

# Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

## Occasional Titbits, issue 68, June 2021

[www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)

### Annual General Meeting Monday 21 June, 7.30 pm ONLINE

The Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook AGM will be held online (Zoom) this year; details will be sent out shortly by email. Guy Belcher, the Cambridge City Council Biodiversity Officer, has kindly offered to talk about the current chalk stream restoration work in Cambridge.

We are urgently looking for new committee members, particularly a Secretary and a litter pick co-ordinator. If you could help, please email Sue Wells ([chair2019@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:chair2019@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)).

### April litter picks

COVID restrictions prevented our usual group litterpicks. Instead, on 11<sup>th</sup> April, teams of six (each with a committee member) went to different areas: Sainsburys to Burnside, Burnside towards St Bedes, and Blacklands allotments towards St Bedes. This worked well and we collected 10 bags of rubbish from the near bank and the Brook (one group had a volunteer in waders, the others used a long-handled hook). High spots were sightings of a water vole, and two bullheads (small fish that live mainly on the bottom of fast-flowing streams) [right] that were hiding in cans. Sadly the body of a baby muntjac was also found.



Since some of the rubbish, particularly in the Sainsbury's part of the Brook, was difficult to reach, a "mini-litterpick" of hardy wader-wearers was organised on 18<sup>th</sup> April and successfully pulled out yet more plastic, cans and bottles. We welcome the interest shown in the Brook and its environs since the pandemic began, and are most grateful to all those who have helped with litter picks. We hope that, by the autumn, we will no longer need to restrict numbers. *Holly Anderson*

### Brook Restoration 18-20 April 2021

As with many streams in the Cam Valley, the channel of Cherry Hinton Brook has been much abused over an unknown number of decades. Levee-like embankments at several locations are evidence of widening, deepening, and straightening. A deep layer of silt has accumulated on the floor of the enlarged trough etched into the (Cretaceous) West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation which can be seen brightly exposed in the banks of The Lakes. Thus all appearance of a Chalk stream channel has been lost. Features of the Chalk stream itself which may linger, at least close to its spring at Giant's Grave, are a characteristic slightly-alkaline chemical composition, a constant temperature of c.10.4°C, and a non-flashy discharge. These qualities are damaged and lost progressively downstream, due to pollution and urban run-off, of course, even if still flowing over Chalk.

The recent Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams Project Report<sup>1</sup> prepared by Ruth Hawksley of the Wildlife Trust BCN and Rob Mungovan of the Wild Trout Trust, lays out actions to improve the state of the city's Chalk streams, including Cherry Hinton Brook. As reported in previous newsletters, work started in January along the stretch between Blacklands allotments and the entrance to the grounds of Cherry Hinton Hall. Undergrowth was cleared and overhanging branches removed to allow more light to reach the stream. Some 27 tons of silt were then removed, overseen by the City Council's Drainage Engineer, Jason Tyrrell. In April, several hard-working volunteers, including some Friends of the Brook, shovelled 20 tons of gravel into the channel.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/9067/greater-cambridge-chalk-streams-project-report.pdf>

Logs were wired into place to form “flow deflectors” which, with the gravel, create patterns of flow similar to those found in healthy streams and lead to a greater variety of habitats. The gravel provides a more natural stream bed and creates an environment suitable for invertebrates and spawning fish. The width of the channel was made effectively narrower in places, which will increase the flow rate, helping to keep the gravel clean and providing more turbulence which increases oxygenation. Costs for the work were met by the City Council, the work parties were led by Ruth Hawksley and Victoria Smith, the City Council’s Local Nature Reserves Officer, and the project is being overseen by the City Council’s Biodiversity Officer Guy Belcher.



David Brooks

## Wildlife along the Brook: April/May 2021

Breeding birds are now busily nesting and rearing young so, as well as hearing melodious songs, there are many contact calls between parents and newly fledged birds. They are almost impossible to identify but, if you stand quietly, you may see parent birds coming in to feed the youngsters. In spite of a decline in many species, such as house sparrows, the shrubs and ivy clad trees beside the Brook provide good nesting sites. Swallows and house martins are flying over the lakes and swifts arrived recently. Maybe this year we will be lucky to have the latter nest in the purpose-built swift boxes on some of the Burnside houses; if not, at least some are occupied by a house sparrow colony. Moorhen chicks and ducklings swim with their families along the Brook. The swans are now on a nest inside the lakes, where they successfully raised their brood last year. At the moment, with only anglers allowed access, the lakes are a safe place for them but if plans to open the lakes go ahead then this may be less secure. They and other nesting birds such as kingfishers need to be considered when decisions are made about the use of the land around the lakes.

Water voles seem to be less easily disturbed, although we urge people not to let their dogs into the stream in vegetated areas. Several voles seem to delight in posing for photos as they feed on the reeds in the Brook. The restoration work described above and the wet spring should allow the Brook to support many of the birds and mammals that live and feed in its environs.



Please send reports of your sightings of water voles and other wildlife to: [wildlife@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:wildlife@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)

Holly Anderson

***Please help us keep Cherry Hinton Brook clean, for the benefit of the wildlife whose home it is, and so we can all enjoy it looking attractive and litter free.***

**Data protection** To ensure that we comply with the General Data Protection Regulations, we inform you that you are able to withdraw your consent to be on the Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook mailing list should you wish. Your email address and contact details are currently held in our database to receive our email newsletter and other occasional messages about our activities and your membership. We do not sell or share your details with anyone outside the committee of Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook. Should you have any concerns whatsoever about the way we use your data, or wish to withdraw from our database, please let us know.

**JOIN US!** See [www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk) for our aims and activities.

We welcome your photos for use in our newsletters.

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To be taken off our email list, please email [membership@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:membership@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)

**Monica Frisch** ([editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk](mailto:editor@friendsofcherryhintonbrook.org.uk)) 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021

