



www.ryemeadows.org.uk

Rye Meadows Newsletter – No. 16

Welcome to Newsletter number 16 from Rye Meadows.

As I write this Newsletter we are into July and summer has been with us since May with days of blisteringly hot weather. Surrey Wildlife Trust are strict about what management tasks can be undertaken in the period March to September as this is nesting season when birds, animals and invertebrates rear their young.

In Rye Meadows we have birds nesting in the numerous hedgerows, plus of course there are the ground nesting species as well. The volunteers are therefore unable to cut back the hedges, or the margins of the brook in case there are birds nesting there or in the banks. Similarly, we cannot cut the fields until September is out.

Over the last three years we have been unable to cut the fields for one reason or another. We have a small window of opportunity to cut the grass. We cannot start until September is out and have to cut before the rain turns the meadows back into wetlands again where a heavy tractor could get stuck in the mud. Of course, the farmer himself is in the same boat and he has other customers as well all seeking his assistance to cut their fields. This year though Surrey Wildlife Trust now have their own 'in-house' contractor so competing with the farmer's own demands will not be a feature. If your garden backs onto the meadows you will have to endure high seeding grass once more but come September/October the grass will be cut.

Hedge Laying

If you have been out walking in Ashted Woods Road you will have noticed the two areas of hedges that have been laid. These were done not by professional hedge layers but by the volunteers themselves. In 2025 Peter, Nigel, Neil and David were professionally trained on the use of the chainsaw at Land Skills Training and Assessment Ltd. Having passed the assessment all four were certified by LANTRA or City & Guilds to maintain and operate a chainsaw. This enabled Peter, a skilled hedge layer, to instruct Nigel and David in the art of cutting and laying the pleachers. These are the vertical stems of the hedge that are cut 80% through at an acute angle and then folded down to make a still-growing barrier. As long as there is an element still attached, the plant will continue to grow. This evidenced by the hedge laid in Ashted

Woods Road in 2025 which is now a healthy green vibrant barrier ideal to support bird and wildlife. (see picture)



The other hedge we laid this year (2026) is at the northern end of Ashted Woods Road near to the beginning of the top end of Footpath 596. This hedge had been laid some 20 years ago and the hedge had become in reality a thick series of trees interwoven with bramble. The high branches were also interwoven making it difficult to lay down as they were entangled. As Shaun from Ashted Common commented “It was a beast of a

hedge to lay”. That said, the three hedge layers worked over several weeks to lay 80% of the length of hedge, leaving a 20-metre length still to do when work is permitted again in October.

The laying of the hedge is only a part of the process. The thick briar and bramble have to be removed before hedging can begin and all this debris has to be taken from the site to a bonfire site. Another team is involved in this fetching and carrying using the tractor and trailer. There’s another team, led by our intrepid fire-starters, Bob and Steve, who set about burning this debris and this took several weeks of volunteer time to dispose of the mountain of excess wastage.

Finally, there’s the staking and binding. Hazel stakes have to be banged in at intervals measured by the length from fist to elbow. Then long hazel coppicing strands are woven into the top of the stakes in such a way that it resembles a woven rope. This is Midlands style binding. Colin, Roy and Derek became experts at this procedure. Again,



Shaun was impressed with this finished effect as he usually uses South of England style binding. To finish off, the excess height on the stakes is cut off at an angle to aid the shedding of water, delaying rot.

If walking in the road and witnessing our efforts, we’d love to hear your feedback (email rmadmin@ryemeadows.org.uk)

Sad News



Since the previous Newsletter we had some sad news of the passing of Allan Mornement. Allan was our Treasurer for many years as well as a volunteer. When age prevented the volunteering, he still kept Rye Meadows in the forefront of his mind, and when offered a brushcutter as a gift he immediately thought of us and we are the proud possessors of an almost new SGL Petrol Brushcutter/Strimmer.

It was everyone's wish to remember Allan in a fitting way, and we are thus commissioning a rustic bench to go into the Centenary Field that Allan was so invested in. The bench will have a plaque remembering Allan, and quoting a favourite line of his from "Winnie the Pooh."

It was Allan who researched all 42 residents of Ashted who fell in WW1. For each one he drafted a short biography and then arranged for schoolchildren from local schools to record this (thanks to City of London Freeman's School) and read this out as though the fallen person was a brother, son or husband. The recording of these voices was played at the opening ceremony (thanks here to Pete Williams). It was an enormous piece of work by Allan and it is appropriate that a bench in his memory is placed in the Centenary Field.

To hear the recording go to: -

[https://www.ryemeadows.org.uk/site_files/9892/upload_files/CentenaryFieldCommemoration2\(1\).mp3?dl=1](https://www.ryemeadows.org.uk/site_files/9892/upload_files/CentenaryFieldCommemoration2(1).mp3?dl=1)

Information Boards

These two boards have been in position in Jack Adams field and on Footpath 596 near Fairholme Crescent for some 10 years. The plastic information inserts are now much faded and the information historic and they were in need of replacement. We are very grateful to Thames Water who agreed a grant of £1,200 to have made two new inserts for the wooden oak frames.

The graphics team from Surrey Wildlife Trust were asked to draw up designs for the new inserts showing all the current information, as well as new wording reflecting the past of Rye Meadows and the present ownership and ambitions of Surrey Wildlife

Trust. The trust is currently renewing their Notice Boards in a corporate design so that anyone seeing a board can immediately see it is a Surrey Wildlife Trust owned site.

Whilst recognising this necessity the volunteers also wished to ensure the history of the meadows was recorded remembering the generous gift of the 14 acres of meadowland to the Trust from George and Daphne Burnett.



By using the in-house graphic designer and Surrey Wildlife Trust's usual printer we were able to bring in this scheme at a much lower cost than originally budgeted for. We therefore contacted Thames Water who generously agreed we could use the surplus funds on three other projects, new shelving for the barn, new fencing for FP596 and a new wooden kissing gate that we are considering for Centenary Field. The latter is another potential device we may need to install to prevent misuse of the field by youths on their motor bikes.

Donations and Grants

We are always very grateful for donations to Rye Meadows. One such person is Sue (you know who you are) who has been donating a sum each year to Rye Meadows. For personal reasons Sue will no longer be donating to us but on behalf of everyone in Rye Meadows we wish to thank her for her past help and wish her well for the future.

We have also been successful in applying for grants to help pay for new equipment, training and materials. The Surrey Community Nature Recovery Grant assisted with a grant for hedge laying materials and chainsaw training costs. The Lower Mole Countryside Trust provided funds enabling us to purchase Stihl Hedge cutters, and we received another donation from a donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, to buy

materials to improve the “front door” to Rye Meadows. This has enabled us to replace the fence and gate that had been there previously but where time and weather had rotted it away until eventually it just collapsed. The gate will still allow access but perhaps hinder entry for those illegally entering on trial bikes and scooters. The picture below shows the new smart fencing. The gate is ready to be hung but are awaiting a new latch. We are very grateful for all support that helps us achieve our aims.



Of course, we still receive funds via Easyfundraising and the Lottery, and you can still participate in both of these. Using www.easyfundraising.org.uk and searching for “Friends of Rye Meadows” as your chosen cause will take you to our page. Register your name and then use the site to go onwards to your retailer. Anything you then buy online from that retailer produces a small donation to Rye Meadows – and it costs you NOTHING.

Alternatively, you can visit www.molevalleylottery.co.uk and search for the cause “**Ashted Rye Meadows Wetlands**”. By signing up for a regular lottery ticket, we receive 50% of your ticket cost as a donation. You in turn get the chance of a lottery prize each month.

Last, but by no means least, we continue to be grateful to George & Daphne Burnett who make a substantial annual donation to Rye Meadows via their involvement with the Community Foundation for Surrey. They may have gifted the land to Surrey Wildlife Trust but they still play a major part in continuing Daphne’s initial vision to create a corridor of biodiversity alongside the Rye Brook.

Becoming A Charity

Forms have now been submitted to the Charity Commission to form a new Charity. If accepted we will become “Ashted Rye Meadows Conservation Volunteers”. The

Trustees of the new Charity will be Nigel Bond, Neil Phillips, Peter Ross, David Baker and Rod Shaw. We will need to change our logo, letter head and bank account though the email address, Facebook page and web site will stay the same. We hope to hear news on the application in three to four months' time – well it is a Government Department!

Heritage Days in September

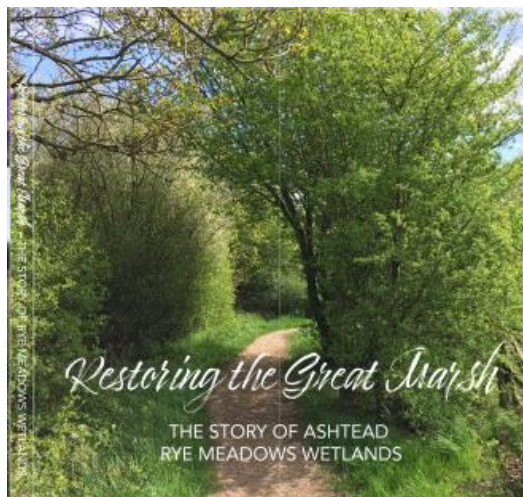


Heritage Days begin on 11th September and finish on 20th September. Rye Meadows will be opening its “doors” from 10am until 4pm each day to allow the public to explore. There will be mown paths through the fields and visitors are encouraged to stick to these paths. The longer grass can contain deer ticks. If walking the dog

please keep it on a lead and pick up after it. We will have young deer grazing in the fields and a dog chasing a deer can be fatal for the animal as it causes the deer severe stress.

The theme this year is “Find my past” and we aim to have large historic maps on display from the 17th and 19th Centuries showing how Rye Meadows and the surrounding farmland looked and how the fields were named. These names have been replicated on some of the current field names – Fraudings, Tomletts, Seamers, Gullett and Jack Adams.

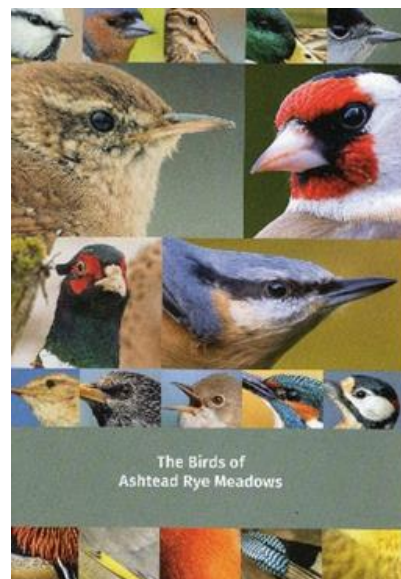
On **Sunday 20th September** the volunteers will be in attendance at Centenary Field



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 hedge laying. Personnel will also be in attendance from Surrey Wildlife Trust who will be outlining their plans for the Centenary Field. So do come and visit us. No need to bring cash as we have a card reader.



If you can't make it on the day, you can order any of the books or other merchandise on the web site. Go to <https://www.ryemeadows.org.uk/shop/>

We will deliver books and merchandise free of charge to any KT21 address. Thank you all for your continuing support and positive comments. We really do appreciate it. It makes the volunteering worthwhile.

David

PS. Don't forget to keep an eye on our web site www.ryemeadows.org.uk and to 'like' us on our Facebook page to see pictures of recent wildlife sightings and the activities of the volunteers.....