

THE VER REMEMBERED

by Christopher Chapman

Banks of weed pulled to and fro
Swaying in the current's flow
Minnows dart among and through
Don't go in though-
Bloodsuckers will get you
Under the bridge it's dark and cool
The place to find a Miller's Thumb
We searched
and searched,
but we never found one
Sunlight on a clear pool
Look! A tiny pike
Barred and lean,
Hungry mouthed.
Hanging motionless.
Waiting.
Among the rocks below the lake
Crayfish
Little black lobsters
Catch him – quick!
But mind his pincers.
Going home
Dusk is falling
Mallard cackle contentedly
Bats are swooping
A moorhen calls
The Abbey bells begin to ring

This poem was written in 1953 and in Christopher's words it is an attempt to recapture a ten year old boy's memories of growing up close to the Ver in Orchard Street which is off Abbey Mill Lane.

Christopher's father, the late Charles Chapman, explored the same places as a boy in the 1920's, when of course the lake did not exist.

Writing in the 1980's Charles wrote remembering paddling in the Ver:-

"The water was deeper then and a lot of weed grew in it. We were quite sure "blood-suckers" lay in wait for us under the weed and did not venture far from the bank.

The meadows beside the river where the lake is now were much more exciting. There was a small weir up near Bell Meadow and an overflow stream went through the Ver Meadow and the water returned to the river where the lake outlet is now. Water forget-me-nots, kingcups and yellow iris grew on the banks of this little stream and in places it was wide enough to jump over.

I think this is a wonderful sketch of growing up with and observing nature in the raw which hardly exists for kids nowadays where their every move is so organised and subjected to a risk assessment and there is so much competition for their attention from modern technology. I think they are losing more than they will ever know. My mother and her siblings also grew up close the Ver in Spicer St. but my Aunt Eva, who only died a couple of years ago, had less romantic view of Ver Meadow and referred to it "as that stinking bog" but she was a girl!

John Fisher – my personal views not necessarily those of the Society.

TO THE VER, VERLAM OR MUSE

by Duncan Gardiner

Over to you my Muse! My humble verse
Convert to veritable poetry
Conversant with your lengthy history,
Conversely, as your very length is, terse.
Once your names were several. How perverse,
To discover such versatility.
Old maps aver that you are Muse or Lea,
Others Mure, Verlume, Verolam or, worse,
Verlum. Strip maps name you for Michael's mill;
One plan, severely, "The River". Some own
You as the one true Colne. Some too clever,
Sever you from names. We however will
Revere our Muse, lovers of mills and bourn
And ever verdant verges of the Ver.

THE RIVER

by Valerie Bloom

The river's a wanderer, a nomad, a tramp.
He doesn't choose any one place to set up his camp.

The river's a winder, through valley and hill.
He twists and he turns, he just cannot be still.

The river's a hoarder and he buries down deep
Those little treasures that he wants to keep.

The river's a baby, he gurgles and hums
And sounds like he's happily sucking his thumbs.

The river's a singer, as he dances along
The countryside echoes the notes of his song.

The river's a monster, hungry and vexed
He's gobbled up trees and he'll swallow you next.

(This poem is not necessarily about the Ver!)