

FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT OF OVERTON BIODIVERSITY SOCIETY MARCH 2006 – MARCH 2007.

Introduction

OBS (Overton Biodiversity Society) has had another productive and enjoyable year. The society has 130 members with a committee of 16 members meeting every 6 weeks.

Throughout the past year we have focused on the final stages of the LHI (Lottery Heritage Initiative) Project and on providing a programme of talks, visits and walks for OBS members and for the general public.

We have produced a final report on the tree survey carried out by John Smith and Jim Stickland and have carried out a water vole survey and produced a draft report.

During the year we have kept in close contact with other organisations such as the RSPB, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (Natural Environment Forum), Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre and Overton Parish Council.

With the LHI Project now drawing to a close we are looking forward to new challenges including the production of a Biodiversity Action Plan for Overton Parish.

Local Heritage Initiative Project.

The original LHI grant was awarded to OBS to:

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

Little Meadow:

Work in Little Meadow is now largely complete. Following last year's hedge and tree planting this year saw the planting of wild flowers and the production of earth banks and the sowing of tussock grasses to provide a habitat for over wintering insects. Earth for the banks came from an area within Little Meadow where the fertile topsoil was removed to create suitable conditions for annual wild flower seeds to germinate. An exciting consequence of this was the discovery of Neolithic or Bronze Age worked flints and fragments of clay tiles which were identified as being probably Roman.

We are looking forward to Little Meadow being officially opened by our former chair, Kath Doyle, on Sunday 6th May 2007 and would like to extend an invitation to as many people as possible to attend.

Heritage and Nature Trails.

As part of the LHI project 3 nature trails covering “Historic Overton”, “Little Meadow and Flashetts” and “Field and River” were to be produced. Guides covering all three trails have now been completed and are available at outlets within the village. They have proved very popular if the rate at which the holders need topping up is anything to go by!

In addition, a double sided noticeboard has been produced which will be sited outside the Community Centre displaying Overton footpaths and an annotated map of the Village while two single sided display boards will be sited in Little Meadow explaining the layout and history of Little Meadow and (the nature trails??).

Surveys.

As part of the original LHI proposal a hedgerow survey of the parish was carried out and this was completed last year. In addition to this, 2 OBS members, John Smith and Jim Stickland, also carried out an impressive survey of notable and ancient trees within the parish. John and Jim surveyed and recorded 450 trees considered ancient or notable with the data being processed by Mari McNair. When John became too ill to continue the fieldwork, Jim completed the tree survey with help from his wife Sheila. Sadly our friend John died in August last year and we all miss him very much. We are extremely grateful to Valda

Stevens for producing the final tree survey report which was published this year.

Project Management.

We are indebted to Alan Stevens for the thoroughly professional way in which he performed his role as project manager for the LHI project and the way in which he kept the whole project on track and guided it to its conclusion. We would also like to thank Margaret Rainford for her hard work in designing and implementing the Little Meadow plans and to Valda Stevens for producing the Community Centre display board with Jane Beckmann who also dealt with planning issues and managed to steer the application through to a successful conclusion!

Non – LHI surveys.

Between October and December 2006 OBS members carried out a survey of the entire length of the River Test within the parish. Evidence of water vole presence was recorded and a draft report has been produced which includes recommendations for managing areas where water voles were found. We would like to express our thanks to the landowners who allowed us access to the river to carry this out.

One of our members – Peter Hutchins has carried out a sponsored parish bird watch and recorded over 100 species.

Publicity and activities for members.

Throughout the year a number of activities were arranged including talks, walks, visits and opportunities to help with planting Little Meadow.

These included birdwatching walks, nature trail walks, dawn chorus walks, mollusc and ladybird workshops, talks on climate change, a wildlife garden visit and working parties at Little Meadow. Homemade refreshments invariably emerge at the end of most of our events!

Publicity events included manning displays at Overton Church and Overton School fetes, Laverstoke Estate and Northdown Orchard Open Days and Queen Mary's College Environment Day. Regular articles were produced for "News and Views" to update non-members on activities and progress.

If you haven't already sampled the delights of our superb website, please do so! Veronique Kerguelen and Adam Trickett have created and constantly updated the OBS website. It is highly professional, informative and gives a most attractive photographic record of the groups activities.

Appreciation.

I would like to thank OBS committee members for all their hard work over the past year and all the other individuals and organisations who have given us support and advice. On behalf of the committee I would like particularly to express our sadness at the death of John Smith and our appreciation for all that he and Rose did for us, and that Rose continues to do.

We look forward to the coming year as one which will bring us new challenges and the satisfaction of helping to maintain and improve the wildlife of Overton