



www.ryemeadows.org.uk

Rye Meadows Newsletter – No. 5

So much has happened and will be happening on and to do with Rye Meadows, we thought another Newsletter was due.

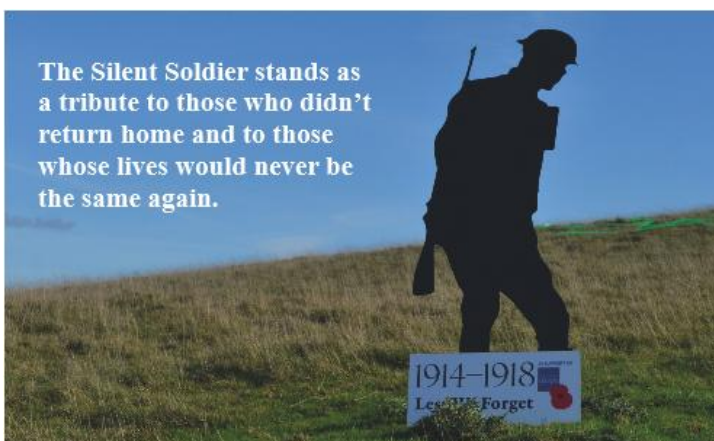
Bird Surveys

Each month our intrepid bird surveyor, Peter Firth, goes out in all weathers, rain or shine to count the numbers of birds on Rye Meadows. This is a good indication on how well we are doing in encouraging wildlife back to the Meadows and the new ponds and scrapes. This month Peter's diary reads as follows:-

“For a reminder of what the dawn chorus used to sound like, visit Ashtead Rye Meadows. There, during just over an hour's walk on a mild but drizzly morning, I counted 14 blackbirds, most of which were singing, together with reasonable numbers of robins (27), great tits (21), blue tits (9), collared doves (9), wrens (5) and four stock doves (a new addition to my Rye Meadows list), chaffinches (5), starlings (50), greenfinches (3) and a dunnock, albeit only 1 song thrush and, as yet, none of the returning warblers. It was a good morning for waterbirds with 4 mandarin ducks, 2 moorhens and 2 mallard, though no snipe nor kingfishers. Incidentally, there is a new addition to the Centenary Field – a life-size, black plastic cut-out of a Tommy from World War I with the legend ‘Lest we forget’.”

This is good news for Rye Meadows with the numbers and variety of bird life seen. Peter's diary is updated monthly on the web site and there you'll be able to see how numbers have fluctuated over the seasons.

“Silent Soldier”



The Silent Soldier stands as a tribute to those who didn't return home and to those whose lives would never be the same again.

You will recall last May in that glorious weather we commemorated our Centenary Field and over 200 people came for the occasion. The Surrey History Museum and the Surrey Infantry Museum were present as were a great many of our generous sponsors, including A Plant, The Community Foundation for Surrey, the Barnby Trust and Thames Water.

More than 1.1 million British and Empire service men and women gave their lives during the First

World War so that future generations could live theirs. The Royal British Legion aims to ensure that we pay our respects to those who gave so much.

The First World War changed communities across Britain and the allied countries forever. These same communities are coming together in many different ways to reflect and remember the huge sacrifice that so many made during the First World War and say thank you to those who rebuilt the country after the war. The Silent Soldier stands as a tribute to those who didn't return home and to those whose lives would never be the same again.

Why a Silent Soldier? Following the end of the war in November 1918, the process of demobilisation and discharge was still a long process as the British Army still had commitments to fulfil in Germany, North Russia and in the garrisons of the Empire. On arrival back in England the men would move to a Dispersal Centre, this was a hutted or tented camp or barracks where they received a railway warrant or ticket to their home station. From there they were on their own, and would be seen across the country, walking back home, down the roads and across the fields, returning to their families. Most of the war service men were back in civilian life by the end of 1919.

David and Allan sold family wartime memorabilia on E Bay and used that money to sponsor a Silent Soldier of our own and he can be seen standing in the Centenary Field by the pond.

New fencing and new hedges



To complete the boundary of Rye Meadows we have erected a new fence partitioning Fraudings Marsh field (on the opposite bank to Centenary Field.) We have been clearing large areas of blackthorn, scrub and bramble on the north bank of the Rye in readiness for more bank work to re-establish meanders to the river and create water-holding berms. To ensure birdlife did not suffer any loss of habitat we also planted 750 new mixed native hedging plants next to the new fence. Our thanks go out to the residents and children who came along to help plant 500 hedging saplings on

Saturday 9th March. Snow prevented us planting the last 250 on the following Saturday but the hardy team of volunteers planted them on the following Tuesday.

Ashtead Village Day

Once again we will be represented at this year's Village Day and our theme this year is the artwork of our resident artist Cathy Brett whose wonderful creations will be on sale at the stand. Cathy is a local Leatherhead based artist, author, printmaker, storyteller and illustrator. She has been commissioned by Daphne Burnett to create cards, prints and books with a Rye Meadows theme. An amazingly talented artist she has visited Rye Meadows on a few occasions and taken many photographs. She hopes to build up a stock of photos for all seasons and create artwork reflecting the changes.



Visit our stand at Village Day and bring your wallet. Cathy's items will be on sale, and profits from the sales will go towards Rye Meadows future work. See Cathy's web site <http://www.cathybrett.co.uk/>.

You can also see Cathy's work during Surrey Artists' Open Studios between 2 - 17 June 2018. Cathy's 41 Highlands Road, Leatherhead Studio is open 2nd & 3rd June, 9th & 10th June and 16th & 17th June between 11am and 5pm. For details visit https://surreyopenstudios.org.uk/home/visitors/open-studios/studios/?ven_number=61. In addition to Cathy's work she will be joined by three amazing local artists: Tania Busschau, Gill Cann and Jill Goodchild.



Heritage Week



Finally, on Saturday 15th September 2018 between 11am and 3pm we will be participating once again in Mole Valley's Heritage Week. You might recall last year we started guided walks from Ashted Woods Road ending at Centenary Field. This year we are reversing the course and setting up the Rye Meadows tent in Centenary Field where we will clear an area for people to come and have a picnic. We hope to set up a "Field Kitchen" continuing the World War 1 theme of the field and the Silent Soldier, but more details will be published nearer the time.

Last year we were moderately successful and obtained two new keen volunteers as a result, plus one visitor was so impressed with our work she suggested we give a talk to Banstead's U3A which will take place in September.

Volunteers

Volunteer days are the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month from 09.45 until about 1pm. To volunteer just contact David at rmadmin@ryemeadows.org.uk. No special skills are required, just being willing to get a bit wet and grubby at times.

David (Chairman)