

# The Hurst Water Meadow

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



## Hurst water meadow news

**21 February 1996**

### **Contracts not yet exchanged!**

There has been considerable delay over exchange of contracts for the purchase of the water meadow and fishing rights. This has been due entirely to slow responses of the Receiver's solicitor. Meanwhile, your money is earning interest!

### **What is the role of the Trust?**

An essential feature of a trust is the distinction between legal ownership and 'beneficial ownership'. The ten trustees are the legal owners and have full authority to manage the meadow solely for the benefit of the public. They are not allowed by law to gain any personal benefit from their position as trustees.

Charitable status brings substantial benefits in the form of tax relief and attracting funds, but imposes duties on the trustees. These are described in the Deed approved by the Charity Commissioners to whom they are accountable and have to submit an annual report and audited accounts. The trustees believe that the meadow is as safe for posterity as is legally possible. Trustees are all residents of the village and will resign if they leave.

The trustees wish to work closely with the Parish Council and have agreed that two trustees shall be Parish Councillors.

Please tell us your ideas for the future use and improvement of the meadow. Either speak to any of the trustees, or write to the honorary secretary.

## **Future plans**

### **1. Replacement of gate and stiles**

New gateposts and a better gate will be fitted as soon as the purchase is completed. Plans are afoot to replace the existing stile near the gate with two stiles of British Standard Specification, each with a post as a handhold. These will be solidly made of oak. The stile at the Overy end of the public footpath will be improved.

## **2. Access to the meadow**

Access to the meadow will be free to all. Disabled residents can apply for a key to the gate. Motor cycles and cars will not be allowed, nor the lighting of fires, as they all damage the meadow. Use of metal detectors needs to be authorized by the County Archaeologist, or historical information can be lost forever.

## **3. Management of the meadow**

The horses will be allowed to graze until the end of March 1996, after which the meadow will be allowed to grow and then be cut for hay or silage. Further use of the meadow will await advice from the Northmoor Trust.

## **4. Fishing**

All residents of Dorchester and Overy will be allowed to fish free during the season from 16 June to 14 March (incl). They will be asked to apply for a year's permit at the Post Office. This should be displayed when fishing. Non-residents can obtain a day permit from the Post Office or the water bailiff at a cost of £2.50. Season tickets will be available for non-residents for £40. Mr Chuck Selwood has agreed to act as water bailiff, and will enrol some deputies. The NRA annual rod licence can be obtained at the Post Office for £15.

## **5. Conservation Management Plan**

The Northmoor Trust (who own and manage Wittenham Clumps and Woods) have been approached again to finalize arrangements for the Conservation Management Plan which they have agreed to undertake at no cost to the Trust. This is of crucial value for the future of the meadow as Conservation Charities are unwilling to make grants to charities that do not have such a plan. It is, in any case, prudent to have a constructive plan for future management.

## **6. River banks and bridge**

Erosion is taking place around the bridge, which is itself unsafe for vehicles such as heavy tractors. The County Council Bridge Engineer has agreed to draw up plans for strengthening it, in consultation with the National Rivers Authority. The meander on the south side of the meadow is eroding the bank rapidly. Advice is being sought on whether it is feasible to stabilize this bank or just wait for it to meander the other way!

The trustees wish to keep in touch with you by issuing regular newsletters. We will be glad to receive offers of help, and will be asking for volunteers for working parties later in the year. So please let us know what help you can offer!

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