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Rye Meadows Newsletter – No. 3

As promised, though a little delayed, below is a 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.

Ponds and scrapes



Following the granting of planning permission in 2015 we intended starting the work on the creation of ponds and scrapes from 1st April this year. However Mother Nature had different plans and April, May & June were exceptionally wet months with torrential thunderstorms. This meant the ground was far too wet for Robert to use the heavy machinery supplied by A Plant, our sponsors. Although the ground then dried up somewhat allowing Robert to excavate



the three areas it was impossible to use the heavy dumper to transport the spoil to the Preston Grove field for the grab lorry to take it away. First attempts to drive across the two fields just showed it would turn the area into the Somme and destroy the ground surface. Instead Robert built up a huge pile of spoil until the ground conditions improved enough for the dumper to be used and the 'mountain' taken away.



The excavations uncovered ancient field drainage pipes which if left untouched would have prevented the meadow becoming the wetland area we wanted. On the advice of experts Robert broke up the pipes and dug a trench between ponds and brook, backfilling with heavy clay effectively creating a barrier preventing drainage. This will mean the groundwater will rise and fill the ponds creating the wetland.

The heavy work is now complete but there is still landscaping to be carried out with some larger tree planting in the autumn.

Fields in Trust

All the Rye Meadows have now been placed under the auspices of Fields in Trust. This organisation, previously known as the Playing Fields Association, ensures that the area remains an open space to be enjoyed by everyone in perpetuity. Residents



who live on the boundary of Rye Meadows now know that their outlook is protected open space and will never be built on. As part of this scheme, it has been decided that the pond field (the most western of the meadows) is to be designated a Centenary Field commemorating the fallen of Ashtead in World War 1. In the spring of 2017 we will be holding a commemoration ceremony at which residents, volunteers and sponsors will be invited.

New Gates and Field Names

Those who walk across the Meadows or around Ashtead Woods Road cannot fail to have noticed the new oak gates to all the fields. The last of these will be installed soon to Centenary Field as these were delayed due to the continual passage of heavy machinery. In addition to new gates we have now named all the fields and where possible have used the original 17th century names from the old maps. These are as follows:-

Fraudings Marsh; Centenary Field; Fraudings; Tomletts; Seamers Upper; Seamers Lower; Jack Adams; Winter Meadow; Gullett; Eight Acre and Rye Paddock.

Wooden name plates will be installed soon on all gates and for our next leaflet we will be producing a detailed map.

Information Boards



A new Information Board has been installed in the Preston Grove field (now called Jack Adams) and we are pleased that a new hard surfaced path has been constructed by Surrey Rights of Way following a Grant from Mole Valley District Council. A second Board is now being made by the Lower Mole Countryside Group and will be installed on the footpath from Bushey Shaw near to Centenary Field. The new path completes the full circuit allowing residents to walk from Bushey Shaw to Ashtead Woods Road and back to Preston Grove or Links Road on hard surfaced paths.

Dead Hedges

The Volunteers constructed a long dead hedge between the footpath from Bushey Shaw and the field (now known as Fraudings) This provides an effective barrier but is better than post and rail as it provides a habitat for wildlife, birdlife and insects. This dead hedge matches the one constructed along the edge of Centenary field opposite.

Surveys

As well the continuing bird surveys kindly undertaken by local resident Peter Firth, we have also had two dragonfly surveys by Mike Thurner. Details of his observations are available on the Meadows web site.



We have also been fortunate this year to have had a visit from Dr Judith Webb who has undertaken an ecological survey for us, examining many areas with the Rye Meadows. As well as identifying countless plants, Dr Webb and her colleague Rod Ayala have given us excellent advice on the future management of Rye Meadows and on the pond construction. Details of the plants identified by Dr Webb are available on our web site.

Future Work

We are applying for a grant from Thames Water to undertake several more improvements – watch this space for more details if we are successful. (DCB 7/8/2016)