

VOLUNTEERS: 25 SACKS OF RUBBISH: 26



The Friends summer work party programme is now in full swing, and started with a wonderful morning on Pilsey Island carrying out a much needed beach clean, writes Nicky Horter, AONB Officer.

It's an important bird nesting area, but because of wind and tide, attracts a lot of rubbish. Twenty five volunteers managed to fill 26 sacks with accumulated flotsam and jetsam and recovered quite a few outsize items as well.

The main theme of the summer programme is carrying out footpath improvements following the recent wet winter, which took a heavy toll on many of our paths. Also, we will be revisiting many of our winter tree planting sites to ensure our saplings get off to a flying start. The programme will end with a social event in July to thank all our volunteers for their hard work throughout the season. To find out more about joining work parties contact Nicky Horter at the Harbour Office on 01243 512301 or email nicky@conservancy.co.uk

HARBOUR TRUST CONSOLIDATES ITS SUCCESSES

This spring has been a period of consolidation for the Chichester Harbour Trust, tidying up loose ends after the flurry of acquisitions and agreements achieved during the course of 2009, writes James Davis, Trust Administrator

Following the important commitment from West Sussex County Council to protect the north-east of the harbour by creating an undeveloped 'buffer zone' at Apuldram (reported in Autumn 2009 Newsletter), there have been further discussions that will lead to the transfer to the charity of the first piece of land.

It is expected that an 8-acre portion of meadow at Fishbourne that is already managed by the Conservancy will be transferred to the Trust later this year as the first stage in creating a vital protective shield for that part of the harbour.

Apuldram Meadow leased for grazing

A bit further south, the 15 acres of meadow at Apuldram acquired by the Trust last autumn (see report in Winter 2009/10 Newsletter) has been leased for grazing to farmer, Matt Sawday – a good friend of the harbour. This will ensure that the area's value as a wildlife habitat is maintained and will not affect the attractive public footpaths that traverse the site.

Slow progress at Maybush Copse

Meanwhile, at Maybush Copse, Chidham, where many members of the Friends have been generously helping with the tidying up of the site, the work to clear the administrative path for the larger improvements

we wish to make has been frustratingly slow. Further soil testing has now been completed but discussions are still taking place with Chichester District Council to establish what remedial action is required before public access can be granted and the Council is also still deciding whether planning approval will be needed. Once these fundamental points have been settled a management plan will be produced and we can work towards opening the site for everyone to enjoy.

For further details of these please contact the Chichester Harbour Trust at: admin@chichesterharbourtrust.org.uk

HARBOUR WILDLIFE UPDATE

By now our winter bird visitors will have departed and spring migrants will have passed through on their way to northern breeding grounds, writes Ed Rowsell

They have now been replaced by summer visitors such as terns and migrant warblers arriving to breed.

There are already broods of birds such as Mallard and Coot around and expect to start seeing Shelduck with parties of ducklings in the next few weeks.

Look out for Holly Blue, Speckled Wood and Comma butterflies. Wildflowers such as Stitchwort and Lesser Celandine will be brightening up road verges and hedge banks, while on the saltmarshes scurvy grass will be amongst the first flowers to emerge.

EAST HEAD: GOOD NEWS

East Head is looking healthier than it has for the last 10 years, a consultant has told the East Head Advisory Group. There has been a significant influx of sand from offshore. There has been some erosion in front of the Hinge, which will be monitored.



Shelduck chicks



Speckled Wood

Our Chairman writes -

PLANNERS NEED TO RECOGNISE THE JEWEL IN THEIR CROWN

Thank you for your responses to our recent questionnaire. It was encouraging to get so many replies. The consensus seems to be that in general you are very happy with the way the charity is run and with what we are achieving. Your committee will not be complacent and we will continue to strive to use the charity's resources in the most effective way. You will see yet another membership initiative in this newsletter. We want as many people as possible to take an interest in this beautiful harbour. Early indications of membership levels this year show that, with your help, we can exceed last year's record membership.

We have a wealth of expertise amongst our membership across a wide spectrum of experience. There are times when we need your opinion on major matters and when we need to seek your help in other ways. With the recent effort put into refining and reprogramming our database we are able to communicate more effectively. Please do make sure the membership secretary is kept up to date with your email address and keep an eye on our website. Then communicate - please! Let us have your views and comments.

The last newsletter asked for your vigilance in Local Authority public consultations likely to affect the harbour. You can see the formal responses made by your committee, on behalf of the Friends, on our website. Members who don't have internet please write and we will send you a copy.

Our submission on the 'Coastal Path' has been used by Natural England to feedback particular points of view to Defra. Having made our views clear on the Strategic Growth Options we await the next stage of consultation by Chichester District Council in their Local Development Framework and as I write Havant's proposed Core Strategy is being closely studied. We have also responded to the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan.

It remains a mystery why drafters of these plans fail to acknowledge and understand the importance of the AONB or give sufficient priority to this jewel within their boundaries. *Martin Rhodes*

THORNEY COASTAL PATH REPAIRED

With generous funding support from the Friends, a 140 metre stretch of coastal footpath at Thorney Island has been improved.

The footpath to the south of the Sailing Club forms part of the round Thorney Island walk, in turn part of the Sussex Border Path long distance route. The low-lying path was poorly protected and at risk of being lost to the sea through coastal erosion.

An improved sea defence has secured the path, which has been levelled, widened and resurfaced to secure this much loved route well into the future.



The much improved footpath on Thorney Island

ADVANCE NOTICE:

Please note that the Friends' AGM will again be held at the Chichester Yacht Club, close to Chichester marina at Birdham.

The date is 28th October – more details in our next issue.



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SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT COUNCIL'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The Friends have lodged 'serious concerns' with Chichester District Council about the impact of development on Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as the Council prepare their core strategy policy for 2011 – 2026.

Our Chairman, Martin Rhodes, made the following points in his submission to the Council:

Housing: We are concerned that the impact of further housing development close to or within the AONB would be seriously damaging to nature conservation interests.



Boats moored at Dell Quay

Water quality: We are concerned about water quality in the harbour, which is already being reduced whenever prolonged heavy rain compels the Waste Water treatment Works at Apuldram to discharge sewage which has only passed through a 6mm screen into the harbour. Further housing development, without improvements to the capacity of the works and the identification of sustainable alternatives, will clearly worsen an already serious situation.

Sensitive landscape: The findings of the Council's own Landscape capacity Assessment in 2009 emphasise that the surroundings of the settlements within the AONB are all of high environmental sensitivity and not suitable for strategic or large scale development. We are concerned that development within or immediately adjacent to the AONB could be seriously harmful to the rural setting.

Road pressure: Additional housing will put considerable pressure on the area's road system, particularly the A27.

Development to North: We agree that strategic development to the north and northeast of the City would have the least impact on the AONB, subject to resolving the waste water treatment problem, and satisfactory mitigation of recreational pressure impacts.

We also consider that of the 'settlement hub' options, strategic development at Tangmere, Selsey and East Wittering would have the least impact on the AONB. Better transport arrangements would be needed, however, particularly for East Wittering and Selsey.

Martin Rhodes said that in addition, the Friends were concerned that additional 'smaller scale' development sites allocated within or close to the AONB further into the LDF process will also have significant impact, particularly when their cumulative impact is considered.

Your Views Count!

A big thank you to the 539 members who responded to the questionnaire asking for your views on the Friends, and the work it does. More details on page 2.

Chance to Enter Harbour's Own Photo Contest

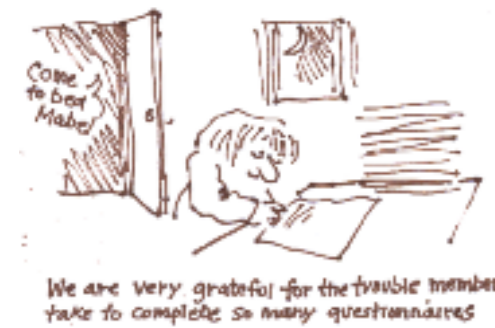
Members who are keen photographers might like to consider entering the Chichester Harbour Photography Competition, which opened for entries on May 1st.

The contest, which is sponsored by the Friends, Chichester Observer, and Whitby's Imaging Centre, attracts hundreds of entries and considerable support from the public when the results are put on display. Three winners are selected, and 15 runners up.

This year's theme is 'Inspired by Chichester Harbour AONB' which gives photographers as wide as possible a choice of subject. Entry forms are being distributed in this mailing to members.

This stunning photograph by Richard Parkhouse, *East Head Tranquility*, deservedly won first prize in 2009





OVER 500 RESPONSES TO MEMBERSHIP POLL

We had a phenomenal response from members to our questionnaire, issued with the last issue of the Newsletter. A total of 539 of you gave us your views on everything from the website and the newsletter, to Friends' activities and future priorities.

This will greatly help your committee to decide on the charity's work in the years ahead, and will help us to give members greater involvement in what we are doing.

We are very grateful to committee member Bernard Clarke for his organisation of the research project, and his analysis of the findings. We are also grateful to our Membership Secretary and Treasurer (Val and Richard Evans respectively) for their ideas and assistance.

One clear finding is the depth of feeling among members about the harbour – 'my spiritual home', 'I just love sailing in the harbour', and 'I walk in the harbour whenever I can and simply love it', were typical comments.

Members also strongly believed in the value to the community of the Friends' activities.

Conservation issues on which we received comments included cycling (should it be allowed on footpaths or not? Opinion was divided); habitat clearance (the need to be aware of wildlife while tidying up overgrown areas like North Common); the problem of sewage discharges in the harbour after

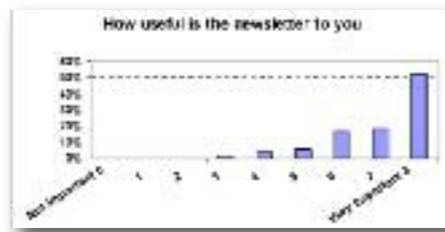
heavy rainfall; and the need to be alert to harbour planning proposals. Other members felt it was important to involve more young people in caring about the harbour.

One disappointing finding was that fewer respondents than expected access our website for information about Friends' activities. Some 20 members were unaware of the site, but were impressed by it when they visited it. Thirty respondents were not computer users, so were unable to access the internet.

The Newsletter was seen by our respondents as their main source of information about the Friends. There were 15 highly favourable comments, and a general tone across other comments of being very happy with the newsletter.

Other suggestions were for some weekend walks or talks, for people working and unable to attend mid-week events; litter collection round the harbour organised by the Friends as well as the Conservancy; the possibility of more Friends' social activities; and more email updates about activities and issues.

We are very grateful for the trouble members took to complete and return so many questionnaires – thank you, it greatly helps your committee to know that so many of you actively support our aims.



PLEASE ENROL A FRIEND AND HELP THE FRIENDS!

We have found that more people are keen to join the Friends when they find out about our work. So please can you pass this edition of the newsletter to a friend or neighbour when you have finished it, together with the joining form enclosed with this mailing. Thank you.

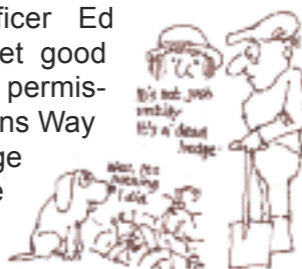
Also, a number of volunteers have helped us to spread the word by placing small display stands and joining forms about the Friends in sailing clubs, boatyards, museums and other outlets. We are looking for a few more helpers to cover the Fishbourne, Dell Quay and Birdham areas. Please contact our Membership Secretary Val Evans on evansval@bt-connect.com if you can help.

ANCIENT WOODLAND GETS MAKEOVER

The largest piece of ancient woodland on the Manhood Peninsular, Salterns Copse, has had a makeover this winter, part funded by the Friends.

In the past, the boundary of the woodland has been marked with piles of brash from the season's coppicing, creating a 'dead hedge', which over time has become a bit untidy. So a post and rail fence, made from local timber, has been constructed around two sides of the wood.

Coppicing encourages a variety of woodland plants and flowers. Conservation Officer Ed Rowsell says: 'the public will get good views into the woodland from the permissive shoreside footpath and Salterns Way cycle route which run along the edge of the wood. This Spring, we are expecting a riot of colour from the bluebells and other flowers there'.



Getting the Best Out of Fishbourne Meadows

by Ed Rowsell

Fishbourne Meadows will be familiar to many of you, especially those who attend the work parties, which have made a huge contribution to the management.

The Conservancy has maintained an interest in the meadows since the late 1980s, becoming the tenant from West Sussex County Council in 1988, and management work starting in 1989.

The meadows are situated at the head of Fishbourne Channel, lying between the Mill Pond and Church. Consisting of three fields, the largest of which is bisected by a stream, parts of the meadow are a Scheduled Ancient Monument as it forms part of the Fishbourne Palace Roman site. The meadows contain a variety of habitat types, but the dominant one is wet grassland.

As this article is written, the meadows are starting to burst into colour and ac-



tivity; with the white and pale pink flowers of Lady's Smock (also known as Cuckoo Flower) and the bright yellow of Lesser Celandine. There is also a cacophony of bird song including the warblers Blackcap and Chiffchaff and flurry of activity from the resident Water Voles. By the time you are reading this, the early flowers will have given way to a riot of colour from Ragged Robin, Horseshoe Vetch and the star of the season, the showy purple flower heads of Southern Marsh Orchid.

Annual botanical monitoring in the meadows commenced in 1991, and the initial count of Southern Marsh Orchids recorded a mere five plants. Positive management, including the reintroduction of grazing, lead to a year on year increase up to a peak of 782 in 2004, this has since stabilised to around the 500 mark.

Management has not been without its ups and downs. The foot and mouth disease and bluetongue outbreaks in 2001 and 2007, affected appropriate grazing of the meadows, which had a noticeable effect on the wildflowers. The fencing which reached the end of its useful life in 2008 also limited our ability to graze the meadows and tested the ranger team's leg muscles in rounding up escapees.

The fencing was replaced in 2009 with kind financial support from the Friends and Natural England, which enabled the site to be grazed fully last summer. The grazing, backed up by the sterling efforts of working parties helping control noxious weeds such as Hemlock Water Dropwort and Ragwort, should guarantee a great future for the meadows.

If you are passing it is a lovely place to while away an hour or so, or even better attend a work party and experience the effort that goes into keeping the meadows in prime condition.



COBNOR GETS A NEW BIRD HIDE

With the help of an enthusiastic team from the Friends, the derelict bird hide at Cobnor Point has been demolished and lovingly rebuilt, guided by the Conservancy's Rangers, writes Nicky Horter, AONB Officer. The new bird hide is open to all, to enjoy the views over Nutbourne Marshes, and contains a wealth of information on the birds that might be spotted.

The new hide is dedicated to Joan Edom, who grew up at Cobnor and was instrumental in achieving the Local Nature Reserve designation for the marshes. Joan was the Conservancy's first conservation warden, as a volunteer and then an honorary role. Joan set about organising the bird count system in the harbour which laid the foundation for the vast dataset now held by the Conservancy.

It is fitting that the new hide is dedicated to her as it is at the spot where Joan would sit for days at a time with her thermoses, sandwiches and binoculars, guarding the nesting birds hour after hour!



Cycling in the AONB - A Guide to the Best Routes



As car running costs escalate and the design of today's bicycles offer smooth easy riding so cycling is becoming a more appealing recreation. The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) offers some attractive rides. It is flat and small undulations are easily overcome with modern cycle gearing, writes our Chairman, Martin Rhodes, himself an enthusiastic cyclist.

As elsewhere in UK cycling on footpaths in the AONB is not allowed but you have a right to ride on bridleways and byways, all shown on Ordnance Survey maps. Ordnance Survey has started to provide free and unrestricted online access to many of its maps. Sustrans.com website is another good source providing extensive information about the UK National Cycle Network.

Here in our AONB there are three major cycle routes around the perimeter and many options for cycling and then walking within the AONB. The Friends have, with the Conservancy, placed cycle posts where you can leave your cycle and then walk favourite sections of the AONB. The cycle posts are sold oak with inlaid steel strips for extra security.

Moving clockwise around the AONB the first major cycling route adjacent to the AONB is the old Hayling Billy railway track now converted to a cycle and walking trail. It starts at Havant Station and runs down touching the AONB at Langstone bridge continuing down the western shore of Hayling Island to the old railway station now the Station Theatre just short of the southern shore of the island. The distance is about nine miles there and back and it is almost completely traffic free along its length.

The next is the National Cycle Network Route 2 that runs along the entire south coast of UK. This crosses along the top of the AONB from Havant to Chichester mostly along the old A27. Cycle lanes have been created along a busy road but you can branch off to some lovely peaceful walks in the northern part of the AONB.

The final major cycle route is the Salterns Way cycle track from the centre of Chichester down the eastern side of the harbour to East Head. This is almost all traffic free on a designated cycle track. It is 12 miles in length, 24 miles round trip. You can get a leaflet all about it from the Harbour Office.

What we suggest you try is to cycle and then walk some of the most popular areas where you will find cycle posts. Starting clockwise around the harbour, these are at RNL Station Hayling Island where there are three posts, Hayling Island North Common car park, Warblington Church*, Prinsted opposite the Scout Hut. Chidham by the two main road bus stops, Nutbourne down Farm Lane*, Bosham Hoe by the ferry to Itchenor, Fishbourne church car park, Apuldram church car park*, Chichester Marina* and East Head by the 'hinge' leading on to the sand dunes. (The ones marked with an asterisk are in the process of being negotiated and placed.)

Why not give it a try, cycle then walk.

WORKING BOATS DRAW IN THE CROWDS

This year's working boat festival, at Itchenor in April, was the most successful so far, with over 1200 members of the public attending to look over the craft which in various ways depend on Chichester Harbour for their livelihoods.

John Davis, the Harbour Master, said 'the interest everyone has shown has been phenomenal and it has been rewarding for all the skippers and crews who have volunteered their own time to attend the event, and for the Conservancy's staff who have put so much effort into organising it'.



Special thanks to the nine members of the Friends who helped at the event: Mike and Clare Goddard, Julia Rowlandson, Bryan Elphick, Dick Pratt, David Pugh-Jones, Liz Davey, Pauline Beale and Matthew Fyfe.

CAN YOU HELP WITH SCHOOL VISITS?

The Harbour Education Service are looking for more volunteers to help them with school visits to the Education Centre and wider harbour, and members of the Friends would be particularly welcome.

The volunteers support the teachers who organise the day trips, which are very popular with schools in the area, and their pupils. No experience is necessary, but your knowledge of the harbour and ability to get on with children will be hugely valued.

As you will be working with children, a security check will be necessary, and this is organised by the Conservancy. If you are interested, please contact Gary James, the Education Officer, on 01243 789173 or: gary@conservancy.co.uk.