

The Hurst Water Meadow

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



Hurst water meadow news

March 2002

Buck Pool Spinney project

Since the last newsletter in October 2001, much progress has been made. The Environment Agency Constructor Unit has widened the weir bridge and set the main beams of the new footbridge on concrete foundations. Volunteers did the rest. Chuck Selwood and craftsmen from Hallidays fixed the keruing decking and the treated softwood handrails. Other volunteers constructed ramps for all three bridges, fixed new handrails on the sluice bridge and painted the steelwork. An otter holt has been constructed. We are all very grateful to the volunteers for work well done.

Generous grants have been received from the Countryside Agency Local Heritage Initiative, the South Oxfordshire District Council, the Shell Better Britain Campaign, the New Horizons Trust and the Dorchester on Thames Society. Members of the public have also provided essential financial support, without which we could not have completed the project. We also had much professional help in the form of waived or reduced fees for surveying, design and legal work

We plan to put wood chippings on the muddy footpaths. The owners of the Buck Pool Spinney site, who kindly allow us access, may repair the weir. A stock-proof fence has been put around the otter holt to keep the site as a nature reserve. The bypass has also been fenced off to deter trespass - a kind donation from Ian Reid. Residents and visitors can now enjoy some attractive views from the spinney and the shady woodland. Wildlife can benefit from a more varied habitat.

Opening event on Wednesday 10th April

The Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Mr Hugo Brunner, has kindly agreed to open the site on Wednesday April 10th at 11am. All members of the public are welcome at the far end of the meadow near Buck Pool. Allow at least 20 minutes to get there from the village. Mulled wine and nibbles will be available thanks to Jane and Leo Hill. A car shuttle service will be available from Manor Farm Road by the school for those unable to manage the walk, starting at 10am. Do come if you can and give the spinney a good start.

Maintenance work on the meadow

Three substantial willow trees, and one small one, have been pollarded by volunteers. The cordwood has mostly been removed. The brushwood will either be chipped for drying up muddy footpaths, or left in place

as a nesting site for birds. Volunteers have tried to clear the verges of the lane from the bypass to the Hurst. The Parish Council has generously contributed £223 to the mower servicing costs. Graham Howard and his team have kindly agreed to reinstate the field fence at the end of Manor Farm Road.

Open day on Tuesday 7th May 2002 to visit the Hurst and the Abbey

Una Crowe has suggested this idea. Assemble in Manor Farm Road by the Rectory at 5.30pm. Participants will have the choice of a number of expert guides who will lead small groups round the Hurst. The topics will include natural history and ecology (with expert help from the Northmoor Trust); the landscape through artists' eyes (Rebecca Hinds); and conservation, site and charity management. The groups will return for guided tours of the Abbey including new and ancient features and end up with a glass of wine and refreshments in the Abbey. Donations will be welcomed and will be shared between the Abbey and the Trust.

Appeal for funds for a reserve and contingency fund for the Trust

The Trust has no reserve fund to meet exceptional expenses, such as river bank maintenance, nor the means to purchase any adjacent property that comes on the market. A reserve fund, either in the form of money or pledges to support projects, would make the future more secure. Funding bodies will mostly only cover actual projects, and if property comes on the market, we would have to move very quickly. The meadow is very small in terms of conservation, as birds and mammals cover a much larger area. We would like to acquire the copse on the north side of the river Thame and indeed, the whole of the 33-acre Demesne Field (on the left as you go down to the Hurst). This would make an attractive new woodland for the public to enjoy and a choice of shady walks. This appeal will be discussed at the Parish Public Meeting on Tuesday April 23rd, and people's views sought, before we make any moves.

Website www.hurst-water-meadow.co.uk

The website has won a commendation under OSCA (Oxfordshire Special Conservation Awards) scheme and a cheque for £200. The site has been updated and now includes photographs of the Buck Pool Spinney project. We would be glad of help in re-designing the layout and including a logo. Do you think the owl (see below) would make a good logo for the Hurst?

Wanton damage to the meadow

Chuck Selwood carved a beautiful owl and fixed it to the wooden footbridge as a 'signature' (see picture). Sadly, it was forcibly removed soon afterwards. He has kindly carved another which has been fixed more securely. The meadow has suffered from much needless damage. Perhaps the perpetrators can be encouraged by their parents to adopt a more positive attitude to the meadow. After all, it is there for all to enjoy and should still be there for their children and grandchildren. Litter abounds, some of it sharp tins and nylon fishing line that are dangerous for dogs and wildlife. Residents are already very vigilant and help to clear the litter.

Public involvement

Once again, the trustees wish to stress that the meadow is for the benefit of residents of the village and the public in perpetuity and we need your comments and views on its conservation and management.

18 March 2002

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