

Local Companies Become Friends' Corporate Sponsors

Sixteen regional companies, from Rolls Royce Motors and Southern Water to four harbour marinas, have joined the Friends as Corporate members.

Corporate Membership allows commerce and local organisations, particularly those with an interest in the harbour, to support the work we do to protect the environment of Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

'Commercial management plans often include sharing a portion of their success with worthwhile causes. If the environment is one of their causes where better to invest than here, at home', says Friends' Chairman Martin Rhodes.

An additional benefit for the Friends, is access to a group of employees or members where we can promote our work through the newsletter and other harbour publications. We offer our knowledge to assist with planning any team building or employee recreation where participation in the Conservancy's activities programme or a specially arranged event might be attractive.

A large individual membership for the Friends backed by an impressive list of quality companies both large and small gives us significant credibility when it comes to taking action against threats to the AONB.

Corporate Membership subscription is a modest £150 a year. We are proud and grateful to the following companies who support us through Corporate Membership:

Rolls Royce Motors Ltd, Goodwood Estates Ltd, Southern Water, Opal Marine, Haines Boatyard, 4 Delivery Ltd, Warnings Contractors Ltd, EMU Ltd, Birdham Pool Marina, Marina Developments Ltd, Premier Marinas, Emsworth Yacht Harbour, Chichester Yacht Club, Hayling Island Sailing Club and Thorney Island Water Sports Centre.

This membership category is in its early days and we would very much like to hear about other companies who you think may like to join. If you can provide an opening, the chairman and your committee will do the rest. Please contact us with suggestions.

£1000 FOR FOOTPATHS

We are very grateful to a local company, who wish to remain anonymous, for donating £1000 each year to help to maintain the harbour's shoreline footpaths.

Our Chairman Martin Rhodes received the first cheque to pay for 2009 renovation work, in January.



Have Fun Helping Out!

Every week, groups of Friends meet at different harbour venues to provide practical conservation help. The programme is organised by Nicky Horter at the Conservancy and is nothing if not varied!

Tasks for this winter include planting trees, constructing a boardwalk, cleaning beaches, getting rid of invasive scrub, and maintaining footpaths.

Hot drinks and biscuits are provided by Conservancy staff, and it's not all hard work, because there are plans for a summer social as well as a chance to get afloat and observe the harbour bird life on the Conservancy's solar powered boat.

To save costs and paper, work party details are not being sent to all members with this Newsletter. If you would like to join in or find out more about the plans for 2009, please contact Nicky Horter on 01243 510983 or nicky@conservancy.co.uk or , or you can see the programme on the Friends' website: www.friendsch.org.



Our Chairman Writes...

MAJOR ISSUES FOR OUR HARBOUR

Two major issues for the harbour need your attention in 2009 - the Environment Agency's policy for East Head and Parliament's Marine and Coastal Access Bill. The former is expected to be declared by late spring and the latter could be on the statute books by late autumn.

At High Water, 41% of the 74 sq kms (29 sq miles) of Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is under water. In the outer world 70% of the world's surface area is water. Yet we struggle to know what is there and how to protect it.

As an island nation our actions lag well behind others, such as New Zealand, in protecting marine areas. Since the first national park in the Peak District of Derbyshire in 1951 authorities have moved steadily to protect many beautiful areas of land but as yet little or nothing has been done to protect the diverse marine life around the UK coast.

'Leave the relatively small areas that have been left to develop as nature intended .. as a vital haven for wildlife'

Marine environmentalists have high expectations that the Marine Bill will give the opportunity to grasp this difficult problem. At the Friends

AGM last October, Dr Bruce Tomlinson graphically illustrated the complexities involved and aspirations of the commercial world for the Marine Bill.

The European Marine Strategy Framework Directive requires nations to assess the state of marine ecosystems under their jurisdiction.

Here in Chichester Harbour AONB much of our attention and activity is in the areas above the water. Occasional marine surveys reveal a fascinating marine ecology in our harbour waters and forthcoming surveys such as that of our harbour seals will tell us more. These surveys are expensive. For example the seals survey is forecast to cost around £70,000.

Friends' funding is critical. We can provide 'match funding', often a requirement to show commitment locally before larger contributions can be sought from outside sources.

The Government's intention to extend coastal access for the general public is also included in the Marine Bill. The shoreline of Chichester Harbour measures some 77 kms (48 miles) in length of which 87% is accessible to the general public. Add to this almost the whole length of Langstone Harbour's shore and much of Pagham Harbour, and one can see that in this area the public has a wealth of access to shoreline walking.

Is it necessary, therefore, to cover every metre of shore with public footpath? Many think not. Leave the relatively small areas that have been left to develop as nature intended over many, many years, as a vital haven for wildlife. Destroy, for example, peaceful roosting areas and the population of many loved and welcome waders will decline.

Now is the time to take an interest in the above issues through residents' associations, local councillors and Members of Parliament and make your views heard. Waiting to hear what the legislation says when it comes, will be too late!

Thanks to all our helpers and members for their part in our activities in 2008. It was particularly pleasing to see record attendances in our work parties. Please act on our 21st Anniversary Challenge for each member to recruit one more. Subscriptions are modest. Inviting a large membership to take a keen interest in the protection of this beautiful harbour is the key to our future success.

Happy exploring and sailing in 2009. *Martin Rhodes*



Jackie Knight



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FRIENDS LAUNCH 'RECRUIT ONE MORE' CAMPAIGN

To mark our 21st anniversary, we are launching a campaign to double our membership, and are asking all existing members to 'Recruit One More'.

'The Friends have been an influential and important element of the life of Chichester harbour for two decades now', says our Chairman, Martin Rhodes, 'but there is so much more that we want to do.

'If we can double our membership to 4,000 - we will double the funds we have available to finance conservation and education projects, and we will have more volunteers to help with working parties around the harbour'.

Another Friends' objective is to influence the way in which this very special Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is protected for the long term. We are represented on the Conservancy's Advisory Committee, the Chichester Harbour Trust, the Save East Head campaign, and the Solent Protection Society. We lobby against inappropriate housing development within the AONB, and express members' views on other important issues affecting the harbour.

'The more members we have, the more powerful our voice, and the greater the likelihood that policy makers will be influenced by our views', Martin adds.

The harbour is under growing threat from development, and from natural environmental changes like global warming, and from the sheer volume of visitors.

The Conservancy do a remarkable job in balancing the need to conserve the harbour, while encouraging public enjoyment of its facilities afloat or ashore. But they need help from the voluntary sector, and increasingly look to the Friends for financial and practical support.

A membership leaflet is enclosed with this newsletter. Please give it to a neighbour or friend, and encourage them to join us.



Second Infil for Hinge Planned

The Conservancy hope to strengthen the vulnerable 'hinge' which joins East Head to West Wittering this March, by recycling some 15,000 tons of sand and shingle. This will be the second time infilling has been carried out.

The sand will be taken from the area to the north of East Head, and will create an enlarged barrier beach to widen and strengthen the hinge area.

A planning application to carry out the work has now been submitted to Chichester District Council. The project is the first step in implementing the new Coastal Defence Strategy for the West Wittering and East Head frontages.

More details on www.conservancy.co.uk.



Emma Millen

A Bad Year for Lemmings Can Affect our Brent Geese

By Ed Rowsell, Conservancy's Conservation Officer

If you see bird-watchers carefully scanning through a flock of Brent Geese one by one, they may well be assisting in a national project called the wildfowl productivity survey run by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

They will be looking for the telltale signs of juvenile birds and noting down the percentage of 'Baby Brents' within the flocks, and thereby the breeding success of Brent Geese in arctic Russia's Taimyr Peninsula last summer.

You may hear mutterings from the bird watchers, catching phrases like 'one good year in three' or 'must be a bad year for the lemmings'. Early estimates from around Chichester Harbour for this year indicate that less than 1% of the population are juveniles, compared to about 10% last year. A researcher working in the Taimyr gave us prior warning that it would prove to be poor breeding season, based upon the very low numbers of lemmings observed.

Good breeding success in Brent Geese tends to coincide with years of high lemming numbers

You have probably noted the implication that lemming numbers affect the breeding success of Brent Geese. Scientists noticed that breeding success in arctic breeding geese and waders, especially the Brent Goose, seemed to closely mirror the ups and downs of lemming populations. Lemming numbers tend to cycle over a three year period from very high numbers, followed by a crash the following year and subsequent recovery. Good breeding success in Brent Geese tends to coincide with years of high lemming numbers. But how can a small hamster-like rodent have an effect on Brent Goose breeding success? Do they eat them? Do they create suitable nesting habitat? Or are they just a useful indicator, a 'miners canary' of sorts for Brent Goose breeding?

Actually it appears as if there is little direct interaction between lemmings and geese, and the linkage is derived from complex relationships with predators.

There is still an active debate in the scientific community over the relative importance of the different interactions, but space will not allow the full complexities to be explored here.

It appears that in years of low lemming numbers the main resident predator, the Arctic Fox, switches from its preferred lemming prey to bird nests and young. Predator numbers will also tend to be high following a glut of lemmings the previous year. In years of high lemming numbers foxes will concentrate on lemmings and therefore put less pressure on geese. The effect is amplified by the tactic of Brent Geese to deliberately nest in close proximity to Snowy Owl nests, which will only attempt to breed in high lemming years. Snowy Owls vigorously protect their own nests from predators, hence the geese gain a somewhat dangerous to know 'guardian angel' reputation.

Or at least this was the case. Evidence is emerging that the 3-year cycle seems to have collapsed in parts of the low arctic region; lemming populations no longer have extreme peaks and troughs possibly due to lower snow depth enabling Arctic Foxes to hunt lemming more easily throughout the winter. Researchers are continuing to monitor the situation and see if another, perhaps longer, pattern emerges. What this might mean for Brent Geese is unclear, they are quite long-lived animals so they can withstand a few poor years of breeding, but not indefinitely.

When there are fewer lemmings, the Arctic Fox will prey on bird nests and chicks



An outraged Brent Goose will protect her young from attack



ON THE WING AT DUSK

This stunning photograph by Nick Moore was the winning entry in the annual Chichester Harbour photographic competition, sponsored by the Friends and Whitby's Imaging Centre.

There were over 250 entries last year, and the standard was higher than ever. We will be sponsoring the competition this year as well – details will be available in April from the Harbour Office.

Entries from the Friends particularly welcome!



Goose Watch Volunteers Needed

Thousands of Brent geese over-winter in the harbour every winter, but comparatively little is known about their way of life while they are here.

So, the Conservancy's Conservation Officer, Ed Rowsell, has set up a

'Goose Watch' system and even at this stage in the winter, would be glad to hear from any members of the Friends prepared to help.

Each volunteer will be allocated a sector of the harbour, and asked to monitor the geese in it on a fortnightly basis. Reports will then be fed back to the harbour office to help the Conservancy to build up a better informed picture of the habits of these special winter visitors.

Last winter, there were as many as 12,000 dark bellied Brents in the harbour, which is about 5% of the population, so the harbour is an internationally important winter site.

Brents are easily identified by the 'cackling' sound they make when flying overhead, or when communicating with each other while feeding or resting on the water.

In the daytime, the geese move inland from the shore and graze on fields, which can be a problem for farmers.

'Each year we try to build up a picture of where the geese go, which fields they use, and how many are in the harbour', says Ed. 'This means that over time we can build up a more accurate picture of their way of life here.'

Anyone interested in helping should contact Ed at the harbour office: 01243 510985. No bird watching experience is necessary as training, maps and recording forms will all be provided.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Your Trustees are pleased to announce that the husband and wife team of Richard and Valerie Evans have joined the committee. They live in Bosham. Richard will take on the role of Treasurer, and Valerie becomes Membership Secretary.

SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE

A reminder that your subscription for 2009 is now due. A form is enclosed with this issue.



Runner Up East Head Walkers - Barry Williams



Second Prize Boat at Bosham Anna Walls



Runner Up Happiness Is... Andrea Farrell

Popular Ranger Leaves

Work parties are going to miss David Molloy, the Countryside Ranger who left us at the end of December. Last year more volunteers turned out for the Friends weekly work parties than ever before. This success was in no small part due to David's friendly informal personality and his efficient leadership of the work in hand.

David leaves to follow his partner to the Oxfordshire area and will work with the Oxfordshire County Council as a Countryside Tasks Assistant. We wish him all the very best in his new appointment and thank him for his great work with the Friends.

Georgia Siddle, equally popular with the Friends, remains to lead the work parties single-handed until a second Countryside Ranger is recruited.



Your 2009 Guide to Harbour Life and Living

The 2009 edition of the annual Chichester Harbour News and Guide has now been published by the Conservancy, with 86 pages of informative and interesting articles about the harbour, its people, its wildlife, and all manner of activities on the water.

Copies are sent automatically to everyone liable for harbour dues.

If you don't have a boat, but would still like a copy, they will be available from tourist offices or libraries from February, or you can apply to the Harbour Office for a free copy.

For racing sailors, there is advice on how to make best use of the harbour's tides, plus reports from the Conservancy's patrol and moorings teams. For walkers and cyclists, there are articles on the harbour's footpaths and cycle tracks. Other contributions describe the Conservancy's work with farmers in the AONB, and local schools. There are special features on how people enjoy the harbour through five very different types of activity on the water – from kayaking to rowing Langstone cutters – and how wildlife activity in the harbour is monitored.



TAKE A TRIP ON TERROR

The restored oyster boat Terror has been enormously popular with the public, and most trips were sold out last year. She sails from Emsworth quay for two hour trips at around high tide on most days in summer.

The Friends help to fund the boat's maintenance costs, and several of your committee members who have been out on her report that the outing is great fun. It's a unique experience to be sailing along the harbour waterways under a press of sail, in a boat that was first launched almost 100 years ago. The only change from the original design is a diesel engine to get you home if the wind fails.

Two volunteer crew are always on board to man the boat, but everyone gets a chance to take the tiller or work the boat if they want.

The price per outing is £10 for adults, and £5 for children, and this year's voyages start in May. Further details from the Harbour Office.

