

Stone Stiles in Gloucestershire

Could you help to discover more?

Did you know in Gloucestershire there are three types of stone stiles - step, slip/squeeze and slab? For centuries they have provided access across field boundaries to locals walking along ancient pathways as they went about their business. Despite the historic value of these stiles scores of them have been abandoned and some lost forever.

Stone stiles are found in many areas of the country with examples throughout Gloucestershire of the three types of stiles. Step stiles are however quite rare - perhaps you might spot one or know of one in the Cirencester area?

In 2020 Peter Wilson, a member of CPRE launched '**The Stone Stile Project**'. Peter has extensive knowledge of the history of stone stiles but was surprised to learn there was no comprehensive record of stiles in neither our county nor apparently elsewhere in the country. In association with CPRE and the Cotteswold Naturalists Field Club, Peter's aim was have a record of every remaining stone stile in Gloucestershire before they were lost forever. Through support from these two groups and other keen walkers almost 500 stiles have been recorded but it's known there are at least 100 more stiles yet to be mapped.

When you are out walking, if you spot a stone stile, or if you know of an existing stile, please photograph it, if possible from both sides. Download a Stile Recording Form by going to the CPRE website, <https://www.cpreglos.org.uk/creating-a-record-of-gloucestershire-stone-stiles/> Please give as much information as possible before emailing the form to: peter.wilson@woodchestervalleyvillage.co.uk

Any 'duplicate' stiles are fine as you may have taken a better picture than one already on file and provide more historical and architectural information about the stile.

With the many sightings of stiles across the county, Peter has now launched Phase 2 of the project. He is seeking help on a voluntary basis from local people with an historical knowledge of their own parish; also historians, geologists and archaeologists. The aim is to create a comprehensive record of the history of the stiles before some are 'lost' forever. If you can help with the next phase or have friends who can, please contact Peter.

The information received will then be available to develop an interactive App. for the enjoyment of everyone who loves the countryside. There is no doubt this will encourage more people to explore our wonderful county adding to their enjoyment of country walks. It will also help wheelchair users and families with children in buggies to plan their walks.

If you would like to make a donation in support of **The Stone Stile Project** please go to the CPRE website where there is a 'Just Giving' page and more details on the Project.

Update at July 2021

There are now over 220 contributors to the project. Over 600 individual stiles have, so far, been identified. With many reports to review I am confident, having accounted for the duplicates which have great value, that the final Gloucestershire total recorded could approach 800.

Additionally a wide array of landscape artifacts are being reported from hemp ponds to mounting blocks and including cattle pounds, sheep washes, ancient village pumps and spring fed watering troughs plus even old insurance plaques. More welcome.

Photocopies of old photographs/postcards showing rural landscape artifacts are also very welcome for use in stage two.

The project is moving strongly into stage two where more help will be very much appreciated:

Firstly reviewing the stiles is giving rise to occasional queries and it would be help to have a local volunteer in each area to whom these can be referred – if you feel you may be able to help

please e mail me the name of the parish in which you live.

Secondly collecting the data for the App(s) is being piloted. The data research and write ups are best done by local groups so In would be very pleased to hear from

local history groups and others willing to assist

Peter Wilson
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