



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

## Rye Meadows Newsletter – No. 11

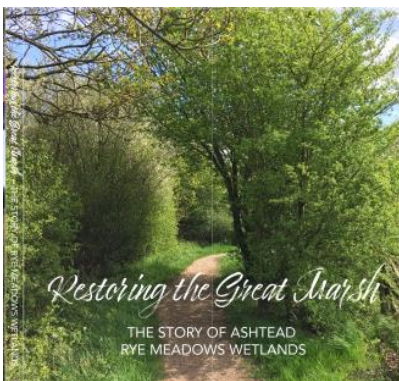
It's been a while since the last Newsletter and much has happened since then. We've had a change in personnel leading the volunteers, we've said goodbye to some and welcomed new volunteers.

David Baker stood down as Chairman of the Friends of Ashtead Rye Meadows Wetlands having been in the post for 10 years. Nigel Bond, who was the Hon. Secretary, has taken up the role of Chairman and will lead Rye Meadows into the next phase. David Curnow has also stood down as Volunteers Leader. David organised the tasks for each volunteering session and directed the volunteers to where they were needed. In addition, he was our "named driver" for the John Deere tractor and trailer. David Baker has taken over this role, as he says one of the things he likes doing is telling people what to do! We have welcomed Rod Shaw onto the Committee. Rod brings with him a huge amount of experience from his many years working at Mole Valley Council. There's no change in the role of Treasurer. Peter Williams very efficiently manages our books for us and keeps an eye on our expenditure.

The successful growth of Rye Meadows in the last 10 years has created a slight problem for us necessitating a change of direction. We have had to rewrite our Constitution and reduce our activities. Although priding ourselves on being a charitable (small c) institution for the benefit of Ashtead as a whole, we were never a Charity (capital C). Thanks to Sue Bond's investigation we found that our annual income from grants and donations etc exceeded £5,000 and this together with our "charitable purpose" could mean we needed to register as a formal Charity and all the bureaucracy that entails. The Charities Commission does not offer advice on whether we would qualify or not and we would have to have submitted an application. They would then decide yay or nay.

We decided therefore to change the organisation to Rye Meadows "light", keeping our income below the £5,000 threshold and essentially working for the landowners, Mr and Mrs Burnett. This will mean any future projects will need to be arranged by the Burnetts as we cannot have grant money going through our books. For the moment therefore all the planned projects for Centenary Field are on hold.

### **"Restoring the Great Marsh"**



In the last newsletter we announced the delayed publication of this book detailing the history of Rye Meadows, how it came about and the various events over the last 10 years. It is a terrific book with over 100 colour photographs. Mrs Burnett tells how she came up with the idea and how, with help from outside professionals, turned the germ of a scheme into reality. It tells how she persuaded the first three volunteers to come on board (Stefanie Weinmann, Geoff Ball and David Baker) and form the first Committee. The book then covers the various major improvement projects

that have been successfully carried out over the years, but also includes amusing anecdotes by the volunteers.

It is a great read as well as a colourful 'coffee table' book that you can dip in and out of. We have already sold many copies at Village Day 2022, on the internet via [www.ryemeadows.org.uk](http://www.ryemeadows.org.uk) and with the kind assistance of the ladies at "Stems" in Craddocks Parade.

Proceeds of sale of the book are being donated to Ashted Rotary, and we were pleased to send them a cheque recently for £2,371.39. Why the strange amount? That's the small commission charged by our internet website "shop" provider.

If you don't have your copy yet we still have copies available at £20. We will deliver free of charge to any KT21 address, but if outside there we will have to charge P&P. To order your copy go to <https://www.ryemeadows.org.uk/shop/>.

### **Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme**

In 2020 during Covid restrictions we agreed to oversee three girls doing their Bronze Award. These were Bethan, Freya and Alex from City of London Freeman's School. David Baker supervised the three girls (and their mothers!!) doing various tasks from painting the barn, cutting back brush to having a huge bonfire.



Since then, over the next three years Richard Wassell has taken on four groups doing Bronze and Silver Awards. These volunteers were Jack and Alfie, Anna and Eleanor, Aarav and Leo and Adam, Toren, Louis and Theo. They have undertaken a large variety of tasks on the Meadows on Saturday or Sunday mornings each growing in confidence with the tasks and becoming a good team. They have all worked superbly under Richard's guidance.

Here we must also pay tribute to Richard who gives up an hour or more each weekend to guide these young people towards their goal of Bronze or Silver awards. This would not be possible without Richard's

sacrifice and commitment.

Keep an eye on the Facebook page for reports on activities.

### **Trees**

We took over the management of another field last year. This is one to the north of the existing Rye Meadows fields and lies just south of Ashted Common. We have called it Trevona Field. It is not part of the land designated under Fields in Trust, but is now managed by the volunteers with the remainder of Rye Meadows.



Last year we planted another stand of trees on the northern boundary of this field and plan on erecting deer netting to give the young saplings protection. The original pods of trees in Rye Meadows have all suffered from deer damage and many have had their bark stripped away by these beautiful but destructive creatures. Whether they will ultimately survive this damage only time will tell.

The Duke of Edinburgh volunteers also planted new more established trees in the area by the barn. When we obtained Planning Permission, we agreed we would plant trees to mask the structure from view from the south. The trees will take a few years to become established, but in time will form a barrier shielding the barn from view.

The original trees planted in 2011 have grown well, some reaching 20 feet in height already, but others being much slower to become established. Horse and deer damage is slowing their growth. This last year we have removed all the green protective tubes and stakes as they are now all strong enough to support themselves even in high winds. With guidance from Chris Edge Tree Care ([www.chrisedgetreecare.com](http://www.chrisedgetreecare.com)) we have also removed the epicormic growth from many of the young trees. An *epicormic* shoot is a shoot growing from an *epicormic* bud, which lies underneath the bark of a trunk, stem, or branch of a plant.



## **Blackthorn**



In April, the meadows will see this plant in full flower. White blossom will appear in the hedgerows and look spectacular. This will be followed in May by the hawthorn blossom. These species really herald the arrival of Spring. We hope also the Wildflower Meadow (Fraudings) will see more Yellow Rattle and Milk Maids following more work by Chris Edge Tree Care. We have also planted primrose and snowdrops in various locations in the Meadows.

Blackthorn, for all its beauty in the Spring, is an invasive and dangerous plant to manage. The thorns are very strong and can penetrate even the stoutest wellington boot sole. It will also pierce heavy leather gardening gloves, and unless removed from the skin can cause a severe infection. One volunteer suffered such an accident and almost overnight his hand swelled up necessitating a trip to A&E. Such was the rapid infection he was admitted to Hospital and put on intravenous antibiotics. This is a plant not to be trifled with and each session volunteers are warned of the dangers of dealing with blackthorn.

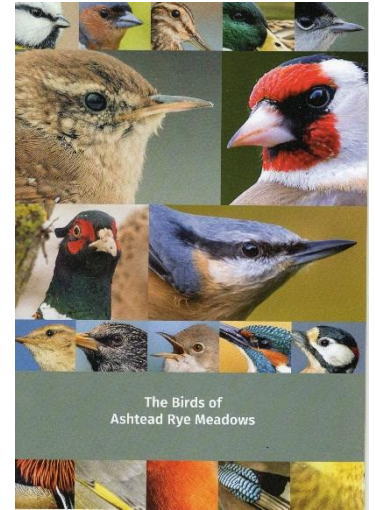
Working in the countryside has other hazards as the area, including Ashted Common, has deer ticks, and being bitten by an infected tick can cause Lyme Disease. If treated early this can be harmless but if left can cause severe illness. Just be careful when walking in Centenary Field or on Ashted Common in the summer if wearing shorts, or short sleeved shirts. The ticks live in the grass and jump to exposed skin.

Having successfully sold the merits of volunteering (!! ) if anyone wants to join our band, they will be very welcome. No commitment to regularly attend, just come along on the first and third Tuesday of each month. We have said farewell to Rosie who is now doing that thing called "Work" and can no longer attend, but welcome Alexis, Greg, Neil, Peter and Rabinder to the fold.

## Wildlife

The Meadows were created by Mrs Burnett as a wildlife haven; a corridor between Epsom and Ashted Commons and Leatherhead. Peter Firth used to regularly walk through the Meadows and report on the various species of birds he observed. Sadly Peter is now too infirm to do this on our behalf and we are looking for another bird watcher to do this task for us. It would involve once a month walking through the fields taking note of the different birds and reporting back to us. If anyone is interested, or you know of someone who might be willing to do this, please let us know ([rmadmin@ryemeadows.org.uk](mailto:rmadmin@ryemeadows.org.uk)) . Last year we were visited by Reed Bunting nesting in the bramble by the stream in Fraudings and Jack Adams fields. We also erected a new owl box in one of the taller trees overlooking the Meadows and are keen to learn if owls have taken up residence.

Despite not being able to walk the Meadows any more, Peter responded to a call from Daphne to write a small book to help identify bird species on Rye Meadows. This excellent little 20 page book is entitled “The Birds of Ashted Rye Meadows” and contains colour photographs of all the birds together with a short narrative outlining Presence, Habitat, Breeding Season, Diet and Nest. The book is priced at only £2.50 and is available also via the web site shop. We will deliver to anyone in the KT21 postcode, but P&P will be incurred elsewhere.



Peter Williams, the Treasurer, as well as watching over our finances is also a keen photographer and has taken many photos of the meadows in all seasons. Each month he publishes “Photo of the Month” on the Meadows Facebook page. He has been able to capture some stunning pictures of deer, foxes, kestrels and even a badger.

Peter regularly walks through the Meadows with his trusty cameras to hand and takes pictures ranging from roaming animals in the distance to close-up shots of the dew or hoar frost on plants. His photos are a pictorial catalogue of Rye Meadows through the seasons. He also has a motion activated camera in a secret location which takes pictures of animals oblivious to the presence of the camera. As a result, he is able to capture some wonderful pictures of animals relaxed in the knowledge that ‘man’ is not nearby.



## Donations and Income

No newsletter would be complete without the usual plea for funds. The tractor, brushcutters, chain saw and other equipment all need diesel, petrol and oil and we all know how expensive that is. We have to insure our tools and ourselves for Public Liability and pay to replace fence posts etc from the ravages of weather and rot. This all takes money and you can help by using Easyfundraising when you buy items on the internet. There are several thousand retailers who subscribe to the scheme and it costs you NOTHING. Just visit

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/support-a-good-cause/step-1/?char=100092&invite=26KLH6&referral-campaign=c2s> and sign up. Once registered, just visit Easyfundraising before choosing Amazon, Argos or any of 3,000 online retailers and they will donate to us a percentage of the value of your purchase. It might be pence or pounds, but it all adds up.



Another way to support us is to buy a regular weekly lottery ticket from Mole Valley Community Lottery, choosing us as your supported scheme. Visit <https://www.molevalleylottery.co.uk/support/find-a-good-cause> and in “Search for a Cause” type Rye Meadows, then follow the on-screen instructions to sign up. Tickets cost £1 each and from that we receive

50p. To date we have raised £1,742 from supporters.

We hope all our supporters have a good Spring and Summer.

David