



*Summer Party – September 2012*

*Photo: Nick Madinaveitia*

## **Newsletter — September 2012**

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## **Introduction:**

The nights are drawing in heralding autumn. Birds are finishing raising their young, the grass on the bank is long and dry and the reeds have come into flower.

The summer – or the little there was of it – has been very nice but is really memorable for poor weather and exceptional rainfall. All the vegetation has thrived apart from the much admired Strawberry tree – which has died and will be replaced.

The Association is preparing for its Annual General Meeting and its Agenda (circulated with this Newsletter) some members are standing for re-election, and following the retirement of Peter Archer and Gavin Millar there are two vacancies – volunteers needed. You?

*Nick Madinaveitia, Chairman.*

## **Ron Clifton**

It is with sadness we have to report the passing away of Ron at the end of August. He was a very enthusiastic Association member, always cheerful and helpful, who served on the Committee from 1991 to 2006. He leaves Carol, his wife who is now in residential care and a son Chris.

## **Wildlife Report**

*Gavin Millar reports:*

In the last Newsletter we left the Greater Black-backed Gulls sitting on their nest in the middle raft and wreaking havoc on the other birds trying to bring up young on and around the pond. Well, as you will all know by now, three eggs were hatched, one of the chicks died early and the other two grew rapidly, fledged and departed, although they still visit, as do their parents. Not surprisingly, the coots had no success, although they raised one brood on Peter Pond, and it was late in the summer before a couple of clutches of ducks survived infancy. Most of us have mixed feelings about the selection of our pond as a breeding site for these magnificent and fearsome birds. Who gets priority in our mission to conserve? My own feeling is that we have no brief to interfere with what is an entirely natural example of the eco-system at work. Incidentally, I misled you in the last

Newsletter: the four previous recorded breeding pairs in Sussex referred only to the 2011 season, not all previous years. It's rare, but not that rare. There's not a lot more to say about bird life. The numbers of cormorants on the middle raft recently suggest goodly numbers of fish and eels in the pond. I caught an elver in the seaweed below the tidal gates while shrimping with my grandchildren, which is uncommon.

On the botanical front, the weather, early warmth and then lots and lots of rain, encouraged vigorous growth of grasses and reeds, in particular. Following the clearance of the plot between the Strawberry tree and Slipper House, it was decided to plant a "rustic" hedge of Hawthorn, Field Maple, "Wild" Roses, Hazel and Blackthorn once the Lonicera was pretty much removed. This is growing well. Its linearity has been criticised by some, but you can't please everyone. Despite an inclination to wait and see what came up after the clearance of that area, we succumbed to the temptation to throw a packet of wild flower seeds around after planting the hedge. The result has been an explosion of plants, not all of them "wild" as I see it. I have counted 49 species growing there now (and I doubt that I have spotted and identified all). That's more than the stated contents of the seed packet. Trouble is we don't know which are spontaneous and which are of packet origin, which is frustrating. An example is 'common' Calamint, which I recorded three or four years ago and it then vanished. It's not on the list of packet contents but I'm not sure how carefully they exclude other seeds. I mentioned the Strawberry tree. It began looking sick in the Spring. Expert views were sought. They are reckoned to have a natural life-span of around 30 years, so it owed us nothing and, after attempts to ensure it had enough water and nothing constraining it at the base, it duly turned up its toes. Sad – it has given us lots of pleasure, although clearly not a native plant. The committee's view is that it would be good to replace it with another of the same. The membership may have a view on that and it will be sought at the AGM. Rob has been looking at the best way to remove it and a decision will be made shortly.



*Wild flowers*

*Photo: Nick Madinaveitia*

## **Pond Tidal Gates:**

As we reported in the May Newsletter in the autumn of 2011 the 35 year old leaking gates were allowing the pond to drop in level exposing mud flats and upsetting its eco-balance so in December 2011 we decided to replace the gates.

We had a number of difficulties with the necessary approvals and protracted negotiations with local firms we approached. Finally, after much searching, at the end of February 2012 at the very end of our window of opportunity we appointed Greenoak Carpentry of Liss - a specialist contractor.



*Gates being positioned*

*Photo - Richard Somers Cocks*

He fabricated the gates in his workshop and started on site in March two weeks before before Easter. The old gates were removed and the hinges and frame checked as we planned to reuse them. The hinges were worn and had to be repaired and the seals replaced. After a week of minor set-backs all was ready and the new gates were hung. Unfortunately the seals did not close completely and need further minor adjustment. These delays meant that we were into a period of impractical midday tides denying access to the gates during working hours and Easter was upon us.

As the adjustments required the draining of the pond , it was decided to

postpone completion of the works to the Autumn so as not to interfere with the Spring and Summer wildlife breeding seasons. This proved invaluable as a pair of Greater Black Backed Gulls took up residence on the large bird raft and brought up two chicks to the delight of bird watchers.

The contractor is currently planning to work on the gates on the week of the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2012. We will be draining the pond during the preceding weekend and it will be empty for several days. He will be using a crane to lift out the gates so we will be arranging with West Sussex County Council to close the path in the interests of public safety.

## Flooding

The wettest summer for 100 years – that is the headline in the local and national press. The Westbourne Parish Magazine reports that whilst the average rainfall for June is normally 36mm, this year 156mm fell! Needless to say there has been flooding in places and some residents have queried how the pond sluice is operated. Many of you will recall that we commissioned a study of the lower Ems in 2001 showing that flooding upstream occurs when the pond banks are submerged. We had already given the report to both the Environment Agency and West Sussex Council, who are looking at it again and we plan to hold a joint public meeting to review its findings and help affected residents take appropriate measures to minimise disturbance and disruption when local flooding is inevitable.

On a separate note Hampshire County Council together with the Environment Agency are holding an exhibition as part of their Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in the Community Centre on 4<sup>th</sup> October 5 to 8pm.

**Your chance to help in the fight against local flooding...**

Are you affected by local flooding?

*"This is your opportunity to have your say!"*

Following one of the wettest springs and summers on record, Hampshire County Council is urging residents to help ensure that plans to prepare the county against future flooding are up to date and accurate.

We are inviting comments on our new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS). This important document looks at how the County Council, its partners and communities themselves can better manage flooding from surface water, groundwater, streams and ditches.

From the end of September we'll be holding a six week consultation on the draft LFRMS. We're asking you to let us know about flooding 'hotspots' in your local area, help check that our information about previous flooding is correct and comment on plans for managing flooding in the future. The draft strategy will be available on our website and you will be able to make comments via an online form.

Alternatively you can view documents, make comments, ask questions, talk through concerns or share experiences of local flooding by coming along to one of our drop in sessions. At each session County Council staff will be on hand to help.

For more information or if you'd like to get involved in the consultation, please visit:  
[www.hants.gov.uk/flooding/floodrisksstrategy](http://www.hants.gov.uk/flooding/floodrisksstrategy)

**Monday 1 October**  
 The Ringwood Gateway  
 The Forum, Ringwood  
 5pm - 8pm

**Thursday 4 October**  
 Emsworth Community Centre  
 Church Path, Emsworth  
 5pm - 8pm

**Saturday 6 October**  
 Discovery Centre  
 Jenny Street, Winchester  
 10am - 2pm

**Monday 8 October**  
 The Harrington  
 Fleet Road, Fleet  
 5pm - 8pm

*All consultations will be free of charge, please feel free to drop by as and when.*

Please note that the LFRMS will not directly cover the Environment Agency's role in this matter; the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

**Hampshire County Council**  
[www.hants.gov.uk](http://www.hants.gov.uk)

## **East Bank Matters**

In our May Newsletter we set out our plan for the summer and, thanks to our volunteers, we have been able to carry out the tasks.

### **Common Reeds**

At the start of August we trimmed back the reeds fronting the road to limit their intrusion and preserve the necessary line of sight. Needless to say the cut rhizomes have sprouted again but have not had time to become a nuisance.



*Road edge trimmed*

*Photo - Nick Madinaveitia*

### **Nettles and Brambles**

Our cull away from the reserved areas has been very successful, and their space has been taken up by vigorous grass and wild-flower growth.

### **Cotoneaster**

The tree close to the wall of Slipper House which was mercilessly pruned in the Spring has rejuvenated.



*Cotoneaster*

*Photo: Nick Madinaveitia*

We are planning to cut back the reeds as we did last autumn. It is inevitable that reeds will re-appear but hopefully the cutting will weaken them and give the other plants a chance to show – like the daffodils did earlier this year.

## **Work parties**

### **September**

We propose carrying out the work – reed cutting - in two stages:

By the time you get this Newsletter a small group of us will have cut down the reeds and left them to dry to reduce their bulk.

Stage 2 - An informal Work-Party on 15<sup>th</sup> September to trim and prune bushes

bag and dispose of arisings and the hopefully dry reeds

November – full Work-Party to prepare the bank for the winter and install storm drains across the bank to relieve Slipper Road ponding.

## The Bird Book

Readers will recall that such was the appreciation of the pictures Richard Somers Cocks showed us at the Spring talk that the whispered suggestion has become reality. We have produced and are now selling a ring bound, pocket sized volume of birds and other wild life to be found in and around the Slipper Mill Pond and the local area for £4 a copy (post and package extra).

If you would like to buy a copy of this popular volume please email your name and address, to [birdbook@SMPPA.org.uk](mailto:birdbook@SMPPA.org.uk) or contact Betty Smith.



*Osprey - Richard Somers Cocks*

Richard has retired to live by the the Moray Firth and is now taking pictures there .

## Summer Party

It all started with a sad Email from Betty on the Sunday when the party was to be held:

*Dear Members, I am so sorry that we had to cancel today's party. We left the decision to the last minute hoping for a glimmer of sunshine, but not a glimmer in sight, quite the opposite!*

*We intend to hold our Summer Party instead at 12.00 noon on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> September in the Urrys' garden, at Sailaway, 59 Slipper Road (at the end of Slipper Road). Do please join us if you are able and bring with you all the nice food that I hope you will be able to salvage from today.*

*Sorry again and look forward to seeing you on Tuesday when, I am reliably informed, THE SUN WILL SHINE!!*

*With best wishes*

Contrary to the trend of the summer it turned out to be a splendid occasion with unabated sunshine lifting everyone's spirits – and a great time was enjoyed by all. Many thanks to Betty, the Urrys and all the helpers.

## **Email Addresses:**

If you have not already done so please either send your E-mail address to Betty Smith or send an E-mail to [membership@smppa.org.uk](mailto:membership@smppa.org.uk) so we can keep you informed of events, workdays etc. We will only use it for SMPPA business and not pass it on to any other parties.

Please note that our Newsletters, including this one, are also available on our web site: [www.smppa.org.uk](http://www.smppa.org.uk).

## **Dates for your Diary**

Friday	9 <sup>th</sup> November	Annual General Meeting
TBA	November	Work Party
Friday	23 <sup>rd</sup> November	Annual Dinner, Brookfield Hotel.

## **Contacts:**

General:	Nick Madinaveitia	01243 377749
Treasurer:	Mark Phillips	01243 376756
Social Events	Betty Smith	01243 371576
	Sarah Titley	01243 379947
Wildlife:	The Downland Surgery	01243 377141
	RSPCA	01239 667541
Environment Agency	Pollution	0845 9881188
	Flood line	0800 807060
	Mention the local rangers in any calls – Paul Reynolds & Trevor Page	

## **STOP PRESS**

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers the Reed Cutting on the Eastern Bank is now complete.



*Before and after pictures of the North end of the Bank*

*Photo: Nick Madinaveitia*