

# HADRIAN COOK'S REPORT

Drowned meadows, media exposure and multiple school trips are the three matters that come to mind since I last reported for this Newsletter. Last December I was praising the hard work of Sparsholt College students, of Tom Gainsford and our various volunteers who come through the *Friends* and as well as those from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, but would it all work? Then - right on cue - after a couple of dry years, the river levels rose. It is a truism that they knew what they were doing way back then - but do I now?

For a couple of days water reached certain bedworks opposite Rose Cottage at the top end of Martin's Mead. This included an area where repairs had been made by students from Sparsholt College. I should stress that some areas, lower down in the system, can be drowned more frequently during a normal winter and Natural England encourage us to continue restoration where it is beneficial for birdlife. Needless to say, over the summer and into the autumn we will continue doing what we are able to improve our drowning. It is likely that several of these areas have not been properly managed for fifty or more years, some think longer! I await an agreed Site Management Statement from Natural England that should permit an increased degree of autonomy for us to manage the Site of Special Scientific Interest area on the eastern meadows.

Readers of the Salisbury Journal may have noticed two articles all about us. I was approached by Plymouth University, about arranging two 'environmental quests' for primary age children from St Martin's School in the City. It formed part of a teacher training event in which students dressed variously as witches, knights, fairies and the like while the children learned about a range of topics that were environmentally related. I declined their kind offer to dress me as a fairy, settling for a 'meadow wizard's' outfit, including a pointed hat that kept blowing off my head in the wind. A second article concerned the Trust and all it is doing. I am especially grateful to both Roger Elliott and Anne Morris for this coverage. The Trust also featured in the Daily Telegraph's Countryside Section on 26th May, in a piece by Jack Watkins that we shared with Peter Martin, famous for his long-term management of the water meadows at nearby Britford. Peter and I also acted as consultants for the BBC2 programme in the first of the series 'Jonathan Meades Abroad Again', broadcast May 9th on BBC2.

There has also been much model-making activity. David and Honor Baines have kindly renovated their model of a watermeadow system for me to take out to schools and community groups. Thanks are also due to two gentlemen of the cloth. Rev David Wright of Harnham Free Church arranged the donation of a fine table-top model of the sheep-corn system to Rose Cottage made by pupils from the Wylde C.E. Primary School. Rev Scrase, a governor of Harnham Junior and Vicar of Harnham, put me in touch with the staff of Harnham Junior. I lead visits to the

meadows on no less than six occasions during June for their Year Three and Four pupils. Catch 'em young. There may be a drowner of tomorrow out there!

Additionally in 2007 I participated in the Schools Environment Day and hosted visits from Bemerton St John's School and represented the Trust at a School's Science Day at Newton Toney. Other visiting groups included the Salisbury Photographic Club, Woking Rotary, Salisbury Local History Society, British Association for Local History (hosted by Michael Cowan and myself) and the agricultural Lycee Georges Desclauze in Saintes, as part of Salisbury's twinning activities. I have also lectured at the University of Winchester, the 'Wessex Centre' and have been approached about research from University College London, Cranfield and Reading Universities.

Schools Environment Day was Tuesday 6th June. It was attended by some 55 children from several primary schools. They were accompanied by 10 adults on three short guided walks of the Meadows.

To encourage fellow travellers in the business, I have made contact with groups who seek to improve or restore watermeadows including the Laverstock and Ford Downland and Watermeadows Trust, and (not so locally) a community initiative, the Kings Clipstone Project who seek partial restoration of some historically important watermeadows at Clipstone Park, near Mansfield in Nottinghamshire. I also represent HWMT on the Avon Valley Liaison Group.

Finally, I welcome to our Education Sub-Committee Dr Terry Clayton (who also donated a fine bowler hat so I look more like a nineteenth century drowner) and to the Friends Committee Dr Ian Ingrey-Counter. Both have professional backgrounds that have much to offer our Trust as we look forward in time.

*Hadrian Cook*