

**Ringing Pits, Irlam  
Agricultural Land Classification  
ALC Map and Report  
May 1997**

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## AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION REPORT RINGING PITS, IRLAM

### INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents the findings of a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey on 36.1 hectares of land. The results of this survey supersede any previous ALC information for this land. The land is located to the north west of Irlam. The survey was in connection with a proposal to extract peat.
2. The survey was undertaken on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in May 1997 by the Resource Planning Team of the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA)- Northern region of FRCA.
3. The land has been graded in accordance with the publication "Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales - Revised guidelines and criteria for grading the quality of agricultural land" (MAFF 1988).
4. At the time of survey the agricultural land on this site was not being cropped and Birch scrub has invaded the site. Field notes from a survey carried out in 1988 show carrots and other vegetables growing at that time.

### SUMMARY

5. The findings of the survey are shown on the enclosed ALC map. The map has been drawn at a scale of 1:10000 with an average auger boring density of 1 per hectare. The ALC map is only accurate at this base map scale and any enlargement would be misleading.
6. The area and proportions of the ALC grades and subgrades on the surveyed land are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Area of grades and other land

Grade/Other land	Area (hectares)	% surveyed area	% site area
1	-	-	-
2	19.7	75	55
3a	6.6	25	18
3b	-	-	-
4	-	-	-
5	-	-	-
Agricultural land not surveyed	-	N/A	-
Other land	9.8		27
<b>Total surveyed area</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Total site area</b>	<b>36.1</b>		<b>100</b>

7. The agricultural land on this site has been classified as Grade 2 (very good quality) and Subgrade 3a (good quality). The key limitation to the agricultural use of this land is soil wetness.

8. The area of very good quality land is located across much of the site. The soils have a humified peat texture overlying fibrous peat.

9. The areas of good quality land are located in the north eastern and south western boundaries of the site.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING ALC GRADE

### Climate

10. Climate affects the grading of land through the assessment of an overall climatic limitation and also through interactions with soil characteristics.

11. The key climatic variables used for grading this site are given in Table 2 and were obtained from the published 5km grid datasets using standard interpolation procedures (Meteorological Office, 1989).

Table 2: Climatic and altitude data

Factor	Units	Values
Grid reference	N/A	SJ 700 950
Altitude	m, AOD	23
Accumulated Temperature	day°C (Jan-June)	1423
Average Annual Rainfall	mm	879
Field Capacity Days	days	208
Moisture Deficit, Wheat	mm	85
Moisture Deficit, Potatoes	mm	72
Overall climatic grade	N/A	Grade 1

12. The climatic criteria are considered first when classifying land as climate can be overriding in the sense that severe limitations will restrict land to low grades irrespective of favourable site or soil conditions.

13. The main parameters used in the assessment of an overall climatic limitation are average annual rainfall (AAR), as a measure of overall wetness, and accumulated temperature (AT0, January to June), as a measure of the relative warmth of a locality.

14. The combination of rainfall and temperature at this site means that there is no overall climatic limitation. The site is climatically Grade 1.

## Site

15. The site lies at an altitude of about 23 metres AOD and is generally level.
16. The three site factors of gradient, microrelief and flooding are considered when classifying the land.
17. These factors do not impose any limitations on the agricultural use of this land.

## Geology and Soils

18. The solid geology of the area is comprised of Bunter Sandstone. This is overlain with deposits of peat - British Geological Survey 1975, 1962.
19. The soils that have developed on this geology are generally of a peaty texture.

## Agricultural Land Classification

20. The details of the classification of the site are shown on the enclosed ALC map and the area statistics of each grade are given in Table 1, page 1.

### *Grade 2*

21. Land of very good quality occupies 19.7 hectares (55%) of the site area and extends across the majority of the site.
22. The soil has a humified peat texture overlying an acidic fibrous peat below 30 cm. The soil is placed in Wetness Class III and Grade 2. At the time of the survey the soils were moist at about 40 cms.
23. The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is soil wetness.

### *Subgrade 3a*

24. Land of good quality occupies 6.6 hectares (18%) of the site area and is found in the south western and north eastern parts of the site.
25. The soil is a humified peat which lies directly over fibrous peat at or above 30 cm. At the time of the survey the soils were moist at about 30 cms and are placed in Wetness Class III. The shallower depth to the acidic fibrous peat can affect crop rooting and hence these soils are placed in Subgrade 3a.
26. The main limitation to the agricultural use of this land is soil wetness.

*Other Land*

27. Other land occupies 9.8 hectares (27%) of the site area and is found as a trackways, dense Birch scrub and current peat workings.

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## **SOURCES OF REFERENCE**

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