



Christmas Newsletter 2004

Message from the Chairman

Very best wishes to all our members and readers for a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

2004 has been another busy year for the Pond. One only has to review the events to see that the Committee and volunteers have been very active not least in keeping the banks clear from litter and looking after the bird rafts - and we do need to offer them our special thanks.

2005 promises to continue in the same vein.

Following our successful British Trust for Conservation Volunteers Group Review accreditation in the Spring we are continuing to consolidate the Association's position as a positive and progressive mature organisation. We intend to gently raise its profile by preparing a brochure and creating a Web site both about the pond.

We are building on Tony Wilkinson's Biodiversity study and are studying the flora and fauna in and around the pond more carefully, and hope to present our findings to you next year.

We anticipate that once the technicalities of ownership and more particularly responsibility have been formalised we will be in a position to address some of the outstanding infrastructure issues such as the stability of the South-west bank of the pond and the outfall from the sluice.

As you will appreciate such exercises are both expensive and time consuming. In addition to looking to our own resources will be applying for technical and financial support from major institutions such as the Lottery. As you will see from the questionnaire enclosed, we are looking for all sorts of help from artistic and publishing to basic research and manual labour to achieve our programme.

Nick Madina

2004 - A Year's Achievements

Footpath Matters

Kissing Gates

Tony Wilkinson's hard work on behalf of the Association came to fruition at long last in January when the Kissing Gates were finally installed by the Conservancy's contractor. Their effect has been pronounced and there are now considerably fewer people cycling along the path.

Our thanks must go to the Harbour Conservancy for their help, both physical and financial, in achieving this.



Bike Rack

In July volunteers completed the "Kissing Gate" project by building the Bike Racks by Slipper Mill. Great care was taken in their construction to use anti-vandal fixings even though this added to the base cost. Much to everyone's surprise they have been used by young people who came to bathe and fish!



Bylaw Issues

The Kissing Gates, Bike Rack and the relaxation of the "No Fishing" rule to "Responsible Fishing" seem to have combined to reduce the previously unacceptable loutish behaviour.

Should behaviour deteriorate or the pond and footpath become abused the sanction of a bylaw will be reconsidered.

Condition of the Footpath

The Association will continue to vigorously press the County Council to meet its obligations in maintaining the path and keeping it safe and will be building on Tony Wilkinson's sterling work in lobbying for help.

Bank Repairs

Overall Condition

As we all know the Bank has been attended to and repaired for many years and we must expect to continue to be vigilant. Various sections are in a poor condition and unfortunately major works are not out of the question.

Radar Survey

In January the discovery of a void that, when investigated, extended 1.5 metres under the path near the South-west corner of the Bank caused some consternation. After emergency repairs a full Radar Survey was carried out to check that there were no other areas of specific weakness under the path. Happily the results were satisfactory and no significant problems were uncovered.

We must thank the Conservancy again for their help with funding and carrying out the investigation.

West Bank Inside Face

During routine inspections it became apparent that various sections of the sandbagged bank were becoming undermined by wave action washing out foundations. It was agreed that the bank needed to be underpinned and extra wave protection provided.

When we approached the Prince's Trust, a youth training organisation, they agreed in principle to help with repairing it. This approach was abandoned as due to their internal restructuring they could only offer to undertake the work in December which was too late in the year.

We developed an alternative approach in discussion with Chichester District Council, West Sussex County Council and the Environment Agency. We are working on strengthening the foundations and make good the major defects in the face of the bank. We then plan to encourage reeds to grow along the face of the bank to provide the outer defence against wave action and, incidentally, soften its appearance.

In discussion with the Conservancy and specialists the plan is to install coir (coconut) matting rolls at the foot of the bank and to plant reed rhizomes in them. We have been warned that ducks do like to pull them out and eat them! We are going to have to protect them with chicken wire until they are fully established. Samples of the matting will be positioned in the Spring and, if successful, we plan to plant the whole bank the following year.

Tide Gate Flank Wall

During a routine inspection in June 2004 it was found that the footing of the red brick wall between the Tidal Gates and the Sluice had loose rocks in it.

It had been repaired in the past with sand bags. Wave action had eroded them, exposing the bank core in several places and some of the foundations had become undermined. The repair proposal was agreed with the Conservancy, who gave us financial help, and with the Environment Agency.

Volunteers worked rapidly, limited by both the tide and the workspace available. More holes and soft spots were discovered below and in the wall. Any that could not be filled by the main pour of concrete were carefully addressed and filled with bagged ready mix or rapid setting concrete. Finally fibre reinforced concrete was pumped. to form the block and fill its adjacent cavities.

Annual General Meeting

This year saw the resignation of Arthur Townsend as Chairman after 10 years of dedicated service. Nick Madina, who has been a Committee Member for four years was voted in as the new Chairman. Tony Wilkinson, a committee member of 8 years' standing also resigned and his place has been taken by Gavin Millar.

Wildlife

The pond has continued from strength to strength. We are in danger of having an overpopulation of coots, ducks and swans. This pressure was demonstrated in October when a visiting swan was set upon by the resident family, and had to be rescued from a muddy fate by several association members. Many other species of birds have been sighted in addition to the usual visitors. Terns have been fishing. The warm summer has encouraged many fish to breed, and there have been regular sightings of Bass and Mullet leaping the gates as the tide has risen.

One animal seen frequently around the pond gates, and which we could well do without, is the rat. Well intentioned but over enthusiastic feeding of the birds undoubtedly supports the rat population. As well as keeping any food supplements we may give to sensible levels we can all help by (ever so politely) discouraging anyone we see overdoing it.

Please do report any unusual sightings of bird life etc. to Gavin Millar. (See contact details)

Sluice repairs

The Hampshire Mill Group, all volunteers, continue to look after the gates and sluice for us with Tony Yoward's help. This year they have replaced the oak blade, and are working on the seals to its sides.

Pond Tidiness

We must all thank both Peter Archer and Bruce Hailstone for their sterling work in their regular picking of litter and keeping the banks tidy.

Slipper Caravan Park

The division of Slipper Caravan Park following the death of Johnny Matthews has raised a number of legal issues. These have complicated car parking from early October causing congestion and extending damage to the edge of the road. We have been assured that the parking aspects of the problem are being addressed as a matter of urgency and that sufficient space will be available.

Hermitage Development

A revised housing scheme was submitted earlier this year by the new developer, KingsOak (Southampton), was withdrawn on 7th December 2004.

The Planning Office hold the details and they are available on the Chchester District Council Web Site.

Annual Dinner

90 members and their friends enjoyed a very pleasant meal and evening in the convivial surroundings of the Brookfield Hotel. Philip Couchman, from the Chichester Harbour Conservancy, and his wife were guests of honour in recognition of the Conservancy's continuing support of the Association. The raffle raised a record £340 with special thanks to those who donated prizes.

2005 - A Programme of Challenges

In the Spring we are determined to consolidate our position as a well-organised pro-active body, able to work constructively and responsibly with the local authorities and conservation agencies. Production of a brochure and the development of a Web site in the coming year will help establish our credentials with a wider public. We also plan to increase our understanding of the pond's ecology by building on Tony Wilkinson's biodiversity study.

January 8th - Saturday - 1.30pm

Meet outside Slipper Mill

- Volunteers to help continue repairing the inside face of the West Bank

February

- Installation of test stretches of reeded bank reinforcement by volunteers.

April 15th - Friday - 8.00pm Emsworth Day Centre

- Tony Yoward speaking about the Mill Pond and the Emsworth Mills.

Continuous

- Picking litter
- Checking of banks and structures
- Monitoring of development around the pond and in the Ems catchment area.

Contact Numbers

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- Chichester Harbour Conservancy - 01243 512301
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