

Hurst Water Meadow News February 2010

Peter Pritchard

Following the purchase of the Old Bridge Meadow (OBM) Peter Pritchard, our founding secretary, has decided to retire. Without Peter's drive and initiative we would not be in anywhere near the good shape we are in for the future and, indeed, probably would not have managed to acquire the OBM.

His commitment to the Trust over the last 14 years has been enormous, creating a team around him from diverse disciplines that will now continue his work and pursue the objectives set for maintenance and enhancement of the land in our care with, hopefully in the longer term, an enlarged land holding. Mike Southon, a trustee for the last 5 years, takes over as hon. secretary.

This is the latest of a continuous commitment Peter has made to the village, both professionally and voluntarily, since he and Daphne came here in 1954.

Richard Douglas, chairman

Old Bridge Meadow

When the purchase of the Old Bridge Meadow was first proposed, we promised a public meeting so that we could describe how we would manage it. We have arranged for this meeting to be held in the Village Hall on **Wednesday 28 April at 7.30 pm**. This will include a presentation of what the Hurst Water Meadow Trust has achieved to date and our plans for the future management of the meadow. This will be followed by questions and answers. Full details of the meeting will be published in the April Dorchester News. All will be welcome.

We received the reports from the experts who visited the site to advise the trustees on its future management. Their reports have helped us to make our overall plan for the meadow.

Over the last couple of months the meadow has seen snow, freezing and flooding. The flooding did indicate clearly the 'lie of the land' and has helped us understand the way the water flows.

In February, a working party removed the old shed under the trees. This had been assessed as unsafe, too expensive to repair and not required for grazing. There is now a clearing with a view through to Wittenham Clumps. There is still excellent shelter from the rain in one of the arches.

The freezing weather on one Sunday led to a car skidding, crossing the road and striking the bridge parapet and causing some damage to the parapet. The bridge is the responsibility of the Highways Department which has been informed. Until it is repaired, it is unsafe to stand under the damaged part of the bridge, and we have fenced off this small area.



One of the old spreading willows



The Old Bridge Meadow after flooding and freezing

Hurst Meadow

The horses that grazed the Hurst have been taken to new pastures. They have done a good job, exposing fresh soil and keeping down the coarse grasses, both of which help the propagation and growth of wild flowers and rarer species.

A primary school group from Woodcote visited the Hurst in January as part of their on-going project on seasonal change. They were amazed at the floods and plan to return twice more to see the Hurst in spring and summer. We encourage schools to visit the Hurst.

The Hurst will not be forgotten while work is carried out on the Old Bridge Meadow. As well as general maintenance, this year we must work hard at controlling brambles and nettles which threaten to dominate some areas.

To do all of this, we need to call upon the help of volunteers. Think of it as outdoors exercise, in the company of like-minded people, with refreshments at half time and the knowledge of a job well done! If you'd like to try, please contact Graham Beland at workingparty@hurst-water-meadow.co.uk. We will have working parties every month or two.

Mike Southon, hon. secretary 341544