

The Hurst Water Meadow

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



Hurst water meadow news

24 April 1996

Good news at last!

Contracts for purchase of the water meadow and fishing rights were exchanged on 23rd April 1996. The purchase will be completed before May 17th.

What has been bought?

The sale includes 18.11 acres of the meadow, freehold. All we do not own are the mineral rights which are held by ARC as part of a larger potential gravel digging area. The likelihood of permission being granted for digging up the Hurst is very remote, but the trustees propose to negotiate with ARC for purchase of the mineral rights. This would close the loophole.

Fishing rights.

These have also been purchased freehold for all the river banks of the property, plus the banks of the western plot of about five acres (the property of Mr and Mrs Morrison) and also the north bank of the Thame on the edge of the large cornfield (the property of Mr Blundell). We do not at present have access to the last site, as it is subject to a tenancy agreement, and it is overgrown and not safe because of dead trees, but we have the freehold. Free fishing permits for local residents; and day tickets (£2.50) and annual licences (£40) for non-residents, will be available from the Post Office before the season starts on June 15th. We will ask all car-borne visitors to the Hurst to be considerate about where they park.

What did it cost?

The final price was £31,000, against an asking price of £40,000, so we have been very fortunate not to have been outbid. Originally, the sealed offer price was £32,576, but the receivers reduced this by £1576 on account of the lack of access to some of the fishing, and the increased professional costs of their errors in defining the sale particulars. The Trust will also have to meet the professional fees of the surveyor (Mr Julian Sayers) and the solicitor (Mr Stuart Capel). Both have done a substantial amount of work on behalf of us all, and we are very grateful to them for their skill and perseverance. We could not have succeeded without their help. Both are charging us at a reduced rate on account of our charitable status.

What will it cost to manage this year?

This is difficult to assess at this stage. We will have to pay for new stiles and a gate. Some work on the river bank near the bridge is badly needed. Some tree branches that might be dangerous must be dealt with. The bridge itself is not satisfactory, and this is being discussed with the County Council (who are responsible for a footbridge) and the National Rivers Authority (who are responsible for flood control). We hope to draw up a satisfactory plan, but this will take time. We will inform everyone of the plans, and their likely cost, as they evolve. The trustees have arranged insurance cover for public liability.

Plans and finances for the future.

Thanks to everyone's generosity, and the reduction in the purchase price, we will probably have enough to meet immediate needs. However, with help from the Northmoor Trust (at Little Wittenham), a Conservation Management Plan is being drawn up. This is a major undertaking, which the Northmoor Trust is doing free of charge. It is essential for applying for grants from government agencies like the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and from charities. These will be necessary to secure the proper conservation of the Hurst for future generations, as well as making it more enjoyable for us all.

What might you do to help?

There are several ways. First, please tell us what you would like to see the trustees do. We need your ideas and suggestions. We also need volunteer help from working parties. Please tell Leo Hill or Peter Pritchard if you would like to join us in some healthy outdoor work! Several people have said that they would like to make regular contributions to the Trust, either by banker's order or covenant. Please ask Andrew Clements for a form if you are interested. We would greatly welcome this support.

Past history of the Hurst meadow.

We are very keen to learn all we can about the meadow, in the recent and distant past. We would welcome any stories from the memories of residents, and the sight of any old documents and pictures, maps etc. Please get in touch with any of the trustees.

*The meadow will soon be yours
Please help us to keep it
as you would wish it to be*

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