



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

## **Rye Meadows Newsletter – No. 14**

Welcome to the latest Newsletter from Rye Meadows. There has been quite an interval between this Newsletter and the last one and a great deal has happened.

First a little bit of history. All the fields comprising Rye Meadows Wetlands and the fields to the north, plus the whole of Ashted Common was once owned by Lord Barnby, a resident in Ashted Woods Road. On his death, everything passed in Trust to Lady Barnby, but on her death in 1988 the estate was broken up. Ashted Common was eventually bought by The City of London to add to their portfolio of other Common areas such as Epping Forest and Burnham Beeches. With regard to the fields to the south of the Common, Lord Barnby had stipulated that these were not to be broken up into small parcels of “horseculture”, but maintained as one unit. Thus, the fields were bought by George and Daphne Burnett, then also residents of Ashted Woods Road. Daphne Burnett managed the fields for many years but then decided to make progress on her vision of a wildlife area to act as a corridor between Ashted Common and Leatherhead. 14 acres were set aside on either side of the Rye Brook and Rye Meadows Wetlands was born. (For a more detailed history see “Restoring the Great Marsh” later in this newsletter.) Later, to protect the land from development, the Burnetts covenanted the land to Fields in Trust.

George and Daphne have now very generously decided to gift the fields to Surrey Wildlife Trust. This will ensure the land is managed and improved for the benefit of wildlife for many years to come. As I write this the transfer of ownership is nearing its last stages. The Rye Meadows volunteers will continue to work the meadows but under the guidance and support of Surrey Wildlife Trust.

### **Heritage Days in September**



Heritage Weeks begin on 6<sup>th</sup> September and finish on 15<sup>th</sup> September. Rye Meadows will be opening its “doors” from 10am until 4pm each day to allow the public to explore. There will be mown paths through the fields and visitors are encouraged to stick to these paths. The longer grass can contain deer ticks. If walking the dog please keep it on a lead and

pick up after it. We have young deer grazing in the fields and a dog chasing a deer can be fatal for the animal. On **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September** the volunteers will be in attendance at Centenary Field with their stand and will be selling mugs and tea towels (good Christmas stocking fillers) plus our two publications “Restoring the Great Marsh” and “The Birds of Rye Meadows”. The latter was written by local ornithologist Peter Firth who sadly died last year. The books are priced at £10 and £2.50 respectively. The volunteers will be happy to explain the work we have carried out this last year, including our first attempt at hedge laying.

The Four Gables Cookery establishment, who are our near neighbours, will be generously providing scrumptious chocolate brownies and cool drinks for the visitors.

### **Wildflowers**



Two years ago, following donations from some Friends of Rye Meadows, we had a contractor clear Fraudings Meadows and plant Yellow Rattle seeds. A year later we saw the benefit of this, and this last spring we saw more plants appearing as they had self-seeded and spread. In addition, some original wild flowers (Milk Maids) made a reappearance. We had feared the ground clearance

for the Yellow Rattle would have perhaps damaged their seed bed, but thankfully this proved not to be the case.



The volunteers also planted bulbs for Snakeshead Fritillarias and wild tulips and this Spring we saw the first appearance of these attractive flowers including one albino Fritillaria. We hope these too will self-seed and spread.

### **Hedge Laying**



One of our newer volunteers moving to Ashted from Oxfordshire is an experienced hedge layer and with his help the rest of the volunteers laid the hedge alongside FP24 just over the wooden bridge. We bought stakes and binders from The Corporation of London, Ashted Common Estate office. These had been cut from hazel coppicing on the Common.

Armed with chain saws, mallets and a large supply of muscle (it's tough weaving hazel through and

around the stakes) we laid 90% of the hedge before having to stop as bird nesting season was upon us. We intend to finish this hedge in the Autumn and then commence on the hedge in Ashtead Woods Road. This is a historic double hedge on either side of a ditch. We will lay the outer side and coppice the inner side.

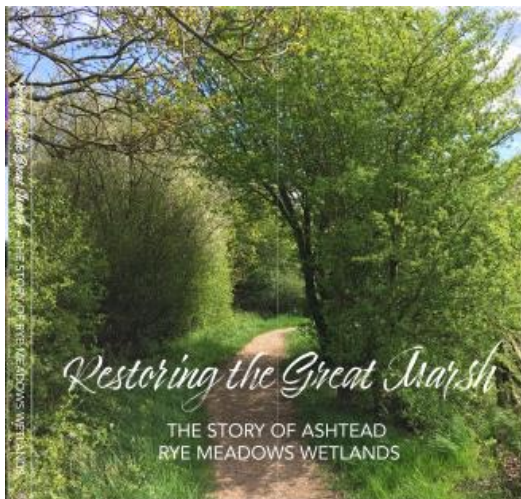
**Footpath sign repairs**

At the same time, as some of the team were hedge laying, others were repairing the fallen Public Footpath sign at the top of FP24. Years of rot had taken their toll on the sign and eventually it had collapsed taking the fence with it. The Rye Meadows volunteers contacted Surrey County Council Rights of Way and offered to make repairs if they provided a new sign post with new ‘finger pointers’.

New holes were dug and fence posts and rails nailed into place and the new sign post was erected where the previous one once stood.



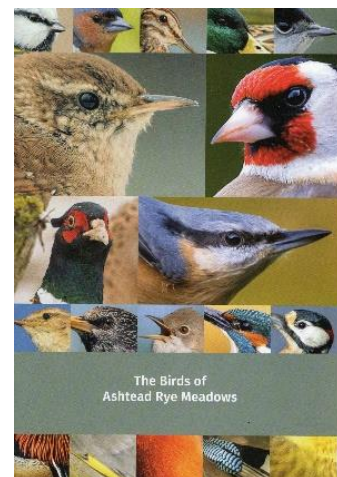
**Stuck for a Christmas present? ” Restoring the Great Marsh” – A great Christmas gift**



This book would make an ideal Christmas present. The price is still at £10 and is terrific value. It is a really excellent book and tells the story of Daphne’s vision for a wildlife corridor.

As one local author, Andy Smith, recounted in his magazine article for Surrey Life, Rye Meadows is “an oasis of rural tranquillity just a short distance from the M25. In Centenary Field there is a boardwalk so that the site is easily accessible to visitors, even when at its wettest!”

If you don’t have your copy yet we have some available. They will be available on our stand on Footpath 596 from Fairholme Crescent on 8<sup>th</sup> September for Heritage Open Days. No need to bring cash, we can take a card now. Also available will be “The Birds of Ashtead Rye Meadows” written by the late Peter Firth and typed by one of the volunteers Lizzie Hide. This is priced at £2.50. All the proceeds from book sales are donated to Ashtead Rotary for the Charities they support.



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/>.

### **Materials for Rye Meadows**

We have to buy in much of the materials we use on Rye Meadows and rely upon funds coming in via the Mole Valley Lottery and Easyfundraising. This is our “bread and butter” income source. However, many visitors either lose sight of, or are unaware of, the huge financial commitment to Rye Meadows made by the land owners, George and Daphne Burnett. Without their overriding financial backing none of this would be possible and even after handing over ownership to Surrey Wildlife Trust they have ensured support will still be available from a generous donation.

We do though also receive generous financial donations from local residents. Contributions to the wildflower meadow cost for example. We also receive donations of tools, trees and materials for use in the meadows. We have recently been given two young oak tree saplings raised by a local resident from acorns that were planted by local squirrels.

### **Ingenuity**



We have some 22 volunteers on our books but not everyone turns up each time. Nearly all are retired from their respective employment which in the main has been office based. However, these people are able to turn their hands to a great variety of tasks, hedge laying, fence building, bridge repairs, ditch clearance, river management, amongst other skills. Did you know that the hard footpath surfaces everyone enjoys on FP24 and FP596 were laid by the

Rye Meadows Volunteers?

When a particularly wet and stormy night resulted in two bridges being destroyed, we were advised to get in a contractor to undertake repairs. We thought “No.” let’s do it ourselves. The result as you can see was a fully repaired bridge.

## News of a different sort



Sadly, we have to report visitors less welcome have come to the Centenary Field. Youths on mopeds have been congregating by the seating area and making a nuisance of themselves upsetting our neighbours. They have also been riding up and down the footpath on their scooters. In addition, there is evidence that they have been using canisters to inhale nitrous oxide gas and smoking cannabis. Distressingly, a resident's dog ate some of the left-over

stubs and was taken seriously ill needing an overnight stay at the vets.

We have notified the Police and taken advice from the Designing Out Crime Officer and are looking at ways to try to dissuade unwanted visitors whilst still allowing residents to enjoy Centenary Field. A tricky balancing act, and possibly one needing expenditure on revised gates.

Vandals have also been at work throwing the lifebelt into the pond and pulling the stanchion out of the ground on two occasions. Why? You may well ask? We will replace it because it is an essential piece of life saving equipment and we hope this time we will make it impossible to extract.

## Donations and Income

No newsletter would be complete without the usual plea for funds. The tractor, brush cutters, chain saw and other equipment all need diesel, petrol, oil and annual servicing. The tractor alone costs £630 a year for its annual service. We have to insure our tools and ourselves for Public Liability and this costs £240 p.a.

With Christmas just around the corner (look out for Christmas decorations appearing in your local garden centre soon! It gets earlier and earlier.) you may be buying gifts on the Internet. If you are, consider enrolling with Easyfundraising and choosing Ashted Rye Meadows as your benefitting charity. It's free to join and simplicity itself to use. There are literally thousands of retailers taking part and when you visit one and buy a product the retailer sends us a donation. All you pay is the cost of the item you wanted. Once registered, just visit [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) **before** choosing Amazon, Argos or any of **7,000** online retailers and **they** will donate to us a percentage of the value of your purchase.



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. We are on track to raise £1,000 this year in this way.

Thank you for your continuing support and positive comments. We really do appreciate it.

David

**PS.** Don't forget to keep an eye on our web site [www.ryemeadows.org.uk...and](http://www.ryemeadows.org.uk...and) to friend us on our Facebook page to see pictures of recent wildlife sightings and the activities of the volunteers.....