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Rye Meadows Newsletter – No. 2

As promised, below is 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

We continue to excavate the banks to re-install the meanders back into the brook. Robert Baines, our contractor, using machinery donated by A-Plant, has been busy creating berms in the brook, together with some scrapes.



In addition we have equalised the two opposing banks in places to ensure the brook floods on both sides. Parts look bare at present but by next year



these will have grassed over and the water loving plants already transplanted will start to flourish as they have done elsewhere. See 'Before' and 'After' pictures above after 6 months.

The wooden berms have also started to infill as the branches and twigs capture the silt and create a substantial 'bank'. The pictures below show the newly created berm and the situation now.



By widening the brook and removing the vertical banks it will slow the passage of the water assisting in flood prevention downstream. Robert has also been installing more deflectors to encourage the brook to create its own meanders by pushing the flow to the opposite bank.



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.



In one of the fields we have scraped away the top surface and created scoops to hold back the water and create a wetland area. We will be transplanting some waterside reeds to the newly created area and already the scrapes have filled and due to the clay sub-soil have stayed full of water.

The Ponds

It has taken another six months to achieve, but we now have planning permission to create the ponds in the furthest west field. This took much longer than we had wished due to a number of factors and even though we now have permission we will not be able to start work until 1st April 2016. This is down to the wet ground conditions but also a pre-condition of the planning permission. We hope to make a grant application to construct raised walkways so members of the public can see the new wetland area and, we hope, more birds and wildlife.

Hedges, "Dead" hedges and woodland



We have been creating more "dead hedges" using wood from pruned trees. This has been carried out to establish clear boundaries between Rye Meadows and adjoin footpaths. The volunteers together with Robert Baines have added to the hedge created earlier this year and started another hedge that abuts the footpath from Bushey Shaw.

In August we were ably assisted by volunteers visiting from the City Of London, Ashted Common.

Over the space of four Thursdays in August, together with Rye Meadows own people, volunteers cleared much of the overgrowth on the footpath from Bushey Shaw to Ashted Woods Road and then laid down a hard surfaced footpath shifting several tons of Type 1 material by wheelbarrow. Then in September the Lower Mole Countryside Group came and coppiced the hedge to one side for half its length. The



remaining section will be coppiced next year. The coppiced area was then protected by deer fencing and the hedge will grow back stronger over the coming years allowing it to be “laid” in the future.

Future Projects

We will be seeking grants from various sources to carry out further work on the Rye’s banks to create more meanders plus creating more berms and deflectors. We are seeking a grant from Thames Water to remove the over-engineered concrete “bunker” that supports a road drain from Preston Grove to replace it with a reed bed. The reeds will filter out any impurities coming from the road like fuel spills and tarmac. The



Environment Agency support this scheme and “all” we need do now is persuade Thames Water to part with a lot of money.

Daphne Burnett has ordered new gates for all the fields including those within Rye Meadows. These gates will all be named, many of which will reflect the names of the ancient fields seen on Ashtead’s 17th Century map.

Another new gate will replace the broken one on the entrance from Preston Grove and we have secured

agreement for an environmental grant from Mole Valley District Council using developer contributions to hard surface the present muddy footpath from the road to the wooden bridge. Although we’ve had agreement in place for some 6 months, the scheme is held up due to the machinations of Local Government and it is immensely frustrating waiting for these things to come to fruition.

Lower Mole Partnership

Together with Teazle Wood and Ashtead Common we on the Rye Brook are members of this partnership looking to improve the quality of the Brook and its biodiversity. In turn this will improve the Mole and help with flood alleviation. Sadly the brook suffered continuing pollution over the summer but now the source has been found and remedial action is planned. It seems oil has been leaking from a high voltage underground power cable and finding its way into the road drains and eventually to the Overdale outfall and into the Rye Brook. (No, I didn’t know these cables had oil in either!)

This has had a devastating effect on the water quality and Keith Lelliott and Nigel Bond’s Riversearch monitoring has seen a serious decline in evidence of biodiversity in the water. Further downstream in Teazle Wood the quality is starting to pick up again and we hope that same will happen on both Ashtead Common and Rye Field.

What’s Next?

Tasks too numerous to mention and that’s why we need more volunteers to come along on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month. The more who come to help the more we can get done.

(DCB 10/12/2015)

