

# STREAM STORY II: Another Riveting Riverscape – River Cam, Cambridge

**Book 9 in the RIVER FRIEND series of Riverine Small Books**

**written by Sylvia M Haslam and Tina Bone, illustrated by Tina Bone**

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<https://riverfriend.tinasfineart.uk>

References to the RIVER FRIEND series of books have been made over the years in CVF Newsletters so it is a pleasure to announce that Book 9 is now available. See <https://riverfriend.tinasfineart.uk> for background information. Dr. Sylvia Haslam is a Life Member of the CVF. Tina Bone was also a longstanding member but, sadly, she died in January and Book 9 will be the last in the series. It is fitting that it features the Cam Valley.

The series deplores ‘vanishing’ streams, pollution, and the depletion of wildlife, and extols ‘the extraordinary value of freshwater and its plants, as well as natural heritage’. The authors found that ‘there was a huge gap in the literature’. There are ‘many publications for scientists, for pond-dippers, birders and anglers’ but as for ‘handy pocketbooks focusing on the river itself, and the vegetation belonging to it and creating the habitat for all else’, they ‘could find none!’

The area covered by Book 9 extends downstream from the Cam and its tributaries to beyond the junction with the Great Ouse, across the Fens, past the Denver Sluice Complex, to King’s Lynn thus extending the authors’ scope for exploring historical interaction between people and water. Bourn Brook (the flashy one) is compared with the Rhee and the Cam and Granta. Three maps, each of all four rivers, dated 1971-1972, 1976, and 1979, record in detail the aquatic vegetation assiduously observed by Sylvia herself thus revealing changes over that period. The historical growth of the port and industrial town of Cambridge is traced in relation to water and, indeed, its water supply.

The uses of rivers and the geography of river settlements is discussed, including the Lodes and their villages. Ely and King’s Lynn are presented as case studies. The vanishing peat as the result of drainage, drying, and oxidation is addressed. Interestingly, the poisoning of tomatoes in Essex in the 1970s by a toxic chemical discharged into the Cam by the Hauxton (not Harston) agrochemical factory owned by Fisons is offered as an example of pollution. The widespread environmental (and probably human) damage caused by this factory was something of a cause célèbre in CVF circles (see Newsletters No. 10, April 2014 and No. 29, March 2016). It is now a posh housing estate. But chemicals still probably lurk, and seep?