

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

Occasional Titbits, Special 50th issue, December 2016

www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

As this is our 50th Newsletter it is twice as long as usual as we decided to have a look back at some of our activities and achievements, so. We hope you enjoy it.
With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

November litter pick



The 2016 autumn clean-up of Cherry Hinton Brook took place on Sunday 20th November. All agreed there was less general rubbish than in recent previous clean-ups. We removed a bath and a large tool box from the Brook and a wheelie bin from by the path, all of which we think were dumped by fly-tippers. There was also a bike in the Burnside section of the Brook.

We were pleased by the positive interest that shoppers at Sainsbury's took in our activities and at least two thanked us and commented on how much they liked the Brook. Several people commented on seeing the Kingfisher recently – one of our supporters said she saw three separate birds while walking along Snakey Path to the litter pick.

Sue Wells

Cherry Hinton Festival

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook had a most successful day at the Cherry Hinton Festival on September. Our stall was well-placed and we had lots of people stop and chat to us, attracted by the gazebo, shopping trolley kingfisher and a variety of games. The lucky dip, where litter-pickers had to be used, proved popular with children, and lots of people had a go at 'guess the weight of the bag of litter'. Many thanks to Rebecca Jones for coming up with these games and for organising them and all who helped.

Monica Frisch



Dates for FCHB events in 2017

Saturday 25th February: Winter Walk along the Brook. Meet at 97 Burnside at 2 pm (outside the dentist).

Sunday 4th March: Spring litter pick. This will be our contribution to the Great British Spring Clean (www.greatbritishspringclean.org.uk). Meet at 97 Burnside at 10.30 am (outside the dentist).

New funding for further Brook restoration work!

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook submitted an application to the Pebble Fund, for further restoration work on the Brook, and has been awarded a grant of £1,700. The work will involve the installation of another four flow deflectors in 2017, in sites to be determined with Cambridge City Council, and the production of some information and awareness raising materials. PEBBLE (Projects that Explore Biodiversity Benefits in the Local Environment) established by South Staffordshire Water PLC, which operates Cambridge Water, is a new fund created to support schools, youth groups, charities or community organisations in activities that encourage and enhance biodiversity in the local environment. We will be organising volunteer work parties to help with the activities once the work starts.

Sue Wells

Keeping an eye on the wildlife

One of our aims is to restore the brook and create more suitable habitat for wildlife. We try to track changes and document where possible the various plants and animals that inhabit the brook. Collaborative monitoring efforts have been expanding in recent years:

- **Wildlife sightings:** Since 2014 we have been compiling observations sent in by casual observers. Records received are mainly of Water Voles, but several other interesting species have been recorded, including Grass Snakes and American Signal Crayfish.
- **Fixed-point photo monitoring:** To document changes in vegetation and the general appearance of the Brook where restoration work has been done, Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook committee members take photos monthly at fixed locations.
- **Riverfly monitoring:** This citizen science approach allows anglers, conservationists and others to monitor water quality, using invertebrates that inhabit the riverbed. This year Local Nature Reserves Officer Victoria Smith and her group of active volunteers started monitoring riverflies in the area near Sainsbury's along with FCHB members.
- **Student projects:** BTEC students from University Technical College have been conducting research in to water quality along Cherry Hinton Brook and Hobson's Conduit. Their findings suggest that water quality is better around the flow deflectors.

Thanks to all involved in monitoring! Please keep sending us your exciting wildlife sightings:

wildlife@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

Berry Mulligan

Quite a transformation

We've come a long way since 2008. Before then the Brook was perceived by some as a local suburban landfill site. The stretch accessible from St. Bede's Crescent, the path and stream behind the houses along Brooks Road, and the channel through Sainsburys were depressing eyesores, littered with furniture, car wheels, garden fencing, stolen safes, and much more, not to mention bicycles, supermarket trolleys, shoes, anoraks, and underwear. Now, in 2016, after prolonged 'tlc' there is a general sense that the green corridor is somewhere to be enjoyed by walkers, cyclists, and wildlife, and that the Brook is, potentially, a special Chalk stream.

It was in 2008 that a small spontaneous group of litter pickers decided to form a Friends' group. Though rubbish was the spur, there is a record of a meeting in January 2009 between four of us and Guy Belcher (then Nature Conservation Projects Officer), Alan Wingfield (Drainage Engineer), and Simon Bunn (Urban Sustainable Drainage Engineer), which shows that there was wider ambition.

Indeed, the first item in the first *Titbits* (drab-looking without photographs) dated August 2009 announced a 'walk along the Brook' with Guy Belcher, admittedly to discuss practical rather than ecological matters. In April 2009 a draft constitution had been reviewed and the Friends' group was formally established at a meeting in June 2009.

What is remarkable is the current breadth of vision of the group and the variety of projects generated, far beyond what was imagined by the founder members. All this is made possible by the loyalty of the old stagers and renewal by younger members, and the dovetailing of wide-ranging, miscellaneous skills and enthusiasms.

David Brooks

Fly-tipping

Cambridge City Council has produced a leaflet about fly-tipping, which we are sending with this newsletter. As they point out, fly-tipping rubbish is a crime, and they provide advice on how to report it and stop it. The City Council website has a page <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/report-flytipping> for reporting fly-tipping as well as pages about how to find your nearest recycling point and disposing of bulky waste.

Some highlights from the past 49 *Titbits*

Our newsletter, *Titbits*, first appeared in August 2009, produced by David Brooks who went on to be responsible for 30 issues. The newsletters chronicle the concerns and activities of the Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook, which have developed and broadened over the seven years. All the newsletters can be downloaded from our website.

Some issues are constant: the problems of litter and our arrangements for litter picks in response feature in most issues, while the issue of people swimming in the lakes first appeared in the second issue. Our links with Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall and other local groups also get frequent mentions.

Improving the Brook as a habitat for wildlife

12 flow deflectors (right) and **2** gravel riffles installed.

3 low kerb areas installed along Burnside to make it easier for frogs and toads to reach the lakes.

23 bird boxes and **2** insect hotels constructed with members of the public and put up along the Brook.

Maintaining the appearance of the Brook

About **20** litter-picks – the first was in November 2008 and we usually have two a year. Items collected have included adult and kids' bicycles, computers, about **6** safes (empty of contents), wallets and credit cards, a silver plate tea service, toys and a bath!



Raising public awareness of the importance of the Brook

4 interpretation boards designed and erected.

Information displays at Mill Road Winter Fair, Cherry Hinton Festival and the CNHS Conversazione.

4 talks given to Cambridge Natural History Society, University Technical College, Edward House care home, Cambridge Conservation Forum symposium.

3 appearances on local radio (2012, 2014, 2016).

50 issues of *Titbits*, our occasional newsletter.

Observing and monitoring the wildlife of the Brook and surrounding area

Around **200** individual sightings of Water Voles; we got good footage using trail cameras.

About **200** Frogs and about **50** Newts and Toads helped to cross Burnside on their way to the Lakes in March 2010. Sadly, many fewer have been seen since then.

2 sightings of a Grass Snake in the Brook, in 2011 and 2013.

Lots of birds heard or seen include Chiffchaffs, Little Egrets and Kingfishers. Swans built a nest and tried, unsuccessfully, to raise young one year and a Water Rail was resident on the Brook for several months in 2012.

Working with other organisations with similar interests and other activities

Regular liaison with Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall, Cambridge Natural History Society, The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire.

7 Annual General Meetings plus committee meetings.

Commented on the proposals for the lakes in the Draft Local Plan and participated in the Council-led Lakes Working Group.

Provided comments on development issues that may affect the Brook.

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook in action



Making birdboxes at Sainsbury's, August 2015

Our interpretation board at Sainsbury's, July 2014



Litter pick, November 2016

Little Egret



Water Vole
among sedge

Banging posts in
for flow deflectors,
February 2015



Many thanks to all the current committee, Rivercare, Guy Belcher at Cambridge City Council, Alan Wingfield, Simon Bunn, the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, our funders, the volunteers who have done so much of the practical work, past committee members (Anne Cleasby, John Collins, Zoe Harris, John McGill, Glynn and Jane Phillips, Nicole Robertson, Rob Martyr, Tiffany Wallace) and all our members and supporters.

JOIN US! See www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk for our aims and activities.

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