



Slipper Mill Pond Preservation Association

Registered Charity: 277744

www.smppa.org.uk



Raft works

Feeding gulls

Newsletter — April 2014

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Introduction

Winter this year has been a protracted stormy event with little cold weather but much rain which, in addition to causing flooding, has raised groundwater levels. Even if we have a dry period it will take months for the levels to return to normal.

WSSC and the Environment Agency have now formally endorsed the findings of the Burgess Report and its supplementary information demonstrating that the management of the pond does not affect Lumley Cottages. We are now making preparations to repair the sluice and its apron and work with the authorities to help resolve upstream problems.

Spring is now upon us and hopefully the pond will recover from the depredations of the savage winter.

We are looking forward to the results of the Photographic Competition, the Spring Talk, and the Summer Party with anticipation.

Nick Madinaveitia – Chairman

Wildlife report

General

After a turbulent January and February we hope that things are now returning to normal, with the hedging and Spindle tree planted at the north end of the East Bank looking very encouraging. The daffodils have delighted us and seem to have spread. There has also been a lovely display of lesser Celandines.



The Common Reeds sprayed in September last year need monitoring over the coming months to see how successful the spraying was. We may well need to repeat spray in order to control growth.

The whole ecosystem is recovering from having the tidal gates held open in December and again for much of January and February. The duck and coot population, which had already declined last summer, has dwindled more, probably from the time the pond was drained.

The Greater Black Backed Gulls have hopefully got the message that they are not welcome – but Barnacle Bill reports below...

The water in the pond is crystal clear at the moment as groundwater is draining directly from the chalk and has not had time to develop the usual algal deposits .

Many mullet and the odd eel have been seen and all eyes are now on the swans and coots who have built their nest in the reeds at the north end of the East Bank.



View across the pond



Greater Black Backed Gull (*Larus Marinus*)

Barnacle Bill reports:

THREE MEN ON A RAFT

*The Great Black Backed Gull, *Larus Marinus*, is handsome and powerful. It is the largest gull in the world, and knows it. Awareness of its assets gives it the audacity and self confidence to be a voracious predator. Slipper Mill Pond is not only an idyllic location for a love nest, but it (usually) teems with humbler water-birds and their families, providing a varied and attractive diet for *Lari Marini*. It was a good place for them to nest, but bad from the point of view of the long term denizens of the pond.*

At the SMPPA's AGM in 2013 it was therefore decided that measures should be put in hand to make the nesting rafts unusable by Great Black Backs. Firstly, a survey of the main raft was carried out and measurements taken. This raft, the

middle of the three, is in fact two rafts lashed together. Both of these are decked by heavy timbers. The remnants of a pebble “beach”, put there in the past to encourage the nesting of Terns, occupy much of one of the rafts.

The dimensions ascertained, orders were placed for coils of green plastic covered wire, timber, brackets, staples and screws. In the opening months of the year, and when the Chairman had crafted timber trestles and a replacement nesting box on shore, the equipment was shipped out to the raft. Two intrepid Committee Members spent a happy day in splendid isolation in the middle of the



pond, fixing the trestles across the rafts and tensioning longitudinal wires across them. The superb eyesight of the gulls would warn them of the potential hazard and deter landing. Hopefully, therefore, the Gulls would look elsewhere for 2014. This action received an honourable mention on line in the Emsworth Wildlife Blog, which included a reference to the two “chaps” who had been spotted carrying out the work.

The early part of the year saw some violent weather, with mighty winds and storm surges. One storm succeeded in raising seas of unusual height upon the pond and these, coupled with tide height and wind strength, caused the two parts of the large



raft to split wide apart. This necessitated the presence of three men on the raft, to warp the two halves of the raft back together by dint of muscle power alone, in the manner of the Volga Boatmen.

Shortly afterwards roosting poles were fitted to the large raft. These were lashed atop the trestles and the wire, hopefully to encourage



the Cormorants which had been frequent former tenants. Whilst the work was in hand, a pair of Black Backs was seen to be sitting quite happily on the smaller south raft, appraising it as a possible home from home. Clearly the other two pond rafts also needed wiring.

The south and north rafts were therefore fitted with supports and wires. In both cases a central post was installed, and wires fixed radially to form a wigwam shape covering the raft.

Whereas the southern raft was able to bear a worker, albeit in a tippy fashion, all work on the small northern raft had to be accomplished from the trusty dinghy.



And so, after a series of missions, all rafts now have wiring to deter the Black Backs from nesting. The wires might have the desired effect, but what must be monitored is the impact on other bird life. Ideally, once the Gulls have found an alternative nesting site, things can return to normal. Meantime there are hopeful signs - a coot was observed setting up home in the box on the south raft. Let's hope for a happy event!

Barnacle Bill

Work Parties

The recent storms have also caused problems for Slipper Road and the East Bank. Both have been covered, more than once, by debris from the harbour and also the remains of reeds cut down to ground late last year.

A huge thank you to individual residents of Slipper Road and work party volunteers who have come out on at least three occasions to clear the debris and litter and remove it from site. Litter has also been removed from all the other sides of the pond.

Infrastructure

General

The pond banks and the gates are in good condition apart from the sluice with only minor maintenance issues to be addressed at present. We have not been able to deal with the leaks at the tidal gates yet as working conditions are too dangerous due to the flows downstream but they remain 'on the list' for the near future.

The sluice itself and more particularly its apron are in need of urgent attention – see below.

The River Ems

The wet winter has been exceptional. The problems of the Christmas Eve Flood we reported on fully in the January Newsletter have been compounded. In anticipation of exceptional tides and at the behest of Lumley Cottage residents we opened the tidal gates on 31st December. The 3rd January and 14th February high tides were exceptional, closing the main road and reaching the first of the Lumley Cottages. The gates were closed on 20th as a period of calm weather and neap tides was expected. This was not to be as the weather deteriorated and the Environment Agency asked us to reopen the gates on 22nd January as flow levels in the Ems were rising, being fed by rising groundwater upstream. They were bringing the balancing pond (or South Meadow of Brook Meadow) into use. The weather continued to be poor and heavy rain on 10th February and exceptional tides on 14th were notable. The gates were finally closed on 22nd to help with repairing the broken bird raft and because the breeding season was about to start. Sad to say the prolonged period of having a drained pond seems to have affected the wild life and now there are even fewer coots and ducks.



However there is good news - Opus Consultants, on behalf of the Council, have now completed the Review of the Burgess Report and its supplementary information and have formally agreed that the pond does not cause fluvial or tidal flooding upstream. This means that we can now address the repair of both the sluice and its apron without fearing being sued retrospectively for causing damage or distress upstream.

Moreover as a result of the recent flooding , the Watershed Grant

application and the Review process, WSCC have set up a group to look at the whole of the river system between the Constant Spring Sluice and the sea. The Environment Agency, Havant Borough Council, residents from the Lumley Cottages, Gooseberry Cottage and Lower Lumley and Brook Meadow as well as the SMPPA are all actively participating.

(The Watershed Grant application is for works along Lower Lumley Road to improve the surface drainage, the outfall of the Hermitage Brook, raise the bank of Peter Pond to reduce tidal over-topping and repair the bank by the park bench at the A259 corner.)

Many solutions are being investigated at present including raising of Brook Meadow river bank alongside the railway embankment – where the stream has overflowed in the past and flowed through the Lumley Cottages. The impact of Climate Change, particularly increased rainfall and the predicted rise in sea level, is being included and hopefully proper long term solutions will be developed.

Photographic Competition

Sarah Titley Reports:

Excitement is mounting as the closing date for the competition – 7th April – has passed and our judges, Jenny Tyson, a well-known artist, together with Gill Thatcher and Lizzie Dymock are starting their deliberations.

Just to remind you, prizes and certificates will be presented on Friday 2nd May 2014 at a private viewing for the entrants and their families at the Emsworth Community Centre at 4pm where all of the entries will be on show. The photographs will remain on display over the Emsworth Arts Trail weekend of 3rd and 4th May.

Spring Talk

“Smuggling in Chichester and Langstone Harbours.”

Linda Newell, administrator of the Emsworth Museum, will give a talk on Friday 16th May - 7.30 for 8.00pm. at the Pastoral Centre, Emsworth. Do come along – it will be a good evening.

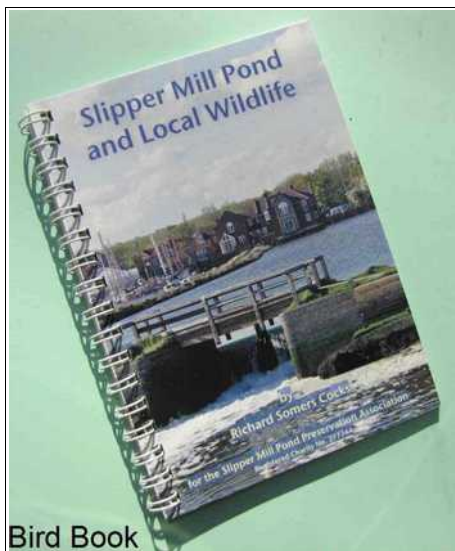
Dates for your Diary

16 th May	Friday	Spring Talk
August	TBA	Summer Party
17 th October	Friday	Annual General Meeting
November	TBA	Work Party
21 st November	Friday	Annual Dinner, Brookfield Hotel.

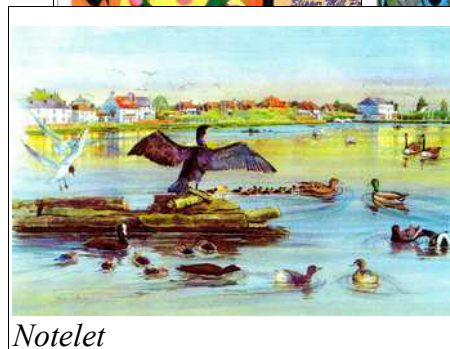
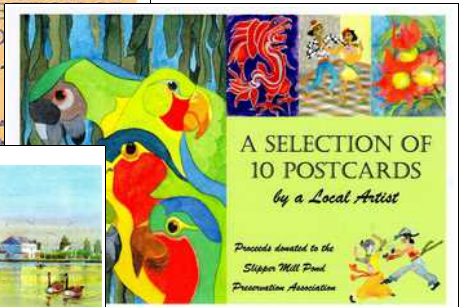
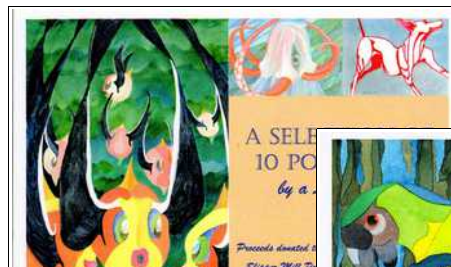
Contacts:

General:	Nick Madinaveitia	01243 377749
Treasurer:	Mark Phillips	01243 376756
Membership & 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	

Publications



Bird Book



Notelet

All on sale to support the Association
Please contact Betty Smith if you wish to purchase
the Bird Book, Notelets or the Cards