



Newsletter

February 2020

Love Hambrook Marshes



Welcome

By now, you will all have heard about the arson attack on our boardwalk in the early hours of St Valentine's Day. The banner photo (above) is of the boardwalk in happier times, but 80% of it has now gone completely. There is a certain irony to the fact that the organisation dedicated to protecting the area is called Love Hambrook Marshes, when it is all too painfully obvious that some people do not share this affection for the place.



Our sincere thanks go out to everyone who has expressed their sympathy and shared our devastation at the destruction of the boardwalk. As a small group of volunteer trustees, we are hugely grateful for your support and it has lifted our spirits at this difficult time. Many people have kindly offered to help with the clear up. At the moment we really need financial contributions towards the cost of making the site safe and removing sheets of melted plastic, as well as for creating and maintaining a new route across the marshes. In time, we may need volunteers to help too. Once we have a clearer idea of how we wish to proceed, and the likely cost, we hope to set up a Crowdfunding link.

What's happening on the Marshes?

Wincheap Park and Ride

The saga rumbles on: As you know, Canterbury City Council's planning committee's decision to approve a highly controversial application to extend the Wincheap Park & Ride onto water meadows next to the river Stour is being challenged in the courts by the countryside charity CPRE Kent with the support of the Save Wincheap Water Meadows campaign. The council is now considering possible alternatives but we need to maintain the pressure. Here's how you can help...

- **Please donate:** We need to raise another £4000 to help cover the cost of the legal action so far. Please go to: <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/wincheap-water-meadows/>
- **Please respond:** The Council is consulting on its Corporate Plan 2020-22 which sets its priorities. The draft document states that '*important*' open spaces will be improved and maintained. While it emphasises action on climate change, it has totally dropped all reference to the Stour, biodiversity, nature and the broader environment. The consultation closes on Monday 23rd March. Please ask for the Canterbury River Corridor to be designated as an important open space: <https://news.canterbury.gov.uk/consultation-item?id=1&r=6>
- **Please show support:** Put up a Window Poster to show support for the campaign (available from email address below) and follow the campaign on Facebook and Twitter.
- **Please come to the concert:** A number of Canterbury-based musicians are making plans for a fundraising concert for Hambrook Marshes (opposite Wincheap Water Meadows) following the devastating fire on the boardwalk. Please look out for announcements.



We are most grateful to our busking supporters for the £110 they raised with their musical talent in the High Street on 1st March.

Facebook: [Save Wincheap Water Meadows](#)
Twitter: [@MeadowsSave](#)
Email: swwm@gn.apc.org

Tree planting

Fortunately, all is not gloom on the Marshes; a generous local resident has paid for 18 larger trees to be planted. We agreed that a good place for them would be between the Wincheap footbridge and the A2 bridge, as an irregular arc would help to screen the bridge, traffic and offending graffiti. Even before it has put on any growth, a strategically placed alder blocks out part of the bridge and graffiti when viewed from one angle (see before and after photos on right). Some screening benefit should be apparent fairly quickly, but for the moment the bare stems and branches (bottom right) are in mute testimony to our faith in the project !

Five members of the St Stephen's Women's Institute gallantly planted thirty small whips in the field adjoining the Canterbury side of the A2 on a wet and windy Saturday. Originally mown for a hay crop, the field often proved too wet for this work to be carried out, and it seemed more sensible to work with nature by allowing it to scrub over. Small numbers of hawthorn, willow, alder, rose and field maple have already established themselves, and the WI's work will help speed the process along.

Conversely, we are aiming to keep parts of the old embankment free of scrub in order to maintain habitat for slow worms and lizards on its sunny slopes, and so volunteers cleared some more scrub this month. The aim is to maintain a balance of open and scrubby areas, the bushes being particularly attractive to birds



at all seasons, but especially in autumn when many are feeding up prior to embarking on an arduous migration south.

Willow wands free to a good home

Our willow weavers cut more stems than they needed this winter. The surplus has been left in the osier bed, sorted by colour (left), and is free to anyone who wants it.



Wildlife Report



Most of the signs are that spring is on the way, with the number of wintering tufted ducks on Tonford Lake declining to seven on 24th. Some birds do nest in Kent and the rest of the UK, but in winter their numbers increase about nine-fold as birds pour in across the North Sea to enjoy our milder winters. So, it is only natural that at this time of year tufted ducks disappear from the lakes in the Stour valley as birds move north and east in preparation for the breeding season. Much the same happens with snipe, numbers dwindling to just eight by the end of the month. A great spotted woodpecker was drumming on 14th, so may choose to nest on the old embankment once again. A single great crested grebe, the first since last April, made an appearance on Tonford Lake mid-month, but whether that will translate into a breeding pair (left) has yet to be seen.

One or two little egrets have been

present all month, probably a prelude to their moving to a heronry elsewhere in order to breed, and 30 black-headed gulls taking advantage of flooded fields on 10th, all in various stages of regaining their chocolate hoods (right), will any day be heading off to the Thames Marshes to nest.

The only other bird of note was a greenfinch, a very occasional visitor to the marshes.



Great crested grebe and black-headed gull photos courtesy of Dave Smith

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