

CHERISHING OUR LOCAL STREAMS

In a built-up area such as ours, it is easy to be unaware of the topography of the land beneath our feet – the hills and valleys, and the streams which flow through them. Most of the Borough of Enfield is drained by two streams, Pymmes Brook and Salmon's Brook and their tributaries, which in many places flow unseen at the backs of gardens or in culverts under roads. Where they do appear in public spaces however, they have the potential to enrich the environment – how much poorer Trent Park, Arnos, Oak Hill and Grovelands, for example, would be without their lakes and streams.

These same streams can be a threat to the environment. They pose a flooding risk, a risk which is likely to increase in the future as a result of climate change. However it is pollution which is the more constant and insidious risk. In Enfield we have a separate sewer system, which means that oil and heavy metals from road run-off, and detergents and raw sewage from misconnected drains, go straight into our streams, and eventually into the River Lea. In the open country in the north of Enfield, it is agricultural pollutants which are the main threat.

What can we, as ordinary householders, do to help to clean up our streams? First, we shouldn't pour any pollutants down surface water drains and we should check our plumbing to ensure foul water from sinks, washing machines and toilets is not getting into these drains. Secondly, we should support the efforts of organisations such as Thames 21, a registered charity which aims to improve the quality of life of people in the community by enhancing waterway environments.



Thames 21 has promoted schemes which are already improving water quality in Grange Park. The picture shows the reed bed in Grovelands Park under construction. The inlet is polluted with road run-off and sewage misconnections but the difference in water quality on the other side of the barrier can be clearly seen. Now a reed-bed is permanently

improving water quality. Elsewhere in Grovelands Park and in Houndsden Road reed beds and swales (shallow grass covered channels) are dealing with pollution from local roads.

In Oakwood the stream which feeds Boxers Lake flows first into the Glenbrook wetlands in Lonsdale Drive which are a series of connected reed beds. The picture shows the present situation with thriving vegetation. Tests have shown that about two-thirds of pollutants can be removed. When this scheme was under construction a big effort was made to deal with sewage misconnections in the



surrounding streets but a recent visit revealed that the inlet is still polluted.

All of these SuDS (sustainable drainage systems) directly benefit Grange Park. But they are on tributaries of Salmon's Brook and are relatively small scale – most of the flow of the Brook remains untreated. Thames 21 has brought together local residents to identify sites where further SuDS might be possible on both Salmon's Brook and Pymmes Brook. Ultimately the Group would like to see the brooks 'rewilded' – concrete culvert sides removed where possible, lakes recreated, meanders restored – which would not only improve water quality but also reduce flood risk. However these would be major schemes requiring the consent of the whole community. It is easy to understand residents' caution while the brooks remain polluted by sewage.

To find out more about what Thames 21 is doing in our area please go to the following website:

<https://www.thames21.org.uk/community-modelling/rewilding-the-pymmes-brook-in-enfield>

To offer help or support in respect of either Salmon's Brook or Pymmes Brook, please email:

thepymmesbrookers@gmail.com