

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook: Occasional Titbits, No. 6, December 2009

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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 please let me know.

1. Giant's Grave As can be seen from the photograph, the pond is in a disgusting state, due to a fairly recent surge of interest in the spot taken by alcoholics. The new block of 11 flats which replaced the 4-bedroomed detached house is in the background. Careful, adult volunteers could make an impact in 20 minutes of their own time by dainty litter picking from the bank. Litter pickers are available for borrowing. Gathering the less accessible litter would be more hazardous.

The following is an extract from a **City Wildlife Site Survey carried out on 24 August 2005 by Martin Baker**. See <http://www.google.co.uk/search?hl=en&q=cambridge+city+wildlife+site+survey+2005&meta=> for full report with map. The locality qualifies as a City Wildlife Site because it is a Chalk stream with associated habitat.



This site comprises a small chalk spring-fed pool known as Robin Hood's Dip (or Giant's Grave – Ed.) and the first section of Cherry Hinton Brook to the north-west. The pool is surrounded by poor semi-improved grassland with scattered trees and scrub. The pool water is approximately 20cm deep and there is much fine sediment covering the bottom. Aquatic macrophyte vegetation is very limited with a couple of patches of Water-cress *Rorippa nasturtium aquaticum*. Marginal vegetation is also sparse and includes Hard Rush *Juncus inflexus* and Yellow Flag *Iris pseudacorus*. Other species occur at the edge of the grassland and include Hairy Sedge *Carex hirta*, Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, Hairy Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata* and Square-stemmed St John's-wort *Hypericum tetrapterum*.

The pool contains a small tree-covered island with Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Buckthorn *Rhamnus cathartica*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and a Weeping Willow *Salix x babylonica*; the trees support much Ivy *Hederá helix*. On the southern and eastern side of the pool the ground slopes steeply up to the level of the adjacent road and path, while on the western side the ground is level and part of the floodplain. The pool is surrounded by scattered broadleaved trees and shrubs over mown, poor semi-improved grassland. The trees and shrubs include frequent Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* together with a range of native and exotic species such as Elder *Sambucus nigra*, ornamental *Prunus*, Ginkgo *Ginkgo biloba* and Poplar *Populus spp.* Under the trees, the ground flora is dominated by Ivy, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and Traveller's Joy *Clematis vitalba*. In addition to abundant Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* and Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*, the grassland contains a limited variety of common grassland forbs with

occasional tall herb species. A Cardamine sp. recorded here may be the grassland indicator species Cuckoo-flower *Cardamine pratensis*.

The (outflowing) Brook is generally heavily shaded by trees and shrubs from the neighbouring gardens and significant stretches of bank are reinforced with wooden piling, particularly along the northern side. Aquatic vegetation is very sparse or completely absent along most stretches. The pool and Brook, together with Cherry Hinton Hall Bird Sanctuary, form a Grade D site in the JNCC Invertebrate Site Register. This grading is based on 1960s records of cold water flatworms, but further survey is required.

Giant's Grave is one of the local areas surveyed by the **Cambridge Natural History Society** in 2009. Details of visits and species lists are on the CNHS website: www.cnhs.org.uk The Cuckoo-flower (*Cardamine pratensis*) was recorded at this site, for example.

2. St. Bede's School/Snakey Path Litter Pick As planned, this went ahead on three bright, sunny Sunday mornings in November, among the bushes, over the fence from Snakey. One solitary figure was to be seen plying his lonely trade. By the third Sunday, strong persistent westerly winds had blown litter across the playing field to replace much of that which had been removed. So there is still plenty to do, starting **this Sunday morning, 13 December**. Meet at 10.30am at main entrance to St.Bede's School in Birdwood Road, in old clothes and gloves, unless you can ignore your conscience.

3. Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall Their next meeting is at 7.30pm on 20 January at the Baptist Church Rooms in Fisher Lane. The group has been awarded £520 (by the Cambridge Community Foundation <http://www.cambscf.org.uk/>) to be used for admin and promotion. S106 'Improve Your Neighbourhood' money ('planning gain' sums paid by developers) has been allocated to Cambridge parks. The Area Committee has been discussing the possibility of 'restoring' the CHH pond and managing the CH Brook and woodland. The ground surface on the busy side of the pond is already being improved.