



A good year for Egrets & Orchids

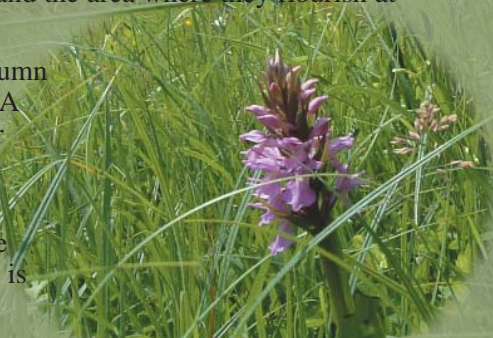
A good year for Little Egrets, Brent Geese and Southern Marsh orchids. This is one of the cheerful conclusions from the Conservancy's 2004 Wildlife Report, a full copy of which can be seen on the harbour website.

A record 228 Little Egrets - those elegant white birds with distinctive harsh cries - were recorded, mainly on Thorney Island. In the day, increasingly they are being seen inland as well. And there were 8290 Brents, the highest number since the winter of 1999/2000.

As for the Southern Marsh orchid, 798 plants were counted on one day in June, and the area where they flourish at Fishbourne Meadows continues to expand.

There was less good news about the Ringed Plover (only 215 counted on their autumn passage) and the Grey Plover (a low figure of 631 spotted in the autumn). A Peregrine in residence at one of their favourite sites didn't help, Anne de Potier reports.

Interesting arable plants such as Small Flowered Buttercup and Shepherd's Needle are well established in the Itchenor area, and as more farmers leave uncropped margins round their fields, a wider spread of attractive wild flowers is being encouraged.



Harbour Trust Acquire More Sites

Chichester Harbour Trust has acquired several sites within the AONB in the last few months, as part of its objective to conserve the natural beauty and wildlife of the harbour.

On the Wittering shore a 3-acre area of saltmarsh and shingle of important habitat value has been offered to the Trust by owners who wish to see it conserved for future generations.

In Chidham a 2-acre site that was originally being considered for development is now to be let to the Trust on a 125-year lease. This woodland area lies just one field away from the harbour's edge and will be managed for the Trust by the Conservancy with the help of local residents.

Also in Chidham, the freehold of a 4.5-acre area of pond is currently being acquired. This freehold has, until recently, been owned by the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the area is leased for 999 years to the owners of the adjacent property. However, ownership of the freehold will allow the Trust to enforce a range of covenants designed to protect the unspoilt nature of this important site.

These are among a number of acquisitions currently being negotiated and they clearly demonstrate the value of the Trust as a mechanism for conserving land around the Harbour.

The Trust relies entirely on the support of those who know and love Chichester Harbour and in the coming year will be emphasising the importance of legacies as a way of supporting the charity in the long term, so helping to conserve the beauty of the area for generations to come. For further information on legacies, or work of the Trust, please contact The Administrator, Chichester Harbour Trust, PO Box 327, Chichester PO19 1ZN (Tel: 01243 777632).

Did you know -

* Chichester Harbour would have been some 50 kilometres inland in the Mesolithic period (12,000 - 4,000BC).

* Traces of human life half a million years ago have been found in archaeological and geological records.

* There was a dummy airfield at West Wittering during World War 11 to fool enemy bombers targeting the genuine airfield at Thorney Island.

These and many other facts are included in a report, published in December, detailing the archaeological history of the harbour.

The report was carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service, and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

It looks at activities in the harbour from 450,000 BC up to the present day, and will be followed by a series of research projects so that more can be learned about the harbour's archaeological history.

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Newsletter

Spring 2005

Editorial EAST HEAD: A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

The search for a solution to the East Head problem is more complex than it might appear to someone seeing it for the first time. This is because there are so many bodies involved, i.e. the Harbour Conservancy, Chichester District Council, the National Trust, English Nature, Havant Borough Council, West Sussex County Council, and West Wittering Estates. All of them are concerned about East Head and wish to safeguard their own particular interest in the feature.

The good news is that everyone has agreed that there is a need to act in partnership to find a long term solution that is sustainable and satisfies their concerns. This is a very significant step in the right direction.

Meanwhile, all those involved have agreed that action should be taken as soon as possible - around the end of March - to repair the 90-metre long gap at the Hinge. Some 8000 cubic metres of sand and shingle will be recycled from the northern tip of East Head back to the Hinge. It will be placed on both sides of the rock berm, the rear part providing a walkway to East Head. Chichester District Council will manage the work, which will be jointly funded by them and the Conservancy.

The longer term solution must follow from the Pagham to East Head Coastal Defence Strategy (CDS), as no ad hoc solution can be implemented in case it has a knock-on effect on an adjoining sector of coastline. The first draft of the CDS will be available within a few weeks and is expected to suggest a number of possible options. Meanwhile, the Conservancy's consultants have started an initial assessment of the most likely ones.

Assuming that a suitable long term solution can eventually be agreed with all interested parties, it will go for public consultation in the Spring. The Conservancy will then approach potential funders to gauge their likely support, and this will include all of us. Assuming adequate financial backing, the Conservancy will then obtain tenders for the works and apply for planning permission before work can start at East Head towards the end of this year.

Peter Henshaw, Vice Chairman Elect



The hinge at East Head in January

HOW CAN THE FRIENDS HELP ?

Please log onto the Conservancy's website at www.conservancy.co.uk and register your interest in receiving up to date information about East Head. You will be kept informed about new developments and if there is a need to lobby for action, your support will be invaluable.

Arrangements have been made to launch an East Head appeal if it is apparent that extra support from the public is needed, and the Friends have promised to provide organisational help.

East Head must be saved!

We will of course continue to support conservation and education projects in the harbour.

You can also persuade your friends and neighbours to join the Friends - the more of us there are, the more powerful our voice.

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Where your money goes:

FUNDS FOR CONSERVATION AND HARBOUR IMPROVEMENT



Sorting the catch - the fish survey conducted last summer

In 2004, the Friends were able to donate some £20,000 to support Conservancy projects round the harbour. Our objective, as always, was to improve the harbour's facilities for visitors, to improve the landscape, and to increase our knowledge through research projects of the changing habitat and wildlife of the AONB.

To make access better, we funded footpath improvements at Itchenor and Rookwood (£3000), paid for footpath maintenance (£2200), and funded a hydraulic wheelchair lift for the 'Solar Heritage' boat so that disabled people can get on board (£3500).

To increase knowledge of the harbour, we funded research projects into sub-tidal fauna, vegetation (£2750), and even the life and times of the humble land snail (£250).

In addition, we contributed £2000 towards the cost of tree and hedge planting, and as usual our volunteers

helped to plant thousands of trees, as well as clearing litter from the foreshore and cutting reeds in harbour-side marshland.

In the second year of the Conservancy's 'Rhythms of the Tide' project (2004-5), we are contributing £12,000 to support coastal and habitat enhancement and conservation, research, the history and archaeology of the harbour, access, education, and sustainable transport.

Well done to the members who have turned out to help with practical projects, and thank you to all of you for allowing us to give this support through your membership and donations.

'Friends' enjoying a break after a morning's tree planting



Making the Harbour a Safer Place

Even if they are not sailors, members of the Friends will be aware of the Conservancy patrol boats out and about in the harbour: and 2004 was one of their busiest years.

They are there to make sure the harbour is a safe place.

Roger Young, the Patrol Officer, and his peak season team of seven have two high speed RIBs, the Conservancy launch Regnum, and several dories to enable them to carry out their work. This includes enforcing the harbour byelaws (no speeding!), helping sailors in difficulty, collecting harbour dues, and being proactive about crime prevention.

They have two additional roles which have saved several lives in the harbour already: acting as a first response unit for the Sussex Ambulance service, and being on call to the Sussex Fire Brigade to get fire fighters out as fast as possible to deal with fires on vessels.

All the patrol officers are trained to use defibrillators, to help revive people suffering from heart attacks, for instance, and they carry oxygen cylinders.

Their jobs are far from grim, however. Roger sees the

creeks and channels of the harbour as his playground, and says he frequently thinks how lucky he is to be doing as a job what most harbour users do for pleasure.

It is a busy job, though, especially in the school summer holidays when the patrol boats are out from early morning until dusk. But there are compensations, like watching a spectacular sunset, witnessing an osprey fishing for its supper, and meeting many new people.

Perhaps it is due to global warming and a run of mild winters, but Roger notices that more people are out and about in the harbour throughout the year, walking, sailing, fishing or just watching the flow of the tide and the ever changing harbour scenery.

Each day is different, and never dull - the Patrol responded to over 300 incidents in the harbour last year. These included handing over a suspected illegal immigrant to the police, recovering an expensive model plane found on a sandbank, helping to recover a car which had slid into the water, retrieving a drowning dog, rescuing a man with a broken leg, and standing by dozens of dinghy sailors in difficulties.

They also found a skeleton at Fishbourne, and three men stranded in a tender on an Emsworth mud bank who, it turned out, had been breaking into boats in the Emsworth channel.

So next time you see the dark blue RIBs on patrol round the harbour, give them a cheery wave. They deserve it!

Walks Festival

Friends who like walking, and that's probably most of us, will be keen to join in the Festival of Harbour Walks being organised by the Conservancy this Spring.

Three Harbours Walks Festival
27 April - 1 May 2005

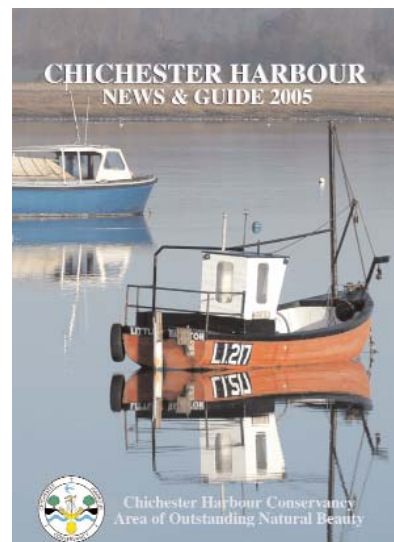


The Festival is being held jointly by Chichester, Langstone and Pagham Harbours. Each day between 27 April and 1 May there will be a walk taking in the best of the three harbours. Refreshments will be at some of the sailing clubs in the harbour, there is a solar powered boat trip on one day, and an evening reception. Some or all of the walks can be booked.

There's a leaflet with booking form about the event. Booking is essential. Please contact Judi at the Conservancy.



HARBOUR GUIDE AVAILABLE



Friends who are boat owners will automatically get a copy of this year's Chichester Harbour News and Guide with their Harbour Dues renewal form. Non boating Friends who would like a copy can get one free from the Conservancy office, information centres or libraries in the area.

The 84-page full colour booklet includes articles about harbour activities, describes forthcoming events, and lists useful contacts on and off the water. There is a pictorial guide to common harbour birds, and a fascinating look at the seals who now live here. It is an encyclopaedia of information which will be invaluable for anyone who is interested in the life of the AONB.

HELP WANTED !

The Friends will be exhibiting at two local events this summer, and we would be very grateful if members could help us to recruit new members by manning the stands for a while.

The stands will be at the Dell Quay Festival of Sail from 8-10 July, and the Emsworth Food Festival from 9-11 September. Please contact David Rolph by phone or e-mail (address on back cover) if you think you can help.

We are grateful to the Chichester Wildfowlers who will include a display about the Friends' activities on their stands at the Chichester College 'the Countryside comes to Chichester' event in the summer, and the Emsworth Show on 29 August.

HAVE YOU PAID?

We now have 2,600 members - more than ever before - but some have not yet paid their 2005 subscription. Please send the Treasurer a cheque now - it's only £2 per year plus a donation if you wish, or £100 to become a life member.

Letters: Tree planting at Ellanore

Dear Volunteers,

Yesterday was the first opportunity I have had to visit the area on the farm (Top Field) where you had completed a morning of tree planting. I was amazed what you had done. The tree planting looks absolutely marvellous and will certainly make that hedgerow a great habitat and restore it back into a valuable hedgerow in years to come.

We will do our best to ensure that the whips are managed to give them the greatest chance of survival.

Thank you so very much for your hard work.

Charles and Lindsay Dewhurst

LMD Farming, Ellanore House, West Wittering