

West Oxford Wildlife Group Projects

Hinksey Meadow

Hinksey Meadow is a wet meadow off Willow Walk, which includes an old meander of the Thames (**Figure 25**). It has been owned by the Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT) since 1997, and will be protected from further development. The site was identified by WOWG in 1998 as having potential for a habitat creation project. The Pond Conservation Trust Policy and Research Group looked at the site and proposed increasing the variety of wetland in the meander. This was agreed by OPT and funding was obtained from Oxford City Council and OPT. The field already had considerable wildlife interest in it, with areas of wet meadow vegetation and a small patch of snakeshead fritillary. It is designated a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) within the Oxford Local Plan. However, the area of the meander had low wildlife value, being damp grassland with *Agrostis stolonifera*.

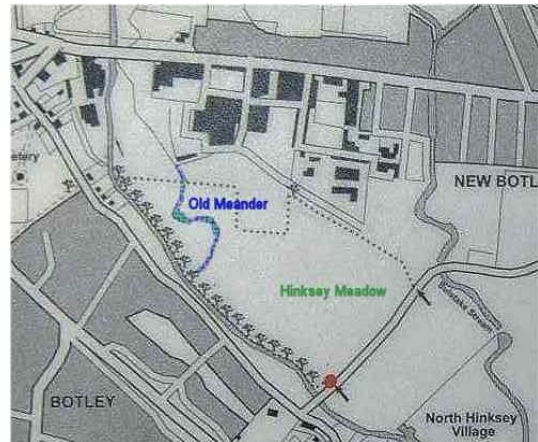


Figure 25: Map of Hinksey Meadow showing the old meander

In September 2002, two seasonal pools were created in the northern part of the meander about 50m², 0.4m deep. Another pool, also 0.4m deep was made by extending the existing embayments of the meander by 36m². The excavated areas were deturfed and the turves returned to the excavated hollows in order to preserve the existing seed, spore and egg bank. The excavated soil was dumped above the 100-year flood line on the Seacourt Nature Park. In October 2002 the site was designated as Jubilee Wildlife Space by the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Hugo Brunner.



Figure 26: Hugo Brunner launches Hinksey Meadow Jubilee Wildlife Space

The field's current management (a hay cut in late July with aftermath grazing by horses) is adequate for the newly created wetland areas. WOWG plans to monitor colonisation and to involve local schools in educational projects on the site. In the longer term the pools are expected to silt up. This is a natural process, creating habitats for a series of plants and invertebrates. Options, which can then be considered, include creating further wetland areas or re-excavating the pools over a number of years to give an increased variety of different wet conditions.

Tumbling Bay

Tumbling Bay is a former river-bathing place, which is part of Botley Park (**Figure 8**), and has happy memories for many local residents. It is a delightful backwater, a peaceful retreat from noise and traffic, and, in its current neglected state, it has become an unofficial nature reserve. During the mid-1990s, a group of concerned local people set up the Friends of Tumbling Bay to protect the amenities of the place and encouraged the Environment Agency scheme to rebuild the decaying weirs through the former bathing place in 2000.

The West Oxford Wildlife Group is now carrying on the Friends' role and plans to improve the site in two stages. The first stage, which is in progress at the time of writing, is the rebuilding of the wooden footbridge, which had fallen into disrepair, became unsafe and

eventually collapsed. Funding for this was secured from Oxford City Council and the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) via WREN.

The second phase, which will be made possible by the rebuilding of the bridge, is to enhance the wildlife value of the site, whilst retaining its considerable amenity value. This will include:

- Preserve and enhance the semi-natural feel of the site by clearing inappropriate planted species such as invasive dogwood and willow scrub, pollarding mature willow trees and planting some new native trees to provide continuity.
- Increase the wildlife value of the site by managing the long-neglected grassland as wild flower meadowland and by planting nectar-bearing shrubs to attract more insects to the site.
- Make visible and maintain surviving bathing place features, notably the path to the old ferry site on the main river.
- Increase the amount of semi-emergent vegetation in the upper pool and the old shallow end.

Other projects

WOWG has also undertaken a number of smaller projects, including planting five trees (supplied by Oxford City Council) in the Oatlands Road Recreation Ground and putting up a number of bat boxes, made by the children of West Oxford Primary School, along Willow Walk, and leading wildlife walks in the area. Community participation is central to the Group's vision, and we intend to involve local people in all our projects as much as possible.