

The Hurst Water Meadow

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



Hurst water meadow news

1st May 1997

Since the last newsletter appeared in November there has been steady progress.

Repair of eroded bank by 'long bridge'

This work was carried out on 18 November by Environment Agency staff and a group of volunteers. Eight metres of bank upstream and two metres downstream were reinforced by 'willow spiling'. This entailed driving in live willow stakes (obtained by pollarding willow trees nearby) and weaving thin willow branches between them to construct a large wattle. This was lined with geotextile and the gap backfilled with soil and covered with geotextile to prevent erosion. The stakes should take root and further strengthen the bank. The result has been much admired and represents good cooperation between the Trust and the Environment Agency. Mr Graham Howard helped drive the posts with a heavy duty digger. Surplus posts were driven into the eroded bank of the meander, as markers rather than as a serious attempt to control the erosion.

Removal of barbed wire fences

The old fence along the footpath was completely removed by Chuck Selwood and other volunteers from Hallidays, as was the fence in the river by the oak tree. They have also put sawdust on the access lane to make it less muddy.

Support from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme

The trustees' proposal for a ten-year plan for the meadow was approved. It was based on the Conservation Management Plan provided by the Northmoor Trust. This scheme, administered by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food (MAFF) provides an annual grant of £497 for maintenance and specific grants for capital works such as removal of eyesores (the fence) and the management and planting of trees, as well as the projects described below.

Future projects

The plan requires that some grazing takes place, as has happened in the past and which helps to improve the meadow. Other projects are to place earth bunds across the dry flood channel parallel to the River Thames in order to retain water in a 'linear pond' to encourage wildlife and diversify the habitat. A shallow depression ('scrape') will be excavated near the eastern end of the meadow, with a similar aim. The excavated soil and

gravel will be deposited at the edge of Buck Pool between the island (popular with fishermen and featured in the Daily Telegraph) and the main bank. This will make access easier for fishermen. The linear pond and the scrape should improve the landscape and enjoyment by the public. Trees will be planted chiefly in a group at the north eastern end of the meadow (between the oak tree and Buck Pool). Boundary posts will be erected as appropriate.

Board for notices and `interpretation'

A 3' x 2' notice board has been constructed, and will be sited near the entrance gate and stile. It will contain a map and a description of the history and features of the meadow as well as by-laws governing its use by the public and by anglers. An interpretative leaflet is planned for next year that could be sold at the Post Office and Museum. Ideas and suggestions are welcome.

Hay cut and grazing

Mr Graham Howard will arrange a hay cut shortly. Arrangements for grazing sheep on a part of the meadow are under discussion with local farmers and the Northmoor Trust.

The concrete access bridge

The 'long bridge' is in poor repair and is unsafe for heavy vehicles. The trustees have bought some jacks to use when required, but a longer term solution is needed. Major strengthening of the bridge would be costly, but the Oxfordshire County Council might help, as they have a duty to maintain it as a footbridge.

Memorial to the late Mr Ralph Cherrill

The British Legion has kindly offered a substantial sum to erect a memorial to Ralph who loved to fish there and enjoy the wildlife. A group of specimen trees with a memorial plaque has been suggested.

Countryside Commission grant

With the help of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, we have received a grant of £140 for publicity, such as this newsletter, for which we are grateful.

Fishing

This has been popular with residents, particularly children, and also with non-residents who have contributed £550 in fishing permits. The trustees are very grateful to Chuck Selwood for his voluntary services as fishing bailiff and to Matt and April Husband for selling permits at the Post Office.

Public Parish meeting on Wednesday 14 May 1997 at 7.30pm

Following Parish Council business, the trustees will present their annual report and accounts for inspection and discussion. Anyone wanting an advance copy should apply to Peter Pritchard. Please come if you can and let us have your ideas and views about the meadow and its future management.

Keeping the meadow free of litter

Several volunteers collect and take home litter in a plastic bag, for which we are all grateful. But better still if we can persuade people to take their litter home rather than discard it as a blot on the landscape.

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