

What's Beane Happening?

The newsletter of The River Beane Restoration Association
Issue No 28 Autumn 2020



Welcome

In our summer issue we bemoaned the fact that the previous very wet winter had been followed by a very dry spring and summer, thus undoing a lot of the good work the previous winter had done in refilling the aquifer. A more detailed article on the turbulent weather we have been experiencing follows later in the newsletter.

Well, as you have probably noticed, we are having some wet weather this autumn and the picture on the left shows the river as it flows through Whitehall Farm. This stretch has been dry all summer. Unless it keeps raining it will dry up again but it's good to have a reminder of how it could be. More good news, Affinity Water plan to start re-meandering the river here where it has been artificially straightened and this simple, though major piece of work, will improve the suitability of the river for wildlife and increase biodiversity.



Corona Virus and our AGM

This should have taken place in June but, like so many things, it had to be cancelled. It will now be held on Tuesday 10th November at 7.30 pm via Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join us whether you are a member or not. This will be the last meeting for our chairman, Dave

Stimpson, who is retiring afterwards, so a good turnout would be great.

Register in advance for this meeting:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAKdu murDisE9foxnXgUCLIs2b0oqlbWdUu> . After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing further information. If you would like help with getting to grips with Zoom meetings please email our secretary at rba.secretary@gmail.com, or phone 01438 861248.



Congratulations to Bob Thorton

Bob is second to the left in this picture, cutting a dash in his waders! The picture shows most of the team, led by Bob, who took part in the survey of the river to assess its suitability for the release of water voles. This, and its subsequent digitalization, was a huge piece of work, mostly for Bob and Anthea. Its success led to an invitation from Herts Naturalist Journal to write an article for them which will be published shortly.

The gentleman on the right of the picture is Martin Ketcher (*also in the picture to the right*). Martin has been a great supporter of the RBRA, particularly with the river corridor survey, and we would like to thank him for that. We wish him all the best for the future and we hope to bump into him one day in a reed bed somewhere.

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The picture above is of the notorious Whitehall Pumping Station where abstraction has been reduced to only 10% of its previous level. This has definitely benefitted the lower river during a period where we have experienced drought conditions in three out of the last four years.



Au Revoir to Martin Ketcher

Martin has announced that he is leaving the employ of HMWT after 12 years leading work on water voles and non native invasive species.



Problems at Waterford Weir

We have reported on the collapsed bank by the Horseshoe Falls in our last two issues. The Environment Agency has started work on the area felling trees and stabilizing the bank etc. The weir needed to be bypassed anyway to allow for the passage of fish. Hopefully the work will allow this to happen and at the same time still send some water down the mill race.

News from the Environment Agency

According to the EA in January 2020, 16% of rivers in the UK were reported as having GOOD quality status. This is shocking as that meant that 84% of rivers were not regarded as good. After a gap of nine months, the EA's latest report on the condition of rivers across the country shows the number having good status has dropped to 0%. Although drought must be a factor the latest assessment shows just what a poor state our rivers are in. The government has set itself a target of 75% of rivers being classed as 'good' by 2027. No progress has been made so far and it is shameful that our rivers are officially the dirtiest in Europe. Urgent action is needed if our rivers are to become the thriving blue corridors they once were.

Chalk Aquifer Alliance

We reported on moves to establish the CAA in our last newsletter. We are now pleased to report that there are currently 18 rivers represented by the alliance (see below)

Hertfordshire	Beane, Chess, Ivel, Mimram, Rib, Quin & Ver
Cambridgeshire	Cam, Mel & Shep
Chilterns	Bulbourne, Misbourne & Wye
Kent	Dour & Westbrook
Suffolk	Lark & Linnet
Wiltshire/Berkshire	Kennet

The alliance is busy making contact with MP's, many of whom are also concerned about river environments including two local MPs, Sir Oliver Heald and Sir Charles Walker. Both are members of a new cross party group of MPs (*Charles Walker is the chairman*) interested in protecting and restoring these rare iconic rivers. The Alliance is currently hosting talks being given on Zoom by industry and environmental experts which anyone can join. Details can be found on the website <https://chalkaquiferalliance.wordpress.com>.



Aston's Turbulent Rainfall

Steve Shaw has been measuring rainfall in Aston for very many years. He is now an authority on what is, and what is not, normal. He has sent us the following information which puts the intermittent flow in the upper river into some context.

Aston has experienced a turbulent period of rainfall over the last year and a half.

September 2019 to February 2020 was the second wettest Winter in the last 13 years.

March to May 2020 was the 5th driest Spring.

June to August 2020 was the 3rd wettest Summer. August is normally the second wettest month of the year averaging 63.9mm. This year it was 50% higher at 94.0mm.

September is normally the 3rd driest averaging 34.3mm. This year, up to 23rd, there was only 6.0mm but then the month ended with 36mm in just a few days. At the time of writing October is also well above average.

No wonder we all like to discuss the weather.

Thanks Steve, lets hope we continue to have plenty of rainfall over the winter so the aquifer can finally properly recover.

Beane Marsh, a new Nature Reserve on the Beane

The Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust has recently acquired a five acre site on the Beane near Hertford North Station which will become a nature reserve. This has been done with help from local residents who raised £100k, and this together with a grant from Hertford Town Council enabled H&MWT to purchase the land. The Trust will now produce a management plan to safeguard wildlife which includes dragonflies, butterflies and marsh plants. The site does not have any public access at present. (see picture to the left)

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