

NEWSLETTER - December 2005

The cold snap is a signal that the festive season is just around the corner and that it is time to write the Christmas Newsletter.

As you will see we have had another successful year. Wildlife has flourished and there have been no emergencies. We have worked with the Authorities on the flooding issues of the Lower Ems and maintaining pressure on the Hermitage Development planning issues.

The Association has raised its profile. We now have our own web site - www.smppa.org.uk and the Pond leaflet is in preparation.

The New Year brings us new challenges. The geotechnical appraisal has confirmed our fears that we have potential problems with sections of the West bank - more below.

May I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Nick Madina, Chairman

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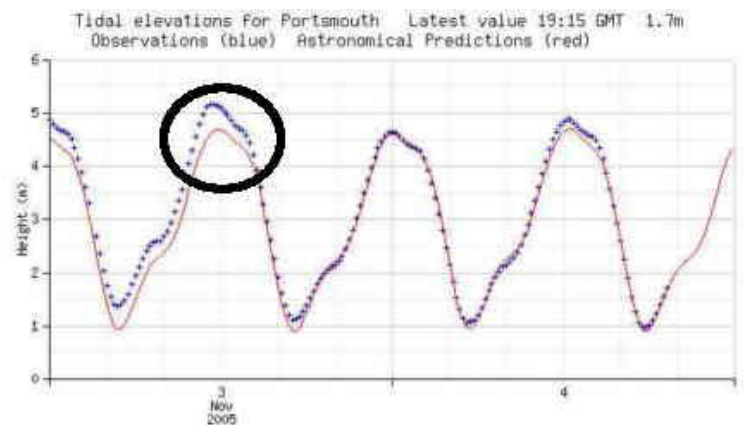
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Flooding - 3rd November 2005

The Environment Agency sent out a flood warning for the midday tide, and flooding did occur. Lumley Road was covered and impassable for a time and Slipper Road was covered. Tide heights were significantly higher than predicted as shown in the official tide graph for Portsmouth..



Slipper Mill Pond - South and West Banks - 13.03 - 3 November 2005
(Photo thanks to John Brown)



taken from the National Tide Levels Facility web site

Flooding

SMPPA & Emsworth Residents Association Meeting - 31st October

We had developed good relations with the Environment Agency and with Autumn coming with its storms and potential floods it seemed an excellent opportunity to invite them to speak. We made contact with the ERA as the issues touched a much wider audience than just the SMPPA members and agreed to hold a joint meeting. The Agency came in force, four specialists, and spoke about their work on the River Ems and its flooding. We were all gratified to hear that the Ems was one of the cleanest rivers and that it supported much wildlife along its length. The interesting evening raised thought provoking comment about river management and the effects of rising sea levels.

We have an open invitation to submit questions to them arising from the meeting - the SMPPA will happily forward any such queries if you have them.

Studies

There are three flooding related studies that include the Emsworth area, and supplied the consultants with full information about the pond and our work on the lower Ems. These are:

- DEFRA
Flood Management Forward Capital Programme
Westbourne to Emsworth Flood Improvement
(HX80370)
The recent level survey on and around both the Peter and Slipper Ponds was part of this exercise.
- DEFRA
Coastal Defence Strategy
Porchester Creek to Emsworth
(JH60537)
This study is being carried out by Halcrows (Consulting Engineers) and is in its early stages and the feasibility of various ideas is being explored at the moment.
- Environment Agency:
River Ems and West Sussex Rifes Catchment Flood Management Plan
This Plan is out for public consultation at the moment and will close on 17th December. As you will already know the Association has been taking a full part in the process and is a member of the Stakeholder Group.

For further information please do contact the relevant councils, public libraries or look on the Web.

Hermitage Development ref.: 05/03653/FUL.

The Planning Committee met on Wednesday 30th November and the application for more houses was approved subject to various condition. Full details are available at Chichester Distinct Council Offices and also on the Internet. (www.chichester.gov.uk - Planning Applications. The "Site History" gives a full schedule of the other applications and also shows the Committee Papers).

West Bank Outside Face

We were worried about the medium to long term stability of the bank in particular and, with the help of a grant from Chichester Harbour Conservancy, we have engaged Arups (Consulting Engineers) to advise and help us.

Their preliminary report has confirmed our fears - the seaward end of the West bank, together with a short section in the middle, are at serious risk and much of the rest of the bank is in doubt.

We are in the process of commissioning a drilling contractor to take sample cores as well as help with excavating trial pits in the bank itself. The results of these test will enable a much more precise evaluation of its stability, and, hopefully, point the way to straightforward solutions.

We are expecting that some major works will need to be carried out next winter - specifically timed to not affect the breeding season.

Needless to say we are very concerned about the financial consequences and are actively seeking financial support from the Authorities and elsewhere. Suggestions as to who to approach most welcome!

Wildlife Report

Recent sightings of birds on and around the pond include:

Brent geese & juveniles	Coots	Comorants
Curlew	Egrets	Gulls - herring
Gulls, blackheaded	Canada` geese	Hérons

Dabchick	Pied Wagtail	Grey Wagtail
Kingfishers	Greenshank	Lapwings
Mallards	Moorhens	Oystercatchers
Rooks	Redshank	Swans & juveniles
Turnstones		

A suggested sighting of a Whimbrel elicited the comment from a local expert that it would highly unusual at this time of the year. Despite the lack of breeding/rearing success amongst the coots there seem to be more than ever on the pond (up to 50).

The strawberry tree (arbutus) at the North end of the East bank has been in flower and its spectacular display has pleased many passers by.



We continue to build up our observations of wildlife seen in and around the pond and they are being posted on our web site.

Whilst responsible fishing is acceptable, we have noted that there are still a lot of lines and hooks around the notice boards. Please do remind fishermen that hooks and lines are particularly dangerous to bird life.

Events held during the autumn of 2005

Annual General Meeting - 21st October

A comprehensive and interesting meeting updated the audience on the activities carried out by the Pond Committee during 2005 and on the plans for the Pond in the coming year.

Annual Dinner - 25th November

86 people enjoyed the dinner at the Brookfield Hotel in Emsworth. The food was excellent, the service, as ever, carried out to its usual high standard and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. A total of around £300 was raised mostly by the raffle – a welcome contribution to the finances of the Pond. Very many thanks to everyone who contributed so generously to the prizes, to everyone who bought the raffle tickets and, not least, to the four fearless raffle ticket sellers – Anne Christian, Penny Montague, Sarah Titley and Julie Warren.

Pond Draining

November 23-24th - geotechnical inspection

December 2-3rd - taking advantage of the very high tides and bad weather to stir up and flush out silt.

SMPPA Web Site - [www.smppa.org.uk]

At long last we have reached a solution to our problems with copyright and have made the draft web site demonstrated at the AGM in October live.

The site is intended to be informative and interesting, with layers of information to satisfy most needs. For instance as part of the Natural History of the pond we have included a set of pictures of the plants and shrubs we have seen around the pond to help in identification, and included a much more detailed register logging at fixed points in the year. We plan to keep the registers up to date and to add more pictures as they become available. We are particularly indebted to the help we have had from Tony Yoward for his invaluable assistance in assembling the historical information.

Contacts:

- General:
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Please let him know if you see any wildlife activity out of the ordinary.

Should you need to rescue an animal or bird in distress the first point of help is the RSPCA (01329 667 541). The Downland Surgery (01243 377 141) offers a support service in the event of real need.

Dates for your diary

Work Party - weekend -February 4th & 5th

- Filling erosion holes in West bank
- Making good inside face of East end of the South Bank
- Dredging the North-east and North-west corners of the pond

Spring Talk - Friday - 21st April

- To be given by Les Freeston of the Wildfowlers on "The Work of the Wildfowlers".

STOP PRESS

We went live on 1st December

Our Web Address is [Www.smppa.org.uk](http://www.smppa.org.uk)