Memories of a healthy, free flowing Cran Brook from 70 years ago

Back when I was a child of 6, my brothers and I lived beside the Cran Brook at Netley Road off the Horns Road. This was back in the 1950s. That was a time when parents thought it safe for children to play out and roam their local area.

Water always fascinated us kids! It was fun to go **tiddler fishing** and the Cran Brook had them in profusion. We would climb into the concrete lined Brook with our nets and jam jars. Sometimes we were lucky to see and catch what I know now is a **Smooth Newt** and on one occasion I was lucky to see my first **Grass Snake**.

My brother and I would sometimes follow the brook up river, picking it up on the other-side of the railway, in the horse pasture, of what is Aldborough Hatch Farm. We had to be wary that the farmer was not about as he wouldn't tolerate us kids!

The Brook ran naturally through the pasture, with no concrete in sight. Banks were a bit poached from the animals but still a joy with a good flow. Further along, where the football club land is today there were **Water Cress beds**. We had to avoid that area as were likely to get caught and suffer the consequences! So, we never really saw that except in the distance. But picking up the Brook again, by the track that is now Station Road, the Brook ran through a nice fine gravel bed just nice for cooling one's feet and more tiddler fishing and **other creatures** to be found.

The brook on the other side of the track, in what is now Fairlop Waters Country Park, meandered towards and alongside the railway embankment where it disappeared. So, I suppose this is where it rose. It was a bit overgrown, from what I remember.

This was soon after the war and this was a barracking area for the airfield. Our interest here was all the **skylarks**, as eggs were much sort after then.

I also remember the Cran Brook in Valentines Park or should I say Cranbrook Park, as we referred to that park in those day. This was prior to all the concrete terracing we have now. It fed the model boating pond, which was a magnet for all the local kids. My brother fell in retrieving boats. What a laugh! And more tiddler fishing opportunities on the flow to the large boating lake.

Such happy days. So sad to see what has happened to my river.

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