

Glebe Meadow AGM Report January 2021

As reported in September 2020, the meadow was kept open during the pandemic, with notices on entrances to ensure compliance with Government guidelines. This worked well with many reporting how it felt like a lifeline with people unable to exercise elsewhere.

Maintenance

All the important maintenance tasks were carried out by our excellent volunteers as usual, including mowing and managing the dog bins, although volunteer groups were only able to meet subject to the 'rule of 6' later in the year. These groups included some new Starston residents who had moved into the village earlier in the year – which bodes well for the future. Since the present lockdown, I've heard from two new Harleston residents who have also offered their volunteering services.

The hay was cut as usual by Francis Webb and sold to 3 purchasers rather than the usual one, and even made a profit of £5!

Trees

The group of dead and dying alders between the Beck and Low Road will be cleared this spring, and we have permission from South Norfolk Council for this work in the Conservation Area. Any dead boughs of ash trees will be removed at the same time. A hanging ash bough over Harleston Road was removed in the autumn under emergency arrangements.

Bees

The bees thrived in the pandemic and have made a record amount of honey in 2020 bringing returns to Jubilee Hall of over £800. Our thanks go to Janet Broadhurst for helping market the honey throughout the village during lockdown. It's very pleasing that the honey is proving so popular among residents – who are showing good taste!

The December flood

The elephant in the room of course is the Christmas Eve flood which had a dramatic impact on Glebe Meadow. Fencing was severely damaged by fast flowing water up to 3 feet deep with the post and rail fence needing complete replacement, having been hammered by fast flowing water and floating battering rams. And the roadside fence was also damaged by the weight of flotsam. The oak bench by the footbridge, complete with its concrete feet, disappeared and was found aground about 200 yards downstream when the water receded. Two bee-hives were knocked over and nearly washed away. Amazingly there are still live bees there and having righted them, I have been feeding and treating them and providing drier accommodation. Whether the colonies will survive will not be known until the spring when I will find out if the queens have survived. The third hive remained upright and I'm hoping will be OK.

Discussions are taking place with contractors to replace the post and rail fencing, repair the roadside fencing and the bench, and to make more flood

resistant bee hive bases. I have also made grant applications for help with funding but whether or not they will be successful may not be known for several weeks.

If it weren't for lockdown, there would be volunteers helping with the repairs to the hedge and generally clearing debris, but we will press on with that as soon as it is permitted.

The Beck

The Environment Agency and its consultants are preparing a feasibility study to look at the potential consequences of removing the iron weirs on the Beck and replacing them with a series of more natural rock riffles, and possibly other environmental enhancements. This was kicked off by a site meeting with landowners on 11 January, and we will see their report in due course. Three trustees, (Geoff Broadhurst, Bruce Colman and I) represented Jubilee Hall Trust at this meeting.

The Internal Drainage Board will be de-silting the Beck in the early part of 2022. This has not been carried out since Jubilee Hall became owners of Glebe Meadow in 2012, out of consideration for its public use. The excavated silt will be placed on the bank, but this normally dries out and grasses over quite quickly.

So despite the pandemic and the flood, Glebe Meadow has proved its value to the community once again. Once the repairs are completed, the meadow should be even more resilient.

Peter Grimble
15 January 2021