

THE STRIPLING

Newsletter of the Upper Thames Protection Society



Issue 38, October 2018

Open Meeting and AGM

Wednesday, 24th October 2018, starting at 7.30pm

The Jenner Hall, Bath Road, Cricklade

Guest Speaker: Jim Seymour, Fisheries Field Team, Environment Agency

“Upper Thames Fish Populations”

Membership £2 a year. Non-members welcome

Upper Thames Protection Society - Registered Charity 299418

Chairman's Report

Another year has flown by. Welcome again. Thank you to all the contributors who have spent time preparing articles.

Thanks this year must also go to our sponsor of this newsletter and our AGM, The Hop Kettle Brewing Company, who are also donating money from their sales to the Thames Path National Trail. The path is now complete with the final stretch available for walking between Castle Eaton and Lechlade.



The Official Beer of The Thames Path National Trail brewed by Hop Kettle Brewing Company, Cricklade, available to buy at the Red Lion Inn, Cricklade

How weather conditions affect the world in which we live. We started off this year with incredibly wet weather and as you can see from one of the articles, North Meadow was under water. For the last five months we have had next to no rain to the extent now, that those reliant on grass and crops are looking skywards at regular intervals. It seems unlikely that there will be sufficient to enable good forage stocks to be carried over the winter but I am sure conditions will change.

It has been another busy year for our committee and our work linking in with the Upper Thames Catchment Partnership continues to grow at a pace. The partnership is seen to be a leading light in how to bring together partners, landowners and farmers into a catchment base approach. If you have a moment, why not come to one of the partnership meetings to hear what is going on and the good work that is being promoted by the organisations involved.

We have an interesting talk at our AGM in October on the Upper Thames fish populations. I am sure that we all want to see improvements to water quality. It is already happening and I will be interested to hear from Jim Seymour as to how this is evidenced.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy reading the latest newsletter and I look forward to any feedback that you may have either direct to me or by anyone of the committee members.

Chris Graham, Chairman, UTPS

Magnificent Meadows of the Upper Thames



June 2018 - Hay Harvest in Hallsfield Meadow, Cricklade

Floodplain Meadows Partnership

Species-rich floodplain meadows are naturally sustainable systems that yield productive hay crops and nutritious grazing with minimal inputs. English floodplains only occupy around 5% of the total land area, yet deliver major benefits for agriculture and human health. For example, floodplain meadows can provide 6 tonnes ha of hay annually with no artificial fertiliser, delivering an agricultural product that is resilient to droughts and floods. Floodplain meadows provide nutritious grazing for livestock.



June 2018 - Hay Harvest in North Meadow, Cricklade

Floodplain meadows offer major benefits for river catchments too. Meadows can intercept 50 tonnes of sediment ha reducing the amount that needs to be dredged from rivers. Up to 6kg ha year phosphorus can be removed in floodplain hay, reducing the task of removal at water treatment plants.

The Floodplain Meadows Partnership (FMP) believe species-rich floodplain habitats should be a key part of the proposed Nature Recovery Network (25 year plan) and an integrated component of natural flood-management solutions. A relatively small shift in floodplain land use, where strategically important and technically feasible, would yield multiple benefits and give society a higher return on the use of public money.

The FMP are recommending that targeted support for landowners in critical floodplain areas should be offered. Such focus could yield dividends in terms of slowing, storing and filtering floodwaters, keeping topsoil out of rivers and supporting a sustainable agricultural system that is productive during drought and capable of rapid recovery after floods".

The FMP are actively researching or involved with many floodplain meadows in the Upper Thames area, including our major research site at North Meadow Cricklade. Other sites include Elm Lea Meadows, Clattering Farm, Chimney Meadows, Oxford Meads and Iffley Meadows

We have also visited a high number of floodplain meadow restoration meadows along the Upper Thames. The alluvial soils overlying gravels in much of the area mean that the soils are very suited to creation of floodplain meadows, with good drainage in winter, but some groundwater input in summer. We would encourage anyone who owns land in the Thames floodplain to think about whether it would be suitable for this habitat and landuse. 100 years ago it is very

likely that all of the floodplain area here was meadow, as it was the most productive and effective way to manage the land.

There is plenty more information about floodplain meadows, their history, biodiversity, management and restoration on our website, and in our freely downloadable Technical Handbook via the website: <http://www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk/>

Emma Rothero Floodplain Meadows Partnership
Outreach Co-Ordinator, The Open University
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North Meadow Update

Every year is different on a meadow and 2018's weather events have provided an interesting challenge. With snowfall at the start of the year and heavy rains causing the meadow to remain flooded well into spring and then the heat of the summer leaving the whole country in need of a good water.

We started the year wellie deep and had to postpone guided walks and encourage people to put off their visits during the flowering of the fritillaries. Trampling, compaction and desire lines were our concerns, but thanks to the respect shown for the meadow there was very little damage caused whilst the meadow was so vulnerable. The fritillaries did OK, showing good numbers in the driest areas and struggling in the wettest. Hopefully Spring 2019 will offer a wondrous display that everyone can enjoy.



May 2018 - North Meadow just before the Hay Harvest

The warm weather over the summer saw slower growth than usual but a beautiful and varied colourful sward. Visitors may have noticed new signs asking dogs to be kept on leads and stressing the need to pick up all dog fouling. This push has come after an increase in dog fouling on and off paths. Dried dog poo that gets into hay and subsequently into the food chain can have major health implications to livestock. There has also been an increase in dogs being scent and retriever trained in the long grass, so we are now asking people to keep dogs on leads when visiting the meadow.

As we move into autumn we will have a herd of cows and a few horses grazing on the meadow until the rivers break their banks later in the year.

Overall it has been a positive year for North Meadow. We look forward to next year wondering what weather conditions will come our way and hope to be able to welcome everyone back in time for the flowering of the fritillaries.

Aidan Fallon, Natural England
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What Happens to the Hay?

Hay from our part of North Meadow is used to feed 100% grass fed cows at Waterhay Farm in the winter. We are only 2 miles upstream on the River Thames in Leigh. For further information, please visit:

<https://www.andyrummingsbeef.co.uk>

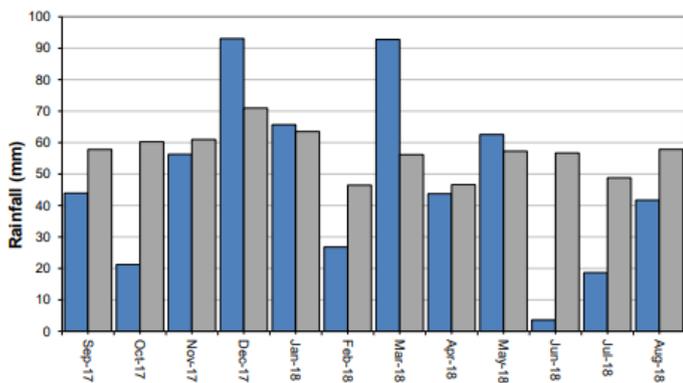
Environment Agency – Upper Thames Monthly Water Situation Report



Frogsham Meadow, Cricklade taking up the flood waters in January 2018

Meadows within the Upper Thames have had a lot to cope with this year, from the prolonged flooding during Spring 2018 through to the drought during June / July 2018, and yet they still continue to be productive and serve a vital ecological role. The chart below clearly shows the dramatic range of rainfall this past year.

Upper Thames Catchment and Upper River Thames (source: Environment Agency)



■ Monthly Total Rainfall (mm), compared with
 ■ Long Term Average Rainfall (mm)

Thames Path is Complete!

Following final negotiations with landowners, the Thames Path National Trail has a new route between Upper Inglesham and Inglesham open for Public Use. Please Note the Thames Path no longer follows the verge of the A361. The Trail is off road and mostly

follows the river, with new signage, gates and bridges installed along the route. It is fully open and available for public use. **Please follow signage on the ground** and not Ordnance Survey (OS) maps or guide books for this section. Guide books and maps will be amended in time, when new reprints occur. We hope you enjoy this new and lovely section of riverside walking.

Official Trail Ale

It's finally arrived...*LIQUID HIGHWAY*...The Official Beer of the Thames Path National Trail! We have teamed up with Tom at the Hop Kettle Brewery & Red Lion Inn Cricklade. Liquid Highway is an English golden ale that balances a light maltiness with a combination of traditional and new English hop varieties - East Kent Goldings & Challenger hops in the boil then dry-hopped with Jester & Target to bring a familiar spiciness followed by orange marmalade flavours & hints of citrus.

Why the name? The Trail brings to life the liquid history of England and the river has been used as a highway for many centuries. Liquid Highway is a thoroughly English yet modern Ale that represents the Thames! It is currently for sale in bottle, cask and keg in the Red Lion Inn, Cricklade and can be purchased online. For every drop sold, a donation from the brewery is made towards maintaining, enhancing and promoting our Trail.

Steve Tabbitt
 Thames Path National Trail Manager
www.nationaltrail.co.uk/thames-path

LIQUID HIGHWAY

THE OFFICIAL BEER OF THE
Thames Path NATIONAL TRAIL

AN ENGLISH GOLDEN ALE THAT BALANCES A LIGHT MALTINESS WITH A COMBINATION OF TRADITIONAL AND NEW ENGLISH HOP VARIETIES. EAST KENT GOLDINGS & CHALLENGER HOPS IN THE BOIL THEN DRY-HOPPED WITH JESTER & TARGET TO BRING A FAMILIAR SPICINESS FOLLOWED BY ORANGE MARMALADE FLAVOURS & HINTS OF CITRUS

FOR EVERY DROP OF LIQUID HIGHWAY SOLD, A DONATION FROM THE BREWERY IS MADE TOWARDS MAINTAINING, ENHANCING & PROMOTING THE THAMES PATH NATIONAL TRAIL. WITH ITS SOURCE IN THE COTSWOLD HILLS THROUGH WATER MEADOWS, HISTORIC SETTLEMENTS AND OUR CAPITAL CITY, THE TRAIL BRINGS TO LIFE THE LIQUID HISTORY OF ENGLAND, LONG USED AS A HIGHWAY WELL BEFORE THE WHEEL EXISTED!

AVAILABLE IN BOTTLE, CASK & KEG

HOP KETTLE BREWERY COMPANY
 CRICKLADE

WWW.HOPKETTLEBREWERY.CO.UK WWW.NATIONALTRAIL.CO.UK/THAMES-PATH

Liquid Highway available in the Red Lion Inn Cricklade

River Thames Erosion Project near to Hatchets, Cricklade

The Town Council has been monitoring the bank of the River Thames for several years. A new ditch had been created in 2010, a joint venture between the Town Council, Wiltshire Council and the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency had identified that a tree rooted in the River Thames (near to Hatchets) was forcing the flow of water into the bank causing it to break up, the water was also flowing up the existing ditch. The tree was removed, the bank rebuilt and replanted, the existing ditch filled in and another one created further down and angled to flow with the river.

During the following years, the Town Council continued to monitor the bank for erosion with photographs taken annually. Two areas were identified as requiring erosion work. The biggest section by the Isis Bridge was completed last year and reported in a previous edition of The Stripling. The other section close to the 2010 erosion work was the second project.

River Bank Near Hatchets – May 2015



Same River Bank Near Hatchets – May 2017



There were no signs of water voles or otters on this section of the River Thames, so there was no additional need for extra surveys. The second stage of the erosion was delayed due to the heavy rain fall in Spring 2018 and was finally completed in June 2018.

To complete the project, 91 metres of coir rolls with hazel faggot and chestnut post fixings were installed to the eroded outside bend section of river. The bank was regraded and reprofiled to form a soft toe and coir roll was installed at the confluence of the drain to stop future erosion. The Town Council would like to thank the Upper Thames Protection Society for their kind contribution towards the project which cost £2,935 to complete.



Chestnut posts visible on the water line



Finished Project

Tina Jones, Town Clerk, Cricklade Town Council
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Louise Aitken It is with great sadness we report the death of Louise Aitken, following a stroke. Louise very much supported the work of the Society from its early days, and was its secretary for a number of years. Up until Seymour's death, committee meetings were held at Brook House and Louise invariably produced delicious home made biscuits to keep committee members going. We are thankful for her dedication to the Society and send our condolences to Robert, Helen and David.

Note: The opinions expressed by correspondents are not necessarily those of the Upper Thames Protection Society.

Please send contributions, letters, comments to Editor:
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Upper Thames Protection Society - Registered Charity
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