

The Hurst Water Meadow

Dorchester on Thames, Oxfordshire
Owned and managed on behalf of local people
Charity Number 1050272



Hurst water meadow news

15 November 1999

OSCA Conservation Award

In the face of stiff competition, the Trust has been granted an award for conservation. This consisted of a cheque for £500 and a plaque which will be put on the notice board. The awards are administered by the Oxfordshire County Council in association with the Oxford Times. The sponsor was National Power.

The award ceremony was featured in the Oxford Times of 29 October 1999. One of the judges remarked that he was particularly impressed by the way the site has been made open and accessible to the public.

Acquisition of site between bypass and Buck Pool

Progress is slow, as the owners 'City & St James Properties' do not give it a high priority. We keep reminding them, and it seems likely that we will eventually obtain a 99-year lease to conserve and manage this very attractive site.

Kissing gate

Not everyone has found the existing stile and the 'squeeze stile' to their liking. With the help of a Parish Council Millennium grant of £205.62, a kissing gate will be erected by the long bridge. The trustees plan to use oak posts and rails to match the existing timber, with a hardwood gate. The work will be done in the spring of 2000. This should make access easy for children in pushchairs and for fishermen. Wheelchair access will be possible, but the surface of the meadow is not very suitable for them.

Culvert repair

The culvert that takes the public footpath over 'the rushing stream' (i.e. the old flood drain) was in a bad state after the winter floods, and it has now been repaired with very generous help from Rogers Concrete. Trustees and volunteers worked tirelessly filling sandbags with concrete.

Cattle grazing

As part of the long-term management of the meadow, we are required to arrange a hay cut in July, with cattle grazing afterwards. This has worked very successfully this year, and the meadow and wild flowers should

benefit. The trustees appreciate that this may restrict dog walking, but we have had few complaints. Cattle grazing is a condition of our MAFF Countryside Stewardship Scheme contract. The grant amounts to nearly £1,000 a year for ten years.

Finance

Following the replacement of the bridge, improving the access road and digging the scrape, our financial state was serious. An appeal was made to those residents who had come to the village since the original appeal in 1995. This has produced a very satisfactory response, including several covenanted donations - one for ten years. The trustees are very grateful to the generosity of these relative newcomers who appreciate the benefit of the meadow to the village.

Brochures in the Post Office (with a collecting box) and in Chesters tea room, Hallidays and the hotels, have also produced some donations which have more than covered the cost.

Fishing permits (for non-residents) are also a good source of income, thanks to the efforts of the bailiffs (Chuck Selwood, Tony Jones, and John and Richard Pratt), and Eugene and Angelina Witcombe. The trustees are very grateful to them all.

Trees and banks

Three willows (along 'the rushing stream') have been pollarded and the mature oak tree has had some tree surgery. More is needed as it is not very healthy. Work has been done to restrain erosion of the meander. The Environment Agency have kindly agreed to do some more willow spiling on the bank below the long bridge, to stop erosion. They have removed a fallen tree from the river.

Grass cutting of footpaths

Thanks to the generosity of the New Horizons Trust in providing us with a ride-on mower, we have been able to keep the footpaths cut throughout the season. This has been much appreciated by users of the meadow.

Future plans

Much of the capital work on the meadow has been done, so we can now be patient and leave it to the forces of nature to improve the meadow for everyone to enjoy.

Suggestions and comments

These are most welcome. Please give them to the honorary secretary, or any of the trustees.

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