

Cam Valley Forum: Chairman's Annual Report (2019-2020).

2019 was a highly significant year for the Forum. In the years since our founding we have probably not had as high a profile as we have had this year. This was reflected in an enormous increase in people's concerns for the welfare of the river which resulted in much publicity for the alarming loss of our Chalk groundwater, consequent worries about river flow and pollution and the continuing battle against invasive non-native species. There were 1,986 different users of our web site, 88% of whom were newcomers.

Early in the year, we heard from the Wilbraham River Protection Society that their small river was dry; then in March the whole River Cam was at its lowest flow since records began in 1949, and by June your committee was upset about the poor flows everywhere. We have long been critical of the over-abstraction of water from the Chalk. Is it not 'a drought'? Taken over decades, our mean winter rainfall is really not changing greatly. Despite summer rain by September the River Granta was dry. Significantly, in 2018 we had also learned that from the most recent (2016) full environmental survey of our Cam catchment the EA was showing several sections of the whole river with 'poor' status - not least caused by insufficient flow to dilute treated sewage from small overloaded water recycling centres. Only the augmented (supported) streams, like the Shep which is supplied with extra groundwater, passed the EA test as 'good'. Nothing at all was 'excellent'. To make matters worse, we found that riparian vegetation in the drier river-beds was being sprayed fairly indiscriminately with herbicides. Your committee's reaction to all this was to draft the *River Cam Manifesto*, which we published in August. This *cri de coeur* seems to have been noticed and it should shake the foundations for all those involved in planning who assume that you can take unlimited water, from that provided by our natural environment, without this affecting the river. We now understand our crisis better. Our Cam, Rhee and Granta's source ground water has 22 Olympic sized swimming pools of water abstracted from it daily. Certainly, in slightly drier years, this cannot be afforded by the environment. We are now firmly a part of the England "Chalk Stream Crisis".

Our other main pre-occupation has been in the hard work and vigilance of those committed to physically eliminating some of our invasive non-native species. As a result of the 2018 Floating Pennywort clearance, which we reported on last year, by February 2019 the upper river from Cambridge to Byron's Pool and beyond was essentially free of this blight. Since then the odd plant colonies that escaped the eagle eyes of Anne Miller, canoe club members, and Mike Foley, in particular, have all but been removed totally. At the start we set ourselves a target of clearing it all "in 5 years" - so we are pleased to have nearly done it in three years. Continuing vigilance is needed too be sure that it is gone. We also want all canoeists and anglers to follow the 'check, clean, dry' discipline so that the weed is not reintroduced. Floating Pennywort was never a major problem in the City itself, where it does not adhere to the built banks, but on the lower river this year Mike Foley has continued a vigorous programme of working parties beyond Fen Ditton with great effect. Cam Valley Forum has again been supported well by volunteers and several work parties from *Sentec* (a business). Mike is working still with the Conservators of the River Cam and with the Environment Agency to hold it at bay. If there were to be enough helpers we could eliminate it as far north as Bottisham Lock.

We have been pleased to support the very many local Cambridge River Groups. We congratulate the River Mel Restoration Group on their initiative to have the *Waterlight* Film made. This report would not be complete without acknowledgements. Firstly, we are very grateful for the financial support of our members and the generous donations of many bodies and people, including an increasing number of life members. Second, we would also thank the Cambridge Independent, Cambridge News, the Observer, the local BBC, Cambridge 105 live, the Schools Eco-Council and the U3A for publicity and air time. We thank both the Cambridgeshire Local Nature Partnership and the Cam and Ely Ouse catchment partnership for listening to us. We also thank Katie Thornburrow, a Cambridge City Councillor, for setting up the 'Water Crisis Forum'. Thirdly, we appreciate the Cambridge Water Company's tolerance and courtesy (when we have been critical of them), as well as their now greater pursuit of water losses (though leakage) and their improved advocacy of saving precious water. Finally, I must thank every member of our committee:- Lesley Bradford, David Brooks, Clive Brown, Alan Coulson, Mike Foley, Michael Goodhart, Ruth Hawksley, Rob Mungovan, Anne Miller, Jean Perraton, John Terry, Charles Turner, Richard Wells and Lawrence Wragg and others (Wendy Blyth, Bob Evans, Claire Carter and Anita Joysey) who have joined for occasional meetings during the year. Their individual support has been very great - as has been the support of our families who are rather tired of us "saving the River" !

Stephen P. Tomkins: March 2020

Cam Valley Forum

ACCOUNTS for the year ended 31st December 2019
- continued

	2019 £	2018 £
BALANCE SHEET	31.12.19	31.12.18
Current assets		
Cash at Bank – Current a/c	11,584	2,471
NS&I Bond 1.95% to 09 Dec 2021	6,302	6,302
Nationwide 1.4% Bond to 20 Apr 2019 - repaid	-	5,276
Stock, postcards and booklets	-	-
Debtor,	-	2,880
Prepayments	-	641
	<u>17,886</u>	<u>17,570</u>
Less current liabilities		
Outstanding cheques drawn	97	681
Net Assets	<u>17,789</u>	<u>16,889</u>
REPRESENTED BY		
Accumulated fund b/fwd.	16,889	14,401
Surplus / (deficit) for year	900	2,488
Accumulated fund carried forward	<u>17,789</u>	<u>16,889</u>

Report of the Independent Examiner

I have examined this Balance Sheet and Income and Expenditure Account prepared from the records of the Cam Valley Forum.

I certify that, in my opinion, they give a fair and accurate statement, respectively of the financial position of the Cam Valley Forum, as at 31st December 2019 and of its income and expenditure over the year then ended.

N. H. Heath

Nicholas Heath, MA, ACA, ATII.
Hon. Independent Examiner

1 March 2020

Cam Valley Forum

ACCOUNTS for the year ended 31st December 2019

	2019	2018
	£	£
INCOME		
Members subscriptions	700	540
Donations	1284	95
Slow Swimming donation	250	
Sales of books and postcards	27	6
Interest accrued on NS&I deposit - new bond	-	233
Interest on Nationwide bond - matured	74	73
Sponsorship and Grants	-	9,265
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	2,335	10,212
EXPENDITURE		
Postage and office expenses	15	135
Printing	132	-
Room Hire - Meetings & AGM	53	38
Insurance	641	651
Website	138	162
Audit	30	30
Pennywort Project	-	6,340
Tools and Expenses	298	318
World Rivers Day Exhibition , September	128	-
Donation World Wildlife Fund	-	50
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	1435	7,724
Income less expenditure	900	2,488
Accumulated funds b/fwd	16,889	14,401
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Accumulated funds carried forward	17,789	16,889
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