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Rye Meadows Newsletter – No. 4

This is the end of year and somewhat delayed Newsletter to bring all our supporters up to date with all that has happened in 2017 on Rye Meadows.

Centenary Field

You might recall in the last letter we described how A Plant had supplied the heavy equipment to move tons of earth in Centenary Field to create a large pond area with the addition of scrapes or depressions. In excavating the pond area we discovered ancient field drainage pipes running from top to bottom. With advice from experts the contractor broke up the pipes and excavated a deep trench between the pond and the Rye Brook. This trench he back-filled with compacted heavy clay to act as a barrier. The remaining pipes to the south of the pond were left to drain surface water into the new pond, and the clay barrier prevented the water draining into the brook. When the pond is full, there is an overflow gully to the west of the pond that does then take surplus water back to the brook.

In the 12 months since the pond was completed nature has re-established itself. The surrounds to the pond are now covered in new sedge that has grown from dormant seeds uncovered by the excavation. In addition in April we have planted nine new more mature trees in the area of the pond. It was so hot and dry in May and June this year, the volunteers took it in turns each day to empty bucket loads of water, drawn from the brook to ensure the trees were well watered. Exhausting work but it has paid off and the trees look healthy today.



New Walkway

A Centenary Field in a wetland is of no use unless residents can visit at their leisure without the need occasionally for wellingtons or waders, so with a generous grant from Thames Water, we employed the Lower Mole Countryside Trust to construct a wooden walkway from the field entrance gate to the new pond. In addition they constructed three rustic seats positioned near the pond. In 2018 they will return to construct a ramp at the gate end to enable those in wheelchairs to access the ponds.

Overhead Power Lines

The Rye Meadows team are indebted to Peter Williams for persuading UKPN to remove their lower voltage overhead power lines that ran across Rye Meadows. Peter managed the whole operation from our point of view acting as liaison between UKPN's



Contractors and the Rye Meadows team to ensure disruption to the meadows was minimised. The first photo shows the wooden poles and cabling in Centenary Field and the second photo is the same view without the cables and now with the walkway in place. Despite having to excavate long trenches to bury the new cabling, there is little sign now of this work having been carried out, except of course for the missing eyesore of the overhead cables.



Peter has now taken up the baton again to start the task of persuading UKPN to bury the high voltage 33KW cables and remove the ugly steel derricks that run between Rye Field to the East and Merton College field to the west.

The Commemoration of the Centenary Field

In May this year we held an event to commemorate the Centenary Field. Fields in Trust are keen for their members to set aside a field to commemorate those who fell in WW1 and we decided to set aside this field as one all residents were free to enjoy at any time. In May we held an event where over 200 residents attended. The event was opened by George Burnett and those attending included Chris Grayling MP, Chris Townsend, Ashtead's SCC Councillor and all Mole Valley local Councillors. The Commemoration was led by Rev. Richard Jones from St. George's Church, and the Fields in Trust plaque was unveiled by Col Patrick Crowley, Chief Executive of the South East Reserve Force' and Cadets' Association.



Allan Mornement, the Rye Meadows' Treasurer arranged with local schools to record short profiles for each Ashtead serviceman who died in the war. These were played in the background during the event. Following many requests, Pete Williams (a different one!) the soundman who generously gave his time and equipment for the event, prepared a video of the event with the voices overlaid. This is available to watch and hear on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Upg7aAwtXM>.

The new barn

This year too we moved all our equipment to a new three bay barn situated in the top corner of one of the horse grazing fields to the north of Rye Meadows. It was essential we had somewhere local to store the equipment. Planning Permission proved to be a long drawn out process, but eventually this was agreed and we moved everything from its temporary home in an old steel container to the new barn. A Condition of the permission was that it was painted with a dark stain to help it blend in, and two coats were applied by the volunteers over two days. We hope next year to get water and power to the new building. The picture shows the volunteers taking a well earned coffee break!



Village Day 2017

This year Ashtead Rye Meadows Wetlands were proud to be nominated for the prestigious Group Service

Recognition Award by Ashted Rotary, and Allan Mornement received the plaque on behalf of the Association. The Rye Meadows Chairman, David Baker, also received the individual Award so it was a clean sweep for the Group.



Fraudings Marsh

Although this area of land had always been considered as part of the 14 acres of Rye Meadows, it had never been physically portioned off by fencing or hedging. At the end of this year, again with the generous assistance of A Plant, we hired a contractor to excavate a trench that will soon receive hedging plants. In addition, the volunteers erected a post and rail fence some 300 metres long marking the official boundary of Rye Meadows in this field. In January we will be ordering 500+ bare rooted hedging plants to further mark this boundary, and we will be calling for volunteers to help plant these. Even if it is only two or three, or perhaps 50 plants, everyone's help will be gratefully received. Look out for an email appeal and for details on the web site.



A new footpath

We have been advised that funding would be available from Developer money to construct a footpath the length of the Rye Brook through Rye Meadows. Thus with new pedestrian gates residents would be able to enjoy a walk from Ashted Woods Road all the way to Centenary Field on a hard surface, but adjacent to the brook. As it would be an all-weather surface, those in wheelchairs or mobility scooters would also be able to take advantage of this path.

We are prevented from having the path too close to the Rye Brook as this would break Environment Agency Rules, but a compromise has been agreed with them, and we next need to draw up a route plan to get final approval before funding can be released and the contractor hired.

Ashted Common Volunteers

Every August the Common Volunteers stop their work on Ashted Common and offer their services to Rye Meadows. In previous years, under the leadership of James Irvine, they have carried out large tasks such as creating hard paths, and this year they cleared large areas of scrub on the river bank opening up the Brook to more light. The benefits of their work are there for all to see, and are also now enjoyed by the visiting kingfisher. The sticklebacks might have a different opinion!



What's next?

Hedge planting, field, tree and hedge maintenance. Path maintenance. Rye Brook widening and new meanders created. More berms and stream flow deflectors – and the list goes on. 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. Volunteer days are the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month from 09.45 until about 1pm.

Happy New Year to you all. David (Chairman)