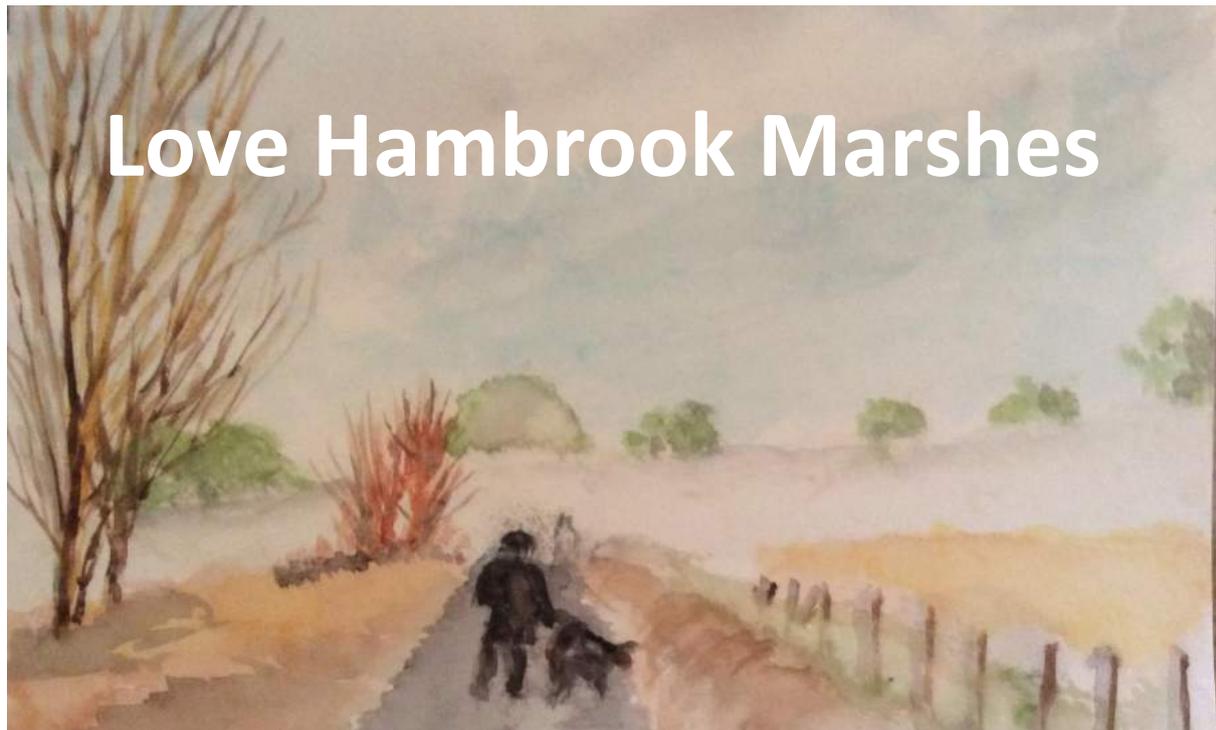




Newsletter

October 2021



Love Hambrook Marshes

Welcome

Our banner this month is a painting by Keith Oliver, inspired by one of Ralph Lombart's recent photos (right), using artistic licence to wreath it in mist. It is a very commendable effort for someone who says he hadn't picked up an artist's paintbrush for over fifty years! At a time when random vandalism, graffiti-scrawling and arson are rife, it's really heart-warming to know that people can get so much pleasure from their visits to the Marshes.



We would welcome artwork or photographs from anyone who has been inspired by a visit to Hambrook for possible use as the newsletter's banner. To be considered for inclusion as a banner, the image needs to be in narrow landscape format, with a fairly blank, out of focus, or fuzzy area towards the top or bottom on which "Love Hambrook Marshes" can be superimposed.

£842 from Co-op's Local Community Fund

Last December we included an item in the newsletter about Love Hambrook Marshes having been chosen to be a local cause in the Co-op's Local Community Fund. We asked all Co-op members to choose the Marshes as their cause when shopping over the following twelve months. We are now delighted



to announce that your support has borne fruit in the form of an £842 donation from the Co-op, which will be spent on educational resources.

What's happening on the Marshes?

We're delighted to say that Hambrook Marshes was one of just four open spaces in the Canterbury district to receive the prestigious Green Flag Community Award. This is entirely down to the time and effort everyone put into making Hambrook Marshes a welcoming, clean and sustainable place for both people and wildlife. A huge thank you to you all, not just from the trustees, but also from the tens of thousands of visitors who enjoy visiting the Marshes every year. The Green Flag Award is an international quality mark for parks and green spaces and Hambrook Marshes joins over 2,000 other sites across the



country that received an award this year, including the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, Chiswick Old Cemetery in London and Kearsney Parks in Dover.

The relatively recent advent of ultra-powerful magnets has, with a wearying inevitability, given rise to yet another pointless hobby – magnet fishing – in which a magnet on the end of a strong fishing line is cast into the river to trawl for any pieces of iron. Aficionados of this new “sport” have recently been trying their luck by the old railway bridge abutment. This bridge was an iron lattice construction, so when it was demolished in the 1950s, large numbers of iron lumps will have dropped to the river bed. This treasure is now being hauled out of the river and dumped at the foot of the brickwork, where it then becomes problem rubbish for us. Valuable jewellery is made of gold, silver or platinum, none of which are magnetic, and the only magnetic coins are 1p and 2p, which are steel with a copper coating, so these latter-day fisherfolk aren't likely to get rich in a hurry.



Our hay crop was cut on 13th and rowed up a couple of days later (below left), but in the early hours of 16th October someone set light to it, creating this ugly black scar across the field (below right).



Fortunately, nature can prove remarkably resilient, and within ten days fresh grass shoots were emerging from the burnt area (left). Given that the grass was presumably covered in dew, it is remarkable that it burnt as well as it did, but the wet ground surface would have prevented the heat from penetrating to any depth. In pre-colonial days, Native Americans in North America would set fire to extensive grasslands to encourage fresh growth of sweet grasses for the animals that they hunted.

The large Guff and Slam tags that have defaced the A2 bridge (below left) for so many years have vanished (below right)! Being in such an exposed and elevated location, they were an eyesore to walkers 200 yards away and there had long been an aspiration to do something about it. Finally, with the aid of a roller on an extendable handle, and a paint concocted out of four emulsion colours, something approximating to concrete hue was mixed up, and then the ugly tags magically began to disappear! One small corner of "GUFF!" couldn't be reached without falling in the river, so anyone with a perverse nostalgia for the unloved tags will, for the time being, have a small red triangle to remind them. The graffiti on the wall underneath the bridge hasn't been touched, as it is so much less conspicuous and, by informally designating this as the graffiti artists' work area, it is hoped that they will leave other areas alone. Being so hard to reach, it is likely that the painted-over areas will remain free of graffiti for years to come, which is more than can be said for the supporting pillars,



which received the same treatment (below, left and right). Being so readily accessible, it seems inevitable that the taggers will thank us for providing them with a lovely blank canvas! Any bets on how long they remain pristine?



Wildlife Report

There were autumnal signs aplenty: a little grebe on the river on 3rd, occasional meadow pipits and skylarks flying over (right), eight tufted duck and a coot back on the Tonford lake, first snipe on 26th, four mallard on the newly wet fields on 21st, and a goldcrest giving away its presence with high-pitched calls on 26th. Any one of these records may not sound very exciting, but they all represent species that had not been seen since the first four months of the year.



The parakeet is still present, delighting, puzzling and annoying people in equal measure.

From 2012-2016 jackdaws were regularly to be seen feeding in Tonford field or flying over the Marshes. Since then they have become a rarity here, hardly ever seen on the ground, but up until a year ago still flying overhead from time to time. This year even overflights had become a thing of the past, and so a single bird calling as it flew by on 26th was definitely noteworthy, having not been recorded since March.

The squirrel was back at the start of the month, and eleven magpies were present on 21st.

Photo credits: Dave Smith for skylark

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