

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

Annual General Meeting 2017

Monday 26th June, 19.30

St Thomas's Hall, Ancaster Way (off Birdwood Rd), Cambridge, CB1 3TT

Present:

Committee: Sue Wells (chair), Monica Frisch (treasurer), Jón Fairbairn (webmaster), Stuart Newbold, Emmy Smart, Shona Douglas, David Brooks, Berry Mulligan and Jenny Sutton.

Peter Pilbeam (Cambridgeshire Mammal Group)
Jeanette Hunter
Glyn and Jane Philips
Moira Robinson
Anne Rout
Rob Mungovan (Wild Trout Trust)
Peggy Denholm
Veronica Greenwood

Apologies:

Holly Anderson (secretary)
Nicola Fawcett (membership secretary)
Rebecca Jones
Wilbert van Vliet

Minutes of the last AGM, and this year's accounts were available.

Sue Wells welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Minutes of 2016 AGM and matters arising

The minutes were approved and there were no matters arising.

2. Chair's report (see attached)

Sue Wells gave a brief run through of the year's activities, reminding the meeting of FCHB's objectives, and the ongoing and expanding efforts of members and the committee. Public awareness raising has been particularly notable in the last year, for example, our newsletter Titbits reaching its 50th edition (53 total), nature walks being initiated, active website and social media updates, presence at the Cambridge Natural History Society Conversazione and production of a new leaflet about the brook with support from the PEBBLE Fund. Three litterpicks

were conducted, including one as part of the Great British Spring Clean and one with the scouts, with ongoing support (e.g. equipment) from Rivercare. Liaison and coordination of activities with Guy Belcher from Cambridge City Council has been key to inform and plan habitat management and our activities to improve the brook for wildlife. Vic Smith, Local Nature Reserves Officer, and her volunteer team have also been very active, including strengthening banks and installing pre-seeded coir matting and our Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership project was completed (a report is being produced). Emmy Smart has put in a huge amount of effort on the project to have a mural by Sainsbury's, but unfortunately our proposal for Lottery funding was rejected as Sainsbury's own the wall. We have confirmed we don't need planning permission, and have the artist lined up, so now need to fill the funding gap. Monitoring is ongoing, with riverfly monitoring led by Vic Smith, fixed-point photo monitoring (initial results were demonstrated in the meeting), plus University Technical College repeated student projects in 2017. It would be good to continue to encourage submission of water vole sightings.

Action: Sue Wells to circulate Chair's report to all (see attached)

Rob Mungovan (Conservation Officer, East Anglia and Central), at the Wild Trout Trust (WTT), was invited to introduce himself. WTT aims to educate on the value of streams for wild brown trout (e.g. working with fishing groups, local groups such as FCHB), and Rob's remit is fairly flexible and he can help with project ideas, funding advice (WTT also have a small pot of funds), and he brings experience from elsewhere, including stream improvements and recovering trout numbers at Fowlmere nature reserve.

3. Treasurer's report

Monica Frisch outlined the relatively healthy financial position of FCHB, and current balance of £2,473.79. This primarily relates to income for the mural (Sainsbury's), Sustrans, and new funding from the PEBBLE Fund (Cambridge Water). Expenses have been modest, for example, printing 1000 new leaflets, the meeting room for the AGM and other sundry expenses. There will be small increase in balance follow membership fees being collected at the AGM. There are currently 107 people on the FCHB online mailing list, but the exact number of current members was unknown, and the membership secretary not present to confirm the figure.

Action: Sue Wells to circulate Treasurer's report to all (see attached)

4. Election of officers and committee members

The following were willing to present themselves for re-election:

Sue Wells (chair), Monica Frisch (treasurer), Holly Anderson (secretary), Jón Fairbairn (webmaster), Nicola Fawcett, Stuart Newbold, Emmy Smart, Rebecca Jones, Shona Douglas, David Brooks, Berry Mulligan and Jenny Sutton. Wilbert van Vliet is stepping down from the committee. Monica Frisch proposed that these changes be accepted, this was seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

Anne Rout expressed interest in joining the committee. This was proposed, seconded and her addition to the committee was passed unanimously.

5. AOB

Veronica Greenwood thanked Sue Wells, Chair, for all her hard work.

6. Date of next AGM

Action: date is to be confirmed during a future committee meeting, but is expected to be June 2018, 1 or 2 weeks after the Cambridge Natural History Conversazione.

7. Talks

Water Voles. Peter Pilbeam, Cambridgeshire Mammal Group

Peter provided an excellent broad ranging talk on water voles, covering their ecology, and their decline in the UK, touching on the survey and training to FCHB committee members that he carried out in May. Means to monitor them were presented, highlighting that monitoring is primarily of droppings rather than burrows, and that latrine sites are thought to be able to give an indication of the number of voles on a given stretch of river. 'Feeding stations' are also important signs as nothing else creates them (there are 2 going towards Sainsbury's). Water voles feed on a huge range of plants (227 spp.) and chew vegetation/reeds at a characteristic 45° angle. Of particular use for vole surveys/observations are a pair of close-focus binoculars. The Mammal Society has a useful factsheet on their website for detailed information.

Their precipitous decline in the last 20 years in the UK was discussed, but also the fact that when there are good weather conditions and no predation they rapidly increase, having 3-4 litters a year, and making startling come-backs at various sites, particularly where predator (mink) control is carried out. They are one of the reasons the brook is a City Wildlife Site. It was highlighted that shading could be an issue on the brook (e.g. alongside St Bede's school) as water voles need fresh vegetation growth, but also that we should be cautious about getting caught up on managing the site only for one species. **Action:** it would nonetheless be good to pursue a good contact at St Bede's School.

Of note from the 2017 survey were several particularly black individuals (similar to Scotland where they are mainly black) and the general conclusion that there is a healthy population of voles in Cherry Hinton Brook and that numbers appear similar to the last survey (2 years ago). A report on the survey has been sent to Sue Wells and Monica Frisch.

8. Future plans, general discussion and questions

Following the talk and questions there was a brief discussion about what our priorities for next year should be, with several points touched on:

- Tues 11th July – there is a nature walk along the Brook.
- Sat 17th September is the next major event in our calendar – Cherry Hinton Festival.
- Autumn clean-ups are expected late October or early November

- PEBBLE Fund working parties will begin once bird nesting season is over – Guy Belcher is keen to begin works parties in August, and there will be one for Cambridge Water staff and one that we will be involved in.
- We hope to continue and do more monitoring, and bring together all the relevant information.
- Tackling invasive New Zealand pygmy weed will be important as it has spread.
- Blacklands allotments are still abstracting water in large volumes – Peterhouse owns these allotments, and management is contracted out to Bidwells. FCHB Committee has followed this issue up in the past and it appears that the allotment holders and Bidwells consider they are operating within their reights. The Environment Agency is the authority responsible for water abstraction. Abstractions by a land owner of 20 cubic metres (20,000 litres) or less a day, provided the abstraction is part of a single operation, do not require a licence (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/water-management-abstract-or-impound-water>). We should try to follow up on what impact the Blacklands abstraction might have on the brook, given that poor water flow is a recognised problem.
- In the long run we need to consider the potential to reconnect the brook with the River Cam. This is something the council have been looking at and even working on with volunteer parties, plugging holes on Coldham’s Common via which the brook flows in to drainage ditches. Restoring connectivity and flow might be required to be able to reach ‘good ecological status’, and would be necessary for the long-term return of chalk stream species such as brown trout. **Action:** [Berry Mulligan and Monica Frisch to walk with Rob Mungovan the stretch of the brook that we cover to ‘introduce’ the site and discuss our activities](#), proposed for the 6th July. Rob to contact the council regarding their restoration efforts on Coldham’s Common.

The meeting closed at 21.05 and the evening continued with refreshments and conversation.

FCHB Chair's Report

AGM June 2017

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook (FCHB) have been as busy as ever over the last 12 months, largely as a result of all the help and enthusiastic support we have from so many people and organisations. Activities that we have undertaken since the AGM in June 2017 are described below, under the headings of our objectives. We would like to say a big thank-you to all our supporters:

- The many volunteers who took part in the brook clean-ups and work parties;
- RiverCare, which provides the equipment, insurance and moral support for the clean-ups;
- Sainsbury's Coldham's Lane store;
- The Cambridge Wildlife Trust;
- Cambridge City Council, particularly Guy Belcher;
- Last but not least, FCHB's very active committee!

1. Maintaining the attractive appearance of the brook

Litter picks: three FCHB events: 14th Cambridge Scouts 13th 1st Oct; autumn clean up Nov 20th; spring clean-up 25th March 2017 as part of the Great British Spring Clean. The City Council organised an additional clean up on 31st May 2017. A special thanks to Nicola Fawcett for leading these events and to RiverCare for equipment, insurance, risk assessment, and general advice.

Maintenance and vegetation clearance: collaboration continued with Cambridge City Council.

2. Raising public awareness about the importance of the brook for wildlife

Newsletter: 5 issues (numbers 49-53), including a special 50th issue in December 2016; thanks to Monica Frisch, newsletter editor, and David Brook who initiated Titbits and was the original editor.

New leaflet – 1000 copies printed with support from the Pebble Fund

Events:

- Cherry Hinton Festival – September 2016; the 14th Cambridge Scouts helped to look after the stall and we had some new games (lucky dip, where litter-pickers had to be used, and 'guess the weight of the bag of litter')
- Earth Optimism Solutions Fair, David Attenborough Building, Cambridge, April 2017
- Cambridge Natural History Conversazione, June 2017

Nature walks along the brook: a new activity, initiated by Rebecca, who with Monica has organised 3 walks - two on 9th July 2016 in collaboration with Sustrans (which provided publicity and a donation), as part of Cambridge Wild Weekend; and a winter walk on 25th Feb 2017. Many thanks to them!

Talks: Sue Wells and Monica Frisch – talk at the Cambridge Local Group of the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants. 24th Feb 2017

Website, Facebook and Twitter (69 followers): thanks to Jon Fairbairn, Wilbert van Vliet and Berry Mulligan for maintaining these.

Sainsbury’s mural: we have been working on this for some time, overcoming various obstacles that have arisen. The good news was that Sainsbury’s awarded us £500. Emmy deserves a medal for her cheerful persistence on this project to raise the remaining funds– it is not proving easy!

Many thanks to the photographers (introduced by Berry) who are providing us with some wonderful images free of charge.

3. Improving the brook as a home for wildlife

March saw the completion of the work to be undertaken with the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership funding, with volunteer parties to strengthen some of the flow deflectors and to put in pre-seeded coir matting in the stretch of stream through Sainsbury’s car park. Particular thanks to Emmy Smart and Wilbert van Vliet for co-ordinating this project, to Guy Belcher and Vic Smith for organising and directing the work, and to the many volunteers who took part. We are now finalising the report which we will make available.

We made a successful application to the PEBBLE Fund (Projects that Explore Biodiversity Benefits in the Local Environment), a grant scheme run by South Staffordshire Water PLC, which operates Cambridge Water, for further restoration work and received £1700 which will be used to install another four flow deflectors, in sites to be determined with Cambridge City Council, and to produce awareness raising materials.

Funding raised for brook restoration work now totals £6700, with an additional £6000 matching funds provided by the City Council:

Natural England	£3000
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership	£2000
Cam Water Pebble Fund	£1700

4. Monitoring the wildlife of the brook

Water voles: we have had fewer sightings reported this year but in May, Peter Pilbeam repeated the survey he had last carried out in 2015 and considers the population still to be healthy. He provided training at the same time to a number of volunteers – many thanks. Monica’s article on the Cherry Hinton Brook voles was published in *Nature in Cambridgeshire* in 2016.

Other wildlife: this has continued to be abundant although the swifts are still not taking interest in the accommodation provided in Burnside – additional nest boxes on have been put in on 95 Burnside, with the help of Action for Swifts. Eels were confirmed as being present, when an enormous specimen (unfortunately no longer alive) was found during the dredging works in Cherry Hinton Hall.

Fixed point photographs: Nicola and Holly have taken monthly photos at specific locations along the brook to record the general changes in vegetation and appearance of the brook near the flow deflectors and riffles.

Riverfly monitoring: Berry and Emmy attended the Riverfly training course in July last year and have been helping Vic Smith of the City Council with the monthly monitoring that she carried out at a location in the brook near Sainsbury’s.

University Technical College (UTC): Cherry Hinton Brook was again used as a project site for the students on the environmental course. Berry gave the introductory talk about the brook at the beginning of the course. We will receive the results of the project and feed it into our monitoring programme.

5. Liaison and co-operation with other organisations

City Council Local plan and proposal for an urban country park for the lakes: Liaison meeting with the Andersons Group following the public consultation in February 2017. We continue to work with a large number of organisations including Action for Swifts, 14th Cambridge Scouts, Cambridge City Council, Cam Valley Forum, Cam and Ely Ouse (CamEO) Catchment Partnership, Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall, Federation of Cambridge Residents Association, RiverCare, University Technical College (UTC).

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook – Treasurer’s Report

Accounts for the year ended 31 May 2017

Our bank balance is very healthy at £2,473.79 as a result of two grants: £500 from Sainsbury’s towards a mural on the side of their Coldham’s Lane store and £1,700 from the Pebble Fund. We also got £50 from Sustrans in connection with the walk along the Brook.

Membership fees remain very low at £2.00 a year. Much of the income from membership was paid in cash. We also got £47.15 in donations at the Cherry Hinton Festival. With membership income of £70 this took cash income to £117.15, of which £85 was banked and £39.50 went towards committee members’ expenses. A small balance of £8.85 remains for cash expenses.

Many members of the committee have not claimed expenses for printing, postage or telephone. We thank them for donating not just their time but also waiving expense claims. However, expenses, where claimed, are low as the newsletter, *Titbits*, is distributed mainly by email and only a very small number of printed copies are produced.

Income:			
Membership & donations			
Sainsbury’s			
Pebble Fund			
Sustrans			
Total income			
Expenditure			
Printing leaflets			
Meeting room hire			
Mill Road Winter Fair			
Photography			
Batteries and velcro			
Renewal of website domain			
Bank charges			
Total expenditure			
Surplus			
Balance carried forward from May 2016			
Current balance at 31 May 2017			

The bank statement to end February 2017 shows a balance of £2,643.50 less cheque for £169.71 gives £2,473.79. This tallies with the balance as checked by telephone on 25th June 2017. There is £8.65 in petty cash, giving a current balance of £2,482.44.

Monica Frisch, Treasurer, 25th June 2017