

Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook: Occasional Titbits, No. 7, January 2010

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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. St. Bede's School/ Snakey Path Litter Pick. This event went ahead on **13 December** as planned, with one lone picker. Subsequent attempts were thwarted by the weather. Three Friends carried out an informal litter pick in **Dawes Lane** on **3 January 2010**, but the area is in a poor state again. **Giant's Grave** is still in a dreadful state, and getting worse.



2. Clearance of the Cherry Hinton Brook channel.

Beginning on 18 January, this work was carried out by contractors for the City Council Drainage Engineering department. The purpose was to ensure that the flow of the water is unimpeded. Unfortunately, in the process, some cans and plastic items were lifted from the stream bed and thrown on the inaccessible far bank, particularly along Snakey Path.

At the same time, removal of vegetation has revealed the accumulated products of earlier channel clearances going back probably many more than 10 years. This litter now lies provocatively in full view but out of reach. Indeed, the far bank of the Brook along lengthy stretches of Snakey now looks in a worse state than it has appeared in recent years. A season's growth of vegetation is hardly likely to cover the litter which would, in any case, be exposed again next winter.

Looking on the bright side, the channel clearance has presented a golden opportunity for the removal, by intrepid volunteers, of litter which has been lurking there all this time. The photograph shows a mix of recent and older litter. The kingfishers are unfazed by the goings-on.

3. St. Bede's dismantled play area. On 20 January a site-meeting was held by Guy Belcher (City Council Nature Conservation Projects Officer), local residents' representatives and Council officials to discuss its future.

Strengths of feeling ran high. Very local residents have suffered torment from alcoholics, drug users, and general antisocial behaviour for at least several years. Police have been called upon, to no effect. The following ideas emerged as front runners:

- (a) The attraction of the area for antisocial people should be minimised.
- (b) The area should be viewed as a 'natural' part of the Brook Green Corridor, not as having any connection with the adjoining houses.
- (c) Along the inner edge of the area (between it and the service road) a suitable thick thorny barrier should be planted to block the area off from the houses, preventing access to them.
- (d) All concrete and tarmac should be removed, and the area opened up onto Snakey Path, eg by removing the remains of the fence and perhaps felling some trees.
- (e) Access between Snakey and St. Bede's Crescent at lamp post 20 would be maintained and would be a good location for an interpretation board. The litter bin should also be moved to this location.

There was optimism that money from the 'improve your neighbourhoods' scheme is available. The current planting season has been missed but there appears to be a possibility that work could start in the late summer.

4. The Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall held their most recent public meeting on 20 January. Parts of the meeting were relevant to the Brook and the green corridor. The Friends plan a flora and fauna species audit for the grounds in May. Two hundred bird- and bat-boxes will be installed in late February. At the Friends' request a short-term (only moderately successful) path has been constructed, by the Council, to bypass the muddy area beside the pond. The Folk Festival is a hot potato.

The poor state of the pond and the Brook and the wildlife were touched upon, with reference to the extraction of water from the Brook for the reservoirs at the top of Lime Kiln Hill, nitrate levels in the pond, and therefore the Brook, and the possibility of dredging the pond. Some historical context was provided.