

# Sun Rising News

The twice yearly newsletter of  
Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground and Nature Reserve



## winter 2007

Welcome to the winter newsletter of Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground and Nature Reserve.

This time we are grateful to Robin Restall for his beautiful sketches.

### Memorial Trees

We were privileged to assist with the planting of some 28 memorial trees over the weekend of 17 – 18 November. While the Saturday was a lovely day, the ceremonies that took place on the wet and windy Sunday were just as moving and beautiful.

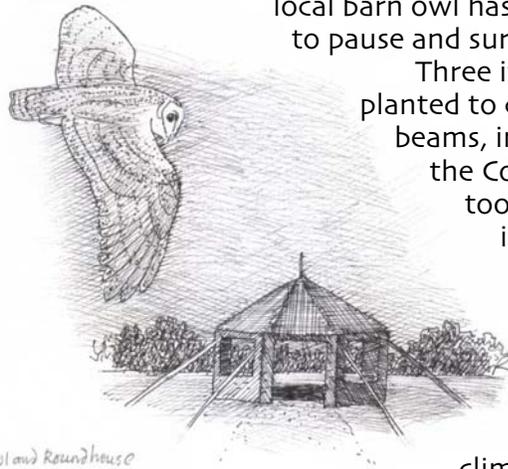
Families and volunteers also helped to plant over 100 trees and hedging shrubs in the gaps around the edges of the field. We'd like to extend our thanks to all.

Because of the warm October, some tree planting was postponed until Friday 7 – Saturday 8 December. If you are interested in helping plant hedging (on the Friday) or planting a memorial tree at this time, do let us know.

### Bulb Planting

Some 450 bulbs were planted in late October, helped by another wonderful band of volunteers. Daffodils, bluebells, wild garlic, wood anemones, snowdrops and fritillaries were planted beneath the hedge canopy, around memorial posts and the Roundhouse.

We'll see how they do this year, and if appropriate we'll put in some more next autumn.



### The Roundhouse

Those who have visited Sun Rising in the last six months will see that we have now completed our memorial Roundhouse. We are thrilled to see that bats have already been using it for roosting, and a local barn owl has taken to it as a place to pause and survey the meadows.

Three ivies have now been planted to climb the green oak beams, in time creeping over the Cotswold stone pillars too. Four roses are going in at the end of

November - all

carefully chosen to bring scent and colour, softening the form of the structure as they

climb the beams, helping to

give the Roundhouse a sense of being connected to its environment.

The roof, planted with sedums (a marvellously drought-resistant plant) suffered through the torrential rains of July; as a result, some of it had to be replaced. Once established, however, it will be sturdy resident, blessing us with its yellow flowers through the summer months.

Now available for funeral and memorial services, the Roundhouse is also a lovely place for visitors to take time in contemplation.

### Construction Completed

All the tracks that we intend to lay at this stage are now completed. These ensure that families and funeral parties have easy access to all burial areas, even in wet weather. Thank you for your patience during the construction work.

## Open Days

Our next Open Day will now be in May - June next year.

## The Grassland

Sun Rising is a work in progress: an agricultural field for many years, it is now slowly evolving into a haven for wildlife. While many modern agricultural practices are detrimental to wildlife, some, like traditional methods of grassland management, help to increase biodiversity.

This year in order to manage the grassland area not at present used for burial, we are employing sheep to keep the grass short. This will prevent a mat of dead vegetation forming at the beginning of next year's growing season that will inhibit the growth of the grass. In this way we can integrate the areas of wildflowers we are sowing into an established meadow system.

Feedback about having these woolly companions at the site has all positive. They are wonderfully serene creatures, an electric fence keeping them well clear of the burial areas.



## Winter Nature Notes

Nature may appear dormant during the winter months, but for one animal that has made its home at Sun Rising this is a busy time of year. Brown hares don't hibernate or store appreciable amounts of fat in their bodies and need a constant supply of food throughout the winter. In order to provide sufficient food for these hungry hares, the landscape must contain a range of grass and herb species.

During the late 1800s there were said to be about four million brown hares in Britain. Recent surveys show it has declined by more than 80% over the past 100 years. In some parts of Britain the brown hare has become a rarity or locally extinct, so we are especially happy to

have them at Sun Rising – even if they do to try and nibble the young trees.

The more diverse conditions which will be created at Sun Rising as the habitats mature will encourage hares and other mammals by providing a range of food plants. Our wildflower meadows will supply the diversity necessary to provide a year round food source.

Small mammals like long-tailed field mice (wood mice), bank and field voles and shrews are also common in meadows. Field mice are seed and insect eaters; bank voles feed on herbs, leaves and seeds, while the field vole specializes in grasses. They particularly favour 'soft' grasses such as *Agrostis* and *Festuca* species, but also eat other grasses such as the sweet vernal-grass, all of which we are planting at Sun Rising.

Goldfinches have been feeding on the teasels this year, which is a delight to watch. Our hedgerows, so heavy with berries this year, have been providing a source of year-round food and shelter for a variety of insects, birds and small mammals. At Sun Rising we've been increasing the diversity of our existing hedgerows by planting up gaps with a variety of trees and shrubs that will benefit wildlife. The hedgerow planted last winter will soon provide additional habitat, as well as helping to screen the car park.

In December this year we will be planting the lower lying area of the site with willow trees, alder, dogwood and guelder rose. After oak trees, willows support more wildlife than any other native tree. As willows mature, they tend to split, creating cavities for birds, bats and insects to shelter in. It is also fast growing, so helping to create a more diverse landscape structure.

Very many blessings!

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