

Chair: Stephen Tomkins Secretary: Alan Woods Editor: David Brooks

Please email davidbrooks@btinternet.com with any items for him to consider for the next newsletter or to request that your address be taken off (or added to) the emailing list. Do forward this newsletter to anyone who may be interested.



Cam Conservators at work in central Cambridge

Human incorrigibility on the one hand.....



The Hoffer Brook, guided by Rob Mungovan

.....and passion for the planet on the other.

The CVF's 20th Anniversary

In the closing years of the last century the late Nevill Willmer, a retired Professor of Histology and fellow of Clare College, convened a group of people who shared his concern that the Cam and its riverside near Cambridge were threatened by rapid urban development. Their mission was sensibly widened to protect and include the river's wildlife and rural landscapes, across the entire Cam catchment, which even then had already greatly lost out to changed farming practice. At the suggestion of Max Walters, a former Botanic Garden director, it was conceived that the group might usefully bring together all those concerned with every strand of river interest and so achieve consensual outcomes that everyone might find were for the better.

It was this vision that led to the launch of the Cam Valley Forum. Jean Perraton, a founder member and former chairman, has been that group's enduring central figure over the last 20 years. Willmer himself left behind two beautiful published sketch books of River Cam scenes, not to mention the brilliant floral artistry in his design of Clare College fellows' garden.

There have been many changes over 20 years. The forum continues to attract enthusiastic voluntary labour, wide-ranging proactive skills, and devotion to its founding principles. These have led to the expansion of its activities.

There has been improvement in farming practices. Some major industrial chemical polluters have gone - though we find their numerous pollutants still present today as traces in water samples from Hauxton. The threat of Floating Pennywort has grown over 20 years. The over-abstraction of water from the Chalk has become a widely-understood and regional emergency though the first Cam tributary augmentations date from the 1970s [see [Let it Flow!](#)]. Discharge of untreated sewage into the Cam system is a major issue.

Rather than merely harangue, the forum has evolved its *modus operandi*, to hold to account and work together with, where possible, the water companies and the cash-strapped Environment Agency, and to call upon help, be it from organisations such as the Wildlife Trust, the Wild Trout Trust, local river groups, volunteers, the Cam Conservators, the commercial punting companies or the Cambridge Canoe Club.