



## UNRAVELLING THE GREENSHANK MIGRATION MYSTERY

One of the largest catches of greenshank ever made in the UK was organised in the harbour last August by the Farlington Ringing Group.

The object is to track the migration of these handsome wading birds, which have long pale green legs and a slightly upturned beak. Chichester Harbour is the second most important habitat in Britain for autumn migrating greenshank, after the Wash.

They breed in Scotland, Scandinavia and Russia and visit here in the autumn on the way to their wintering grounds further south.

The birds were caught on Thorney Island, coloured rings attached to their legs, and then released to continue their migration. The catch took place as part of a new project organised by the Conservancy and the Ringing Group, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project will use observations of the birds to track their migration and form links between people in different places along their route.

'We want to involve as many people as possible in helping to unravel some of the mysteries about these birds and their migration', says Harbour Conservation Officer Anne de Potier. Anyone who sees a ringed greenshank (or any other wader) is asked to contact Peter Potts, at Solent Court Cottage, Chilling Lane, Warsash SO31 9HF. As well as the date, time and place, observers should recall what colours the rings were, on which leg, and where (above or below the knee). Information on the known history of the bird will be sent back.

### New Harbour Book Published

A handsome new book about the Harbour, which will appeal especially to members of the Friends because of their commitment to the conservation of the area, has been published by the Conservancy.

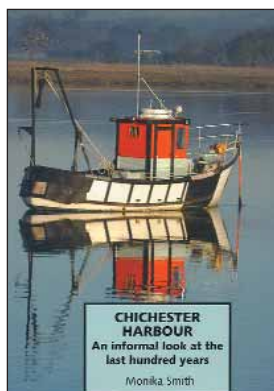
'Chichester Harbour - an informal look at the last 100 years' is not a history book, but provides a fascinating insight into the many facets of life in and around the harbour, and how it has changed in the past century.

There are chapters on sailing and boat building, the landscape and wildlife of the harbour, the people who work and live in the 8000 acres of the AONB, and the wartime years when much of the harbour was a no-go area for the public.

The book was mainly written by Monika Smith, with contributions from Friends committee member Ian McIntyre, local authors Julian Marshall and Ruth Tittensor, and the well known natural history writer Richard Williamson. It is 95 pages long, with 120 colour photographs.

The Conservancy has published the book because it believed there was a need to record the views and actions of the people who live and work in the harbour, and enjoy its amenities.

Copies are available to members of the Friends for £10, post and packaging free, from the Conservancy office. Please make your cheque payable to 'Chichester Harbour Conservancy'.



### £36,000 for 'Rhythms of the Tide' Projects

'The Friends will be donating £36,000 over the next three years to support the Conservancy's 'Rhythms of the Tide' project', our Chairman, David Rolph, told the AGM in October.

The first tranche had aided coastal landscape enhancement (£1100); habitat enhancement and conservation (£1600); history and archaeology (£3400); monitoring and surveys (£700); access (£2000); transport (£2100) and education (£1100).

David reported that membership had increased to 2560, although some households had yet to pay this year's subscription.

The existing committee were re-elected, with Martin Rhodes OBE replacing Liz Davey, who was thanked for her contribution over the past five years.

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### CONSERVANCY ACT TO SAVE EAST HEAD

Following English Nature's surprise move to oppose the retention of the rock berm protecting East Head, the Conservancy decided at its meeting on 4 November that firm action needed to be taken to protect the wider interests of harbour users.

The Conservancy will now go ahead with a planning application to retain the berm and make plans for the longer term protection of East Head; take legal advice on the strength of its case; and work with Chichester District Council to raise public awareness and set up an organisation to raise funds for the necessary work. They will also continue to work with English Nature to look for jointly acceptable solutions to the problem.

It is now 'extremely unlikely' that the long-awaited Pagham to East Head Coastal Defence Strategy will qualify for any government funding.

The berm was installed five years ago, with the consent of English Nature among many other bodies, to prevent a new tidal channel forming through the 'hinge', the narrow strip of land connecting East Head to West Wittering. High tides have already washed away most of the sand on the seaward side of the rock defences. The Conservancy

### Fun and Games at the AGM

Normally, annual general meetings - whether of charities or businesses - are formal and sometimes rather dull events attended by the dedicated few. Not so the Friends' AGM at Chichester Yacht Club in October. Some 70 people played penny whistles, banged drums, sang and laughed their way through a highly entertaining presentation by Conservancy Education Officer, John Tierney.

John had been invited to the meeting to show the Friends how he had developed a new way of helping schools in the area to learn about the harbour and conservation.

His method is to make the whole learning process fun, with a puppet show, the harbour jug band, and a series of playlets with the children (or, at the AGM, the audience) enthusiastically taking part. The Friends have helped to fund the creation of the material, and made some of the puppets.

John got a big round of applause from the Friends for his efforts. Afterwards, several members said they couldn't remember when they had had so much fun at an annual meeting.

\* Ten hand made wooden treasure chests filled with books and toys with an environmental theme are now being offered on loan to schools in the area. Contact John Tierney on 01243 789173.

Yes, there was a formal part to the AGM - see back page for details.



believe that if they are removed, as English Nature say they should be, the sea would rapidly make a new channel into the harbour.

David Rolph, the Friends' Chairman, says: 'at our AGM, members clearly expressed their support for the Conservancy line. We should prepare to make our combined voices heard in the overall interests of our harbour'.

### Editorial

Sailing round the south-east coast of England one is struck by just how exceptionally beautiful our Harbour is. There is nowhere to compare with it between the Orwell estuary to the East and the Dart to the West. It is no wonder so many people love to visit us.

Visitors, of course, bring all kinds of pressure for greater access and more facilities. Nature, too, constantly brings new challenges.

And while we welcome visitors and accept the changes caused by natural events, our role in maintaining, preserving and conserving our environment becomes more important than ever.

We in the Friends support the Conservancy both financially and practically, but there is always more to be done.

I am pleased to report that membership of the Friends continues to rise; we now have over 2500 members including over 200 life members. We need to maintain, and even try to increase our level of support by continuously increasing our numbers. Enclosed with your Newsletter is a copy of our new membership leaflet - please use it wisely!

We plan to embark on a membership recruitment campaign in the spring.

If you would like to help in any way please tell one of the committee. There will be lots to do, so the more the merrier!

David Rolph, Chairman

# How Rising Sea Levels are Affecting the Harbour



Managed retreat? Controlled regression? Setback? Managed realignment?

These are just some of the expressions that have been used over the past 15 years when considering the implications of sea level rise and the loss of inter-tidal habitats.

However, they all mean approximately the same thing - allowing the shoreline to move, but in a controlled managed way, that avoids the potentially catastrophic impacts of a sudden loss of sea defences.

Why is it necessary, where is it happening, and how might it affect me?

These are typical questions we get from visitors and residents alike when they come across the concept of what, for the sake of simplicity, we will call managed realignment.

Not all areas are suitable for this approach, and it is not a low cost option, or a matter of doing nothing and allowing sea defences to decay. Mostly, the areas selected for managed realignment are in places where there is low lying land, probably reclaimed from the sea in the past, with limited existing sea defences and with potential for the creation of saltmarsh, saline lagoons or intertidal mud.

These are the precarious conservation resources that make Chichester Harbour of international importance for nature conservation. They are also the habitats most threatened by the changes we are now seeing as sea levels rise. They are habitats that require a precise amount of immersion and drying. Where they are squeezed between rising sea levels and hard coastal defences, they cease to exist.

While most sea defences that protect life and



property are essential and will almost certainly continue to be defended, there are areas, particularly within Chichester Harbour, where it is simply not cost-effective to defend on the existing line in the long term. By using the realignment approach, the initial investment can provide longer, more cost effective defences as the newly created habitats themselves provide a defence for the land. So it is necessary if we are to allow these valuable habitats to survive, if we are to spend the nation's money wisely, and if we are to ensure that we have a landscape as attractive tomorrow as it is today.

Managed realignment is happening in a number of places around the harbour. At Thornham Point, the sea wall was breached and then bridged to maintain the public footpath but also allow the land behind the sea wall to evolve into an inter-tidal habitat. At Itchenor Park Farm, a tidal flap was removed that allowed spring tides to flood old grazing marsh, to encourage a more diverse habitat.

Two other, larger, areas at Chidham are at the planning stage. The West Chidham footpath will be retreated inland by about 75 metres to create a new shoreline path along a new, inner sea wall while the old wall is, in part, removed. The remaining old sea wall will form a chain of islands to provide a safe roosting area for birds. The proposal at Cobnor Point is similar to the Thornham Point project, where the existing sea wall, our wheelchair footpath, will be breached and bridged. This will allow both the creation of new habitats and the continued use of this valuable path.

I foresee that over the years, as sea levels rise, we will certainly have previously protected areas returned to the sea, as well as low lying areas that until now have been terrestrial. How will this affect visitors and residents? There will be change - footpaths, if they are to remain open, will have to move inland. There are a number of properties fronting the shoreline that will need their defences improved.

It may be that isolated properties will have to pay for their own defences. Where a large number of properties are at risk, such as Hayling Island and Prinsted, then I am sure the statutory authorities will continue to defend.

I have no doubt that we will have to adapt to sea level rise - to defend where we have to, and to realign where we can. This will ensure that the harbour we have tomorrow, although a slightly different shape, will be as valuable for wildlife, as attractive for visitors, and as safe for residents, while remaining a thriving leisure harbour.



New intertidal habitat at Thornham

With coastal conservation in the news again, especially in the harbour area, the Conservancy's Manager, Philip Couchman, explains how rising sea levels are affecting the harbour, and what is being done about it

## Help Needed with Practical Conservation

We would like to update and expand the list of Friends who are interested in helping with practical conservation work round the harbour.

The Conservancy organise weekly working parties with us, and say that it is a great help to them in keeping on top of the many conservation jobs that need to be done. It is also fun!

Recent projects have included managing the water meadow site at Fishbourne to encourage Southern Marsh Orchids; hedge rescue and woodland management at Salterns Copse; tackling the invasive Japanese Knotweed at Thorney Island; litter management and stream clearing. 'There is something for everyone, and we always enjoy meeting new volunteers', says Assistant Conservation Officer Nicky Horton. A recent survey to find out what Friends' views were on these working parties produced helpful comments and suggestions.

The working parties last for two hours, starting at 10am, on weekdays, and it is hoped that weekend or evening sessions can be organised in the coming year too.

If you would like to register your interest in volunteering, please contact Nicky at [nicky@conservancy.co.uk](mailto:nicky@conservancy.co.uk) or phone her at the harbour office (01243 512301).



Clearing the millstream at Fishbourne and litter picking at Snowhill are two of the tasks completed this year



## News from the Harbour Office

The Harbour Patrol had an eventful summer, despite the bad weather. As a direct result of their patrols, five people were arrested in two separate incidents, and a number of stolen items were recovered. Plus, they assisted over 300 people on the water this season.

They still made time to train as 'First Responders' with the Sussex Ambulance Service, and can now provide first aid treatment including use of oxygen and a defibrillator, which are carried on board.

In the workshop, we celebrated Sharkie's 20th year with the Conservancy. He arrived 20 years ago as an apprentice and has never looked back. The Harbour Master praised him for his willing and helpful attitude, and he was presented with an engraved tankard.

Our two major new projects this summer were the harbour bus, and the 'Solar Heritage' boat. Bus Service 57 ferrying people around harbour villages made a good start with an average of 30 users per day. A number of these were using the service purely for sight-seeing and it is a lovely way to see the hard-to-reach parts of the harbour, and makes a good day out if you have visitors. The service starts again next May.

The solar boat was popular as well. We received a very nice letter from one 90-year-old lady saying, 'it was like a dream'. If you have not yet been on board, there are a number of trips this winter for bird watching, or themed tours on Harbour history (8 Feb) and Harbour legends (24 Nov).

For me, the change from summer to autumn is marked by the preparation of the next Harbour News and Guide. As a sneak preview of next year's issue, we will have a lead article on smuggling in Chichester harbour, and in what forms it is still going on today! *Ali Beckett*

## WOOD IS GOOD



To encourage traditional wooden boatbuilding skills to be maintained in the harbour, a young school leaver, Sam Poore, is being paid by the Heritage Lottery Fund to become a wooden boat building apprentice.

Sam will be apprenticed to the Dolphin Quay boatyard in Emsworth, who specialise in wooden boats. The appointment comes about as part of the Conservancy's Rhythms of the Tide project. Part of his job will be to help to restore the Terror, the last of the harbour's oyster boats.