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The new financial year subscriptions are due in April. If you have previously set up a standing order you need not take any further action.

Otherwise use the form at the back of the newsletter. If you have not previously set up a standing order please use the form on the last page

## Events

**\*\* Work parties: Meet at The Scout Hall, Greens Farm Lane at 10.30. Tools/gloves provided – wear old clothing and wellies or water proof boots**

**Saturdays 14<sup>th</sup> January, 11<sup>th</sup> February and 11<sup>th</sup> March : Work Party.** Help keep fit and active by burning any extra pounds you may have put on during the recent holidays. We have various tasks for all abilities while working in the fresh air. If you fancy litter picking, fence repairs, pond clearance or habitat management please join the friendly group of volunteers where any training will be given.

**Monday 31st January @ 19:45: Protecting the threatened species of South Essex.** A talk by Marc Outten of EWT, hosted by Norsey Wood Society at Chantry Way Centre.

**Monday 27 March @ 19:45 'Warley Place - History and Conservation',** A talk by John Cannell, hosted by Norsey Wood Society at Chantry Way Centre

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April @ 19:45. Our society AGM.** Please put a note in your diary for this important event to be held in The Reading Rooms.



**Chris explaining some of the benefits provided by veteran trees including the habitat opportunities for birds and bats.**

*\*we've included the Marked Trail map on page 4. An updated information leaflet exists but has not been published as we aim to replace it a new informative leaflet. If you want a copy in the meantime email or call the chairman.*

## Chairman's Report

A Happy New Year to all our members. It's a time to look forward but some of us are also looking back. The History of Mill Meadows, written by the late John James in 2000, has been a useful source of reference for those of us who are working on the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Since the last Newsletter we have received a favourable response to our project enquiry and are now working on the full bid which we aim to submit by the end of this month. My thanks to members Sue Goss and Liz Saward for their work on this.

The main criteria for a successful bid are to convince the HLF that we can achieve certain outcomes. A key outcome is that more people will learn about the heritage value of Mill Meadows. This suits us well - with the prospect of Billericay expanding, and more people who are new to The Town moving in, it is more important than ever to promote the value of the Local Nature Reserve. The Meadows, as put very aptly by Sue, "affords users an extraordinary taste of the former historic Essex countryside....".



# Mill Meadows Society Newsletter

Issue 76 January to March 2017

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Our events since the last Newsletter, the Fungus Foray and the Veteran Tree walk, were very well attended. It was particularly pleasing to see so much interest in the veteran trees. One of the oaks has a girth of around 7metres which, according to the Woodland Trust, could date its growth from the start of the Tudor period. In the previous Newsletter I pondered on the number of species that had used that oak tree over its life span. Now I ask you to ponder on the enormous change, from the passing of ownership to Richard Riche by Henry VIII, through the sale to the Petre family which predicated the earliest recorded survey of the site and the centuries of farming tenancies since those times. It is interesting how, although The Town has grown around it, the fields and boundaries have changed little since that first survey around 1600.

On the subject of growth of The Town, those of you for whom I have email addresses will have seen that we submitted comments to Basildon Council on the Alternative and New Sites consultation for the Local Plan. Some of our members pointed out two sites proposed for development would have an implication for Mill Meadows. One is adjacent to Outwood Common Road and is proposed as an alternative to Land East of Greens Farm Lane. The other is on the north side of Southend Road in South Green.

Although many members do not want to see development east of Greens Farm Lane, if it does go ahead than we can at least work with the developer on extending Mill Meadows. If these other sites are approved for development then our link to the wider Living Landscape will be tenuous, to say the least. And these proposed sites go against the Local Plan which showed the east side of Billericay as a Landscape Protection Area.

We continue to point out that this area is a wildlife corridor which enables the movement and propagation of wildlife between Mill Meadows and the wider Living Landscape around Ramsden Heath. Species such as Bullfinch, Stoat, Weasel, and some bat species which are recorded occasionally, would probably disappear altogether from Mill Meadows without the wildlife corridor. Also, Climate Change is causing a shift in local species, and the wildlife corridor is a vital link for new species to spread their range, such as Marbled White butterflies which are appearing more frequently. Let's hope that the planners take our comments on board.

John James' History is now available for anyone to view on our web site under the Documents tab. If you never seen it before I can recommend at least a quick

browse as this may add another aspect of interest to your next visit to Mill Meadows.

Neil Sumner, Chairman.

[Neilsumner123@aol.com](mailto:Neilsumner123@aol.com) 01277 630849

## Rangers Report – Autumn 2016

*Happy New Year! Although it feels like they've only just left, I'm starting to think about making preparations for the return of the cattle. I'd like to get an early graze in the SSSI fields again this year, so we need to make sure all the fencing is in place and in good condition. I'll be contacting the Ray from the Essex Grazing Project shortly so we can have a walk round and inspect it all. No doubt there will be a few repairs, and I'm hoping to get some stretches completely replaced this year too where it is looking a bit aged in places.*

*The good news is that I now have a colleague helping me a couple of days a week, and have just had an off road vehicle delivered. These two developments should mean I am able to do some of the repairs around the reserve a bit more quickly and at less cost. It'll probably take a while before I have fully worked out what we can and can't achieve, but there have definitely been positive developments in this area. Some of the non-fencing repairs will probably have to wait until spring as the winter habitat management tasks, like the hedge cutting (Greens Farm Lane, Southend Road and Chaffinch Crescent), need to take priority, but after that I hope we can make more progress. I've also completed the new Management Plan for the meadows which will run from 2017- 2021. I'll be preparing a digital copy for society members to have a look at shortly. There are no major changes, just an update continuing on from the previous period.*

*Apart from that, there's not an enormous amount to report. I was pleased with the turn out for the veteran tree walk in December. I hope those of you who attended enjoyed it. I have for some time wanted to complete a survey of the veteran trees at Mill Meadows that was started a few years ago, so if anyone is interested in helping out with that, please let me know. It could be an interesting project. There are pro forma forms available from the Woodland Trust/Ancient Tree Forum, which give clear guidance, so don't worry if you don't feel experienced enough, and it can be done at a pace which suits you.*

Chris Huggins 01277 624553  
Countryside Ranger, Basildon Council



## MILL MEADOWS BUTTERFLIES in 2016

2016 was the third year of regular “transect walks” to monitor butterfly populations in the Meadows. You have probably already heard that this has been a poor year for butterflies nationally and Mill Meadows has been no exception.

Before looking at the figures, it is important to understand the limitations of “transect walks”. The principle is that a walker follows a pre-determined route around the Meadows once a week. Inevitably then, butterflies that live in areas that are not on the route will be missed, as will butterflies that move around a lot and simply aren’t “in the right place at the right time”. This explains why the purple hairstreak reported by Ken Williamson in the last Newsletter doesn’t appear in these counts. The weather of course also makes a big difference to the number of sightings. A minimum standard is set before a walk can be done, but the difference in sightings between a sunny day when the temperature is only 15oC and a day when the temperature is 10o warmer could be considerable. Results from transect walks have much greater statistical validity when records from many sites are combined but it is nevertheless worth reviewing our own figures.

The following table summarises the results from the last three years:

Year	2014	2015	2016
Total butterflies counted	1213	1040	702
Highest number on a walk and date	218 on 12 <sup>th</sup> July	199 on 17 <sup>th</sup> July	148 on 23 <sup>rd</sup> July
Total number of species seen	20	20	18
Most common species and total counted	Meadow brown 390	Meadow brown 252	Meadow brown 289

Sharp declines were noted in the numbers of almost every species, only meadow brown

showing an increase. Generally, the total number of “browns”, which had fallen sharply last year, only declined slightly, while “whites”, which had more than doubled last year dropped back to 2014 levels. The main hibernating species (small tortoiseshell, peacock and comma) have declined dramatically, the total of these three falling from 145 in 2014 to 79 in 2015 and just 30 this year. “Blues” also did particularly badly with no common blues recorded (23 in 2015) and holly blues down to just 4 (28 in 2015).

The species total would have declined further were it not for the reappearance of a single marbled white and the chance sighting of a clouded yellow.

Many thanks are due to all those who walked transects this year. Some of us also carry out walks at Norsey Wood and as we are keen to establish systematic monitoring at Queens Park Country Park as well, more volunteers to share the workload would still be very welcome.

Paul Hudson

28th December 2016

## Living Landscapes award

Last Autumn at the Essex Wildlife Trust annual members’ day (@EssexWildlife) Chris Huggins and Colin Kidner collected a Living Landscapes award on behalf of the Mill Meadows society for our participation in the grazing project.



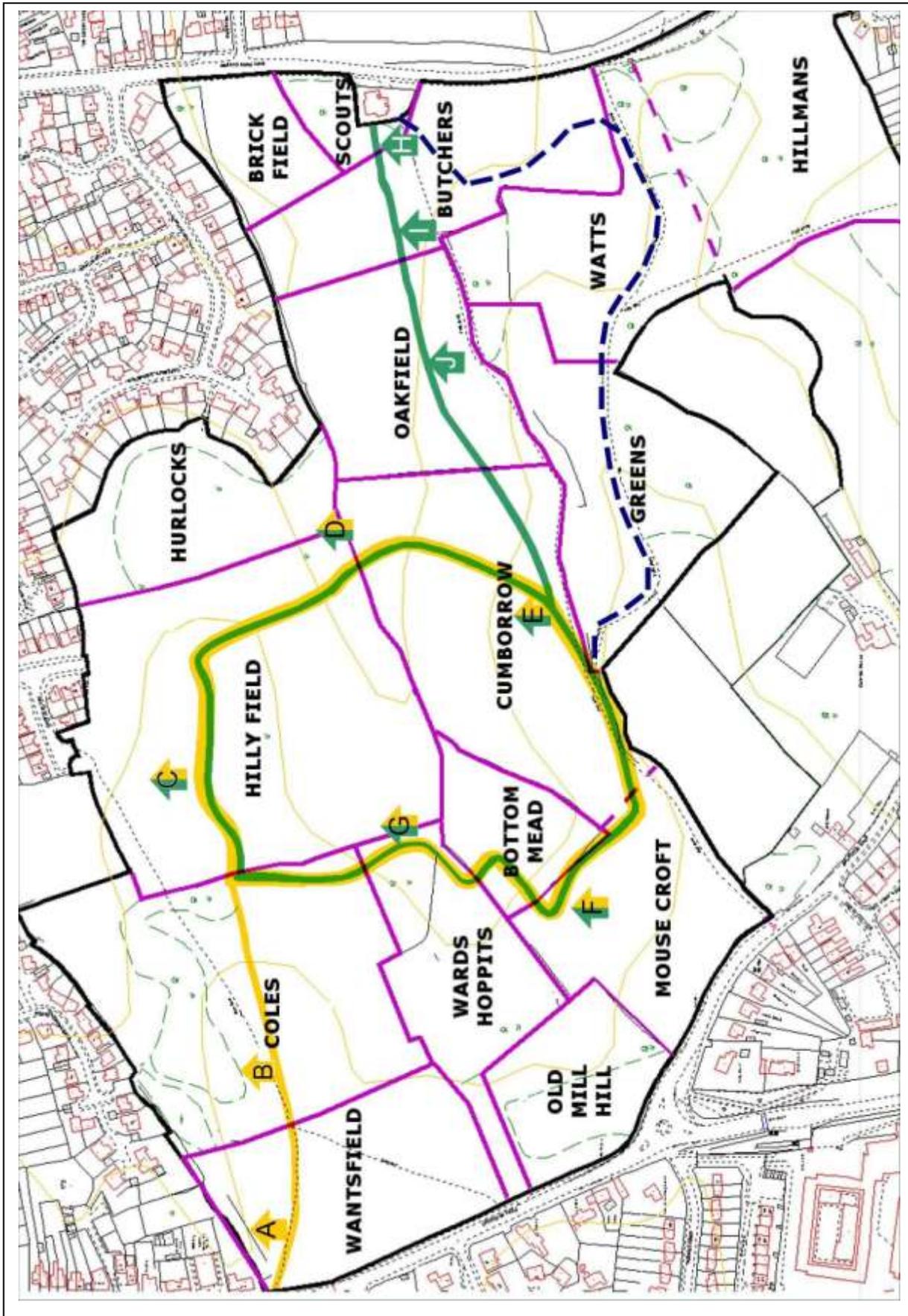
image credited to Daniel Bridge.



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# Mill Meadows Society Newsletter

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I would like to -

Membership Year

apply for membership

## 2016/17

renew my membership

(please tick as appropriate)

From 1st April 2016  
until 31st March 2017

Name

Address

Post Code

Telephone

E mail

(all correspondence & newsletters will be sent via e-mail when an e-mail address is quoted)

In our household there are -	adults	&	children		
Subscription, per household, @ £4.00 p a.				£	:
Donation - thank you	(please state amount)			£	:

**Cheques should be payable to " Mill Meadows Society"** TOTAL £ :

**If you would like to pay by standing order, please complete the attached form**

**Calling all young people** Do you have any young people amongst family & friends who would like to learn more about nature? We are linked to a group that is devoted to children of all ages and it is called B's Ne's (Billericay's Nature Explorers) .....

If you would like more information then please tick this box

**Please send this form together with your subscription &/or standing order form to:**

**Membership Secretary, Mill Meadows Society,  
c/o 19 Gainsborough Close, Billericay CM11 2DB**

**If you require a membership card, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope**

Please use the reverse of this form if -

- (a) you wish to air your views about the Society, its management or have suggestions of topics for future meetings
- or (b) names of other persons who may be interested in joining the Society



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*For Society use only*

date received	s.a.e	date card issued	S/O received	date S/O to bank	xl entry	date subs to Treas	membership number
	YES / NO		YES / NO				



## Pay by STANDING ORDER

Please complete the form below and return it to :-  
Membership Secretary, Mill Meadows Society,  
c/o 19 Gainsborough Close, Billericay CM11 2DB

### **STANDING ORDER MANDATE**

To: (name of your bank) \_\_\_\_\_

(Your bank's postal address) - \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Please make the following payments to :-**

Bank: LLOYDS TSB Billericay Branch

Sort Code: 30 – 90 - 80

Beneficiary: MILL MEADOWS SOCIETY

Reference: Mem No: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Account No: 0 1 0 4 2 8 2 3

Amount:	Annual Subscription	£	4.00
	Donation	£	_____
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>_____</b>

Due Date: IMMEDIATELY then 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL ANNUALLY

Commencing: .....

Last Payment: Until Further Notice

And debit the following account :-

Account Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Account No: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed : .....

Date : .....