



CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 43 16 March 2018

The Occasional Newsletter of the Cam Valley Forum

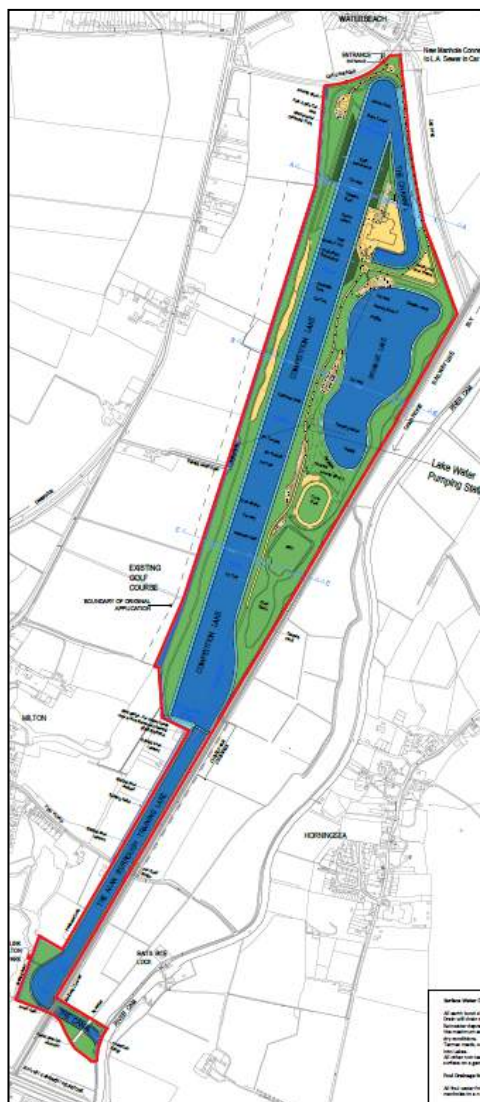
www.camvalleyforum.uk

Chair: Jean Perraton Editor: David Brooks

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We're aiming to **eradicate the invasive weed Floating Pennywort from the upper Cam within 5 years**. So last year we raised the funding and engaged a contractor to help. Over the last 6 weeks, ML Partnership have worked hard from 2 giant punts on loan from Scudamores (photo above left), cutting back drooping trees, clearing pennywort and creating "habitat refuges". The photo, above right, shows two volunteers from Cambridge Canoe Club who installed our prototype protective boom seen floating in the water on the upstream (right hand) side of one of the refuges. This prevents floating fragments becoming caught in the tangled branches. Our initial funding (Newsletter 42) was supplemented by an additional £19,962 from the Environment Agency (managed by the Wildlife Trust). This has allowed us to do about 2.8 km of the river from Grantchester, virtually all the way down into Cambridge.



We should now be in good shape for volunteers to deal with the residual pennywort. We're planning a **Pennywort Working Party** from **2pm on 19 May**. This will include a "social" afterwards for all pennywort pullers: Let us know if you want to be kept informed of details.

Anne Miller

The map on the left, of the proposed **multi-use sports and leisure complex**, is taken from the planning application submitted by the Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust following outline approval given in 2013. **The 220 acre site stretches for 2 miles between the A14 near Milton Country Park and Waterbeach, and between the A10 and the railway**, its backbone being a 2km rowing lake and a 1km training lake. The proposal includes facilities for swimming, cycling, triathlon, and BMX biking.

The map shows the surface water and foul drainage plan. Green areas indicate areas where there would be natural percolation into the ground. SUDS (sustainable drainage systems) are shown in yellow. Narrow light blue strips are lines of run-off to a water course. The rowing lakes are shown connected directly to the River Cam at the south end.

The application can be found at www.scambs.gov.uk/content/search-planning-application reference number S/0795/18/RM. The current consultation period expires at the end of March.



CAM VALLEY MATTERS No. 44 2 April 2018

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Catherine Moncrieff, who leads the UK rivers team at **WWF**, enthralled her audience at the **CVF AGM on 29 March in the David Attenborough Building** with a whirlwind tour of some of the planet's longest natural fluvial wonders, and their desecration by the profligacy of humankind, before focusing on underlying issues and how they might apply to the Cam Valley. Catherine is seen in the photograph on the left with **newly-elected Chair, Stephen Tomkins**. A fulsome tribute had been paid, and a presentation made, to the long-serving and widely-respected retiring **Chair, Jean Perraton**. After the business of the AGM **Anne Miller** gave a short illustrated talk on her **CVF Pennywort Project** which aims to eradicate the pest on the Cam in the next 5 years.



Improvements to the **Cherry Hinton Brook** continue apace (photo, right). In March, volunteers moved 26 tons of gravel from the Coldhams Lane Sainsbury car park into the channel, without looking the worse for wear. **The Friends group** were instrumental in paying for the gravel through Cambridge Water's **PEBBLE Fund**. Operations were directed by **Rob Mungovan** of the **Wild Trout Trust** and **Victoria Smith** of the **City Council**. Go and have a look.

[PS Rob is excited to report that a sea trout has recently been found in the upper Cam.]



Resilient Cambridge tourists (photograph, above left, March 2018) show an enviable capacity to enjoy themselves.

Some thousand local residents gave vent to their frustrations and curiosities by taking advantage of the **Cherry Hinton Lakes' first Open Day** on 11 March (photo on right). The Lakes are normally closed to the public. More future opportunities are being planned.





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Mike Foley



Mike Foley

Water used for irrigation in the Cam Valley is not an insignificant component of the river basin's hydrology. The photo on the left shows Dernford Quarry near Stapleford, in 2012. The recent photo above was taken after the gravel pit's conversion into a 100 million gallon reservoir by Russell Smith Farms, based at College Farm, Duxford. This is a 2,800 acre enterprise which has invested heavily in irrigation systems, adding Dernford to its existing four reservoirs. It grows potatoes, onions, cereals, oilseed rape, peas, and sugar beet.

CVF visit to Mill River Nature Reserve, Shingay-cum-Wendy, June 2018

The photo (right) shows the visitors pausing for thought. In 2017 the reserve received an award from the Wild Trout Trust for its work on its river habitat and for its benefits to wider conservation. At the point along the stream shown in the photo, gravel laid over the existing silt bed has successfully attracted spawning fish. The reserve benefited financially from the neighbouring 250 acre solar farm which was given planning permission in 2014 despite enormous local opposition. This was a £1.25m investment with at least £50,000 a year, in mitigation, to back local community projects over the 25-year life of the farm. The moral seems to be, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.



Mike Foley

CVF visit to Anglian Water Recycling Centre at Milton, July 2018



Stephen Tomkins

The photo (left) shows more pause for visitors' thought. This is where the raw sewage fountains into the plant. Four tonnes of 'wet wipes' and similar, some of which are seen on the platform to the right, have to be separated and sent to landfill every week. Such is the unnecessary addition to the sewage burden.

With new processes and equipment in place the 47 ha Centre has max. capacity of 3000 l/sec inflow, sufficient for 10+ years expansion in public need. Treatment rate is 1300 l/sec, any excess inflow being diverted to large, temporary storm tanks. Sludge collected at Milton and also smaller treatment works undergoes anaerobic digestion producing sufficient methane to supply 40% of the power requirement of the entire Centre. Biosolids produced at 48 t / day is sold as 'nutri-bio', a valuable fertiliser to farmers.

(Mike Foley)

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North Uttlesford Garden Community. (See <https://northuttlesfordgc.commonplace.is/>)

Uttlesford District Council is proposing an alarming 5,000 house development immediately east of Stump Cross, at the south end of the A11. The 1:50,000 OS sheet 154 shows the site to be on high ground east and north east of Hinxton and Great Chesterford (around grid square 5144) entirely within the

Cam Valley catchment. The photograph shows the view due east from the north end of Hinxton village. The proposed site includes the fields on the horizon to the right of the wood. It is notable that a hill-top settlement would be in marked contrast to the low-level villages of the district. Nine upper Cam parish councils, and others, are united in their opposition. The CVF has also written in strong terms to warn specifically of the risk of flooding due to increased surface run-off from hard surfaces, possible sewerage mishaps going north into the Cam system, and the perennial problem of water supply and the lowering of local water tables.

Pennywort Pulling Working Party 8 July 2018. The event was a great success, not least due to the indefatigability of Anne Miller, seen briefing the 21 participants in the photograph below. She was supported by the zest and



Briefing

experience of Mike Foley (out of sight in the next photograph) who orientated the group, on the bank of Snobs Stream, towards practicalities, identifying the invader for example, for the benefit of those whose lives had been undisturbed by it thus far. Wim Brunsting and his merry band of Cambridge Canoe Club members were indispensable.



Orientation

Voracious readers of these newsletters will recall a long pennywort saga, with recent episodes in numbers 42 and 43. The splendid news on that hot day in July 2018 was that workers from the bank and from the fleet of 11 canoes surveyed the whole river from Mill Lane to Grantchester Mill Pond, removing virtually all visible pennywort. The few strands that were identified and left, were to be dealt with later, from the bank or by canoe.



Action

The fact that only a few buckets of pennywort were pulled is a measure of the success of the eradication project so far (helped by the very cold spring). But many small young strands were removed which would otherwise have grown into monsters.



Now the CVF has an enlarged team of enthusiastic pennywort pullers who understand how to help, and are keen to carry on independently as ecological vigilantes. Complacency is out of the question.

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A huge project to extract a million cubic metres of gravel (from the area outlined in red on the map) at Rectory Farm, near Hauxton, and to fill the (water-filled?) void with "inert" waste has been proposed.

This is a further shock for the people of Hauxton. The proposed site is but a stone's throw from the site of the old chemical works, just the other side of the A10 (at X, once described as one of the most toxic sites in the UK), whose harmful effects the residents have had to endure for years. [See Newsletters 10 and 29 on our website. For the awesome Hauxton remediation time lapse video see <https://www.harrowestates.co.uk/what-we-do/infrastructure-delivery/content/blocks/hauxton-video-time-lapse/>]

Cambridgeshire C. C. and Peterborough City C. have prepared a preliminary draft of a new **Minerals and Waste Local Plan** to ensure an **adequate supply of minerals and waste management facilities over the period to 2036**. Landowners, agents and operators were invited to submit to the councils their suggested sites for future mineral and waste management development. One of these was the 64.7 hectare site on Rectory Farm, which was forecast to generate 100 to 140 lorry movements per day.

It seems, on the face of it, that the chances of the project not contaminating the Cam, and not radically affecting hydrology and wildlife, are small. The photograph shows a very small part of the

site. The CVF is in support of Hauxton Parish Council which is opposed to the development.

During September parish and town councils were invited to submit any relevant knowledge and views of the local area or suggested sites. The next stage in the planning process is for the County Council to consider all comments made, and to prepare a further draft local plan for consultation in Spring 2019. For more detailed information see http://hauxton.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Site-PDE-Rectory-Farm_redacted.pdf If you wish to keep up to date consult the Council's website at cambridgeshire.gov.uk/mwlp

Spring augmentation at the Nine Wells Local Nature Reserve will soon be happening. Since CVF Newsletter 38 dated May 2017 was published, a 3-mile pipeline from Babraham has been sunk, descending the slopes of White Hill towards the south-east-facing side of the Reserve which is bounded by the trees seen in the photograph. [Also see Newsletter 27, Jan. 2016.]



The photograph (taken 8 October) shows the location of one of four boreholes, along the edge of the Reserve, which were initially used for testing the suitability of the geology. These will now be used as injection boreholes. Water will enter the vertical pipes from the Babraham pipeline and soak into the surrounding rock, filtering through to the springs (headwaters of Hobson's Conduit) which are downslope to the left, 10m or so behind the trees. There

should be immediate benefits to the Conduit, though in the longer term pumping water from the aquifer will contribute to the general lowering of the water table. The fundamental problem is one of over-abstraction due to excessive demand.

There will be a small (partially screened) telemetric installation with solar panel in the extreme south corner of the Reserve to send water-level readings to Babraham from where water flow will be controlled.

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The photograph above shows the filming of the CVF **Pennywort Pullers** at **Kingfisher Bridge Nature Reserve**, near Wicken, for Countryfile, BBC1, 18 November 2018. They can be seen (about 15 mins. into the programme) on iplayer at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0bsqhm9/countryfile-cambridgeshire> until mid December.



If it is not pennywort, then it is **New Zealand Pigmyweed, *Crassula helmsii*** (three photos on left). Pumping has lowered the levels of the ponds at Cherry Hinton Hall giving better access for the removal (far left) of the invader which smothers native plants.



Alan Coulson (University Angling Club, and CVF Committee member) writes: Even when they were relatively common the

European eel was rarely seen by the casual observer, but they have been an important part of the ecology, and the economy, of the Cam and Ouse valleys for centuries. However their numbers have declined drastically – down 95% in 25 years, and now classified as critically endangered. The reasons for this are not understood, and there are signs that numbers may be rising, but it is vital that those eels that do make the extraordinary journey across the Atlantic returning to our rivers from the breeding grounds of the Sargasso Sea are given the best possible chance of ascending our rivers where they may remain for up to 20 years. To

this end the Environment Agency has for some years been installing various forms of fish and eel pass around all the potential barriers on the Cam and Ouse, such as the **eel ladder at Jesus Green lock** (see photo, above left) and the **Byron's Pool fish pass**. The CVF initiated the idea of the new fish pass and the increased flow of **The Rush at Sheep's Green**. More local projects are in hand, particularly on the Rhee and Granta.