



# Ver Valley Society

## NEWSLETTER

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[www.riverver.co.uk](http://www.riverver.co.uk)

President: Peter Fox, MBE



*These images of a dry Kingsbury Mill channel, taken on 25th June 2017 by John Pritchard, indicate how low the River Ver has fallen this summer although fortunately there is still a small amount of water in the river itself through the City and down to Bricket Wood. Despite our good work over four decades and the closure of two pumping stations above St Albans, the river continues to live on the edge in a very dry year.*



**River Ver Archive: St Albans Central Library (Local History Reference Section)**  
Over 1,000 pages of information

## Chairman's and Bailiff's Notes

Sadly the river is in a sorry state this summer with generally very poor flow, although vegetation growth is only too healthy so causing the river to become blocked in many places and some footpaths are becoming overgrown. Where the channel is clogged pooling behind the blockage does mean at least some water can remain to preserve the channel. Our wonderful Action Group has been out each month doing valiant clearance work on banks and paths as always. You can see from the table that the aquifer is now well over six metres below average. Last year as a whole and the winter of 2016/17 were drier than average and the glorious June weather we have been having for most of the month has been anything but glorious for the Ver! The river is now dry through Redbourn and flows further south are very low.

Month 2017	Groundwater level at Ballingdon Farm in metres <i>[Long-term average]</i> (figures from EA)	Rainfall in millimetres <i>[± average]</i> (figures from Chris Hall at Rothamsted)
April	126.62 [132.79]	40.4 [-10.42]
May	127.09 [133.6]	10.9 [-44.19]
June	127.21 [134.1]	38.7 [-11.4]
July	127.02 [133.32]	<i>Not yet available</i>

Despite having little, if any, flow to measure our devoted Bailiffs still find plenty to report each month. Yellow flags, ragged robin, water-mint and water forget-me-not are making a good show and hogweed is proving popular with many insects. Where there is enough water most of the usual fish are being reported; there is the usual variety of butterflies but they are not in great numbers; various damselfly and dragonflies are now being seen. Among all the usual bird reports reed, sedge and grasshopper warblers are particularly nice sightings; swallows, martins and swifts are busy catching insects over the water no doubt to feed their young and there are skylarks, grey wagtails, yellowhammers and whitethroats being reported. In Verulamium Park there were about seven heron nests this year which have been followed by two pairs of little egrets. John Fisher reports that 12 young barn owls were ringed in late June. Sadly the little owls had only one surviving owlet.

We are very pleased that Richard Wallis, a keen Action group volunteer, has agreed to be co-opted join our Committee and those of you on Facebook or Twitter will have enjoyed the regular updates and photos thanks to John Pritchard, who is also our new Membership Secretary – you can also access these posts on our website. Our Webmaster, Paul Foster is hoping to renew the Website with the help of a sub-committee in the near future.

On a sadder note we are going to lose our Bailiff for Markyate, David Coasy, this autumn when he moves to Devon. He has rarely had much of a river on which to report but has been active in clearing rubbish etc from the dry river bed and flagging up other issues in the area. We thank him most sincerely for all he has done. If anyone from the top end of our valley might be interested in taking over please contact me; a fairly general report every couple of months or so is all that is needed there.

National Rivers Day this year is Sunday 24th September.

## Social Media Update

John Pritchard

(small Facebook and Twitter symbols, [@VerValleySoc](#))

We've made many new friends on social media since we relaunched the Society's presence in March. It's also a great way to share up-to-the-minute news on the River Ver and give a wider audience a taste of what our Society has to offer. Please look in, just go to [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/VerValleySoc) or [twitter.com](https://twitter.com/VerValleySoc) and look for us using [@VerValleySoc](#). You don't need an account or have to sign up to see what's going on.

## Membership

John Pritchard

We are pleased to welcome Adam Tipple, Martin Mylott and Michelle Havell (welcome back!) to the Society since the last newsletter. Thank you for your support.

Please note our membership year runs from September 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>. Annual and five year subscription members with renewals falling due this September will receive a reminder to renew via email or post in the next few weeks.

Thank you to all of our many volunteers who have given up their time to clear debris from the river, clear footpaths and continue to remove Himalayan Balsam along the river banks from Park Street Mill through Frogmore Pits, down to the Ver Colne confluence in Bricket Wood.

As you know, Himalayan Balsam is an invasive weed, which grows along the banks of waterways up to 1.5 m high, with its pink flowers appearing in June onwards, producing succulent fruits, which when ripe, explode and send their seeds downstream, to invade the river bank and block out light to our native species. So working with the CMS volunteers, Tarmac and local residents we ask that you pull up this plant wherever you see it along the Ver, disposing of it away from the river.

## **Summer / Autumn 2017 Programme**

### **Saturday July 15th, 2017 10.00-12.00**

- i) The grounds of Moor Mill and down to Smug Oak Lane to remove Himalayan Balsam, both banks of the Ver and the Mill Stream (park at Moor Mill)
- ii) For those with waders, working downstream from Sycamore Close and behind the Beeches, to the Radlett Road bridge, Park Street, removing Himalayan Balsam (Park in Sycamore Close, or the car park north of Park Street Mill)
- iii) At 12.00, both groups to meet at Moor Mill for a thank you drink

### **Saturday, August 19th, 2017 10.00-12.00**

Please Park at the Drop Lane car park, to walk down Riverside Way / Drop Lane removing Himalayan Balsam along the banks down to the Confluence and any debris in the river.

### **Saturday September 16th, 2017 10.00-12.00**

Frogmore Pits. Please park at Hyde Lane or Moor Mill Lane to:

- i) To have a final clearance of Himalayan Balsam
- ii) Clear the two footpaths along the river of bramble and scrub.

### **Saturday October 21st, 2017 10.00-12.00**

Sopwell Nunnery Green. Please park at the allotment car park, off Sopwell Mill Farm Lane, off Cotton Mill Lane.

- i) To clear bramble, saplings and weeds around the laid hedge
- ii) Clear any blockages in the river
- iii) Clear any saplings along the river bank.

World Rivers Day Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September Based Walk No 8 from Moor Mill car park starting at 10.00 am and featuring the newly designated footpath. Approx two hours.

## **Future Open Meetings**

**John Fisher**

### **Tuesday, October 24th 2017 at 7.30 pm**

At St Michaels Parish Centre – Our AGM followed by David Johnson the HMWT Living Rivers Officer

### **Tuesday, February 27th, 2018 at 7.30 pm**

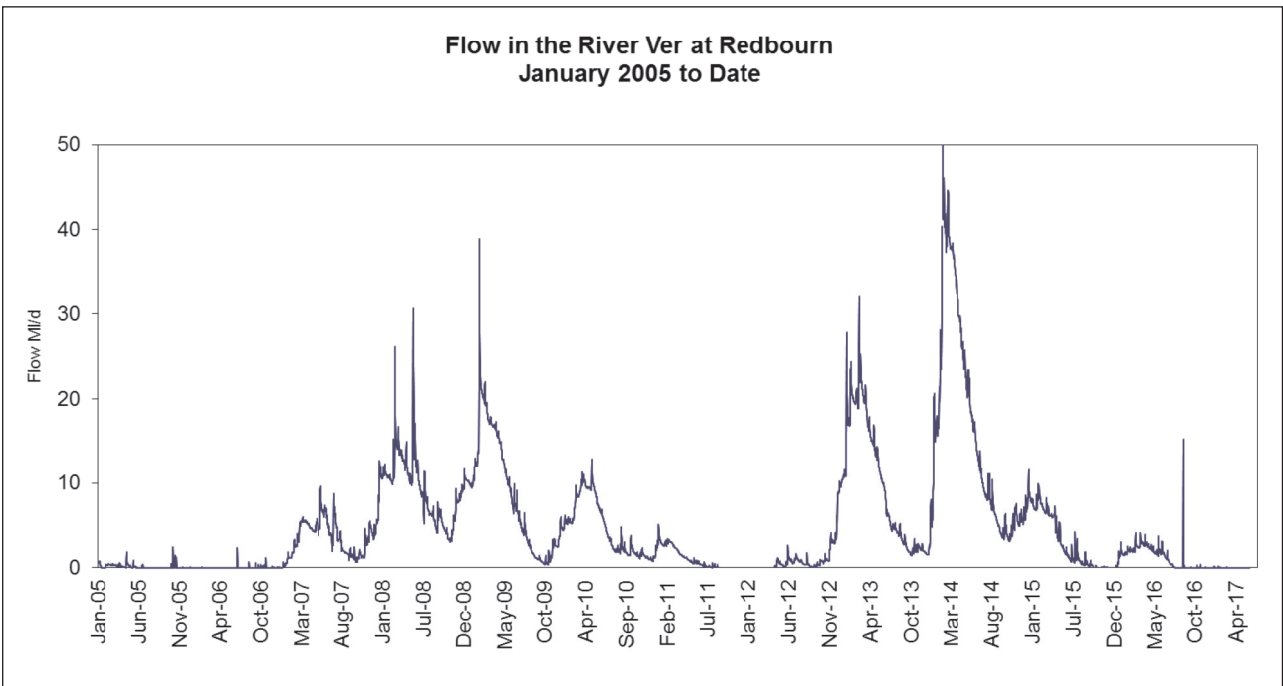
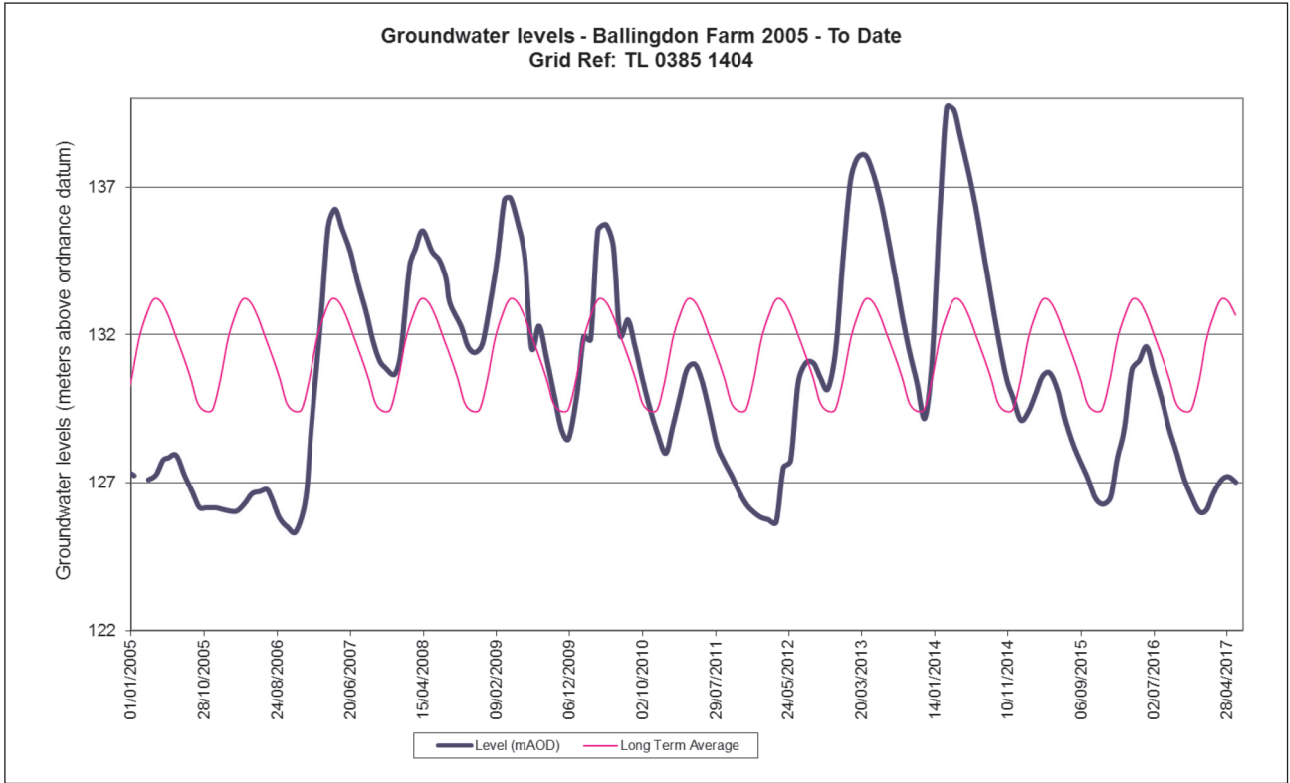
At Redbourn Village Hall – speaker to be arranged.

### **Tuesday, June 5th, 2018 at 7.30 pm**

At Bricket Wood – speaker to be arranged

### **Very Important**

All meetings are free entrance to members and non members - If you are coming to one of our meetings please check our newsletter or the web page a few days prior to the meeting in case of any late changes. If you require directions to any of the venues please contact a committee member. (See contacts page). Although our meetings are free entry to members and non members we welcome donations towards the cost of refreshments, hall hire etc. Suggested £2.



*We are grateful to Affinity Water for supplying periodic ground water and flow charts and to Veolia Environmental Services for printing and distributing these Newsletters.*