

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook: Occasional Titbits, No. 24, April 2012

www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

Chairman: John Collins

Please forward or print out and pass on to anyone else who may be interested. If you have items suitable for inclusion please let me have them as they arise. If you wish to be taken off this group email list let me know.

The Guided Walk. On the gloomy, drizzly evening of 23 April, sitting in front of the telly held no appeal for 13 stalwart Friends who followed the Guided Walk led charmingly and stimulatingly by Iain Webb, Cambridge City Greenways Officer for the Wildlife Trust. The photograph shows rapt attention being paid by the new cycle bridge in Burnside. It was a particular pleasure to have one's eyes opened to the spring's burgeoning plant life, be it meadow sweet or the sinister Japanese knotweed, and one's ears attuned to the black cap or the cormorant. Our grateful thanks to Iain (on left in photo).



A potential Chalk stream? Just as it took painters, poets and leisure to enable visitors to see 'beauty' in the Lake District landscape, so recent decades of education and ecological propaganda have enabled some local residents to see the suburban Cherry Hinton Brook (see Snakey Path in early spring 2012 in the photo below) as something other than a damp ditch serving as a place to dump rubbish.



The brook is, in fact, potentially, a valuable 'Chalk stream'. It is said that there are 200 Chalk streams in the World, more than 160 of them being in England. Such streams are distinguished by a steady flow, of crystal-clear water of characteristic pH value, emerging from a Chalk aquifer, flowing over flint gravel, providing a habitat for a typical range of wild-life including trout and such plants as water crowfoot, and permitting, in Hampshire for example, the commercial growing of water cress.

It is said that a local café once harvested water cress from the Cherry Hinton Brook. It can still be found there, but so can evidence for generations of neglect, be it in the historical practice of pouring arsenic in the stream for sheep dipping, or in huge quantities of litter and rubbish still embedded in the banks. The deep loose silt on the bed of the stream (apart from immediately downstream of the Daws Lane bridge), all along Snakey Path for example, distinguishes this stream from a true 'Chalk stream'.

It is in this context that money has been earmarked to restore the stream between Daws Lane and the Cherry Hinton Hall ponds. Debris has already been cleared and dense overhanging vegetation removed. The width of the channel will be narrowed and appropriately planted, making the flow more rapid, perhaps exposing flint gravel.

David Brooks, 26 April 2012, 01223 244528