

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook: Occasional Titbits, No. 23, March 2012

www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk

Chairman: John Collins

Please forward or print out and pass on to anyone else who may be interested. If you have items suitable for inclusion please let me have them as they arise. If you wish to be taken off this group email list let me know



Glyn/Jane Phillips

A tiny minority of Sainsbury's shoppers park their cars and toss their rubbish over the fence into the brook. Blue disposable gloves from the filling station also end up there. (Why?)

Tiffany Wallace,
President, The Jane Goodall
Roots and Shoots Society, ARU



The cold snap brought out some unusual sightings on the brook; as well as the water rail (mentioned in Titbits 22) a snipe was seen probing the mud near Daws Lane Allotments. Snipe are declining in the UK and are more usually seen over large expanses of fields and marsh. (Holly Anderson)

Cherry Hinton Brook spring clean. Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook turned out in force to clean up the brook on **Sunday 26 February**, leaving it spick and span for the wildlife that will start to flourish there as spring approaches. Some 25 people - students from Anglia Ruskin, local residents, and enthusiastic children – turned up to tackle the stretch of brook from Sainsbury's on Coldham's Lane to Burnside. About 15 bin bags of cans, bottles, plastic bags and other rubbish were collected, including a wallet containing credit cards and a driving licence (now handed over to the police). RiverCare, a Keep Britain Tidy project, provided the equipment. The City Council removed the piles of rubbish that were accumulated and Sainsbury's provided tea, coffee and biscuits to fortify the workers. Many thanks to all who participated. (Sue Wells)

Sheep dipping in the Brook. In the past the Brook was used by the local farmer to dip his sheep to destroy parasites in the animals' skin and wool. I am not sure when this practice stopped, but would guess it was in the early 1940s. Look upstream from the brick bridge to the Blackland (Daws Lane) allotment site, and to your left a slight inlet can be seen (on the bank opposite the allotments). A gentle slope used to run down this bank – it is difficult to make it out now because it is overgrown with the brambles which featured in Titbits 22.

Planks, or a sheet of corrugated iron, dammed the stream on the upstream side of the bridge. When enough water had built up, a solution of an insecticide based on arsenic was poured into the water and the sheep driven down the sloping bank. When the planks were removed, this solution flowed downstream, probably killing some of the organisms present. Arsenic is not biodegradable, so traces of it may still be present in the mud of the stream bed near the dipping area.

During the 1940s the local lads, and some evacuees, would also dam up the stream in the same place so that they could have a swim. Not to be recommended nowadays! I can remember sheep being driven along Mill End Road in the early 1950s, possibly to be dipped in tanks in the farmyard belonging to Farmer Chalk. This was located between what are now Desmond Avenue and Chelwood Road, and was probably the farm shown on old maps as Rectory Farm. (Sid Maskall)