

# River Ouse research project



Our annual general meeting takes place on 22 November this year. Come and hear what the Plumpton Wildlife & Habitat Group has been doing over the past year. There'll be the usual election of officers and annual general meeting business followed by an illustrated talk by our guest speaker, Dr Margaret Pilkington, Emeritus Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Community Engagement at Sussex University. Refreshments will be provided.

Dr Pilkington will be talking about progress to date on the River Ouse Research Project. This is a long-term project to restore traditional 'washlands' along the upper River Ouse in Sussex. In the past these washlands, unploughed and rich in wild flowers, held back floodwater for short periods after heavy rains. Changes in drainage and land management led this system to break down and the project is seeking to restore the meadows to their past richness and function. This will not only increase biodiversity but should also help alleviate flooding downstream.

## **Station update**

Station users may have noticed we've been doing a lot of work to prepare the ground for sowing wildflowers (see the August issue for details of our plans). We've cleared away mountains of rubbish and undergrowth under the hedge on the London side, where we've sown a hedgerow mix and planted some honeysuckle to cover the wire fence. We've also created bare patches on the banks and in the fenced enclosure by the ticket office that we've sown with perennial meadow flowers. We'll sow more flowers in the spring. So it may look a little bare for a while but in a year or two we hope to see a variety of wild flowers.

Batboxes and other features for bats have also been incorporated in the station 'improvements'. In the course of our groundworks and surveys we have encountered a number of common lizards, slow-worms, a vole and a common toad. The lizards are particularly nice to see because we were concerned that they might have disappeared from the station. We hope that our efforts on the vegetation will also improve things for lizards and the like.

**Churchyard update**

A wonderful show of at least 40 autumn lady's tresses appeared in the grass in front of All Saints Church in September. A similar group in Haywards Heath was featured in the Middy. This small, white orchid, whose flowers are arranged around the stem in a tight spiral, has a strong sweet scent and is pollinated by bumble bees. It takes many years from seed to reach maturity and flower and is the rarest of the three orchids in the churchyard. Sadly the fine display was short-lived because the grass was mown before the flowers could set seed.

Jacqui Hutson

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