



www.ryemeadows.org.uk

Rye Meadows Newsletter – No. 7

It's been 6 months since the last Newsletter so we thought it best to bring you up to date with what's been happening on Rye Meadows.

Fundraising

We could not survive without a steady income from fundraising or donations. We have moved into merchandising in a modest way and now have Rye Meadows mugs and Rye Meadows Tea Towels for sale. The designs on both items were made by local artist, Cathy Brett (www.cathybrett.co.uk), who, on our behalf, arranged to have her designs printed on the mugs and one design on the tea towels. Both items have been sold at Village Day and will be sold on the Heritage Weekend, but anyone wanting to have one or some can contact us direct and we'll come and deliver them to you.



The Tea Towels are priced at £5 each and the mugs £4 each or three for £11.00. Both are useful small presents for Christmas or end of year presents for the teacher.

We regularly promote www.easyfundraising.org.uk and via this source we have, over the years, raised £1,000. It is simplicity itself to join, and all you do when shopping online is to visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk first and from that site transfer to your retailer site. Clicking the following link will take you to our own page to join

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/invite/26KLH6/127BII/> then every time you buy from Argos, Amazon, Expedia, Ebay, Apple, Sky and countless others you will raise funds for Rye Meadows, plus feel virtuous without it costing you any extra. It is often only pence the retailer donates, but if sufficient of our Friends and their families take part the sums mount up. It is quite astounding how many online retailers take part in the scheme, so rather than just think "No, they're far too small to be included!", make a Search and be surprised.

Of course if you just want to make a donation just email us and we'll send you our Bank details.

The old hedges

Two years ago the volunteers, together with volunteers from the Lower Mole Partnership Group coppiced the entire hedge that runs alongside Footpath 596. The existing old hedging was cut to ground level in the hope that it could be layered once it re-grew. Two years on the hedge has re-grown and is now a healthy

vigorous barrier alongside the footpath. The poles and deer fencing have been removed and the side growth has been trimmed back by the volunteers. When the hedges are cut in the Autumn, we will request the farmer to trim the top at about 6 ft. Some of the original trees (Ash and Hawthorn) have been left and these are at intervals along the hedge.

Sadly most of the hedge is blackthorn which is unsuitable for layering but the exercise has created a full healthy hedge from top to bottom, whereas the old hedge had been allowed to grow too high with little in the way of side growth at the bottom.

“Combe Bridge”

This year we were approached by a local Leatherhead company, Combe International Ltd, to organise a team day for some of their employees. We had considered this in the past and approached Exxon but without success. This time the company approached us and we offered a task to build a path, and bridge across the culvert that runs parallel to Footpath 24. Although the name Combe might be unfamiliar to you, some of their products perhaps won't be - Just For Men, Seabond and Vagisil.



On 2nd July we were joined by Sarah, Adrian, Luis, Paul, James, Charlotte, Sarah, Joan, Kim, and Bruce from Combe and during the day this team laid 5 tonnes of hardcore to make a path, dug footings for the bridge, moved 4 heavy sleepers into position, dug out two deep gate post holes and hung a new gate – all on one of the hottest days of the year. The fresh air and hard work gave everyone healthy appetites and all tucked into a lunch provided by Rye Meadows (and M&S!)

Blackthorn and Hedging

Each year we prune back the invasive and spiky blackthorn that grows all over Rye Meadows. Over time we have cleared much from the banks of the Rye letting more light into the river, much to the appreciation of a visiting kingfisher whose blue plumage can occasionally be seen streaking along the stream. We recognise the blackthorn is an important habitat for nesting birds and that is one of the reasons why we have again this year been planting another 750 mixed new native hedging plants for birds and wildlife. It is not without some irony that the native mix includes blackthorn! This year's new hedge was planted in the lower part of Tomletts field where a fence had been erected separating Rye Meadows land from other horse grazing land. There is a pedestrian gate from Footpath 596 to this field and we hope in time to open this up too allowing residents to walk through



on the north of the Rye Brook, exiting to Footpath 24 by another pedestrian gate. As many of the fields are also used for grazing horses, we cannot open every path, and signage will announce which paths are open and which are closed.

The existing walks are often used by dog walkers and whilst we are happy for this to be the case, we would request that bags of dog 'poo' are not left on the ground, hanging in trees or thrown into hedges. There are dog and litter bins around, and we have successfully persuaded MVDC to install a new dog bin by the exit of Footpath 24 in Preston Grove. Rye Meadows will be buying the bin, but it will be MVDC undertaking the regular emptying and we are very grateful to Alex at MVDC for pushing this through.

Please therefore do use these bins for bags of poo. Bags left in hedges and on the ground can find their way into the hay being harvested and could cause a horse to become ill or even choke. Also it is an extremely unpleasant task for the volunteers to have to clear these bags away. The meadows are for residents to enjoy and we don't want to close them due to the antisocial activities of a few.



Rye Meadows Book

We have been busy sending in all sorts of texts to Cathy Brett for the proposed Rye Meadows book. These pieces include the history of the area, anecdotes on Volunteers' activities, poetry, and recipes. The layout of the book has changed as time has gone on, and an example of the proposed type of layout is below:-



In the year since we joined we have been amazed at how many different tasks we have been involved in, with fewer repeat activities than we had expected. Examples are clearing overgrown vegetation and debris from the Brook itself and from the array of culverts and ditches, digging channels to direct water away from footpaths into these ditches, cutting back hedges adjacent to footpaths, hedge planting, 'dead-hedging', checking staked tree saplings, repairing fences and bridges, painting the barn, collecting together the inevitable piles of branches and twigs from our own activities and sometimes from storm damage and so on.

We have indeed had the opportunity to learn new skills (such as 'dead-hedging' and managing tree saplings), supported by more experienced team members, but we have also been encouraged to use our own initiative and ideas. In addition we have increased our knowledge of a wetlands environment. It is difficult to single out specific sessions but we found the mornings spent repairing a bridge and re-directing a water channel especially fulfilling, as they were the sort of activities we couldn't have imagined ourselves getting involved in. At the end of those particular mornings we were exhausted but strangely that added to the feeling of accomplishment.

This is part of an article written by two of our newer volunteers, though by now they are “old hands”. Frank and Sarah offered to write something from the perspective of new ‘green’ volunteers joining the team. Cathy has added superb illustrations, and the complete article has images of Frank and Sarah.

Volunteer Days

The volunteers meet on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month and in the main, unless there are specific large projects to complete the days are taken up with general maintenance. This involves hedge trimming, strimming, tree maintenance (re-staking, removing the green tubes, weeding around the base), dead hedging, gate maintenance, barn painting, sharpening the tools, mowing the paths, removing ragwort, removing Himalayan Balsam from the Brook, keeping the culverts clear, maintaining the public footpaths for the public and the list goes on. There’s certainly enough work to keep the group going twice a month. Regretfully we do though have to stop each time at 11am for tea and coffee plus usually a big slice of delicious cake made by Doreen.

Heritage Week 2019

Once again we are opening Rye Meadows during Heritage Week. This is another commitment on volunteers’ time so again we are limiting this to one day. The meadows will therefore be open from 11am until 3pm on Saturday 21st September.

We will have our stall in the fields and will display the mugs and tea towels if people wish to buy them. We hope to see you there.

In closing, anyone wishing to come along to volunteer will be very welcome. There’s no need to come every week, just come along if and when you can. The present volunteers have commitments with children and grandchildren and quite often these take priority over Rye Meadows – even though there is the lure of Doreen’s magnificent cakes!

If anyone is interested (in volunteering – not just the cake), just email David on rmadmin@ryemeadows.org.uk.

David

Chairman, Friends of Ashtead Rye Meadows Wetlands