

CHESHAM ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP
CHAIRMANS REPORT 2008/9

It's nearly a year since I became Chairman of the group and its time to reflect on my year. We remain active on many fronts with a small group of volunteers; a major project in Chesham was the reconstruction of Meades Water Gardens the group was pleased to help out where it could. People can now begin to see the benefits of a fast flowing river, in place of a stagnant pond. There are tasks that the group can tackle in the gardens during the summer; we will be seeking advice from Allen Beechey.

At our arranged monthly working parties we took on a number of tasks that pleased me, cutting back the scrubs along St Mary's Way so people didn't have to step into the road (donation of £100 from Porchester Homes readily accepted), clearing Captains Wood, helping in Meads Water Gardens, Jacobs ladder once cleaned up looked terrific, one of the group said if these steps were in Hampstead they would be a treasure, pulling out Himalayan Balsam from the River Chess on David Briggs farm, on a sunny summer afternoon, at least I think it was sunny, but Probably the thrill of my year as Chairman, took place during our January 2009 Sunday working party. A number of us were working alongside the River Chess litter picking. I decided to join David who was working in the River, clearing rubbish from behind Riverside Court flats, and the islands, I had just got into the river and got my litter picker working when I heard a streaking sound, I looked up, and no more than 10 foot from me, perched on twig on the island was a kingfisher, It wasn't just a fleeting glance it was perched looking at me for at least 5 seconds before it flew off, I have never seen a live kingfisher before, I nearly fell into the river, now I need to see a water vole, little things!

We will continue to support other community groups in the area, Chesham in Bloom, Friends of Lowndes Park, Rotary, Chesham Society, Shelley gardens project, all doing excellent work, not forgetting Bob Ayres, Parks & Open Spaces Manager and his team of Town Council workers. A special mention for those of our volunteers, who diligently worked along side the Action for Bridleways of Chesham (ABC group), and successfully see off, the prospect of some of Chesham bridleways being opened to all traffic, an excellent job, well done. I'm looking forward to an exiting year, Pond Surveying, coppicing in Meades Water Gardens, eradicating Himalayan Balsam, and the progress of Trout in the classroom initiative. There other area's I would like to tackle but for safety reasons it's not possible. We mustn't forget that Chesham is not just the River Chess; I have joined a Newtown group that litter picks the area and the Shelley gardens project in Pond Park. Litter is still a major problem in our town, also along our country roads and is foremost in residents minds when comes to environmental matters. I would like your opinion on setting up a campaign to move the recycling area from under the railway bridge, a major source for litter finding its way into the River Chess.

I mentioned at the beginning of my report that we are a small group but as proved in October 2006, when called upon Chesham people will turn up in great numbers, therefore I thank Merrin Molesworth for telling people about the group on her web-site, Chiltern Voice, Town Talk for wanting updates on our activities, and Voluntary Action for keeping us at the forefront. Indeed you may know that the Group was presented with a joint runner up award, from Voluntary Action, of a certificate and £25, thanks to Justine for putting the groups name forward.

I would also like to thank all the volunteers who come out, no matter what the weather, a special thanks to Georgina for the help she has given me during the year by contacting volunteers, reminding them of working party dates and where to meet, also Ken who is always coming up with ideas Thanks to Bill Richards and the Town Council for their continuous support, free meeting facilities and a generous grant, and Allen Beechey for his knowledge and advice.

Phil Folly
Chair, CEG