

The Hurst Water Meadow

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



Hurst water meadow news

25 January 1999

Replacement of the Long Bridge

The work was completed in mid-October and the bridge was formally opened by Cllr Tim Horton, representing the South Oxfordshire District Council and Mr Graham Kemp of Greenways Waste Management, the two main sources of funding. There was a good turnout of residents, officials, engineers, and well-wishers in spite of it being wet and cold. They were cheered by mulled wine from Jane Hill and friends.

Roy Tudor Hughes welcomed everyone and thanked the many people and organizations who had played a part in the successful construction of the new bridge. The list was long, and there were several contributions in kind, particularly from the Environment Agency, who removed the old bridge free of charge, and efficiently constructed the new one, and the Oxfordshire County Council bridge engineers who supplied the girders, and much good advice, as their Council's contribution to the public footpath that uses the bridge. Richard Douglas coordinated the whole project on behalf of the Trust and his knowledge and skill saved a lot of money and ensured a successful outcome. The meadow now has a single-span bridge that will take at least 7.5 tonnes and should last 100 years or more. The whole project cost the trustees £22,500, of which the SODC contributed £2,500, Greenways gave £2,000 and the landfill tax credit scheme provided the remaining £18,000.

Cllr Tim Horton emphasized that this was very much a Dorchester project with help from outside agencies who were pleased to be involved. The bridge is an essential gateway to this much loved meadow.

Graham Kemp said how much Greenways appreciated their contribution to this sort of project - the first of many in the County. He will be working closely with the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) to release substantial sums of money for environmental schemes.

Sir Martin Wood, principal of The Northmoor Trust, representing The Lord Lieutenant for Oxfordshire Mr Hugo Brunner, congratulated all involved in this essentially local initiative for the benefit of local people and the environment. The whole occasion was a very happy one which reflected the close partnerships that have developed and the great goodwill that the Trust has attracted.

Subsequent work on the meadow.

Renewal of the bridge allowed the cattle to be removed before floods covered the meadow. The black poplar by Buck Pool has had the crown and decayed and overhanging branches skilfully cut back by Oakleaf Tree Services.

Brian Hopkins Plant Hire have dug out the 'scrape' (to encourage a wider range of wildlife). The earth was used to construct three low dams across the drain, to replace eroded river bank by the oak tree and to make a causeway to the small island in Buck Pool. In addition, a temporary repair was made to the culvert over the drain using materials from the site and a substantial quantity of roadstone and recycled road 'planings' were laid on the access lane. Where earth has been left exposed, approved grass seed will be planted.

Tree and shrub planting

Two black poplars (*Populus nigra*) and two osiers (*Salix viminalis*) were planted on 26 November 1998, along with ten each of common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), purging buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), common dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) and spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*). One English oak (*Quercus robur*) was planted to replace one damaged by cattle. The trees will ensure future continuity and the shrubs will be valuable to wildlife, give some protection from the bypass and strengthen the river bank.

Future plans

The County Council plan to replace the bridge and stile at the Overy end of the public footpath which are decayed. The trustees are considering a kissing gate instead of the 'squeeze stile' by the Long Bridge. This would be more convenient for the elderly and for push-chairs. We hope to paint the bridge handrails and stanchions to prolong their life. The colour chosen is dark green. If you would like to help with the painting, please contact Peter on 340008.

We will be discussing our future plans at the Annual Parish Meeting, as well as presenting the accounts and annual report. Do come if you can and bring your ideas and suggestions.

Finance.

We were fortunate in being able to raise enough money for the bridge without an appeal to the public. Subsequent conservation work has cost over £3,000, to which the MAFF grant contributes just under £1,000. The trustees will need money to keep going and to provide for contingencies. Please think of us if you win the lottery or have a windfall! A covenanted subscription to the Trust, or Gift Aid (for sums over £250) are particularly helpful as tax is then added to the gift.

Home	Achievements	Education	Finances
Contact us	Latest newsletter	Friends	Archives
Gallery	Maps	Species	Latest annual report