

HADRIAN COOK'S REPORT

Dear Friends,

Working for the Harnham Water Meadows Trust certainly keeps one out of mischief. I quote from my last report: 'If you know of any other organisation who may like me to come and speak, and ideally come to Harnham on a return visit... you know where to find me!'. Somebody out there kept me at my word. While last year was the year of the primary school, this year has been the year of talks to, and guided walks for, a wide range of community groups.

The invitations have poured in, so that in the last twelve-months I have hosted local history, community and other societies, presenting some 17 lectures and visits, including a large group of local government professionals organised by Wiltshire County Council (lecture and tour), South Wiltshire Industrial Archeological Society, British Association of Local History (with Mike Cowan), Laverstock and Ford Watermeadow and Downland Trust, Sarum Over 50s and the Wilton Historical Society. Of the total, eight involved visits to the meadows. In addition, I have been please to reach a new market recently: I hosted visits for three Brownie and Rainbow groups from around Salisbury. They are especially proficient at gathering wool left behind by the sheep, so I look forward to seeing the first Salisbury-produced spun and knitted garment in hundreds of years!

The Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum has a new Director. Adrian Green is supported by a new and dynamic team including archaeologists and a new education officer. We are in regular discussion with them, planning activities as diverse as archaeological events, adult education and community artistic endeavours. We were delighted to support National Archaeology Day at the Museum on 12 July as part of our closer collaboration.

You may be aware that we successfully enrolled in the Higher Level Stewardship scheme, an essential requirement being the production of an FEP. This is a most exciting development because it means there will be reliable funding for meadow management from Natural England rolled out over 10 years. I especially wish to thank, once more, Sholto Moger (Strutt & Parker), Louise Stratton (Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group), Robert Lloyd and Dr Kathy Stearn (both of Natural England) for

their guidance, patience and professionalism in making this significant development possible. We will not only be able to maintain our ditches and bedwork structures, but there will be capital costs for such as new hatches, pollarding and restoring historic boundaries between the existing meadows. The conservation planning continues and we are also grateful to our all-weather ornithologist, John Vickerman, who continues his regular bird surveys and identifies issues relating to conservation that can be fed into our forward management plans. We furthermore have applied to Salisbury District Council for a grant for new control structures. The plan is to be able to undertake public demonstrations of drowning near to Town Path during the winter months.

Although hampered by livestock moving restrictions at times, this winter enabled successful watering of parts of Martin's Mead, Seven Acres and (briefly) Sammel's Acre. Repairs and improvements to the infrastructure by work parties from Friends Provident, Sparsholt College, Friends Working Parties and British Trust for Conservation volunteers helped greatly. Mike Whitlock returned over the summer to repair hatches, fix new gates and build bridges for access.

On the publicity side, we have revised and printed 2,000 more publicity leaflets and, thanks once more to journalist Jack Watkins, (who wrote the piece about watermeadows in the *Daily Telegraph*) an article appeared in June's *Countryman* about the work of the Trust and featured pictures of Tom Gainsford and of me. Sarum Web Designs have recently re-organised the website making it yet more accessible as it grows! Thanks are due once more to Kirstie Looms, to Mike Gallagher and Mike Cowan. A New History of the Harnham Water Meadows published by Hobnob Press is to be launched at Rose Cottage 14 September, and I have an academic article in *Landscapes* (2008) forthcoming, on the origins of the meadows.

This coming winter will see our meadows in better shape for drowning than ever before, with prospects not only of a decade of steady restoration, but also improved access and opportunities for landscape interpretation.

Hadrian Cook

FRAMEWORK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Our Plan has been formally approved by the Management Committee and is now available for inspection on our website (<http://www.salisburywatermeadows.or.uk/>). There is a lot to read, but should you wish for a quick overview, please go straight to item 18 'Conclusions and Recommendations'. You will see how we intend to extend traditional irrigation while having regard for conservation, for example we plan to both improve our structures and renew certain of our historic boundaries. The Plan is not a *fait accompli*, rather a statement of intent following a protracted period of consultation with input from many experts in their respective fields. Neither is it set in stone; it should be seen as an evolving entity. Publishing our Plan is an invitation to the Friends and others to scrutinise and comment on our outline forward plans. If you have any comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.