

Newsletter February 2017

Litterpick

The first town centre litterpick of the year is on **Saturday 4th March**, to get the place clean and tidy before visitors flock to the Independent market this weekend. We meet at **10am** near the **entrance to the Cheese and Grain** (you should be able to spot our posh new flag shown on the right). We hope to wind up proceedings at around noon.

This event coincides with the Great British Spring Clean.

Please wear boots or robust shoes, clothing that you don't mind getting a bit muddy or caught on brambles, and if possible some tough gloves. We provide everything else.

AGM 2017 – Why Trout?

The highlight of the evening was the talk by Mike Blackmore. We heard about the conditions needed for trout, and indeed many other species, to thrive in our rivers; from the oxygenated gravelly bottom needed for the eggs, through the water weeds that shelter the young fish, to the extended access required by any migratory fish.

Using a set of informative photographs Mike described the arrangements best suited for fish to climb obstructions in the river. He showed us pictures of a low cost, but very effective, arrangement of sleepers to create a “fish ladder”. He also talked about last year's project in the Frome where a number of River Friends and others installed a series of “berms”. (More overleaf about berms). Mike was very complimentary about the Town Rangers, who displayed great enthusiasm and competence during this project.

And the answer to Why Trout? Because they are good indicators: a river that works for trout works for many other fish species.

AGM: business

Nick Ray summarised the Friends' activities in 2016. Lotte Blackmore and Tony House have joined the committee, while a re-allocation of tasks has reduced the burden on the shoulders of the chairman. After long service with FRF Stuart Cooper has retired from the post of Trustee. As part of our outreach we promoted a “Love your River” day in February, and invited BART (Bristol Avon Rivers Trust) to run a series of river talks in July. We ran our usual series of litter picks, plus a special waterborne one from Wallbridge to the Canoe Club. Judy Hosegood has organised the Balsam Bashing, and several members have undertaken a river fly monitoring course.

Nick stressed the valuable contribution to the work we do made by Chris Stringer, the open spaces manager of Frome Town Council, and his team.



fromeriverfriends.org.uk

**Friends
of the
Somerset
River
Frome**

**GO
for the
FLOW!**

Berms: creating wildlife habitat in the river

Because of the nature of the catchment area of our river, it is subject to very high flow rates after heavy rains. This tends to scour the channel out, reducing the area of sheltered habitat favoured by some species.

Berms (see the picture on the right) are artificial obstructions formed by enclosing a small area of river with piles driven into the river bed. The space between the piles is filled with a variety of timber and brush from the riverside vegetation. During subsequent periods of high rainfall the berms reduce the flowrate, and encourage deposition of silt, creating little areas of shelter.



Riverflies: monitoring the health of the river.

The larvae of many species of insect, e.g. damselflies, hatch and develop on the beds of our rivers. The health of a river can be monitored over time by regular surveys of the creatures it is supporting. To put it simply, you enter the river carrying a net, which you place in contact with the riverbed just downstream of your waders. You kick the bottom for a while, then take your netfull of debris and creatures to a quiet place where you can classify and count the animal life. A single check will tell you very little, unless the river is totally dead, but repeated surveys at the same spot over months and years will expose trends in the population, and therefore the state of the water.

Some dates for 2017

Newsletter deadlines.

28th April, for publication first week of May

19th June, for publication last week in June

25th August, for publication last week in August



Litter Picks

This year we will be carrying out our litter picks on the Saturday before the Independent Market each month:

4th March

1st April

6th May

1st July

5th August

2nd and 30th September

4th November



MARCH 3-5, 2017

