



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

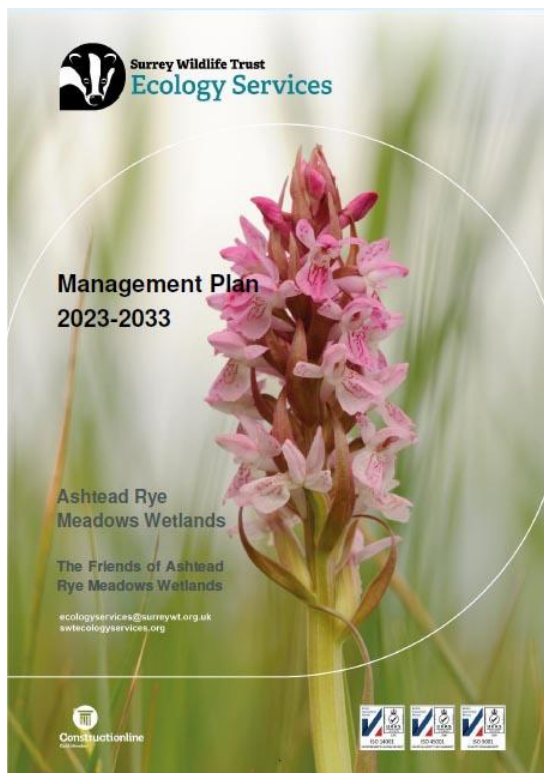
## **Rye Meadows Newsletter – No. 15**

Welcome to the long overdue Newsletter from Rye Meadows.

Earlier this year the Meadows were finally taken over by Surrey Wildlife Trust after a very generous gift of the land by Daphne and George Burnett. Despite the legal issues that inevitably complicate such a large transfer of land, even with all the parties working positively together, after 15 months the transfer is now complete and the volunteers are ready for this new chapter on the life of the Rye Meadows.

Thankfully in early Spring this year the transfer finally took place and the volunteers are now being led by Clare O'Reilly, Conservation Manager – Central Surrey, Surrey Wildlife Trust, and her team many of whom we have met on site with some joining in volunteering sessions.

Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) had already undertaken a major assessment of Rye Meadows on behalf of Mrs Burnett and this detailed comprehensive document will form the plan for the coming years. Funding has been obtained to undertake a consultation and assessment of the river in Centenary Field. This will include seeking renewal of the FRAP – an Environment Agency Flood Risk Assessment Permit. It is hoped to recreate meanders and to remove a willow weir that is blocking fish passage. Further funding will though be necessary.



One aspect of SWT's involvement is the need for the Rye Meadows Volunteers to fall in line with their working practices. Whilst for many years some of the volunteers have previously been certified to operate powered machinery, SWT has been supporting us in obtaining up to date qualification for the use of Chain Saws,

Brushcutters and driving the John Deere Tractor/Mower. Some of us have therefore been attending professionally run training courses to receive the necessary certification. This also fulfils SWT's insurance requirements.

As you can imagine, these courses do not come cheaply and we have spent some £5,000 training various volunteers and this has made quite a large hole in our bank account. Luckily other expenses such as Insurance and tractor maintenance are being taken over by SWT, but we still have our usual day-to-day running costs of Two-Stroke, Petrol, Diesel, tool maintenance and servicing plus of course the essential tea/coffee and biscuits!

### **Volunteers**

We are lucky to have a hard core of enthusiastic volunteers who come along every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday to undertake various tasks and they can turn their hands to all sorts of jobs from bridge building, gate installations and maintenance, fence building, tree pruning and now hedge laying.



Thanks to the knowledge and skill of a new(ish) volunteer Peter, he has taught us the art of hedge laying. The first venture was a short stretch of overgrown hedge alongside FP24 just north of the Rye Bridge in Jack Adams field. Having learned the initial skills there, we moved onto the longer blackthorn hedge alongside Ashted Woods Road. This was a double thickness hedge crossing an

old ditch. The work involved coppicing the inner hedge to ground level and laying the outer hedge. This was finished just before we were obliged to stop work on hedges and trees due to bird nesting season. The finished work has attracted much positive comment from people walking the road with their dogs. In September we'll be starting the last smaller section, plus perhaps moving onto another hedge in the meadows.

Although we have a band of 25 regular volunteers, not everyone comes along each session – which is good because we'd struggle to find tasks for such a large number. Also, this year we have said farewell to a number of previous volunteers who for one reason or another are now unable to attend. Our thanks go to Allan, David C, Derek N, Lizzie, Haroon and Rabinder for their past work.

## Heritage Days in September



Heritage Weeks begin on 12<sup>th</sup> September and finish on 21st 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 14<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 the late local ornithologist Peter Firth. 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. Personnel will also be in attendance from Surrey Wildlife Trust who will be outlining their plans for the meadows.

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

## Wildflowers



This year the wildflowers in Fraudings Field were abundant and there was a sea of Ox Eye daisies, with yellow rattle at ground level.

Also seen in Spring were the snowdrops planted in 2023 by Duke of Edinburgh volunteers, and crocus and fritillaries planted by the volunteers.

The “Milk Maids” (Cardamine californica) that we feared were lost when the field was



scarified initially for wildflower seed planting have made a welcome reappearance and these beautiful pink flowers herald the returning Spring.

## **Wildlife**

Thanks to Peter Williams, we get many superb pictures of returning wildlife to the meadows. We see many deer, young and not so young, plus foxes and squirrels. The bird population seems to approve of our work on the meadows too with species of duck, heron and egret seen in the brook and the ponds.



This year we have seen many does

with their young fawns and they tend to rest in the long grass in Centenary Field, Fraudings Field, Gullett Field and Winter Meadow. With the public having access to Centenary Field, we've had to put up

warning signs to request dogs be kept on leads. There has already been distressing evidence of young deer having been chased to death by uncontrolled dogs. Despite the signs, owners are still allowing their dogs to roam freely. This allows them to chase the deer but also to "do their business" unnoticed leaving their deposits to be stepped on by volunteers walking in the field. Also strimming where a dog has "been" is disgusting as the strimmer sprays it everywhere on the body and face of the operator. Please, please pick up the pooh and leave it in the bins at Preston Grove and Bushey Shaw. You are allowed and encouraged even to use public litter bins for this.

Finally, another request to dog owners. Please keep the dogs out of the stream and ponds, particularly if you use topical liquid flea treatments applied to skin (e.f. Frontline) - these insecticides are damaging to wildlife - they kill aquatic invertebrates. Tablets are less damaging - provided dog pooh is collected and disposed of properly.

## **First Aid**

We are fortunate to have amongst the army of volunteers, Chris Abbott. Chris is our lead man



for ensuring the First Aid box is fully stocked and up to date. Because quite often we are working in separate areas of the meadows, Chris has devised a secondary box for this separated team to take with them.

The boxes have clear instructions for convenient access points for the Ambulance Service or Air Ambulance if required, and use the What3Words simple method to alert people to where the patient is situated.

Fortunately, we've never had to use the procedure in "anger" but Chris has ensured we are as best prepared as can be.

Surrey Wildlife Trust is organising First Aid Training for a selection of regular volunteers so we should always have a "First Responder" available. It is SWT's policy to always have a trained First Aider present.

### **Becoming A Charity**

We realised last year that with the income we were receiving from generous support from the Burnetts, fundraising and donations that we had crossed the threshold of £5,000 income. This meant we were no longer permitted to be a simple Not For Profit Organisation but should probably register as a Charity. There were some legal nuances that meant we didn't automatically qualify but the way the system worked you couldn't ask the Charity Commission for advice, you had to submit an application and be accepted or refused.

The Committee met to decide what route we should take. Previously the situation was complicated, but in a nice way, by the support of the Burnetts, but now that the meadows are owned by Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) the Rye Meadows Volunteers are effectively a separate organisation working under SWT.

We therefore examined the possibilities and opted to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered with the Charity Commission. The Committee met several times to complete the 26-page form, with accompanying Appendix of 9 pages and this will shortly be submitted to the Commission. The change of status will need a change of name and we will be called "Ashted Rye Meadows Conservation Volunteers". We will also need a new Bank account. Peter Williams is stepping down as Treasurer having done a terrific job keeping us on the straight and narrow and Neil Phillips is taking over the role. So watch this space for confirmation of our new status.

### **Donations and Income**

Not another plea for fundraising I hear you say, but yes sadly, despite the welcome support of our Friends and from Surrey Wildlife Trust we have a continuing need for funds to buy fuel, pay repair and servicing costs on the hand held mechanical and power tools and to replace those that become unusable.

We have recently received the gift of a "nearly new" Brushcutter/Strimmer to add to our tool collection, but coincidentally have had to put the Stihl brushcutter to the "Tool Hospital" at Mole Valley Mowers for repair. Cost unknown to date.

The easiest and painless way to show your support for Rye Meadows is to add one simple step to your order of items online. There are now over 8,000 online retailers who are signed up to Easyfundraising. These varying from the "big boys" like Amazon, TUI, Virgin Atlantic and Travelodge to retailing 'minnows'.



To use Easyfundraising just join their web site using the QR Code below and register your name. Then next time you are buying anything online go to the Easyfundraising site, login and then go to the retailer's site. Then automatically anything you

buy from that retailer generates a donation to Rye Meadows – FROM THE RETAILER. Costs you nothing extra! You can even add a reminder App to your login so that if you forget to use Easyfundraising and visit a member site, the reminder App tells you to log in to Easyfundraising! You can see above how much we have raised this way by just getting donations of 10p, 50p or £10 depending on how much you spend – currently £2,225.

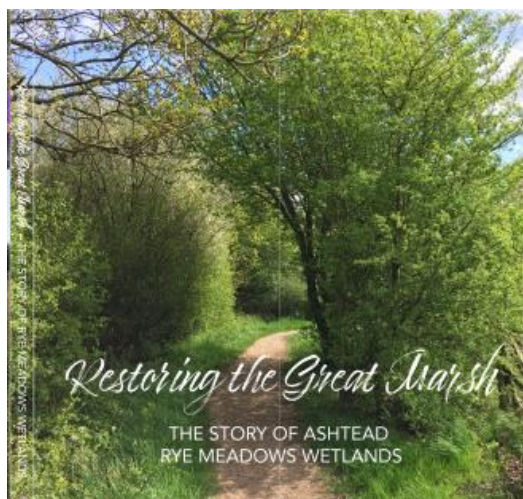


Another way to support us is to buy a regular weekly lottery ticket from Mole Valley Community Lottery, choosing us as your supported scheme. Just visit this site to buy a ticket

Visit <https://www.molevalleylottery.co.uk/support/ashtead-rye-meadows-wetlands> and follow the on-screen instructions to sign up. Tickets cost £1 each and from that we receive 50p. In the 4 years we've been part of the Lottery we have raised over £5,000.



### **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 still have a few available. They will be available on our stand on Footpath 596 from Fairholme Crescent on 14<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/>.

Thank you all 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](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.....

