

# THE STRIPLING

Newsletter of the Upper Thames Protection Society



Issue 40, November 2020

## Virtual Annual General Meeting (via Zoom)

Wednesday 11 November 2020 starting at 7.00pm

For those wishing to join please register for attendance via the CONTACT page on the website

The agenda and meeting login details will be forwarded to you the day before the meeting

Alternatively, please send an email to [Chris.Graham@mooreallen.co.uk](mailto:Chris.Graham@mooreallen.co.uk)

Membership £2 a year. Non-members welcome

Upper Thames Protection Society - Registered Charity 299418

## Chairman's Report

What a momentous year we have had. Whilst this is not the forum to discuss Covid, it is without doubt a year of significant change and the way things are conducted going forward will be considerably different from the past. This Society is no different in that respect. Having to do an AGM online has been forced upon us and it is with a heavy heart that the Committee have moved in this direction, losing the opportunity of meeting all of you members.

The Stripling magazine is one of the ways in which we provide comment, update and insight. The Committee meet regularly to discuss important issues and we are pleased to report that, with the help of Mark Strange, the website is now up and running. There is more about this later on.

Once again, thanks must go to Helen – who has put together a varied range of articles, this time with a few photographs. The website gives us a medium to share information and photographs, so I do encourage all of you members to interact.

It seems a long time ago, but as we moved into 2020, we were suffering the wettest winter for a considerable period of time. That continued to the third week of March, when we moved into a record-breaking dry spell. Is this climate change or some other phenomenon? Suffice to say that for our river catchments, flora, fauna and wildlife, it is as trying as it is for us in the human population. It is important that we recognise this in whatever we plan and undertake.

As ever, the Committee welcome any feedback and/or fresh ideas. Do not hesitate to contact one of us.

Chris Graham  
Chairman, UTPS

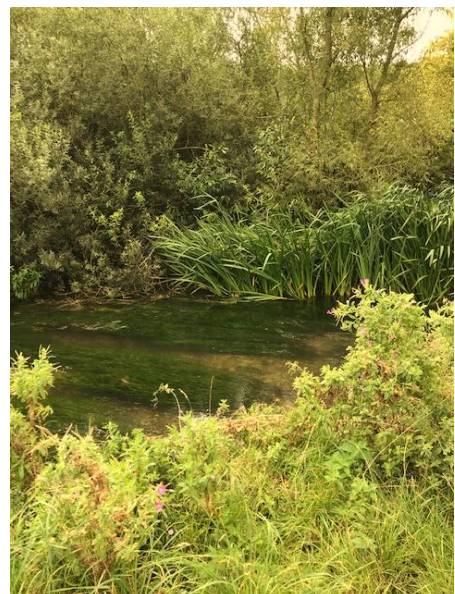
## UTPS Website Update

Over the last year, the Society over hauled its website which can be found using the following link:

[www.upperthamesprotection.org.uk/](http://www.upperthamesprotection.org.uk/)

Many thanks go to our developer Mark Strange for his input and hard work on the project.

The Home page gives an overview of who we are, what we do and what our objectives are. There is also a picture gallery, currently showing images of the flooding along the river earlier in the year and views from the Thames path in May 2020. Any local photographs of the river, and the flora and fauna which members would like to submit for inclusion can be sent to us via the Contact page.



*River Thames (photograph by Chris Graham who says if you look very carefully there is a water vole at foot of the reeds, centre of the photo)*

Copies of previous editions of The Stripling can be found on the Newsletter page of the website and Minutes from our meetings also have a page.

Members can contact us using the enquiry form on the Contacts page and the current membership form can also be found there. We encourage our members and followers to use the website, tell friends and family and we welcome any observations or comments on the condition of our precious River Thames.'

Carol Rouse, UTPS

## North Meadow Update

Traditionally following the summer hay cut, stock are put on to North Meadow to eat the regrowth, preparing the meadow for the winter floods. By keeping the sward short, flood water can flow over the meadow depositing nutrients. Inundated with rain last autumn, the meadow was underwater by late October 2019. Rain persisted through winter and the water level didn't recede until we found ourselves in the midst of the global pandemic in April 2020. This length of flooding on the meadow was unprecedented.



*Prolonged flooding of North Meadow lasted into Spring  
(Photograph by Ben West taken February 2020)*



*Flooding downstream in Castle Eaton Spring 2020*

As spring spoiled us with glorious sunshine, we waited to see what effect the extended flooding would have on the flora. There are over 25 years of survey and research data from the meadow, but due to lockdown

some of the annual surveys had to be postponed. From observations the number of flowering fritillaries was greatly reduced, and the sward has generally been slow growing. Never fear though, in 2013 only a handful of fritillaries were found in the 100 quadrats surveyed, but by 2016 there were 514 recorded. We are hoping for good recovery.



*North Meadow in May 2020 (Photo by Helen Goody)*

The meadow is facing change. Long flooding events such as 2019/20 used to be once every ten years, but now they are occurring every 3-5. This increase in regularity narrows the window for less dominant and rarer species of flora to recover. Data shows the sward is starting to change and the species that we are trying to conserve are localised and not dispersing between events.

But we have a plan! Natural England, The Cricklade Court Leet, adjacent land owners and The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West have been working on a joint project to improve the drainage channels that run from North Meadow to the River Thames. The project will allow the floodplain to act more naturally; flooding, followed by the steady flowing of water back into the Thames. By aiding natural processes, the species of the meadow will start to recover. Funding has been found and the work is underway. Watch this space!

Aidan Fallon, North Meadow Reserve Manager

## WILD Water with Integrated Local Delivery

This year has been a busy time despite the pandemic, it has not stopped contractors getting out and about along our rivers completing the many tasks we have given them to help rivers achieve a 'good' status as part of the Water Framework Directive. Reaching this status and maintaining it relies on factors of which the WILD project helps to solve.

Every year we apply for much needed funding from the Environment Agency to help farmers and landowners address riparian management and improve the flow of water across land so that we might improve ecosystem services. This enables us and landowners to help improve the water body status so that fish can thrive, and water quality is improved. This year we have focused on the rivers Coln, Churn, Key, Ampney Brook and the Thames, with the help of local fishers, landowners and farmers; we have started to make a real difference to the water bodies.

Our volunteers have also started back helping us weekly with important tasks at North Meadow pulling



Himalayan Balsam, helping to install deflectors with the Ernest Cook Trust and at Coln St Aldwyns and on the Daglingworth with channel clearance. If you have a water quality issue relating to how the river is managed and how the land influences the river, please get in touch to see if it's something we can help with.

Joanne Leigh FWAGsw Adviser

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*Thames Path completely flooded near A419 underpass in Cricklade, January 2020 (photo by Helen Goody)*

### **Eric Bizley, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1931 – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020, Swindon Golden Carp AA**

Eric will be very sadly missed by all of those who knew him, he has certainly left a big hole in the Swindon Golden Carp AA which he so dearly loved being a part of for so long. Eric truly was the back bone of the fishing club and we have all been shaken by his loss.

He had a very kind and steady approach to his role as Chairman and Secretary and we owe it to him to continue his hard work and success running Swindon's oldest Angling club.



Eric joined the Golden Carp during the mid sixties and was active up to the very last. Those 55 years shows such devotion and was a true measure of his commitment to the club and a measure of the man himself and not least of all, he was a superb all round river Angler. His name and his work will shine on within this club for many, many years to come.

The SGCAA (as it is most commonly known) is Swindon's oldest established Angling club, being formed in 1894 as a sports and recreational outlet to the work force of the Great Western Railway works at Swindon. In its beginnings the club was mostly canal

angling and we still hold matches on those original venues to this very day. We have held the fishing rights on the upper Thames for around 40 years and are still a very active and popular club today.



*Gudgeon (this one is quite large for a normally tiddler of a fish; photo by Martin Brown, SGCAA)*

We are a traditional style fishing club, promoting the wild and natural stretch of the Thames that we fish in a way that respects all of the other River life we share it with.

Lots of species of fish are present, Perch, Chub, Barbel, Trout, Dace and Pike to mention just the common names, but the fishing is challenging at times, making the catches all the more rewarding,...this is Angling on a natural waterway.

Martin Brown, Acting Chairman & Secretary SGCAA

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### **In and On the River Thames**

This year Upper Thames has proved a popular local attraction, both on and in the water.

For those preferring to holiday at home this summer, many family groups took the chance to paddle in the cooling waters of the Thames at Hatchetts or enjoyed picnics in Fairfields.

Earlier in the year, with the river full of flood water various groups of canoeists launched from the ramp at Hatchetts, Cricklade, including this group in February 2020.



*Canoeists setting out from Hatchetts, Cricklade February 2020 (Photograph by Helen Goody)*

These canoeists looked well equipped and competent, so all being well they made it downriver to Castle Eaton and beyond.

A walk in early October 2020 along the Thames Path clearly showed that with lower water levels and



following the aftermath of storms Ellen and Francis several of the willows now make such a trip down river almost impossible.



*Photos by Helen Goody, October 2020*

As reported in The Stripling 2019, it is a combination of the Environment Agency and local landowners to ensure the river can be navigated. Those often are balanced between the objective to keep the water flowing and the maintenance of the environment, which sometimes considers that in-stream debris is important.

There is a dialogue with landowners on how to protect banks and an ongoing process to discuss with riparian owners what can be done, if anything, with in-stream obstructions such as those in the photographs.

Helen Goody, Editor

## **Cotswold Rivers Under Threat**

The Upper Thames and its tributaries are an intrinsic part of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds but these rivers are under threat as never before in my lifetime. Sewage pollution from the monopoly water industry looms large as new housing development proliferates, but sewage treatment works are allowed to age, degrade and fail. Over the past decades I have seen the Windrush & Evenlode become so degraded that they are now shadows of their former selves. Sadly, in recent years, other highly regarded rivers such as the Coln, Leach, and Dikler are showing similar signs of deterioration. This year the normally pristine Ampney Brook joined them in exhibiting extended periods of spring turbidity and habitat loss.

What were claimed to be short spills of untreated sewage during times of spate have been revealed by a local campaign group to have lasted for weeks or even months on end. Infrequent prosecution by the Environment Agency makes it cheaper for water

companies to pollute than act responsibly in maintaining their infrastructure to a decent standard.

Surely public opinion will not allow these much loved amenities, to continue to be polluted into oblivion with the loss of otters, kingfishers and fish populations? Can



the water utilities be made to pick up the cost of decades of under investment in the post privatisation period?

David Reinger

For more information visit [www.windrushwasp.org](http://www.windrushwasp.org)

## **Upper Thames Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans**

Upper Thames Catchment Partnership have been notified about the ongoing development of Thames Waters' Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans. These are long term strategic plans that will set out how wastewater systems, and the drainage networks that impact them are to be extended, improved and maintained. Thames Water are asking for local input and expertise to support the planning and management of solutions.

Thames Water have completed the 'First stage' which involved screening of each waste catchment (Risk Based Catchment Screening) which aims to pick out the high priority catchments for action i.e those that suffer frequent issues and are highly vulnerable to future changes.

In the Upper Thames we have 27 Sewage Treatment Works – 18 of which have gone through to the next stage of modelling and assessment, namely:

*Ampney St Peter STW; Andoversford STW; Ashton Keynes STW; Bibury STW; Blunsden STW; Cirencester STW; Coberley STW; Cricklade STW; Fairford STW; Faringdon STW; Highworth STW; Lechlade STW; Purton STW; Sevenhampton STW; Shrivenham STW; Swindon STW; Syreford STW; Wanborough STW*

Thames Water are planning a workshop to cover each Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) area. The workshops are due to happen in October or November 2020.

(Extract from information provided to Upper Thames Catchment Partnership from Thames Water)

## **Environment Agency Challenges and Choices**

The EA's Challenges and Choices consultation closed on 24th September 2020. The EA was seeking everyone's views on the '*challenges our waters face and the choices and changes we all need to make to help tackle those challenges*'.

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Note: The opinions expressed by correspondents are not necessarily those of the Upper Thames Protection Society. Please send contributions, letters, comments to Editor: [helengoody@talk21.com](mailto:helengoody@talk21.com)

**Upper Thames Protection Society - Registered Charity 299418**