



[www.ryemeadows.org.uk](http://www.ryemeadows.org.uk)

## Rye Meadows Newsletter – No. 1

This is, we hope, the first of a quarterly round-up of news from the Rye Meadows Team to let you know what the volunteers and contractors have been doing on the Rye Brook and surrounding meadows.

### **Meandering**

No that's not me wandering through the fields, it is putting back the meanders to the brook that was artificially straightened decades ago. Since straightening, when in flood, the water whooshes downstream carving ever deeper vertical banks and producing a volume of water further away from Rye Meadows that results in garden and house flooding in Leatherhead.

With the assistance of Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project plus not forgetting our own band of hardy volunteers we constructed four scalloped berms in the banks of the Rye Brook, plus added several wooded berm deflectors.



Volunteers then transplanted some of the water loving plants from elsewhere to the scalloped area. The wooded berms will, in time, silt up and plants will grow there too.

### **Hydrologic Complexity**

Now you are impressed by these long words, we can explain what they mean. Our Landscape Architect and Rye Meadows Chairman, Stefanie Weinmann has recently submitted a detailed Planning Application to construct a network of ponds and scrapes

within a 120m stretch of the Rye Brook. This will create a wetland habitat and stimulate the recovery of biodiversity along the brook.

The Committee has received two generous grants to enable this work to be carried out; one from the Community Foundation for Surrey and one from the Bannister Charitable Trust. The scheme has the full backing of the Environment Agency and Surrey Wildlife Trust and it is hoped construction work will commence this summer whilst ground conditions permit.

### **“Dead” hedges and woodland**



Using dead wood and brush from pruned trees together with branches dumped by neighbouring properties, Rye Meadows volunteers, aided by Robert Baines, tree surgeon, constructed a long dead hedge along the boundary with the footpath from Bushey Shaw. The original fence had fallen into disrepair and dog walkers were using this as access onto the fields. Sadly some of these dog walkers had no qualms about

allowing their dog to foul the area, with some owners hanging the full dog poo bags on trees or throwing them into the undergrowth.

Volunteers also cleared the small copse adjacent to Bushey Shaw, removing much of the fallen branches and assorted debris (or litter as we call it!). Branches that could not be cut and used as firewood was stacked as bug and wildlife “hotels” for use by small mammals. We have ordered bluebell bulbs for planting in this copse in the autumn and we hope they will spread to make an attractive blue “carpet” in Spring each year.



### **Footpaths**

The Committee has obtained grant funding from Mole Valley’s Section 106 pool to buy and install a Notice Board by the footpath at the entrance to the Meadows from Preston Grove. This is being made locally by the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project.

In addition, all the gates within the meadows are to be replaced with inscribed wooden gates. Daphne Burnett has used, where possible, the names of the ancient fields from the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century maps of the area.



We have also improved the footpath from Bushey Shaw into the wooded copse. This used to get very wet and muddy in the winter and we have used some spare hardcore to make the path more secure.

We are also seeking funding to improve the present footpath from Preston Grove to the Wooden Bridge. As this is a Right of Way we have to liaise with Surrey County Council Rights of Way section and this is proving to be a slow and frustrating process. The present path becomes waterlogged in the winter and the plan is to raise it up with a strong base and then create a hardcore surface with Type 1 material similar to that the volunteers created on the remaining section of the footpath to Ashted Woods Road.

Other tasks carried out this year are the ongoing maintenance of the planted Jubilee Wood which is now appearing above the protective tubes. In addition, in the early Spring we



planted, with the help of many volunteers, a complete hedge of some 230m with the boundaries of Rye Field, Links Close and Preston Grove. This hedge will be kept at a reasonable height in years to come so as not to impede the views householders have over the Meadows.

Volunteers have also cleared the majority of the culverts that cross the meadows from Links Road to the Rye Brook. Many of these were choked with years of growth, leaves and litter and these were cleared to allow freer passage of draining water to the Rye Brook.

Finally, the Friends of Ashted Rye Meadows Wetlands are pleased to be a key player within the Lower Mole Catchment Partnership and together with Teazle Wood are working hard to improve the water quality of the Rye. Nigel Bond is a trained Riverfly researcher and he regularly monitors the quality of the water flowing through Rye Meadows. This involves being dressed in waders and sieving the silt in parts of the stream to physically count insect and fish specimens. The count is the measure of how the stream has improved, or deteriorated. We have seen improvements as a consequence of our work but we have also seen deterioration when effluent and illegally dumped oil etc is disposed of in the road drains that then finds its way to the Rye Brook.

Finally the Meadows are now in full bloom with many specimens of wild flowers. Buzzards are seen regularly over the meadows and latterly we have seen the Red Kite in the skies above. The web site shows the count of bird species identified each month by keen ornithologist Peter Firth.



Ashted Village Day approaches on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June. The Friends of Ashted Rye Meadows Wetlands has a stall in Section C (to the right of the Rec as you go in). Please come and visit us and see the plans for the future and speak to some of the volunteers.



(DCB 5/6/2015)