

CAM VALLEY MATTERS No.2 19 June 2013
The Occasional Newsletter of the Cam Valley Forum
<http://www.colc.co.uk/cambridge/cam.valley.forum/>

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Trumpington Farm Company visit On 13 June twenty members and friends of Cam Valley Forum took advantage of the rare opportunity to visit an astonishingly verdant, sylvan riverside landscape close to the very heart of out-of-sight Cambridge.



The engaging farm manager, David Knott (on the right in the photograph), showed the visitors the newly-created 130 acres of Trumpington Fen wetland habitat on the east bank of the Cam, opposite Newnham. The conservation project, one of several on the Pemberton Estate, is already reaping rewards with its primary aim to 'conserve wildlife and maintain biodiversity on farmland'.

Three years ago the drained fen was taken out of wheat production which used to suffer reduced yields as the result of flooding. Water levels in drainage ditches, carefully regulated by sluices (see

photograph), were allowed to rise. The wetland now consists predominantly of fine grass, sedge, and, from where observed by the group, a carpet of buttercups. The soil is becoming progressively more acid. In the far distance the resident flock of sheep could be made out. The most obvious of the varied

wildlife attracted so far are birds which include green plover and little egret.

The wetland closest to Coe Fen now supports some 70 snipe. This bird was abundant in Coe Fen (just a few hundred metres away) in the 19C before it was drained and littered with town rubbish. The Forum visitors were treated to a majestic circling fly-past by a full-spanned observer from the heronry.

Wilbraham River Protection Society

On 16 June, mustered at The Temple (see photograph) by their Secretary, Rebecaa Lomas, more than 30 Friends likewise took advantage of special access to private land in order to walk from the source of the Wilbraham River to Hawk Mill. The springs, not usually seen by many, are reminiscent of those at Nine Wells. Dr. T D Hawkins, author of *The Drainage of Wilbraham,*



Fulbourn and Teversham Fens, gave the background to the Environment Agency's scheme to augment stream flow by transferring water from a borehole in the Chalk *via* a pipe whose exit in the stream bank he pointed out.

Of particular interest were the complex historical patterns of drainage further downstream and relating to Hawk (water) Mill and Farm. Farmer David White helped explain the Society's recent successful project of diverting all the water from the higher New Cut through a culvert down to the main stream to increase its chances of surviving periods of low rainfall. New Cut had been created in the 19C and was leaking down to the water table.

It should not be said that tea provided by the Secretary at her home, The Windmill, was the highest point of the afternoon but it was a close call.