythe or a strimmer, but some areas might require a brush cutter or hand tools. This management allows meadowland wild flowers flourish in Spring and Summer.

The main natural threats to The Lofthouse Glade are invasion by woody species, especially brambles and shrub willows, and dominance by tall perennial species, such as hogweed, docks, nettles, thistles, pendulous sedge and bindweed. The cutting prevents these species from predominating and cutting the grass and raking-off opens up gaps, thus allowing the regeneration of meadow species.

The area to be cut is identified in the accompanying plan as “The Glade”. All vegetation up to the edge of the surrounding woodland should be cut, including the brambles and young trees. The arisings should be raked off and disposed of in appropriate nearby parts of the wood<sup>e</sup>.



All woody material should be cut, except for the existing small-leaved lime tree to the east of the path. The latest works cleared the woodland ground layer beyond the edge of The Lofthouse Glade and intensive use during the covid epidemic resulted in erosion of woodland ground flora there. These places are beneath the canopy of the surrounding trees and are shown in bright green on the plan. Here, the woodland ground layer will regenerate naturally and there should be no meadow management.

The plan also indicates some nearby woodland trees (a=Ash ‘Jaspidea’, h=Hornbeam, m=Field maple and s=Small-leaved lime)

The wood chip path through The Lofthouse Glade is

maintained separately, alongside similar paths elsewhere in Horse Close Wood.

<sup>a</sup> It is not an ancient wood, but was shown on a map of around 1740 and so is remarkably old for a secondary wood.

<sup>b</sup>Peterken, G.F. 2009. *Woodland origins of meadows*. British Wildlife 20: 161-170.

<sup>c</sup> This plan is from the revision to the management plan for the wood in March 2019. Also shown are the areas of new woodland planting. The Glade was named in memory of Dave Lofthouse in 2022. Dave was the LB Merton Tree Officer for many years and worked with the local community on many projects, including the Glade.

<sup>d</sup> Hopkins, J.J. 1990. *British meadows and pastures*. British Wildlife 1:202.

<sup>e</sup> The Friends of Wimbledon Park have a hay rake and are happy to undertake the raking off.