

CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 7 22 January 2014  
The Occasional Newsletter of the Cam Valley Forum  
<http://www.colc.co.uk/cambridge/cam.valley.forum/>

Chair: Jean Perraton Editor: David Brooks

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**Large jobs or small** Every two years the Conservators of the River Cam lower the river level along the Backs for one day so that underwater hazards can be identified and landowners can inspect below the waterline. This winter **Trinity College** requested a lowering during the period from 6 to 19 January, so that the repairs shown in the photograph (right) could be carried out. Sheet piling and timber wailing were installed to match the opposite bank. **Clare College** (below) took the opportunity for small-scale maintenance work. The fall in height of the river can be deduced from the photographs.



Punting had to be suspended and residents in boats moored above Jesus Sluices were asked to move downstream of Jesus Lock. The river was in flood for much of that time so levels did not reach their absolute minimum as on previous occasions.

Cambridgeshire County Council began major refurbishment of the **Jesus Green footbridge** on 20 January. Scaffolding covers the entire span and for this reason **Jesus Lock** is closed to navigation for **10 weeks until 14 March**.

The Cam (Granta) between Grantchester and Granta Place will be lowered for one week from 3 February

for the County Council's repairs to **Robinson Crusoe Bridge**, downstream of Fen Causeway. Other bridges receiving attention are to be the **Green Dragon footbridge**, Chesterton and **Sheep's Green footbridge** at Newnham.



**Upper Cherry Hinton Lake** The Anderson Group, owners of the lake, are carrying out routine repair and maintenance work (photo on left) on the pipe which connects the lake with the Cherry Hinton Brook (under the sedge in the foreground). The City Council Drainage Engineer recently undertook a 'deep clean' of the **Sainsbury** section of the **Brook** and removed some 40 bags of rubbish. Since there is a litter-related display in the Sainsbury foyer it looks as if the shop is now officially committed to helping keep the Brook clear of rubbish.

**Logan's Meadow: Past Present and Future** A meeting on **18 February** at St. Andrew's Hall, Chesterton, at 7.30pm will include a talk by Guy Belcher, the City Council Nature Conservation Officer, on the proposed water channel and reed bed. The Vicar of St. Andrew's will speak on the history of the meadow.

**Bourn Brook open meeting** The local **Wildlife Trust** is organising a meeting on **5 February** at 7pm, at the Bourn Golf Club, Toft Road, Bourn, at which wildlife and invasive species, pollution, and flooding will be discussed. It is intended to give members of the public a chance to have their say.



CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 8 14 February 2014  
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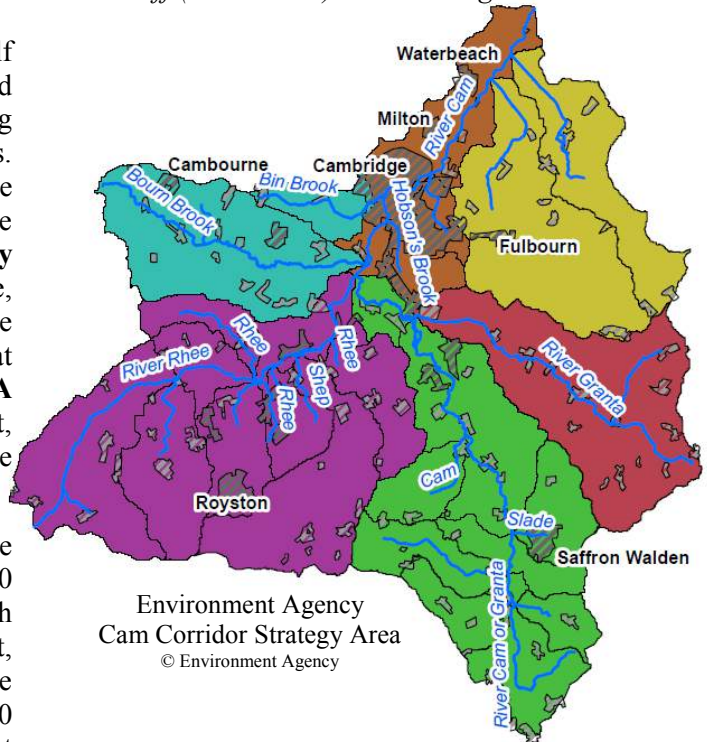
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**The Bourn Brook Open Meeting** held at Bourn Golf Club on 5 February was well and enthusiastically attended by the 58 who signed in. Some attendees were bursting with local knowledge; others brought expert viewpoints. **Chaired by Elizabeth Ranelagh** of FWAG East (the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group), there were three main speakers. **Richard Bowen** of the **Environment Agency (EA)** dealt with the EU Water Framework Directive, aimed at improving all rivers by 2027, with reference to the Bourn, mentioning the £1½ million treatment project at Bourn sewerage works. **David Gillet**, also of the EA discussed the topical issue of flood risk management, regretting the inadequate money available for work in the Bourn valley.

Particular and informed concern was raised in the audience by the proposed development of a new 'village' of 3,500 homes on the site of the Bourn airfield almost all of which evidently lies within the Bourn Brook's catchment, immediately east of Cambourne on the map. Half of these homes would be completed by 2031. An additional 1,200 homes are also, incidentally, proposed for Cambourne West by 2031. A listener pointed out an apparent failing that any lessons which could possibly have been learned about drainage and pollution from the experience of Cambourne, had not been researched. He claimed that even though the EA had advised the planning authority on drainage control and pollution protection measures, and even though the planners had required an appropriate system to be put in place, there did not appear to have been any supervision of the quality and maintenance of installations, nor a programme to examine their effectiveness. If this is correct then potential lessons from Cambourne could not be applied to Bourn airfield.

The third speaker was **Vince Lee** of the **Countryside Restoration Trust** who spoke about invasive species (mink, signal crayfish, Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed), the need to encourage the return of water voles, habitat restoration by scrub clearance and pollarding, and, more especially, **opportunities for volunteers**. Those interested in practical work on the Brook (for which funding is soon to end) are urged to contact:

**Ruth Hawksley, Wildlife Trust, 01954 713533, [ruth.hawksley@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:ruth.hawksley@wildlifebcn.org) or  
Vince Lea, Countryside Restoration Trust, 01223 262999, [vincelea@btinternet.com](mailto:vincelea@btinternet.com)**



The organisers of the meeting (Elizabeth, Ruth, and Vince) were pleased that the **Bourn Flood Action Group** is being re-activated though it will probably take a new name and a wider interest in invasive species and habitats as well as dealing with the threat of flooding to local property. If you are interested please contact the **clerk of Bourn Parish Council ([bournnpc@lgs-services.co.uk](mailto:bournnpc@lgs-services.co.uk))** Other groups in Bourn and Toft expressed an interest in getting involved and publicising events to local people. Events this spring include a local coppicing work party to improve habitat.

Though the Cam system has been brimming, as usual Cambridge and district seem to have escaped the worst effects of tempest and flood which have raged around them elsewhere in the UK.



CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 9 2 March 2014  
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### Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

In 1981 Pam and I moved from Highsett to Newnham, from a terrace house to an energy-efficient detached house. We had bought and built upon land adjacent to the River Cam and its floodplain (recent photo of garden on the right). Within the high ecological specification, was included a roof drainage system transferring the 1000 sq. ft. surface area rainfall *via* wide gutters, into a gravel-based garden soak away. In Newnham itself all rainwater is carried directly into the river through a series of large diameter storm drains. The facilities are adequate except when the river is high, flood water extensive and the drains fully submerged. In such circumstance grids do not clear and roads become flooded.



A sustainable drainage system is a conditional requirement for all new developments within the Cambridge sub-region. However it has its limitations in that at some stage, excessive water has to find its way into the rivers. Cambridge is planned to add 1000 new homes every year through to 2030 that is if it manages to keep pace with the present jobs-driven growth rate. The Cam Catchment area will take most of the additional housing, more significantly to the south of the City at, for example, Clay Farm, Trumpington Meadows, Great Kneighton and around the Addenbrookes site. Building to the north presents fewer problems for the City itself but will require expert-led interventions in terms of the flood plain.

The main purpose of sustainable drainage systems is to mimic the natural drainage of the site before development. This is achieved by capturing rainfall and allowing as much as possible to evaporate or soak into the ground close to where it fell. The rest is directed to the nearest watercourse to be released at the same rate and volumes as before development. Such management techniques take into account water quantities, water quality, and amenity issues. They are discussed at: <http://www.susdrain.org/delivering-suds/using-suds/background/sustainable-drainage.html> In 2010 the City Council was given two awards by the Landscape Institute for its sustainable drainage design. See <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sustainable-drainage-systems>

Richard Wells of the Hobson's Conduit Trust has reported that road and roof drainage at Clay Farm worked well during the recent rains. Discharge was into lagoons to settle, thence via attenuators to restrict flow into the brook. Excess water was sent to Vicar's Brook *via* the original weir near Bentley Road paddock.



However, there is much more needed than SuDS. The gravity of a combination of housing growth, flat land and floods is self-evident. Cambridge escaped the worst of the winter this time. As it stands, extensive flooding is still likely along both the Bin and Bourn Brooks, along Newnham Road, through the backs and significantly so north of the city. (Recent photo on left shows Newnham Mill Pond.) There are also isolated pockets where raw sewage joins the slow progression north to the sea, There is then an urgent need for more fundamental planning and investment in serious infrastructure for the 21C challenge of wetter, warmer winters and population growth.

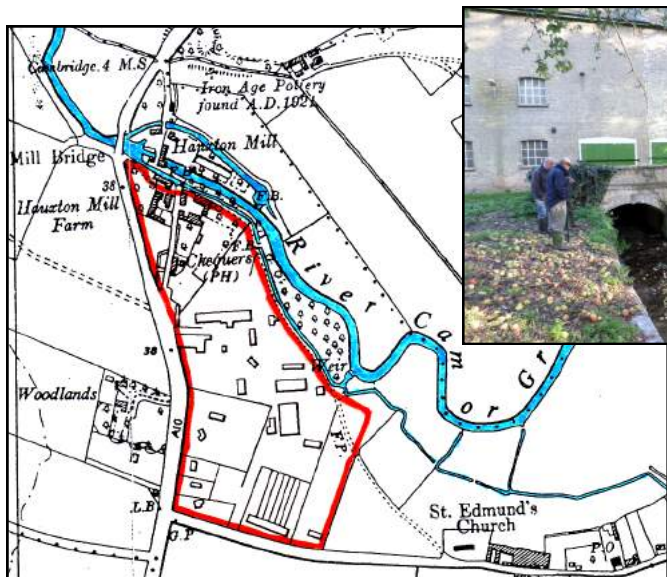
Mal Schofield



CAM VALLEY MATTERS No.10 12 April 2014  
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**Hauxton** The site of the former chemical works at Hauxton was once described as one of the most toxic in the UK. Its boundary is shown in red on the 6" to 1 mile OS map, dated 1958 before the pub, farm, and houses were demolished and the site fully developed. Various dangerous agrochemicals were produced there during the 1970s and 1980s before they became illegal. The site, running

along the A10 for about half a kilometre, has been cleared (see bottom photo, view towards the south from near north corner of the site) and planning permission has been granted for development with houses and light industry subject to agreement by the Environment Agency (EA), South Cambs District Council and an independent assessor that the site has been safely remediated.



Substantial remedial work was carried out on behalf of the developer, some of it allegedly causing prolonged respiratory distress in Hauxton villagers. The EA has been regularly monitoring the water in the Cam near the site, together with occasional spot checks of effluent emerging from its banks into the Riddy, which stream flows from Hauxton village (in the SE corner of the map), and between the north east side of the factory site and the River Cam which it joins very close to Hauxton Mill (currently for sale as a derelict listed building, top photograph). These checks show continued pollution from a range of noxious chemicals.

The photograph on the left shows the west bank of the Riddy, immediately under the temporary metal fence marking the north eastern boundary of the site, from which chemicals emerge.

Pleistocene river gravels, largely concealed by ivy occupy the upper part of the bank, rest on a thin layer of chalk marl, which a little deeper overlies impermeable Gault Clay. Polluted water emerges from the site at the base of the gravel through small holes below the ivy and above the stream surface.

Sampling data for this leakage obtained by the EA in December 2013 and released under the Freedom of Information Act revealed a long list of nasty chemicals in varying degrees of concentration, many very low. However, at least 10 of those listed in the original planning application as 'chemicals of concern' (not all were analysed) are clearly still present. Two of the most concentrated, both very highly toxic organophosphates that were developed as insecticides, are hempa (70.5 µg/l) and schradan, alias Pestox 3 (35.2 µg/l). 236 TBA was measured at 346 µg/l. Concentrations of metals, such as zinc (22.7 µg/l) and nickel (13.4 µg/l) were also noted.

Whereas the main concerns are the effects of residues on future residents of the development site, the Forum remains concerned about the possible effects on the Riddy and the Cam, particularly at times of lower flow than at present, bearing in mind how, in the early 1970s, minute quantities of the herbicide TBA from the site wiped out the commercial Essex tomato crop, when water was pumped from Denver down the New Cut and up into reservoirs in Essex.





CAM VALLEY MATTERS No.11 1 May 2014  
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The **Hoffer Brook** flows under the A10 between Harston and Foxton and may be glimpsed from the King's Cross train. In the top left photo Rob Mungovan, Ecology Officer for South Cambs. District Council, was directing (third from right), on a dull January day, his innovative scheme to return features of the brook to those of a Chalk stream. The photo below the top left photo shows two grades of flint (gravel and small cobbles) being dropped into the channel (in April) creating a more 'natural' sinuous shape. This gravel is expected to increase species diversity by providing a home for invertebrates and a habitat for fish to spawn. The gravel/cobbles rest on plastic mesh to prevent their loss in the stretch where the silt is soft and deep. Immediately downstream, Ruth Hawksley, the Wildlife Trust's

Water for Wildlife Officer, can be seen in the top right photo (second from right), with 3 volunteers, narrowing the channel of the meander. The hessian in the foreground was placed inside the line of stakes to retain the soil being dropped to build out the bank in the lower photo.



The photo on the left shows a stage in the renovation by the City Council of 330m of the **River Cam's** bank downstream from the Green Dragon Bridge on the edge of **Stourbridge Common**. The line of chestnut stakes being installed now retain a soft engineered, geotextile revetment to replace the failing concrete 'wall' seen in the bottom right corner. The new bank includes soils and gravels that have been planted with a range of marginal aquatic plants. These plants will root into and strengthen the new bank, providing a 'softer' and more attractive environment for wildlife.



CAM VALLEY MATTERS No.12 10 July 2014  
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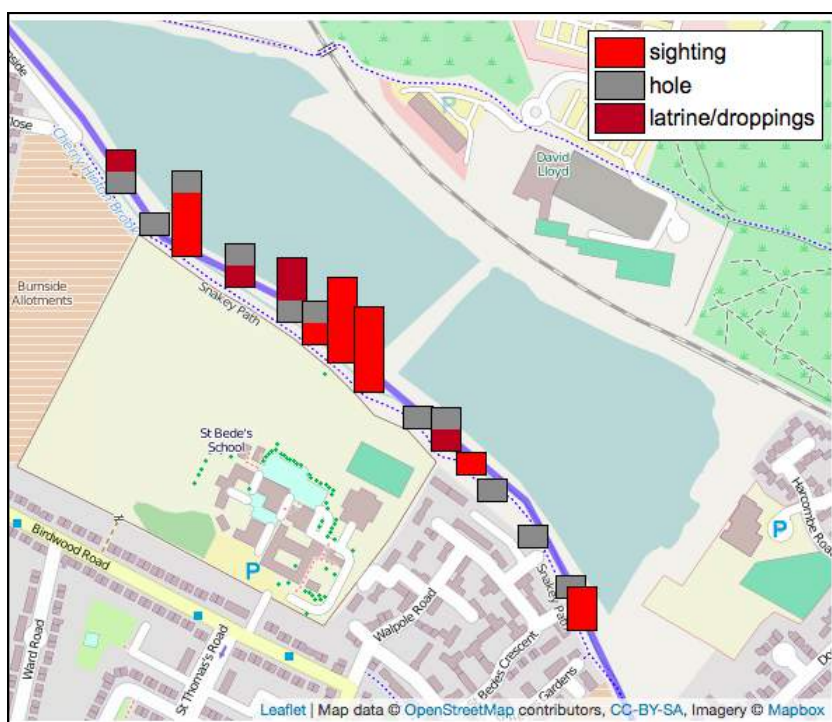
Brian Jackson (on left in photo), water engineer and Chairman of the **Wilbraham River Protection Society**, led its River Walk on 6 July. Its theme, as usual, was the historical trend towards ever-longer periods of low flow and dried-up stream beds influenced by the extraction of water from the Chalk aquifer.

Duly observed were the outlet point on the edge of the Fulbourn Nature Reserve for the Environment Agency's Lodes-Granta Augmentation Scheme deriving from the Dungate Farm borehole (between the A11 and Balsham village); the EA's installation within the Nature Reserve for monitoring the depth below the meadow of the water table; and the EA's stream flow gauge beside the road between Fulbourn and Great Wilbraham. The latter measures the northerly flow

towards New Cut (Drain) which joins the Little Wilbraham River on Hawk Mill Farm.

Richard Townley (in yellow jacket) of Fulbourn Manor, the local landowner, showed the visitors the intricate pattern of streams on the Nature Reserve and the immediate surrounds, noting that the above-average rainfall of the last year or so had raised the water table so that stream flow was impressive compared with some earlier levels. Richard also pointed out his fields on the south east boundary of the Nature Reserve which are newly fenced off and benefiting from Environmental Stewardship, the government scheme that offers financial reward for good stewardship and management of the land to improve the quality of the environment. Four fields are now under sheep having been seeded two years ago with a species-rich grass mix. Two of the meadows were each chosen for the excavation of two ponds which have held water for longer than expected, and which are playing their part in attracting wildlife.

The River Walk was supported by a small but strong band of loyalists, not least in the provision of a sumptuous tea overlooking the inspired setting of the pond created in recent decades, near the north end of New Cut, by farmer David White of Hawk Mill.



**Friends of the Cherry Hinton Brook** are thrilled by the increasing population of water voles along Snakey Path. Sightings on the map are for this year up to June. The voles are doubtless benefiting from the absence of mink in the area. The Friends have on loan from the RiverCare project a video camera which has revealed an unexpected intensity of waterborne industry, apparently unperturbed by the very public footpath and cycle route. Film of the voles will be online shortly, and news will be updated in the Friends' newsletters ([www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)). Still photos can be seen at <https://www.facebook.com/RiverCare?ref=profile>. If you see a vole along this stretch, please note time and location (the lamp posts are numbered which makes it easy) and send the information to [editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk).

CAM VALLEY MATTERS No.13 25 August 2014  
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**Martin Baker, the Wildlife Trust's Conservation Manager**, guided a dozen Forum members on their visit to **Trumpington Meadows Country Park and Nature Reserve** on 20 August. On the map (in the photograph, and also available on the internet) the River Cam forms the western boundary of the green-coloured riverside park which would not exist with all its scenic, recreational, and wildlife potential but for the major housing development around Trumpington Park and Ride.



The visit focused on the section south of the M11 which is represented by the white strip cutting across the map. Here were many examples of the re-profiled river banks, gravel shoals on the river bed, and quiet backwaters off the main channel, all inspired and created by Rob Mungovan, the Ecology Officer for South Cambridgeshire District Council, with advice from the Environment Agency, and the Wildlife Trust which is now entrusted with the task of administering and managing the intricate network of river and its banks, riparian trees, a new flood meadow, other farmland, new and old hedgerows, new woodland, a balancing pond, old coprolite workings, access routes and a major cycle through-route. The area is

expected to be opened to the public, in stages, this winter.

Martin Baker was able to reveal the frustrations of working on such a complex project: the need to reconcile or compromise between the entrenched views of planners, developer, landscape architects, ecologists, the Environment Agency, the cycling lobby, and so on; and the need to know when to stand firm and when to give in. This said, he gave every appearance of enjoying the challenge.

The **Cambridge stretch of the Cam** is clearly a source of delight for residents and tourists alike. Imagine Cambridge without the Cam! However, potential conflicts of interest are well known. The Cam Conservators' Report in early July reported some of these. Every now and again a rowing eight ploughs through a family of young ducklings. In the spring a boater, without the appropriate key, levered open the control cabinets used to open and close locks at both Bottisham and Baite's Bite. This incident was witnessed and reported. Unrelated to any recent incidents the Conservators have implemented Environment Agency policy in purchasing 'stab vests' to protect staff from violent members of the public when managing conflicts between punt operators, sabotage, and illegal moorings. In August the local press reported the nuisance caused by the recurrence of rats in the vicinity of Lammas Land paddling pool.

In July, the **City Council**, as owners of the river bank, agreed to resolve potential conflicts of interest between boaters and the residents of Riverside. From 1 October interim mooring regulations will require boaters to live on their craft and to hold a valid safety certificate. Boats which are not compliant will be removed by the Council.



CAM VALLEY MATTERS No.14 10 September 2014  
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### The Abington Shoal Project

The short stretch of river most recently to be 'improved' for the benefit of wildlife has been on the River Granta at Abington Recreation Ground. In August some 20 tonnes of flint gravel and small cobbles narrowed the channel and increased the velocity of water flow together with its ability to flush

out fines, as well as making public access to the water's edge easier. It is expected that the new environment will attract invertebrates and provide a habitat for fish to spawn, thus increasing species diversity.

The project was organised by the Recreation Ground Committee and the volunteer workforce was led by its Chairman Peter Brunning. The idea of the scheme was approved by the Environment Agency and its details supervised by Ruth Hawksley, the Wildlife Trust's Water for Wildlife Officer, and Rob Mungovan, Ecology Officer for South Cambs. District Council. Daniel Clark, Environmental Manager for Cambridge Water, a partner in the project, arranged for machinery to manoeuvre the gravel into place.



**Bourn Brook Water Vole and Invasive Plants Survey, Spring 2014.** The Bourn Free Project re-surveyed the Brook and in August published a 48-page report with detailed maps showing the distributions of water voles and the non-native invaders, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed. The project began when the Countryside Restoration Trust (CRT) with the Wildlife Trust launched a campaign to restore the brook's native wildlife and habitats. Since 2010 the CRT's mink control scheme (the photo shows Vince Lea at one of his traps checking for evidence of mink)



has been effective so that the numbers of water voles since the 2011 survey have increased and their distribution is more widespread, notably downstream. Otters share much of the brook with the voles. Since 2011 volunteer activity has reduced the density of Himalayan balsam. The density of giant hogweed has also been reduced, being treated with glyphosate by the Environment Agency. Floating pennywort has not been seen.

The inaugural **City of Cambridge Triathlon** scheduled for 28 September (World Rivers Day) has been cancelled now that the Cam tested positive for Weil's disease. It had attracted more than 1,500 competitors.

**Peter Watson**, the skipper of Rosie, has submitted the following **list of birds** observed in August on one of his **cruises from Cambridge to Ely**: barn swallow, black-headed gull, blackcap, blue tit, Canada goose, carrion crow, common buzzard, common tern, coot, cormorant, dunnoek, goldfinch, great crested grebe, great tit, grey heron,

greylag goose, hobby, house martin, jay, kestrel, kingfisher, lapwing, little egret, little grebe, magpie, mallard, marsh harrier, meadow pipit, moorhen, mute swan, pied wagtail, robin, rook, sand martin, sparrow hawk, starling, swift, tufted duck, wood pigeon, wren.



CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 15 15 September 2014  
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Notwithstanding the predations of thousands of care-free trespassers (see lower two photos), until much less than a decade ago the very existence of **lakes within the City of Cambridge** was unknown to many of its residents. Now, with the support of the Cam Valley Forum, they clamour for public access. The Cam Lakes Project and the Friends of the Cherry Hinton Brook have played their enthusiastic parts in this transition, the latter with emphasis on the need to protect wildlife. A leap forward (see Newsletter No. 1, 3 June 2013) was taken when the City's Draft Local Plan 2014 identified the area between the Cherry Hinton Brook and Coldham's Lane as a possible 'urban country park' (a pity, though, that the designation is oxymoronic).



Another significant step was taken on **8 September 2014** when a **meeting for local interest groups and interested councillors was called on behalf of Patsy Dell, the City's Head of Planning**. Of particular interest were the contributions made by representatives of the Anderson Group, the main land/water owner in this defined area (the others being Peterhouse and the City Council). Early in 2013 their peremptory clear felling of two large areas of 'protected' scrub, east of the 'business park' (to the 'right of' in the air photo) and on either side of The Tins cycle route, without any preliminary ecological survey, appeared to be carried out furtively and without any attempt to placate anxious neighbouring residents (again, see Newsletter No.1).

It emerged at the meeting that the Anderson Group, as a developer, specialises in groundwork and civil engineering aspects of difficult terrain (in this case former landfill sites, for example) and has, in the last year or so, been engaged in a thorough and comprehensive survey of the development potential of those two areas. Housing has been ruled out. On the other hand, various commercial uses could perhaps move

here from elsewhere in Cambridge, making space available in those places for houses.

The Anderson Group has commissioned specialist consultants to assess the recreational potential of the area, including the lakes. The results of this study are expected within 2 weeks or so. The Cam Lakes Project is carrying out a substantial survey of public opinion which hopes, so far, in the majority view, that swimming will be permitted and which, for example, predicts the need for at least a public convenience. Those attending the meeting frowned on the use of motorised boats of any kind.

The developer intends to produce a master plan which will outline its vision for the development of its own property together with other land and water within the 'urban country' park area. The scrutiny of the Draft Local Plan 2014 by the national Planning Inspectorate will begin in November 2014. It is only after this lengthy process has been completed that the Anderson Group will be able to submit a planning application.

The productive and harmonious meeting revealed that the main land owners and various interested parties were already in fruitful communication. A future meeting, similar to that of 8 September, is also planned.



By taking a firmer approach in trying to exclude trespassers the Anderson Group has reduced their impact this year. Local residents are highly appreciative of this. Now, the first excited member of the public may just possibly gain legitimate access within years rather than decades.



CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 16      19 November 2014  
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**Logan's Meadow Nature Reserve.** A new reed bed environment has been created by the excavation of a channel from the River Cam at the Riverside cycle bridge (top left). The photograph (top right) was taken from the bridge and shows the new walkway, with the swift tower to the right. In October a team of volunteers (see third photograph) planted the common reed, with sedge, and some marsh marigold, purple loosestrife and flag iris. The next stage will be to use a forestry plough to bring deeper poorer subsoil to the surface along the strip between the reed bed and the fertile football pitch (to the right of the channel) so that meadow plants can prosper.



**The Camlakes Project questionnaire ([www.camlakes.co.uk](http://www.camlakes.co.uk)) results.** There were 813 respondents, mainly local residents, and 86% of them were at least supportive of public access. Quite apart from the resident fishing club members only a small minority did not wish to see change. There was strong support for swimming and a majority did not favour motor-driven boats. Importantly, there was an overwhelming wish to preserve tranquillity and wildlife.

**Bourn Free Newsletter Issue 1, Nov. 2014.** The water vole recovery is trumpeted. Mink are few and far between on the Bourn Brook now, and automated sensors are used. Control also now covers much of the Rhee, Mel, Shep, Guilden Brook, Cam and Granta. As for Himalayan balsam, volunteers have spent 187 hours this year clearing it from nearly 20kms of the Brook. More volunteers are required for renewed attack next year.

The NFU, the EA, and FWAG have been engaged in a project to reduce phosphate pollution of the Brook. Three quarters is derived from the sewage treatment works and one quarter from farming. The project has been assisted by 8 cooperative farmers between Bourn and Eltisley who are aware of the problem and who use appropriate techniques, such as the maintenance of grass field margins, to ensure that soil and muck do not enter the water. Five horse owners were less aware of the problem but also proved willing to take preventative measures.



The **Bourn Flood Action Group** has an interest in all aspects of the Brook. Contact can be made through the Bourn Parish Clerk at [bournpc@lgs-services.co.uk](mailto:bournpc@lgs-services.co.uk)

The **Friends of Bin Brook** are holding an inaugural meeting in early December. If you are interested, contact Chris Wagner at [chriswags58@hotmail.com](mailto:chriswags58@hotmail.com) The photograph on the left shows the Brook in agricultural land near the end of Cranmer Road, off Grange Road in Cambridge.