

Teazle Wood 2014

Introduction

Lucy Quinnell

Following the great successes of 2013 – dramatic improvements to Ponds 1, 2 and 3; the tackling of the litter issues in the wood; fungus surveys leading to the discovery of a species never previously recorded; Teazle Wood's first ever participation in Heritage Open Days; etc. – we propose that the *main* focus for activity for 2014 should be the stream networks in and around Teazle Wood.

In particular, we would like to help improve the dreadful condition of the Rye Brook (now designated Main River) where it flows along (just outside) the southern boundary of Teazle Wood, close to the main entrance to the woodland. This would tie in with the work carried out upstream at Rye Meadows and on Ashted Common, and downstream where the Rye flows in to the River Mole – Surrey's waterways are not in great condition, and are currently the subject of the River Mole Catchment Consultation.

With another Friend of Teazle Wood, Caroline Cardew-Smith, I have attended River Mole Catchment Consultation workshops run by Surrey Wildlife Trust at Leatherhead Leisure Centre and the Old Barn Hall in Great Bookham. The Rye formed one of three workshop cases at the Old Barn Hall (April 2014), as did the Fetcham Splash, which is part of the River Mole close to where the Rye meets the Mole. Many groups are interested in the Rye and the Mole in this part of Surrey, and there are clearly many questions that need answers as well as much work to be done if the Rye and this stretch of the Mole are to become the healthy, well-surveyed and well-managed waterways all groups visualize as 'ideal'.

There are many positives already in place – there are enthusiastic, committed and caring people and teams upstream and downstream, and plenty of volunteers and experts ready to help. This needs co-ordination, and support from specific experts to ensure that action can happen, and can happen in a safe, professional and effective way. The main obstacle from our personal point of view is lack of time – like so many of us, I work a full-time six-day week in my 'day job', and Caroline runs her own business, so our input is unavoidably limited. **All help is therefore gratefully received!**

We have placed this project within Teazle Wood's TWEEN sub-project. 'T.W.E.E.P.' is the Teazle Wood Entrance Enhancement Project – a sub-group of the Friends of Teazle Wood, co-ordinated by me and Caroline, with the specific aim of improving the south-eastern corner of Teazle Wood. This sub-group was set up because the problems unique to this corner were so great that we felt they needed to be tackled in a very focused way and with relevant specialists and contacts aboard. Daphne Burnett (Rye Meadows) has offered help and suggested a 'Rye Partnership' – this makes absolute sense to us, and TWEEN hereby offers its input and services as a member of this partnership.

Draft Proposal for TWEEN's Main Project 2014:

THE RYE - SOURCE TO MOLE

Building on the major achievements in Teazle Wood in 2013, we believe that the most useful 'next step' for TWEEN would be the surveying and clearing up of the stretch of the Rye to the south of the woodland. *Please note that the Rye was straightened in the 20th century, and is now just **outside** the boundary of Teazle Wood – for one short stretch only the north bank of the Rye is part of Teazle Wood – but the health of the Rye is obviously critical to the wildlife of Teazle Wood (and vice versa), it clearly needs attention, it runs past the entrance to Teazle Wood and therefore can set a tone of either abuse or nurture, and we are more than happy to assist in any way we can to help improve the Rye. Small tributaries to the Rye and Mole run through Teazle Wood – the main one has already been the subject of several volunteer sessions.*

We are very aware of the important work at the Rye Meadows site (Daphne and George Burnett and team) and we have frequently stressed our concerns that the good work done 'upstream' should not be undermined by the obviously terrible state of the Rye downstream as it flows under the M25 and past Woodbridge Avenue, Kingsbrook, Tesco, the Brook Way business park (Hyperion, Leatherhead Motor Company, West Hill School, Leatherhead Community Garden, Therfield School, Unilever, etc.), and also by any invisible stretches – what exactly happens when the Rye is canalised under the M25, and what happens at Randalls Road and beyond? Who is monitoring this? How healthy is the Rye at these points?

We have worked to establish ownership of various stretches, and we are working on creating a simple and friendly map of these neglected zones. We have worked hard to establish a good relationship with Tesco, and we now have excellent and important relationships with Unilever, West Hill School and Leatherhead Community Garden, who all back on to the Rye close to Teazle Wood. We need to transform early contacts with Therfield School, Hyperion and the Leatherhead Motor Company into strong partnerships – these also back directly on to the Rye at this point.

We propose a working party day (SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2014?), involving Unilever volunteers as in September 2013. We envisage that these volunteers would be matched with other small teams – from Tesco, Hyperion, Leatherhead Motor Company, West Hill with Leatherhead Rotary (already volunteered), Therfield, Unilever, Combat Stress, Leatherhead & District Countryside Protection Society, etc. We hope that Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project would be enlisted to assist in ensuring that we are all working to a sound ecological standard, at the right time of year, etc. The Environment Agency and Thames Water would be approached to advise re. water quality and safety prior to any volunteer work.

VISION for this first stage:

- To achieve new and strong partnerships and a much greater general familiarity with the whole course of the Rye – source to Mole
- To acquire surveys and share knowledge, to give us all a better picture of the condition, biodiversity and community use of the Rye and to enable a sound future programme of works
- To understand the non-ecological aspects of the future management of the Rye – i.e. likely / possible flood alleviation measures, etc. that may affect any conservation work done now.
- At the TWEEN stretch of the Rye, to clear the stream as far as is ecologically advisable of litter and debris, in order to make a significant impact on flow of water, habitat and 'tone' of the landscape. This has worked well at the south-eastern corner of Teazle Wood, where many problems are resolved because we have created a different feel and encouraged new respect for the landscape from the community
- To clear litter and debris from both banks
- To attend to fallen trees and build-up of dead vegetation where appropriate, and to attend to invasive species where appropriate

I see the immediate key contacts / partners as:

Friends of Teazle Wood
Friends of Rye Meadows – Daphne Burnett
Ashted Common – City of London Corporation
Lower Mole Countryside Management Project – Helen Cocker
Surrey Wildlife Trust – Jim Jones, Glen Skilton
Environment Agency – Michele Cooper
Mole Valley District Council – Rod Shaw
Surrey County Council – Tim Hall
Tesco
Unilever
Leatherhead and District Countryside Protection Society
Leatherhead Motor Company
Hyperion Furniture
Local Ashted and Leatherhead residents
West Hill School
Leatherhead Community Garden – Phil Wessell and Kayleigh Arunasalon
Therfield School

There will of course be others – there were angling groups at the River Mole Catchment Consultations, for example, but I don't have contact details. Can SWT help with this?

This is ambitious, and before we go further the **very first step** would be to establish whether the September / October task (as a whole or in parts) we are proposing is even viable and suitable for a volunteer team. The Rye has high banks at this point, access is not easy, the debris is large and buried deep in silt in places, the water may be polluted and contaminated.

Who can advise re. this, please?

My contact e-mail is lucyquinnell@aol.com, and I can be contacted by telephone on 01372 386453 (Fire and Iron Gallery). Caroline Cardew-Smith's e-mail address is caroline@allbright.co.uk.

Thank you.