

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

Occasional Titbits, issue 74, Spring 2024

www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

The mural unveiled

The highlight of last year was the unveiling at Sainsbury's on Coldham's Lane of the mural created for Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook by Rowan. The culmination of persistent work by Emmy Smart over many years, we were delighted to have the Mayor, Councillor Jenny Gawthrope Wood, unveil it at the end of November.



The idea of a mural at Sainsbury's had first been mooted ten years ago. The donation of £500 from Sainsbury's in 2016 helped us raise more funds through public S106 art funding from the City Council. Emmy also had the idea of approaching Rowan, an organisation which works with adults with learning difficulties. They were enthusiastic and Rowan students, along with lead artist Chris Deane, designed the very colourful mural which is 2.20 m high and 3.65 m wide, and features some of the wildlife found in and alongside Cherry Hinton Brook.

We have a little bit of funding left so we are talking with Rowan about possibly producing some merchandise, such as a jigsaw puzzle of the mural – watch this space.

Spring litterpick

We held our Spring litterpick on March 17th as part of the Keep Britain Tidy 'Great British Spring Clean'. This year marks 70 years since Keep Britain Tidy was set up by the Women's Institute and this year the theme for cleanups was the **permanence** of litter.

Despite the miserable weather we were very grateful to see around 15 volunteers turn up, including several very enthusiastic youngsters, resulting in the collection of 12 bags of general waste, an iPhone and 8 disposable vapes. In keeping with the permanence of litter theme – a Space Raiders packet, with the price 10p on it, was found well embedded in the bank of the Brook. Subsequent research by Sue has determined that it must have been there at least 17 years – permanent litter indeed!



Look out for posters and social media posts for the date of the Autumn litterpick in September/October – we look forward to seeing you there!

Water level gauges

The Cam Valley Forum has given us a grant to install some water level gauges. These will enable us to monitor is how much the water level fluctuates. We have identified four locations where we plan to install gauges: where Forest Road crosses Cherry Hinton Brook, at Daws Lane, near St Bede's

Gardens and near the junction with Brookfields. The gauges have been bought and Cambridge City Council is very kindly helping with arranging Ordinary Water Course Consent and with the installation, which we hope will take place this spring. The grant will also enable us to put up signs explaining what the gauges are for.

The photo, taken on 18th February, shows water flowing OVER the bridge at the junction of Burnside and The Tins, which is a bit worrying for the residents of Burnside, but a rare occurrence.



Mission Street development

Mission St., the company responsible for developing Parcel A, part of the area known in the Local Plan as “Land South of Coldhams Lane”, submitted its planning application in December. The application includes “a detailed proposal for landscape works and access” for Parcel C, i.e. the lakes.

The public consultation closed in mid-February. Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook objected to the proposals, along with many others. Our full objection can be found here on our website: https://friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk/Publications/ConsultationResponses/FCHB_response_to_Mission_Street_Planning_application.pdf

We do not feel that the general proposal is in accordance with the 2018 Local Plan and consider that the so-called ‘master plan’ for opening the Lakes is insufficiently detailed. Before the lakes are opened, we need:

- A management body, with appropriate participation of local community groups and wildlife organisations; and a funding mechanism that goes beyond the 25 years proposed.
- Agreement on the types of activities to be allowed in the lakes.
- Better security of the area to prevent activities that are anti-social, unsafe and damaging to wildlife.
- An appropriate plan for access and transport.
- Reconsideration of the 2006 City Council recommendation that this area should be designated as a Local Nature Reserve.
- Full understanding of the consequences of the development in Parcel A on pollution, water contamination and flooding.

The AGM

The Annual General Meeting was held online on 28th November 2023. Those participating enjoyed a presentation from Sue Wells, with slides describing our activities over the past twelve months. There was also an update on the developments proposed for the other side of the lakes and the area around them, from Nick Stanton from Chess Engage, consultants to Mission Street.

The treasurer reported that our finances were healthy and the committee was elected. Holly Anderson, a founding member of the Friends, stood down from the committee and was thanked for all her input from the start. The current committee comprises:

Sue Wells (Chair)

Monica Frisch (Treasurer)

Shona Douglas (Acting Secretary)

Jón Fairbairn (Webmaster)

Emmy Smart (Membership Secretary)

Caroline Murray (Communications Officer)

Sarah Bowden (Litterpick Co-Ordinator)

Stuart Newbold

David Brooks

Anne Patel

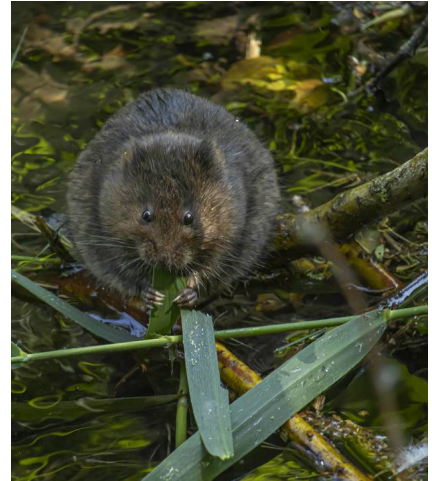
Tom Maddox

Many of our committee members have been on the committee for a long time and have worked very hard. We would like to find new people to join the committee who would bring fresh ideas and energy. In particular, we need a secretary. If you might be willing to help with some of the tasks, please get in touch with Sue (chair2021@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk).

The following were thanked for their help and support:

- The Cam Valley Forum for advice, information and a grant for installing water level gauges.
- Cambridge City Council for much advice and support especially with practical work and for funding towards the mural.
- RiverCare for providing equipment, insurance and advice for litter-picks.
- Rowan for the spectacular mural.
- Sainsbury's for funding towards the mural.
- Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire for planning and undertaking Brook improvement works and for advice and support.
- and all our hard-working volunteers and committee members.

We are very grateful to Geoff Oliver who provides us with wonderful photos of our wildlife, such as this vole. Thank you, Geoff. We are equally grateful to Kip Loades who also sends us wonderful photos.



Our activities in 2023

Maintaining the appearance of the Brook

3 litterpicks gathered almost **30** bags of litter. One litterpick was organised for cubs from the 2nd Cambridge Scouts, who also helped trimming back some vegetation along the path from Sainsbury's to Burnside. Photo shows skilful use of the long-handled litter picker.

Raising public awareness

2 issues of our newsletter, *Titbits*, both 4 pages with colour pictures, emailed to all our supporters. *Titbits* can also be downloaded from our website.

Press coverage in *The Cambridge Independent* of the unveiling of the mural.

Our **website** and **Facebook** page continue to be maintained by our conscientious volunteers, Jón Fairbairn and Caroline Murray respectively.

Monica Frisch spoke at the **rededication of the Rights of the River Cam** organised by Friends of the River Cam <https://www.friendsofthecam.org/>

Observing and monitoring the wildlife of the Brook and surrounding area

Anne Patel and Tom Maddox surveyed the Brook on **5** occasions for riverflies. **Riverfly monitoring** looks for invertebrates such as caddis flies which are indicators of the state of the health of the Brook. Wildlife continues to thrive in the lakes. **Great crested grebe** nested successfully in 2023 – Holly Anderson says there are two pairs, one on the lake nearest Burnside which have successfully reared young, and another on the one nearer the allotments.



Peter Pilbeam surveyed the Brook for **water voles** and Monica Frisch continues to collate reports of sightings of voles and other wildlife.

Kip Loades provided this photo of a young Muntjac deer – many thanks Kip!

Wildlife along the Brook, March 2024

This winter the weather has been mild and wet and the Brook is full of water. Even the pedestrian bridge over the Brook leading to the Tins has flooded. Water birds such as mallard and moorhen are quite happy with this and are already pairing up, as are swans, grebes and coots on the Lakes. A goosander (a type of duck called a sawbill which overwinters on inland lakes) was seen in January for a couple of days but, as two years ago, did not linger. Three shovelers were also seen. This highlights the importance of the lakes for waterfowl in cold periods when shallow bits of water freeze up – this is apparently why they only stay for a few days, but nevertheless it is important.



Walking along the Brook you can hear many small birds singing: wrens, robins, great, blue and long-tailed tits as well as the occasional blackbird and thrush. All are preparing for the breeding season ahead. Sadly the finches are less evident this year, fewer greenfinch or chaffinch have been heard although goldfinch are still around. Birds are often heard but not seen (even with no leaves on the trees in which to hide) and their calls or songs can be hard to identify. However, there is an excellent free app called Merlin from Cornell University which will identify birds both by description and sound recording. Even the most casual birdwatcher can now be helped if they download this onto a smart phone.

Very few people don't recognize the brilliant blue flash of the kingfisher if they are lucky to see one. These beautiful birds regularly perch and fly along the Brook both at Cherry Hinton and Sainsburys, hopefully there should be breeding pairs again this year. Kip Loades took this lovely photo of a kingfisher in January.



Please do report any sightings of kingfishers, and of the water voles which should soon be venturing out and about more in the warmer weather. When reporting sightings please remember to say what you saw, when you saw it, and roughly where.

Data protection To ensure that we comply with the General Data Protection Regulations, we inform you that you are able to withdraw your consent to be on the Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook mailing list should you wish. Your email address and contact details are currently held in our database to receive our email newsletter and other occasional messages about our activities and your membership. We do not sell or share your details with anyone outside the committee of Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook. Should you have any concerns whatsoever about the way we use your data, or wish to withdraw from our database, please let us know.

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Monica Frisch (editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)

30th March 2024