

2. TREE SURVEY

We are continuing to survey and record the mature trees of the parish.

So far 232 have been recorded. A member of the society is very kindly volunteered to create and keep a database of these records. In the long term this survey will provide a unique record of the tree population of Overton Parish, and possibly of any parish, at the beginning of the twenty first century.

The data on the more ancient of these trees will be sent to the Woodland Trust, which are carrying out a National Ancient Tree Survey. In the future the information will also be made available for foresters, planners, landowners and other interested bodies.

3. NATURE DIARIES

Nature Diaries are a valuable source of data and we are grateful to those members who keep these and hope that others will consider doing the same. We know that when records are kept over a period of time changes in the wildlife population can be noted and trends identified. As one of longer-term aims of OBS is to produce a Biodiversity Action Plan for the Parish and it is this sort of information which will be especially useful in drawing up such a plan.

4. ACTIVITIES FOR MEMBERS

For our members and the wider community we provide a programme of walks and talks. We try to make these enjoyable and interesting family occasions and where possible, free of charge. When a charge is necessary members are admitted at a reduced price.

(A full list of activities appears at the end.)

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Last year we held a very successful photographic competition and we hope to do the same this year.

5. PUBLICITY

We believe that it is important to keep others informed of our activities.

We try to do this in a variety of ways.

Notices of events are usually published in News and Views, sometimes in local newspapers and recently on the radio.

Overton Parish Council receives copies of minutes, and recently asked for and was given a verbal report.

Minutes are also available in the Library.

Where appropriate we take part in local events such as Basingstoke and Deane Volunteers' Day and Southley Farm Open Day.

Last year we were involved in the Overton Sheep Fair where we had a stall.

We are happy to accept invitations to give information or talks to local groups - this year we were pleased to be asked to give talks to the Overton Business Association and the Handicapped Riders' Association.

6. TRAINING

Training is considered to be important for both society members and volunteers.

This can be either 'on the job' training as with shrub planting and the second phase of hedgerow surveying or with experts as for plant identification.

This year members have attended a number of courses including:

'Improve your Recording' organised by the HWT, 'Hedgerows' organised by the staff at Bramley Frith Study Centre, Forum held by The Management of North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

B. LOCAL HERITAGE INITIATIVE

Last year OPC asked us to consider managing 'Little Meadow'. This is the land, along Kingsclere Road adjoining the cemetery. It was hoped that it would be the extension for the cemetery but it proved to be unsuitable. We agreed to investigate what could be done with the meadow and the decision was taken to convert it into a wildlife meadow, a quiet place to be enjoyed by all members of the community and with a special interest for children. Many walk past the meadow on their way to school.

But to do this would cost money. About that time we had decided to create our first nature trail and were investigating the cost of installing interpretative boards which we found to be quite expensive. So we put the costs of these together along with that of producing a Hedgerow Report and decided to apply for a Local Heritage Initiative Grant (LHI) grant and were awarded this last October. The LHI is administered by the Countryside Agency and is part of The Lottery Heritage Fund.

The award is described as:-

‘A LOCAL HERITAGE INITIATIVE GRANT’ of up to £14,853 for the period of October 2004 to March 2007.

It is designated for the following APPROVED PURPOSES

- To investigate the habitat of the medieval meadow land
- To engage the local community in the growing of meadow plants
- To produce a survey of hedgerows of Overton Parish
- To develop community skills in hedgerow planting and nature conservation
- To promote the natural heritage of Overton.

We are also given a list of Specific ‘project outputs’ namely:

- No less than three interpretation boards
- No less than 3 different trails
- No less than 3000 leaflets for the trails, 1000 per trail
- No less than 1 guided walk per trail
- No less than 2 workshops on skill development in hedgerow surveying
- No less than 40 route markers

We must also report on hedgerow and habitat surveys – and make these accessible on the society’s web site.

To ensure that we use the grant as indicated we were required to appoint a Project Manager and to draw up A Project Management plan. This has now been done and approved with Alan Stevens very kindly taking on the task of Project Manager.

We are also required to make quarterly progress reports so the first of these was sent in the end of January.

The Management Plan identifies 4 specific areas each of which has its own management plan and a team responsible for its implementation.

Namely:

1. Nature Trails – Valda Stevens
2. Little Meadow – Margaret Rainford
3. Surveys - Peter Huchins
4. Publicity and Outreach - Jane MacKenzie

Details of each of these are on display at the AGM.

Work has already begun on the project with shrubs having been planted in ‘Little Meadow’. The first Nature Trail was prepared in time for the Sheep Fair and two more trails are now in the advanced stages of planning.

We are pleased that a number of members have already been involved in the early stages of implementing these plans, either as ‘consultants’ or labourers in the field. As the project proceeds we hope that more members will be able to help but if not to continue to give their generous support. We really do appreciate this as it gives us the opportunity to gauge how successful we are in interesting interesting and involving members in local biodiversity.

C. THANK YOU

Among the many people we would like to thank are:

Overton Parish Council for their practical as well as moral support and for entrusting us with Little Meadow to develop for the benefit of the local wildlife and the enjoyment of the community.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council who have given us financial support and help and advice through their Biodiversity and Tree Officer.

Our local landowners without whose support we would have been unable to carry out a number of surveys.

Local business people and Overton Business Association.

We are grateful to all our speakers and experts who have added richness and variety to our activities.

The contract groundsman for OPC who not only cuts the grass but also gives practical help in a variety of ways.

A special thanks is due to the COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY the body who administer the LOCAL HERITAGE INITIATIVE GRANT and NATIONWIDE BUILDING SOCIETY who have provided part of the grant.

And last but not least we would like to thank and say how grateful we are to all our wonderful members who give us such support and who we hope at the same time enjoy themselves.

I would also like to give my and your thanks the whole committee for all their cheerful hard work, their expertise and commitment and their catering abilities which greatly enhance every occasion.

Kathleen Doyle
Chairperson March 2005

ACTIVITIES 2004 - 2005

APRIL	River Test Talk
MAY	Moth Evening Bat Talk and Walk Melvin's Farm Walk Basingstoke and Deane Volunteers Day (Information Stall)
JUNE	Willesley Warren Visit Open Day Southerly Farm (Display and Information Stall) Talk to OBA (Overton Business Association)
JULY	Sheep Fair (Stall, Nature Trail, Guided Walk, Biscuits) Guided Walk through Flashetts
AUGUST	Julian Evan's Wood Visit Moth Evening
SEPTEMBER	Northdown Orchard Visit Guided Bird Walk
OCTOBER	Owl and Bat Evening Photographic Competition
NOVEMBER	Wessex Downs AONB Forum
DECEMBER	Press Release (LHI) Gazette (Interview and photo)
JANUARY	Radio Solent (Interview) Andover Advertiser Talk to Disabled Riders Association Hedgerows at Bramley Course
FEBRUARY	Ken presentation to OPC HWT 'Improve your recording' Course First Planting at Little Meadow