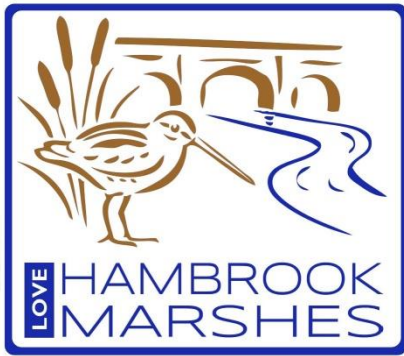




Newsletter

June 2025



Welcome

Reading through an old magazine of Plantlife, an organisation devoted to the protection of our native plants, I came across some rather amazing statistics. A survey carried out in 2018 had discovered that fewer than half of 16- to 24-year-olds could correctly identify a bluebell, Britain's favourite flower, and an alarmingly low 4% of them recognised red clover. These are common plants in England, and both occur at Hambrook (though admittedly, bluebells are confined to a few individuals on the old railway embankment). It brought me up sharp, making me realise the yawning chasm that now exists between young people and the wildlife knowledge that earlier generations had taken for granted. We can no longer assume that most children spend significant amounts of time in the countryside or that they are familiar with common plants and animals. I suspect they know more about exotic wildlife that features so prominently on television programmes.

What's happening on the Marshes?

Sadly, we have to report the discovery of the body of Dylan Bayliss (right), a 26-year-old man, on the old railway embankment, on 10th June. His mother, Florence Bayliss, has been in touch with the trustees, with a view to installing a lasting memorial to him on the Marshes.



Tributes of flowers and hand-written messages have been left on the embankment fence (left), close to where he was found. Since then our cattle have been brought into the Boardwalk Field, so the grazier has erected two sections of security fencing to prevent the livestock from damaging the memorial. All the tributes are due to be removed shortly, now that the funeral has taken place.

Andy and his team of volunteers have cut scallops in the rank grass strip bordering the river. This is to diversify the habitat while creating “windows” onto the Stour, which becomes all but invisible at this time of year. They also cleared vegetation that was threatening to swamp out the steps leading up to the old embankment.

In the April newsletter we were sorry to have to announce that our chairman, Jon Winder, had tendered his resignation. We are therefore now advertising for a new chair. This represents an excellent opportunity for someone with leadership skills to put something back into the community. If you are interested, please email lovehambrook@gmail.com to request an application form.

Wildlife Report

Nine southern marsh orchids and our single common spotted orchid in Middle Field were flowering at the start of the month, but had disappeared without trace a week later, leaving me to suspect that someone had picked them all. Perhaps we need to install one of these signs (right) to discourage this activity!



The breeding season is in full swing now, and on 17th our local pair of swans were proudly showing off their family of seven cygnets, since reduced to six. But in a sign that summer's course is running irrevocably onwards, the drake mallard are losing their finery and slipping into their dismal eclipse plumage, and I haven't heard the cuckoo since 3rd.



A pair of kestrels were around on 3rd, encouraging me to continue hoping that they may nest in their smart new nestbox on a pole next spring. My first Hambrook swifts appeared over the river on 22nd; they appear to be enjoying a revival in their fortunes locally, and I recently saw about thirty of them screaming exuberantly over the city but I still haven't seen any house martins, nor any more swallows since my sighting of an early six birds on 10th April.

Thanks to Dave Smith for the swan family photo

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