

CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 17      2 February 2015  
The Occasional Newsletter of the Cam Valley Forum  
<http://www.colc.co.uk/cambridge/cam.valley.forum/>

Chair: Jean Perraton      Editor: David Brooks

*Please reply with any items suitable for the next newsletter, forward this letter to anyone else who may be interested, or, if you wish, reply to request that your address be taken off (or added to) this emailing list.*



**Floating pennywort** In a 6-week programme during November and December 2014 the Environment Agency removed more than 1000 tonnes of wet cut invasive weed on the River Cam and the Ely Ouse. Mats of floating pennywort were up to 22m long and 10m wide. The clearance extended only up to Baits Bite Lock though some infestation is known to occur as far as Byron's Pool.



**The Cambridge Lakes** Another tiny step towards public access was taken at a second meeting in the Guildhall addressed by Patsy Dell, the City's Head of Planning Services on 29 January. The Managing Director of the Anderson Group (which is one of the land/water owners, together with Peterhouse and the City Council) was present and announced that a public exhibition and consultation process would be initiated at a suitable local venue probably at the end of February. Ecology Solutions Ltd. has agreed with Guy Belcher, City Conservation Officer, a comprehensive ecology survey of the entire area on both sides of the railway including the bodies of water. This began with wintering birds in January and will broaden from March to June. The investigation will be combined with desk-based research. The Anderson Group has ascertained that an

appropriate legal structure for future governance is feasible. Representatives of CHADAC, the Cherry Hinton and District Angling Club, hitherto apparently rather self-absorbed, also attended the meeting. At present, its members have exclusive access to the Lakes. Unlike Canute the representatives did not try to push back the advancing tide but, in keeping with the general mood of the meeting, spoke of the wish to preserve the tranquillity of the Lakes and their surroundings.



The newly-formed **Friends of Ditton Meadows** held a meeting on 21 January in Fen Ditton to discuss proposals for the cycle and footbridge across the River Cam on one side or the other of the railway bridge shown in the photograph. This would constitute a link in the Chisholm Trail from the planned new railway station, just beyond this railway bridge, to Cambridge Station. The Friends believe it is not appropriate to spend £4.5m of public money when there are other bridges a short distance upstream and that the small cycling benefit does not justify the potential damage to the important floodplain habitat. Their website is at [www.friendsofdittonmeadows.org.uk](http://www.friendsofdittonmeadows.org.uk) A video of the full meeting is available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffPMclhRfcI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffPMclhRfcI) Opinions in favour of the bridge were also strongly expressed.

**The Cam Valley Forum AGM** will be held at 7.15pm on Thursday 26 March in the Trumpington Pavilion. The main speaker will be **Jed Ramsay, the River Manager at Cam Conservators**, who will talk about the work of the Conservancy and current problems.





CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 18 10 March 2015  
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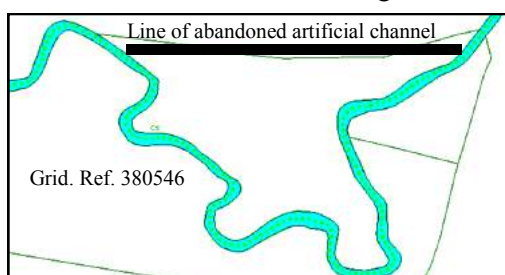
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**Cherry Hinton Brook** Driven by Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook, funded by Natural England, masterminded by City ecology officer Guy Belcher, and fed and supported by Sainsbury's, bands of volunteers have been improving stream flow and stream-bed texture for the benefit mainly of fish, all the way down to Coldhams Lane. The stakes in the photograph (left), helping to hold back introduced gravel, were yet to be sawn off at water level. The photograph on the right was taken from the same bridge in the autumn of 2009.

**Meander restoration on the Bourn Brook** In 2007, Nigel Holmes, the key figure in river restoration, drew up a plan to reinstate an historic meander loop on the Countryside Restoration Trust (CRT) farm at Westfield, Comberton. River engineers straightened it 30 years ago, thinking faster, straighter rivers were better. Sadly Nigel died last year and did not see his plan come to fruition, but thanks to funds from the Ridgeons Family Charity Fund and South



Cambs District Council, and brilliant work with an excavator by CRT contractor Jim Rees, we were able to dam the head of the cut off. Volunteers had helped clear accumulated debris to allow the brook to

flow through its old channel once again. The stream is now 100m longer than it was and more floodwater will be held on the floodplain instead of charging down towards Cambridge.

The area between the old meander and the cut-off had been planted with trees, and 20 of the larger white willows were pollarded by GardenWorks contractors (see photo). This has created more open areas for water vole habitat, thanks to funding from Cambs and P'boro Biodiversity Partnership. CRT volunteers, particularly Louise Bacon with her chainsaw, have helped tidy up the vast amount of brushwood created; **Saturday 14 March is the next CRT volunteer day** when we

will be having a big bonfire! See <http://www.countrysiderestorationtrust.com/events.php?t=vol> for details.

Vince Lea (CRT)

**Cam Valley Forum AGM 7.15pm, 26 March, Trumpington Pavilion.**  
Talk by **Jed Ramsay, River Manager, Cam Conservators**, at about 8pm. All welcome.





CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 19 30 March 2015  
The Occasional Newsletter of the Cam Valley Forum  
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**Floating pennywort: Again.** Mustered by Dame Mary Archer, and spearheaded by Colin Sparkes, River Foreman for the Cam Conservancy, a group of CVF volunteers gathered on **25 March** to clear pennywort, silt, and detritus from a small backwater of the Cam by the Mill Pool at Grantchester. Very early spring growth of the pennywort (see inset photo) can be just made out on the water surfaces in both photographs. The practical impossibility of eradicating this invasive plant from a large area was only too clear to the workers.



The business of the **CVF 2015 AGM on 26 March**, efficiently despatched by the Chair, Jean Perraton, was followed by a privileged insight into the work of the **Cam Conservancy**. **Jed Ramsay, River Manager** (on the left in the photograph, being challenged after his talk), spoke under the title, 'Europe's Busiest River?' Yes, it is the 'busiest' as measured by intensity of use, in vessels per mile. After some historical background and an analysis of uses made of the river, the focus of the talk was on the day to

day work of the Conservancy which is mainly concerned with trying to resolve conflicts between different groups of users. Also, tow paths and the water surface have to be kept free of foliage and fallen trees, and the water free of weeds. Banks have to be repaired, litter cleared, and a certain amount of property managed. The highly appreciative audience provided a steady stream of question and participation.

**Would you like to help protect and improve a stream?** Come to a morning workshop on Saturday 9 May in Barrington Village Hall. Jean Perraton, Chair of the Cam Valley Forum, Ruth Hawksley, the Wildlife Trust's Water for Wildlife Officer, Rob Mungovan, Ecology Consultancy Officer, South Cambridgeshire District Council, and one of the Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook, will discuss how volunteers can help restore some small rivers and streams to a more natural state, making them friendlier for wildlife and more attractive for people. The workshop, which is promoted by the Cam Catchment Partnership, is free and designed to attract and enthuse potential new volunteers.

**If you are interested** email Peter Landshoff, Chair of the Cam Catchment Partnership, [P.V.Landshoff@damtp.cam.ac.uk] for an invitation and programme.





CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 20 5 April 2015  
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**The 11th River Cam Cleanup** on Saturday 28 March was inspired and organised by Luther Phillips. The 150 registered volunteers were no doubt assisted by many others. Under the Queen Elizabeth Bridge, The Mayor, Councillor Gerri Bird (in wheel chair, above), gave her support and Julian Huppert MP (in blue in photo on right) dirtied his clothes and did his bit. The Cam Conservancy (below) did an even bigger bit, under the Riverside Cycle Bridge. The biggest pickings were indeed under bridges where human incorrigibility was clearly illustrated (photo on right). There's nowt



so queer as folk. Further such evidence (photo on left) was dredged up from under the Cutter Ferry Bridge. The suitcase full of jewellery has been reunited with its owner. The burglary had been reported 2 weeks previously.

Thoroughly upright citizens of all generations took part in the Cleanup (photo above).



Thanks were given for help provided by the Cam Conservancy, Cambridge City Council, Tesco, Outspoken Delivery, Cambridge Cheese Company, Donald and Sue Mackay, Robin Barton - Logic Scaffolding, Cam Valley Forum, RiverCare, Keep Britain Tidy, Anglian Water, Thames Row/Parkside Challenge, CamEO, and Scudamores. The Mayor and MP presented raffle prizes, including two (River Cam-licensed) kayaks and additional surprises.

The **Cam Conservancy** recently held a well-attended workshop to discuss how events on the River Cam are managed. There are usually over 70 events per year. There were many practical suggestions such as formal mooring points to allow boats to wait, and increase of signage at either end of events.

**Jester, an ice wherry**, litter on a larger scale, abandoned in 2009 and recovered by the Cam Conservancy, has been found a new owner, after much effort. The sailing vessel was built in 1923 to transport ice for sale. It is believed to be the last surviving wherry built for this purpose and is listed in the Historic Ships Register.





CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 21 15 June 2015  
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**CVF Workshop at Barrington, 9 May: Helping to improve rivers and streams** With characteristic verve and



aplomb, **Rob Mungovan**, Ecology Consultancy Officer, for South Cambridgeshire District Council, showed how improvements for wildlife are being skilfully made, a stone's throw from the Village Hall, by bands of '**Friends of the River Shep**' volunteers.

Participants were welcomed in the Hall by **Peter Landshoff**, Chair of the **Cam Catchment Partnership**. The role of the CVF was explained by **Jean Perraton**, its Chair. **Monica Frisch**, a **Friend of the Cherry Hinton Brook**, outlined the strides which have been made on that suburban stream. Ongoing improvements to the **Bourn Brook** were presented by **Ruth Hawksley**, **Water for Wildlife Officer**, **BCN Wildlife Trust**, who emphasised the need for volunteers. Several participants were willing to take part in future projects.

**The Wilbraham River Protection Society: Annual River Walk 7 June** A large group gathered in proper



summer weather at Hawk Mill Farm and proceeded along Long Drove Way, returning up the courses of Quy Water and the Little Wilbraham River. The **ever-present threat of the lowering water table in the Chalk aquifer** and the consequent diminishing stream flow provided the usual theme for the afternoon. This is not to say that the reward of a most delicious tea was not unashamedly savoured.



The **Cambridge News** continues to report matters relating to the River. The newspaper has rightly given prominent publicity to **Mal Schofield's** intensely-felt report '**Cam River Matters**' (<http://camrowers.com/text/camrivermatters.pdf>).

Feelings do run high. In early June hundreds of drawing pins were spread on the tow path upstream from Baits Bite Lock. A Cam Conservator workman removed them by using a magnet. The newspaper also addresses the continuing **illegal hiring of punts**.

**The CVF Guided River Walk, 6.30pm Wednesday 8 July 2015 along Cherry Hinton Brook** will be led by Monica Frisch (see above) an authority on local wildlife. Past water-mills, present channel improvements, and future lakes may well also get mentions. Meet at the end of Burnside to walk upstream to the source at Giant's Grave, opposite the former Robin Hood pub. Burnside is a cul-de-sac off Brookfields, which joins Perne Road opposite the eastern end of Mill Road (GR 475575) Further information from Jean Perraton ([jean@perraton.myzen.co.uk](mailto:jean@perraton.myzen.co.uk)).





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The **'Friends of Bin Brook'** group was formed in December 2014 by concerned residents (CVF Newsletter 16). They will cover the 9.5 kms from the source in Hardwick, through Coton including the Coton Countryside Reserve, Newnham and down to the confluence with the River Cam at St John's College.

The immediate objectives are:

- to study the ecology and history of the Brook
- to encourage people who live or walk near the Brook to look after it, through education and physical improvements.

Longer term objectives may include:

- to maintain and improve the habitat and biodiversity of the Brook and its banks, including control of invasive species
- to improve the water quality and flows
- to educate local children in stream biodiversity.

The group's initial activities will be to collect data from ecological studies and historical mapping and to invite university students to undertake suitable ecological studies to fill in any gaps. The photo on the left was taken near Long Road between Hardwick and Coton.

The group is open to anyone with an interest in the Brook, or with relevant expertise. If you are interested in joining them, please contact either Terry Spencer at [suetererspencer@gmail.com](mailto:suetererspencer@gmail.com) (01954

210037) or Maria Murphy regarding ecological studies at [the.murphys400@btinternet.com](mailto:the.murphys400@btinternet.com) (01954 211104).

The **'Friends of the Cherry Hinton Brook'** AGM on 15 June (see attentive audience below) showed that they have



Jón Fairbairn

come a long way since their first litter pick in 2009, developing into a model conservation and pressure group for the local environment - with clout. Unlike many 'small' volunteer organisations they are not driven by just one main mover and shaker but by a loyal band.

Some of their activities have been reported in this newsletter, ranging from channel improvements, monitoring wildlife, and pressing for 'quiet' access to the lakes on the one hand, to, with notable successes in the case of Sainsbury's, tussling with the corporate world beyond. The AGM was addressed by their long-term supporter but newly-

designated City Council Biodiversity Officer, Guy Belcher. Rob Martyr, ecologist for RiverCare, extolled the virtues of water plants as indicators of stream water quality. City Councillor Dave Baigent gave an update on the lakes, anticipating that a timetable leading to the opening of the central lake to the public would soon be established, as long as it is not scuppered by 'health and safety' considerations.

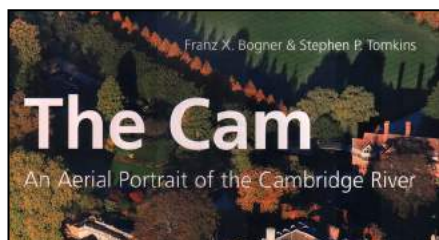
**The Green Dragon Bridge** See the link below to proposals for improvements, and details of a consultation exercise:  
<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/green-dragon-bridge-footway-and-cycling-improvements>





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### **An Aerial Portrait of the Cambridge River, by Bogner and Tomkins**

This new book is a photographic feast which goes beyond a mere tourist's coffee table decoration. Readers of this newsletter will particularly value its use of the River Cam as a conduit for analysing the human impact on nature, both brutal and benign. The superb photographs are a wonderful celebration of the impact of agriculture, the aristocracy, and the university on landscape. Yet, the penetrating,

succinct, and eye-opening commentary on the photographs by Stephen Tomkins does not shy away from the true costs of such devastating destruction of the natural environment. He reveals what the photographs cannot show. His many concerns range from the invasive signal crayfish to the human population's unrelenting demand for water from the Chalk aquifer. Judging by the general perception that tributary spring flows have decreased over the years, he questions whether or not the Environment Agency licenses over-abstraction.

On the left is part of the photograph of Riverside and the new cycle bridge, one of 138 aerial pictures on 128 pages, 21x28 cms in size. Published by the Laber Foundation the book is available in Cambridge bookshops at £24.95.

Prof. Franz X. Bogner is the photographer and he holds a Chair in Biological Education in Bavaria. His colleague Stephen P. Tomkins, a former Cambridge University Lecturer in Biological Education, is an Emeritus Fellow of Homerton College, and a committee member of the Cam Valley Forum. See [www.cambridgeriver.info](http://www.cambridgeriver.info)

### **Floating pennywort at Grantchester - 4 months on**

The bottom left photograph featured in the 30 March Newsletter No. 19. A small work party tried hard to remove all traces of pennywort earlier that month. The photograph below was taken from the same position in July.



The bridge and the horse can just be made out. The small channel off the main River Cam is completely clogged with floating pennywort and, to make matters worse, the banks are lined with those most attractive flowers of the towering Himalayan balsam seen in the foreground.







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Work continues on the **Hoffer Brook**, this time along a stretch accessible to the public from the footpath **between Foxton and Newton**. (Downstream from the railway improvements in 2014 were made on private land.) Banks have been cleared of undergrowth and some trees; flow deflectors and brushwood ledges have been installed. The photograph (above left) shows one of the volunteer groups, with Tim Jacklin ( Wild Trout Trust), Rob Mungovan (South Cambridgeshire District Council) and Ruth Hawksley (Wildlife Trust), posing by the vertical stakes of a ledge which will be covered by silt from the stream bed. Nearby, some tonnes of gravel are poised on the bank, ready to go into the channel.



**Himalayan balsam.** In the 2015 battle of the Bourn (casualties shown in photograph, above right, at Bourn Golf Club) volunteers were pitted against that pretty and delicate flower until early August after which popping seedheads retaliated; all this under the lethal overhead cross-fire, generated by Golf Club members, of hard white balls. Supervisor Ruth Hawksley in off-white hat was deeply embroiled, third from right. Twenty three such balsam-pulling events along the **Bourn Brook** this summer involved 353 volunteer hours and 60 staff hours. Still the battle has to continue next summer as some areas downstream were unvisited and new populations are discovered each year, especially in adjacent areas and side ditches.

Earlier this month the **Friends of the Cherry Hinton Brook** and the **Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall** mustered a strong team under the leadership of Guy Belcher (Cambridge City Council) to clear undergrowth, saplings, and brambles to let in light and to improve public access at **Giant's Grave**, the source of the Cherry Hinton Brook on the village High Street.



Giant's Grave c. 1910

The photograph above was taken about 3 years ago before some of the trees were removed. Both photographs were taken from a comparable location.

What kind of landscape is called for here in 2015? A manicured, ornamental park? A recreation of an historical past? A rich mosaic of habitats for native wildlife?





CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 25 14 December 2015  
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**Floating pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*), again.** There has been rampant growth this year. Mike Foley of the Cam Valley Forum walked the area of the map in early December to locate the outbreaks.



As the above photograph shows, he found that the Mill Race, 50m almost due north of the weir at Byron's Pool, was completely clogged. Elsewhere (see photograph on the left) there was often a relationship between the speed of water flow and the pattern of distribution. In this case the pennywort has colonised the slack water behind a tree branch.

In general, the Cam or Rhee from Haslingfield (northwards) down to Byron's Pool was free of the weed, as was

the Cam or Granta from Hauxton downstream to its confluence with the Rhee just east of Cantelupe Farm. From the west, the Bourn Brook joins the Cam at Byron's Pool and is free of pennywort between the motorway and the road bridge to Cantelupe Farm but downstream is infested with 'numerous small colonies'.

From Byron's Pool, northwards, the Cam is the easterly branch, flowing under the Grantchester Road at the newly reconstructed Brasley Bridge. Large colonies increase in number downstream along this stretch. The westerly straighter branch, the Mill Race, flows through the mill pond by the road to rejoin the Cam. Much of this stretch is seriously affected and includes the small area dealt with in Newsletters 19 and 23. The photograph, above right, is where the two branches meet.

The Cam Conservators are planning to start clearing the pennywort in January. They are hoping to borrow weed-cutting boats from the Environment Agency to take the bulk out. They would then follow this up with hand picking and finally spraying.

**The Voice of Radio Cambridgeshire.** Last month the Cam Valley Forum featured on Radio Cambridgeshire. With their wide-ranging skills, Stephen Tomkins, Charles Turner and Jean Perraton joined presenter Jeremy Sallis to talk about the issues facing the Cam.







CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 26 18 December 2015  
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On 8 August 2014, there was dramatic, monsoon-like rainfall which fell just outside the Cam catchment. The villages worst affected were Girton, Histon and Impington, Madingley, Hardwick, Bar Hill, Dry Drayton and Oakington. At other times, of course, the Bourn and Bin Brooks have flooded homes. To quote Mike Oakley, Chairman of Oakington Parish Council, 'the rainfall [in August 2014] was unprecedented in living memory, as far as I know'. In the village Journal, he quoted the official figures of 124mm between 2 and 6pm and a total of 144mm that day (nearly 6 inches), over three times the

average for the whole of August. These figures are interesting to most of us, inconvenient to some of us who had to take diversions to reach our destinations, but to those whose homes and industrial premises were flooded, it amounted to a complete disaster. Some homeowners, in the villages mentioned, have only returned to their houses after 12 months. Drying out, restoration and refurbishment can take that long. On the other hand, such intense rainfall does little to replenish the over-exploited aquifers.

**When will be the next major event?** The Environment Agency (EA) called this 'a one in 340 year event.' Eight 100 year events have been recorded in the last 50 years. Climate change seems to be changing the rules. The Government requires flood risk assessments for new developments to allow for storm events caused by climate change over the next 100 years by adding 20% to peak river flows and 30% to peak rainfall intensities. Is this enough? Ironically climate scientists are also predicting more summer droughts, in this area of low annual rainfall.

**What can be done about the situation in the short-term and long-term?** In consultations with villagers, the EA are recommending setting up flood action groups, to mobilise local people in the event of flooding. Some villages are going further and setting up flood mitigation groups, to make changes to reduce the chances of further problems. Their recommendations include surveying water courses to ensure that they are deep and wide enough to take event flows, by de-silting and clearing perennial vegetation and debris from streams. Girton worked with the EA to remove pipes from a culvert under a road bridge, to improve water flow. Longer term plans include digging attenuation ponds which hold water up for at least a number of hours, before releasing it steadily. It is clear that improvements in one area can cause more problems for those downstream so cooperation at a catchment level is vital.

**Which agencies are helping people who are vulnerable?** Each parish council is fighting its corner, with district and county councillors much involved. Heidi Allen, MP for South Cambs, has demonstrated a real enthusiasm to help, and the National Flood Forum (NFF) has steered the efforts of some groups. This is a national Charity dedicated to supporting and representing communities and individuals at risk. The 'Homes and Communities Association', who are steering the developments at Northstowe, are offering money for surveying and to build attenuation ponds that could help Oakington. The developers aim to dig ponds for Longstanton. Liaison with the EA is vital but their budgets have been reduced and further cuts are expected. Anyone know of the whereabouts of a spare ark?

John Terry