

Text written for Camboaters Newsletter

March 2019

Since my appointment, much time has been spent speaking with groups, individuals and communities, learning about the connections and relationships that they have with the river. Alongside these meetings, research into the geography and history of the river using maps and library archives, as well as gaining a greater understanding of the environmental context have occupied my time and thoughts. The project has a generous timescale and this work will continue for some months to come, alongside a programme of community engagement work to broaden the reach and impact of the project. All of this will inform an artwork for the river as the culmination of the project.

It is clear that the river stands for different things to different people and communities. The push and pull of the varied views and uses is a testament to the vital place the river Cam holds in the city. It also presents a dry wide range of views and opinions. The river performs so many functions - it is home, it is a place of leisure, and it is a commercial platform as well as a tourist attraction - these are just a few of the important functions and roles the river performs and which illustrate that so many are reliant on the river as an animate, dynamic and vital presence.

From the corralled path between man made banks along the backs, to the green pastures of Grantchester Meadows, the Cam establishes its active position in the landscape. Collectively the water that flows along the river's length is a very visual reminder of our environment, the health of our water and our relationship with the natural world. Recent examples of river wildlife that are thriving include Wild Brown Trout now seen in the restored Rush on Sheep's Green, Wild Sea Trout, a migratory form of Brown Trout, have also been recorded. These records can be indicators of the health of the water in the Cam. Cambridge city water systems have some very unique features - Hobsons Conduit is just one example - and connections between our own water use, river health, and the environment can be traced through past drainage and water provision systems. At the time of writing we are experiencing very warm weather in contrast to one year ago, when snow lay on the ground, a stark illustration that the vitally important balance of the natural world

is incredibly delicate, and awareness of the impact of our actions on the environment is essential.

As the next phase of the project gains momentum I hope that the people of Cambridge will engage in some of the events that are planned, which includes creative making activities and gathering an aural narrative, with a focus on the river history and environment. These events will be hosted in different places in the city both alongside the river and to the outskirts of the city.