

THE DROWNER'S REPORT.

We all enjoy dry weather.....but why can't it rain more? Environment Agency information suggests groundwater levels remain very low for the time of year and, one month off the winter solstice, we are still experiencing a protracted period of low river levels in the Nadder. It is merely colder than when I last wrote to you back in July. Naturally, we are concerned there will be enough water for irrigation by next January, when we start the planned 'demonstration drowning' open days. You are most welcome, but be prepared for cancellation if the river remains low!

Without water we are still able to do useful things. We have reviewed and renewed some of the internal displays at Rose Cottage, and I continue my public outreach and ambassadorial role (if that does not sound too pompous!). Assisted by volunteers, I have represented the Trust at a meeting of the new Wessex Chalk Stream and Rivers Trust (19th October), supported the Living River Stakeholder Event (4th October) and attended Natural England's Wet Grassland & River valley workshop, (9th November) at Titchfield Haven. That day was deliciously wet and I was jealous to see how wet grassland can really get.

I have also given public talks at Downton (9th October), attended by around 80 people and to the Woodford Valley Horticultural Society (3rd November) when there were about 60 in attendance. Apart from the regular Friends work parties, we are grateful to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers who helped prepare the ground for drowning on 1st & 6th November, and to the Harnham Scouts (13th November) who also donated some saplings that will eventually be planted in restored hedgerows. Both volunteer groups have promised further assistance before Christmas. Local contractor and Friend, Tom Gainsford, continues to clear our ditches and carriers this autumn.

Otherwise, we have undertaken much publicity (largely by email) for the programme of open days, starting with the demonstrations of drowning. Following the interest during last June from Bishop Wordsworth School, who include a visit to the Meadows as a part of a guided walk along the river for their year 7 geographers, I have made particular efforts to contact local secondary schools. Due to this, I was invited to meet the science staff at Sarum Academy (1st October) with a view to working with them; meanwhile Lesley is planning mail shots to local primary schools who are so supportive of our work. Other categories of groups contacted include professional organisations (such as Natural England and the Environment Agency), the Living River participants, local community groups, general well-wishers, and lots more.

I thank you too, as ever, for your great support as the Friends of Harnham Water Meadows Trust.

Hadrian Cook, 26th November.