

The History of the Tiptoe Green

In the beginning...

The Tiptoe Green opened its gates to the village on 29th April 2011 and the Trust hopes that this green space in Tiptoe remains a community asset for many many generations. However, the Tiptoe Green might never have existed if it had not been for the Tiptoe community and in particular a few determined souls.....

In September 2008 a 'for sale' sign appeared on the field in the centre of Tiptoe and the word quickly spread around the village. What could happen to this central space in the middle of Tiptoe? Could it be developed? Could it be bought by someone who didn't care for it and become an eyesore? Would it remain as grazing land? Rumours were rife.

The village had recently lost its Post Office and, with that, the centre of the village had disappeared. Whilst Tiptoe has always been a sociable village, there was now no obvious central place where people could 'bump' into each other for a chat. There was ongoing talk about creating a community shop or weekly market as some villages had been able to do after their Post Offices closed and the weekly coffee morning at the Jireh Hall sprung out of this. So, the residents of Tiptoe were amenable to a 'community project' and this gave rise to the idea that the community could perhaps buy the field.

Great idea, but...

Mandy Hayes and Steph Nash, residents in the village, 'volunteered' to hold a meeting and invited the village to attend to discuss the possible purchase of the field. About 30 people attended the first meeting on 24th September 2008 at St Andrews Church. The minutes from that meeting show that there were various concerns raised, but the majority of people supported the idea. And, at that moment, it was just an idea. There was no money and no idea whether, if the field was purchased, the National Park would allow it to be used as a community space. Step forward, Janine Redman, Hordle Parish Council and the wonderful residents of Tiptoe!

The 4.2 acre field was on the market for offers over £95,000 and it came to light that it was actually two fields being sold by two separate parties; the northern field was being sold by the Williams family who previously lived in Conkers on Middle Road and the southern field by the Kyle family who previously lived in Kingswood on Wootton Road. After that meeting, Janine Redman, a vet living in Tiptoe, approached Mandy and Steph and said that she was looking for somewhere to graze her sheep and that if the village couldn't afford to buy both parts of the field, she would be interested in buying one of them. This almost halved the amount of the money that would need to be raised! Janine also offered to give the village the first right to buy the field if she or her heirs ever wanted to sell.

After the first meeting a questionnaire was sent out to the village asking for people's views on the possible purchase and future use. This came back with the majority of people in favour of buying the field and creating a village green.

At the second village meeting on 1st October 2008 at the Jireh Hall, it became very clear that the village wanted this project to go ahead. In one week pledges had been received from the

residents of Tiptoe of approximately £24,000 together with a loan of £20000. The project was on its way, except for yet another hoop to jump through.....

Time is not on our side...

Having spoken to the estate agents selling the field, it was revealed that there had been a great deal of interest and that it had been decided to go to 'sealed bids' with bids required by 15th October – only two weeks away! The 'working party' as it was now called had no way of putting in a sealed bid, firstly because it only had 'pledges' - no actual funds - and secondly it could not put in a sealed bid as there were so many people involved in the project it couldn't be kept confidential. At the meeting of 1st October it was agreed to write directly to the Williams and Kyles and see if they would be willing to help and, boy, did they come up trumps!

Both families were absolutely delighted to hear that the village wanted to buy the fields for the community and the Williams family even commented that it had been 'granddad's dream' to see a game of cricket played there. They said they would take the fields off the market if a price of £110,000 could be agreed. It was and they did.

Money, money, money

Amongst the supporters of the Tiptoe Green were members of Hordle Parish Council and the County Councillor Penny Lovelace. An approach was made to HPC to see if the Council could give a grant to help with the purchase. After many presentations and hours of discussion at the Parish Council meetings, the Council awarded an extremely generous grant of £35,000 towards the purchase of the field.

By that time, the working party had calculated that £70,000 was required which was £64,020 for the field (which was larger than the field that Ms Redman was buying) plus about £6000 for legal fees and expenses. The working party now had the money to buy the field, but what could the space be used for? How would the loan be repaid? Could the dream of creating a village dream ever come true? And, if so, who was going to run it and maintain it?

Can you see what it is yet?

As this was a community project and the working party wanted to ensure that as many people as possible could have their say in what they wanted to see on the Tiptoe Green, the residents were invited to an Open Day. This provided the 80 people who attended with lots of information about the project and asked for their views. From the information collected on this day, the design for the Tiptoe Green was drawn up for presentation to the National Park Planning Authority. The final design was for a large informal open central area with a wildlife and wildflower areas and it is this that has now been translated on to the actual Green.

Trust us – we're a charity!

The dedicated team on the working party realised that some form of legal body needed to be created to buy the field and run the project and so the Tiptoe Green Trust was born. The Tiptoe Green Trust is a registered charity which also helped immensely with the fund raising as it meant that a further 20% Gift Aid could be claimed back on donations. This has so far raised thousands of pounds. The Trust came into being on 11th June 2009 with its founding members being Jon Dowdeswell, Mandy Hayes, Sheila Legge, Graham Meadowcroft, Steph Nash and Pat Rendell from the village of Tiptoe and David Ironside and Ken Wells as representatives of Hordle Parish Council.

Will we, won't we?

When the working party first approached the New Forest National Park Authority with the idea of a new village green, the reception was somewhat 'cool'; however, the National Park have now gone on to become one of the Green's most enthusiastic supporters even dedicating a page on their website to the project! It was a long drawn out process to obtain the planning permission with much supporting evidence needed to show that the community were behind the project but, on 20th October 2009, the wait was finally over and the National Park voted in favour of a change of use from agricultural to community open space.

At long last

It then took a few more months of stress and red tape tying up all the grants, pledges, loans, the 'pre-emption' agreement with Janine and adhering to the conditions of the planning permission before the field finally became the property of the Tiptoe Green Trust on 22nd June 2010.

On the 19th July 2010 the land was transferred to the 'Official Custodian for Charities' to secure the land for generations to come. The Trust still controls the land but it means that there is no risk that the land will remain vested in people who are no longer involved with the charity and who may be difficult to trace, such as when a Trustee moves away.

A brief glimpse

On the 18th July 2010 the Green was opened for a few hours to celebrate the purchase and the village was invited to come along and see what would become their very own village green. The sun shone and it was a fantastic day with many people bringing along a picnic to enjoy the new space. Unfortunately, as conditions still had to be met under the planning permission, the Green was once again closed to the community but everyone felt that it was a real taste of things to come.

Please sir, can we have some more?

The field had been bought, but money was still needed for all the works. The Trust is extremely grateful for the grants received from the Big Lottery, Hampshire County Council, Sway Parish Council, The Woodland Trust, New Forest National Park Authority and the Hampshire Playing Fields Association. This has allowed the Trust to build an all-weather path, a pedestrian bridge and gate, a new vehicular gate, provide fencing for the Green and the wildlife area, purchase a wonderful tractor mower and buy pounds of seeds, over 6000 bulbs, and over 1000 shrubs and trees. Donations from residents have also continued to come in, added to which the Trust has raised funds at various events and this has allowed the original loan from a Tiptoe resident to be repaid in full.

The kindness of strangers

People all over Tiptoe and beyond have not only donated money but also time and energy. Since the field was purchased, the response and generosity of people has been overwhelming. From use of machinery such as diggers and tractors to backbreaking work such as digging and hedge laying and even a donation of a ready-made hedge from Marley Mount 'if you come and dig it up yourself'!. It truly has been a community project. Members of working parties at weekends have got to know each other and have always been well looked after by provision of hot drinks and Pat Rendell's legendary flapjacks.

The dream comes true...

On the 29th April 2011 on the sunny afternoon of the Royal Wedding, the Tiptoe Green was finally opened to all with a wonderful community event attended by over 400 people. There were morris dancers, maypole dancing, dog displays, fun games and races, music, royal wedding fancy dress, bouncy castle, beer tent, raffle and tombola, tractor display and a huge picnic where everyone brought along a plate to share. It even made the local BBC TV news. It was a huge success and the Trust is already planning the next one for the Queen's Jubilee.

And finally....

The Tiptoe Green Trust would like to most sincerely thank the Williams and the Kyles, Hordle Parish Council, Janine Redman, the New Forest National Park Authority, and the most excellent people of Tiptoe for making this community project a most outstanding success.

Tiptoe now has its very own village green.