

What's Beane Happening?

The newsletter of The River Beane Restoration Association
Issue No 25· Autumn 2019



Welcome

Remember this picture? It appeared in our May 2017 'Souvenir Issue'. It also appears somewhere else, but more of that later. The picture was taken on the banks of the Beane at Watton at Stone to celebrate Affinity Water reducing abstraction by 90%. At that time ground water levels had become worryingly low. Thankfully, Affinity Water had managed to

achieve this reduction one year ahead of schedule, but unfortunately since then nature has not been on our side. We have now had over three years of well below average rainfall and at a recent meeting Affinity Water informed us that ground water is at its second lowest level since records began. They said that unless we get a wet winter it will drop further next summer creating a new record. It seems ironic to be writing this in the middle of a wet spell, but the ground is so lacking in moisture it is like a giant sponge soaking up the water so that the Aquifer is not being recharged and there is very little 'run off' into the river. So the upper river remains dry.



Low rainfall

The pictures on the left and the right are of the river at the ford by the church in Walkern. This stretch normally has water even when it has dried up between Aston and Watton. I can't remember it ever being like this in the ten years that I have lived in the area.

Our chairman, Dave Stimpson, takes up the story:

According to the Environment Agency our area of the country has had notably low rainfall this year up to the end of September. The lower Beane south of Watton at Stone is flowing, but the flow is lower than normal. The upper Beane has been dry all year and most of last year as well. The situation is repeated in all the rivers in the upper Lea catchment, and more besides across the south of England. The recent rain at the end of September and during October has not made a visible difference to our river yet although it has made a difference to the soil moisture deficit which is reducing.

Affinity Water has advised that if the situation does not improve, meaning if we don't get enough rain, then drought measures are likely to be imposed next year from spring onward. The concern is not only for water supplies, but wildlife as well. Water Voles are continuing to decline. Because the flows are down, silt builds up and pollutants are not flushed away. The Environment Agency are rescuing fish stocks where rivers are no longer suitable for them due to low flows. This has happened on the Mimram this year. We hope to have further updates at our next meeting in Watton at Stone on the 4th November.

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What is the River Lee Catchment Partnership?

Why not visit the web site at <http://www.riverleacatchment.org.uk/index.php/river-beane-home> where amongst other things you will find the picture at the head of our news letter. You will also find the sub heading 'The River Beane - historic, rare and precious'

(See the article on the next page)



The Beane at Whitehall



The picture on the left shows The Beane as it 'flows' through the Frogmore Estate. Shortly after this it joins with Stevenage Brook which is now the most significant year round source of water for the river. The Environment Agency is working with Stevenage Borough Council to improve the quality of the brook which is currently rated as 'poor'.

Our next meeting will be at 8.00pm on Monday 4th November in Watton at Stone Methodist Church Hall. Everyone is welcome.

We will be showing edited extracts from the recent House of Commons debate (mentioned in our last newsletter) about rivers where the Beane and RBRA were prominently mentioned.

We will be taking orders for our new calendar which this year has been re formatted so the appearance is the same but it is easier to post.

We will also be reviewing the most recent borehole dip record to see what difference the recent rain has made to ground water levels. So far, the upper river remains dry.

The River Lea Catchment Partnership – River Beane Home

The Beane Catchment Partnership is a group of people and organizations who are working to improve the River Beane for people and for wildlife. The partnership was formed in 2012 and includes a wide range of organizations, from local community groups and charities to councils and government agencies.

The partnership is being 'hosted' by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, who brought the partnership together. Their role is to organize and co-ordinate the many different members of the partnership, and drive the Catchment Plan forward beyond December 2012. They are also acting as the initial contact point for any enquiries you may have. The River Beane Restoration Association is a key partner and helps to co-host the partnership.

The partnership holds local public meetings (Watton at Stone) twice a year and welcomes anyone who is interested to come along. CTRL + click on the link for some fascinating information, and another look at the happy bunch at the head of this newsletter!

<http://www.riverleacatchment.org.uk/index.php/river-beane-home>



Stop Press! Oliver Heald, MP for the area including Watton at Stone has campaigned to improve the quality of chalk streams for many years. He wants an end to abstraction from chalk aquifers except in times of emergencies. There are 8 chalk stream rivers in his constituency and he is inviting all the various river and environmental groups to join forces and campaign together. His letter will also be discussed at our meeting on the 4th November.

RBRA Chairman: Dave Stimpson
Secretary: David Standing
River Wardens: Bob Thornton
Editor: Philip Hewett
Contact e-mail: rbra.secretary@gmail.com

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