

Chair: Stephen Tomkins Editor: David Brooks

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#### Waterlight: A portrait of a Chalk stream

The role of the River Mel in its local community was celebrated on 19 November 2019 in film, word, and song. The sell-out joint meeting of the Cambridge Conservation Forum (CCF) and the CVF in the David Attenborough Building was a triumph. The above photograph by Nigel Kinnings encapsulates, by itself, the *spiritual* value of the stream, with more than a nod towards the future.

The event included the Cambridge premier of the 40-minute film, "Waterlight: A portrait of a Chalk stream", masterminded by James Murray-White and Nigel Kinnings. This is part of the Waterlight Project, inspired by the Chalk stream, the Mel, about which <https://waterlightproject.org.uk/blog/> provides a rich and detailed source of information.

"Waterlight" began as a collaboration between the poet and writer Clare Crossman and filmmaker James Murray-White. The group expanded to include Bruce Huett the local expert. On the November evening, Clare read some of her poetry and she was joined by Penni McClaren and Bryan Causton who presented, with guitar accompaniment, local folk songs, including a version of one by Ralph Vaughan Williams, and "Waterlight" which they had composed. All to great acclaim.

Stephen Tomkins chaired a panel discussion with Ruth Hawkesley (Wildlife Trust), Rob Mungovan (fluvial ecologist), Mike Foley (bird and invasive plants expert), and Steve Hawkins the Chair of the Mel River Restoration Group which has worked tirelessly to improve the hydrology and ecology of the stream.

Stephen later wrote about the evening in the following terms. *"I thought the mix of genres in the film was so special, and, in my experience, genuinely unique. It was a wonderful word and picture image of 'place' and human belonging, of local history, social history, natural history and much more. The weave of the stream's images and sounds with descriptive poetry was technically excellent and deeply memorable. I can't wait to see it again. It was a brilliant idea and the whole project is a model of community achievement. The serenity of the film is the abiding impression. It's a gem....."*



Chloë Fitzgerald, in the Mel, 1984

**Now there is another chance to experience the film; this time at the Storey's Field Centre, at Eddington, on 22 February with screenings at 10.45am and 12 noon. Full details at:**

<https://www.storeysfieldcentre.org.uk/event/2020/02/toy-swap-shop-film-screening/>