



Slipper Mill Pond Preservation Association

Registered Charity: 277744

www.smppa.org.uk



*Greater Black-backed Gull nesting on a raft in the pond
Photo: Richard Somers Cocks*

Newsletter — May 2012

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Introduction:

This newsletter offers thanks to all the volunteers who have helped us with improving the East bank, and explains the plans for the rest of the year particularly why we are leaving the cutting of the reeds until later. We report on the Tidal gates and warn you that, as they are not yet complete, there could be water loss in the summer (if it really comes!) We also celebrate the success of the Photographic Competition.

Nick Madinaveitia, Chairman.

Wildlife Report

Gavin Millar reports:

These are exciting times, at least they are if you're not a bird trying to breed on the pond. A pair of Greater Black-backed Gulls is nesting on the middle raft. If they hatch their 'brood' it will be only the fifth time it's been recorded in Sussex, so Brian Fellows informs me. They are, of course, fearsome (and fearless) predators of other birds and their young. The sight of a swan being driven off when it strayed too close, and a dead young cormorant found floating near the west bank testify to that. Their eggs are due to hatch around two weeks from now. Meanwhile, the resident swans on Peter Pond (who also own the Slipper Pond) are nesting a bit more sensibly than the last two seasons, albeit not high enough on the island to be sure of escaping the highest tides. We shall see. Meanwhile there are coots and mallards nesting nearby and I can only say I wouldn't offer them a life insurance policy if the GBB gulls stick around. The two pairs of tufted ducks which appeared in the last week or so seem to have got the message and departed.

Spring flowers are around in profusion. The daffodils gave a great, albeit rather regimented display, and when the foliage dies down it is planned to dig up the bulbs and re-plant in smaller, more irregular clumps. The common reed is also in vigorous growth. We have taken steps with weed matting to prevent spread along the bank from the three main stands. It looks as if we shall have to do a late summer cut to keep them under control, especially where they are competing with other bank plants. Nettles are also looking pretty aggressive and will need some cutting back, preferably before they seed.

There are eight of the original nine wild roses looking healthy, as is the newly-planted rustic hedge at the north end of the east bank. The plan is to scatter some wild-flower seed in this area.

Insects haven't been prominent, with the exception of bumblebees, a few weeks back when it was much warmer. I hope they weren't too quick off the blocks.



Newly-planted rustic hedge

Pond Tidal Gates:



*Gate being lowered
Richard Somers Cocls*

At the beginning of April we, the Slipper Mill Pond Preservation Association, installed replacement tidal gates to stem progressively increasing leakage. Unfortunately our contractor was not able to complete the works in the time available before Easter and the wildlife breeding season.

Finishing touches have been postponed until the Autumn when the gates will be lifted again, adjusted and other minor issues addressed.

We are very grateful for the financial assistance received from Chichester Harbour Conservancy, Southbourne Parish Council and several private donors. In all we have had promises of over £4,000 towards an overall cost of over £10,000. As ever we would welcome more contributions.

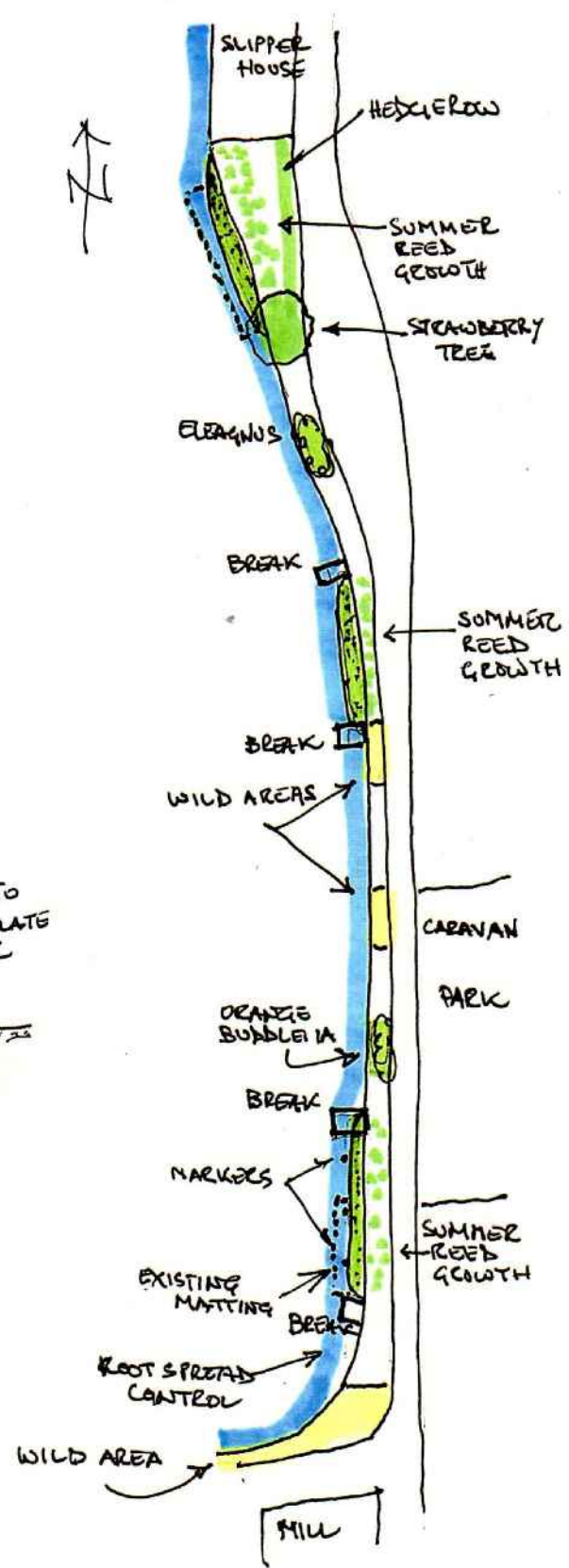
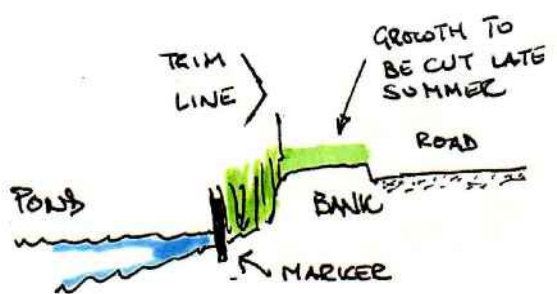


Recycled hinge being refitted



Gates in position

SLIPPER MILL POND EAST BANK SKETCH PLAN



Dly
May 2012

East Bank Matters

Work so far

We have successfully carried out the various objectives agreed last Autumn thanks to the help of many volunteers.

At the North end of the bank at the head of Slipper Road there has been significant progress. In March we completed root clearing with the much appreciated help of Ben Jacobs and David Urry. The ground along the road frontage was cleared, a line of stones placed to discourage parking and the 'rustic hedge' planted.

We had a major Work Day on 14th April with some 20 volunteers attending, enabling us to reinforce the Sea Club Rush on the West bank with fresh stock from Peter Pond, level and tidy up the open land at the head of Slipper Road, and work along the bank removing bramble roots from the 'meadow' sections whilst leaving the 'wild' sections untouched.

Next tasks

We have some pernicious plants that, if left unchecked, will take over the bank – and have established a plan of action:

Common Reeds

We have marked the pond-ward extent of the reeds to keep a check on incursion into the open water and installed weed-control matting at each end of the clumps at water level to try to limit their spread along the banks. Our cutting last autumn has given the other plants a chance to show – like the daffodils – but it is inevitable that reeds will re-appear. In order to keep the bank from being overrun we are going to try to limit them. Extensive research has revealed that the only practical way to control them by mechanical means is to cut them late in the summer when they are flowering and this is what we are planning to do.

Nettles and Brambles

We appreciate their value but we are very concerned that they are becoming a dominant species in the designated open areas. To keep them reasonably under control we are instituting a regular cull and taking care to limit disturbance to grasses and plants whilst those in the 'wild' areas will remain untouched. In this way we will maintain habitats for a wide range of insects and spiders whilst allowing the vegetation to diversify.

Maurice Broomfield Photography Competition

You will recall that Suzie Thomson-Coon had asked that the collection for Maurice should be sent to the SMPPA and, that in memory of him, we set up the Competition in 2011. Well, the first Photographic Competition was a success. Entries were submitted to the judges by the participating children from the Emsworth, St James' and Southbourne Primary Schools by the end of the Spring term. After careful scrutiny of the 72 entries from 29 competitors the judges, Jeff and Jill Thatcher and Lizzie Dymock were able to award the prizes and duly notified the schools. On the afternoon of Friday 4th May the winning images, plus as many others as possible were exhibited at the Emsworth Community Centre as part of the Emsworth Art Trail .



Jeff Thatcher

Gavin Millar introduced the event, Jeff explained how the judges had arrived at their conclusions and Nick Broomfield (Maurice's son) awarded the prizes. The winners were congratulated and everyone enjoyed the light refreshments that Jill Millar had organised.



Nick Broomfield

Work Party - 16th May – 10am.

We plan to work along the East Bank cutting back nettles and brambles whilst leaving intact as much of the natural growth as possible. All welcome.

Spring Talk - 20th April

Richard Somers Cocks enthralled us all with his wild life photographs taken on and around the pond. We left the Methodist Hall bedazzled with the beauty of the birds, flowers and butterflies he had caught on camera and his encyclopedic knowledge about each species.



Lapwing
Photo: Richard Somers Cocks

Such was the enthusiasm that a whispered suggestion to include them in a book has taken root. Richard was in agreement and has generously offered any proceeds to the Association. We are working with him to produce a pocket sized volume of his pictures and hope to be printing it this Summer.



Mallard
Photo: Richard Somers Cocks

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 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.

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday	16 th May	Work Party – start 10 am.
TBA	August	Summer Party
Friday	9 th November 2012	Annual General Meeting
Friday	23 rd November 2012	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:	Gavin Millar	01243 377071
	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	

(Photos: Nick Madinaveitia except where noted)