



Newsletter

January 2026



Mute swans in mist, courtesy of Dave Smith

Welcome



A new trustee

The old adage about asking a busy person if you want something done could have been invented to describe our new trustee, Peter Campbell. Not content with being a volunteer with the Samaritans, and involved in a number of local organisations, including Canterbury City Football Club, Peter decided to fight last November's Wincheap by-election for the Greens. In a surprise turn of events, the Lib Dem incumbent was ousted, and Peter became the first Green city councillor for Wincheap. Recently retired after a thirty-year career in public transport, he felt able to accept Hambrook trustees' invitation to join our small team. Persuading Peter to become a trustee is something of a coup for his fellow trustees as, not only are his Green credentials closely aligned with the aims of Love Hambrook Marshes, but the reserve lies in the Wincheap ward, so Peter will be extremely well-placed to represent us over planning issues that could adversely affect the Marshes. Welcome aboard, Peter!

Wincheap park and ride back on the agenda

The issue of the Wincheap Park and Ride is back on CCC's agenda. The Council's Overview Committee will be asked to consider various options for the future of the Park and Ride after the new A2 slip road is created. One of them is to put the car park on Wincheap Water Meadows, something which we vigorously opposed when it was put forward previously. Another option is the revival of the more recent proposal to put it on Thanington Recreation Ground. Both of them are of course directly across the river from Hambrook Marshes, and either one would radically alter for the worse the character of the river valley. There are other options the Committee will also be looking at, and its discussion will be passed on to Cabinet, which will make a decision about what should go in the Local Plan. It is hoped that one or two Love Hambrook Marshes trustees will have an opportunity to speak at the meeting, which will be held in the Guildhall (the converted church next to the Westgate Towers, on **Thursday 12th February, at 7.00pm**). We hope that many of you can turn out to express solidarity with the trustees' determination to retain Wincheap Water Meadows, a valued riverside habitat, whose destruction would detract considerably from the enjoyment of a walk through Hambrook Marshes along the riverside path.

What's happening on the Marshes?

Local willow weavers have made a start on their annual harvesting of willow wands, the long, straight, supple, one-year-old stems that are ideal for weaving into baskets and other traditional items. These are cut from the osier bed at the back of the marshes, close to the gate leading onto Whitehall Road. One of the trustees' aims is to encourage traditional activities, such as weaving and hay-making, and thereby retain links with a rural past that was once the life-blood of the Stour valley.

Wildlife Report

The main feature of the month had to be the weather but, though unpleasantly wet, it was not record-breakingly so; in the past 44 years there have been four wetter Januarys, albeit not a great deal soggier. There was also a cold snap to start the year, with air frosts on eight nights, prior to a return to relatively mild conditions. So, what impact did weather conditions have on wildlife? Not much, apparently. Tonford Lake was frozen on 11th, so our small wintering group of tufted duck had moved elsewhere, but their numbers have been on the low side up to now anyway. Flooding was less dramatic than might have been expected, only attracting 17 black-headed gulls on 11th and 14 mallard on 28th. Despite the muddy conditions, snipe numbers remained extremely low, with a maximum of only seven, although arguably, when it is so wet everywhere, the birds are spoiled for choice, and the population can spread itself more thinly across the county, with some birds moving into habitat that wouldn't normally be suitable. Twenty greylag geese (right) flew over on 3rd, the largest flock I'd seen since 2015, and this is a bird that puts in fewer appearances than ten years ago. A coot was on the river most of the month, joined by a second bird on 23rd; although more a feature of the nearby lakes, it is not unusual for the odd solitary bird to appear on the river for a few days or weeks. Still on the



subject of waterbirds, four little grebes were on the river one morning; only the second time I'd seen this charming, shy and decreasing bird this winter, and in the 13 years I've been recording on Hambrook Marshes, I've only once seen a group of more than four.



the old embankment, ten meadow pipits (above) in Tonford Field, and a pair of stonechats still present there as well.

Other signs that this is still the winter period came in the form of six fieldfares flying over one morning, 12 redwings (below) feeding on



However, as usual at this time of year, indicators of spring tend to start nudging their way onto the scene; a greenfinch (left) was squeezing out his wheezy song on 28th, my first since September; and a great spotted woodpecker drummed briefly on 11th and again on 28th.

Finally, the mixed bag of odds and ends included a pheasant, sparrowhawk, jay, and at least twenty house sparrows tucked inside the tiniest of bushes.

Thanks to Dave Smith for permission to use his photos of greylag geese, greenfinch, meadow pipit and redwing

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