



# Newsletter

September 2023



## Love Hambrook Marshes

*Turbo-charged green woodpecker by Dave Smith*

### Welcome

It is with great sadness that we have to announce the death of David Lewis, a co-founder of the Love Hambrook Marshes CIO, and for several years the chair of trustees. He did stalwart work in facilitating the purchase of the Marshes by a local benefactor in 2014, and then transferring ownership to the CIO. A career as a statistician ill-prepared him for the tribulations of engaging graziers, organising contractors to install new fencing, producing a range of attractive information panels, and much more. But, along with three other trustees, he rose to the challenge, and the Marshes prospered. Under his chairmanship new trustees were recruited, with particular interest in community engagement and wildlife, so ensuring that Love Hambrook Marshes was established on a firm footing. David will be sorely missed.



*On an early litter-picking expedition*

# What's happening on the Marshes?

## The Great Stour Riverfest

This inaugural venture took place during the week 18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> September, kicking off with Zoom presentations on the Stour beavers, the river's biodiversity and a history of its environs from pre-Roman times onwards. Over the following days there were bulb-planting sessions, bat walks and other walks and litter-picking (photos on page 2). The week was deemed a success by its organisers – the city council and a range of community groups - and planning has already begun on next year's Fest! A photographic competition was well-supported with many excellent shots. Winning photos in each category are shown below:



*Overall winner: Swan taking off from the river – John Pring*



*Wildlife category: Beaver – Steve Ashton*



*Landscape: Punting on the river – David Tabor*



*Winning children's entry: A swan on the river at Kingsbrook Park, Canterbury – Alice Pollard*

A [Riverside Strategy](#) for the Canterbury stretch of the river Stour covering the period 2023-2028 was launched to coincide with the start of the Riverfest week. It's a lengthy document, but the succinct summary provided is that "The overall vision is for the riverside to be a clean, safe, accessible and coherent place – a joy to wander, a sustainable transport corridor for walkers and cyclists – a confident place that reflects the city's proud heritage and complements its important and diverse biodiversity".

The irony of the timing of the Riverfest is that it took place in the week that the government announced its intention to amend the Levelling-up and Regeneration bill, which would then allow developers to sidestep the

nutrient neutrality regulations, which state that no development will be permitted that would increase the nutrient load on rivers (primarily in the form of nitrates and phosphates).



*Candifa inter-faith walk along the river*



*Bulb planting in Westgate Gardens*



*Volunteers equipped to collect litter from the river bed or floating downstream*

## The mural

In less than two days Canterbury College art students converted design ideas into a colourful mural on the brickwork of the old Elham Valley Railway bridge abutment on the riverside walk. It has drawn widespread admiration from passers-by, and is a huge improvement on the random graffiti that previously festooned the wall. A great deal of preparatory work took place in the college: from 14 submissions, Evie Wan's design was selected as being the best and most suited to the setting. Elements of her drawing were scaled up to use as stencils on the wall (below left). The



students then prepared the surface with white masonry paint (above right), which easily covered up all the layers of graffiti. Next came the fun bit – adding the colourful background of grass, sky and river, together with detailed paintings of various wildlife (below).



Finally, the finished mural (below) was treated with three coats of anti-graffiti paint, which should give it a certain level of protection from the spray painters, and the mural has so far survived three weeks unscathed.



The students enjoyed the project, which will go towards their overall academic assessment, and there is the possibility that we will be able to work with the college on another project in the future.

### **Other activities**

KCC contractors finally completed mowing of the riverside path edges, a job they are supposed to do twice a year, but the late cut meant that some stretches had narrowed as thistles, nettles and grasses collapsed onto the path. We hope we can keep KCC to its commitments in 2024.

The rest of the hay meadow was also cut. This is a rougher area that our main contractor was unable to do with his hay mower. A different machine had to be employed to do the work, giving a very rough finish, and with none of the arisings being raked up. This is unsatisfactory as a long-term management prescription for the meadow, as the hay needs to be taken off-site if the field is ever to become more floristically diverse. Part of the meadow has been sown with a variety of seeds in a bid to make it more varied – wild carrot, fleabane, several vetches, yellow rattle, field scabious, hardheads, ox-eye daisy and greater knapweed.

A huge quantity of wire that someone had strung up on the embankment to form a web-like hammock, was disposed of, and the maze was given its fourth and final trim of the season.

Three fish were reported dead in the river near Tonford bridge. We don't know how they came to be there, but it seems unlikely that a pollution incident would affect such a small number.

## Wildlife Report

The mute swan family of two solicitous parents and seven young went missing for much of the month, but all nine stately birds eventually reappeared safely. The parakeet is still around, though usually on the Wincheap side of the river, so its raucous squawks are considerably less penetrating! Considering its wetland status, the Marshes aren't visited by herons that frequently, and one flying over this month (right) was my first record since April.



If, like me, you don't relish the thought of

winter, then certain signs of the times are met with mixed feelings: five tufted duck and a couple of coot had returned to Tonford lake by the end of the month, a sure indication that colder weather



will soon be treading on autumn's toes; and there is currently a staggering display of hawthorn berries (left) and rose hips on the Marshes and in the wider countryside, though contrary to rural myth, this does not portend a harsh winter. Back in the Second World War children were paid a pittance to collect hips, which are rich in vitamin C, and therefore made a valuable addition to the nation's rationed diet. Turning them into something edible is a fiddly job, though, as the interior is filled with a fluff of strands like fibreglass.

*Green woodpecker and heron photos courtesy of Dave Smith*

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