



Newsletter — January 2016



Pond drained and main bird raft

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Introduction

Memories of the revelries at the Annual Dinner and the festive season are now a thing of the past as we all are waiting for Spring to come. As agreed at the AGM we have cleared the bird rafts of their protection and already the Greater Black Backed Gulls are showing interest in using the main raft as a nesting site again. Hopefully they will not impact too greatly on the other bird life in the area.

The next major event on our calendar is the spring talk when John Smith of the Environment Agency has agreed to speak about the Agency and its involvement with the lower River Ems – an occasion not to miss.

Nick Madinaveitia

Wildlife report

Birds

At our Annual General Meeting we discussed that perennial – the Greater Black Backed Gulls – and by a majority decision we agreed to remove the rails and protection and to see if they would nest on the main raft again this year. Whilst they are not there every day the signs are that they will. Gulls and cormorants come and go and waders have visited us when the pond has been drained. Every now and then there is the flash of kingfishers who seem to have a very busy schedule.

East Bank

Rob Turner reports:

The East Bank along Slipper Road is now showing the benefits of our hard work in the Autumn with Spring flowers and bulbs beginning to show and shrubs and roses looking in good order.

However, the bad weather we have experienced over the past couple of months has deposited litter in the pond and a few of us will be out shortly to clear this from the banks, ideally when the pond has been drained.

2016 work party dates will be advised as and when required and a big thank-you in advance, if you are able to help in any way.



Reed control

As noted in our last Newsletter the Common Reed, officially known as *Phragmites australis*, whilst being a sculptural and attractive plant is also very invasive. Despite the work done in 2013 rhizomes had reinvigorated in many places requiring punitive spraying to regain control.

Once the necessary EA approvals were in place we assisted Jonathan Newman, our specialist contractor, to re-spray the reeds taking care to attack only the affected areas. We took special care to protect the now well established wild roses and the Spindle tree.

In discussion Jonathan explained how the glyphosate worked:

- it was absorbed in the leaves and taken down into the rhizomes destroying them
- the glyphosate worked by attracting heavy metals to its molecules
- he used his own de-mineralised water to avoid contamination with the calcium from our hard tap water
- he was using a standard mixture with detergent added to help the globules adhere
- the weedkiller is soon absorbed by the roots so they can be cut after 10 to 14 days
- spraying in the early autumn was ideal as the natural seasonal process was for the plant to build up food reserves for the winter
- treating earlier in the year inhibits their growth but does not kill them
- a license was needed for spraying but that we could deal with errant fronds by simply smearing a weedkiller on them.



Infrastructure

General

The pond and its banks continue to be in good condition apart from the sluice and its apron. Their repair and construction of a possible weir continue being part of the ongoing discussions with the Environment Agency (EA) and West Sussex County Council.

Lower Ems River Management Group

The group has been meeting regularly to pursue the resolution of flooding issues.

Lower Ems Appraisal

The Environment Agency's consultants, Mott MacDonald, have released their report. They concluded that schemes for the reduction of flooding in Westbourne were viable, but that improving the Lumley Cottages area showed little benefit ratio and that proposals to cope with the overall river and tidal flooding were very expensive.

Local Schemes:

Lower Lumley Road

The bank along Peter Pond fronting Lumley Road is complete with the final stages being addressed in December.

The pond was drained at the beginning of September for a day to help them resolve some technical issues.

Gooseberry Cottage Area



South Meadow Outlet by A259

The bank to the cottage has been strengthened and the capacity of outlet structure to the balancing pond has been increased.

Lumley Cottages

Phase 1 -The protection works have been receiving commendations including the Portsmouth News “Best Street” award.



Phase 2 - Work at the bridges by Rose Cottages has been held up as alternative contractors are being sought after a surprise price hike by the successful tenderer.

Phase 3 - The design and detail of the bank to the rear are still pending as they EA study has revealed a very poor cost-benefit value in the study.

Silting

As noted in our last Newsletter we hope to drain the pond more frequently this winter aiming to use spring tides and rainfall to try to flush silt away.



Precise information is not available about how much silt enters the pond from the River Ems and from the sea nor how much silt has accumulated in the past years.

At the moment the current Neap tides make it impossible to open the gates even if we wanted to as the upstream flows would overwhelm the sluice outlet even if it and the apron were in fully operational order.

Tidal Gate Operation

The operation of the gates depends on the relative levels of the sea and the flow in the pond itself and the weather. It can be summarised as follows:

Emergency:

- The tidal gates start to open when sea level equals pond level.
- They can be tied back from then until the top of the tide.
- When the tide turns they are shut automatically by the outgoing stream.
- Pond level can be lowered** using the sluice but the tidal gates will only open on the next rising tide when sea level equals pond level provided the river flow is not too great

Breeding Season (March to October):

- Gates normally shut
- Opened naturally by rising high Spring Tides

Non-breeding season (November to February):

- Gates closed at Neaps
 - river silt held back but harbour silt excluded
- Gates tied back in the open position (*at Springs only **)
 - Below tide line - silt depositing
 - Above tide lining - surface exposed
 - Heavy rainfall helps remove loose silt

Notes:

** Limited because of the current state of the Slipper Pond sluice and its apron*

*** Sluice operated by Committee Members – Mark Phillips, Bill Keeble or Nick Madinaveitia*

Dolphin Quay

We have not heard any further about its development.

Annual Dinner 2015

Betty Smith reports:

A very successful Dinner was held on Friday 20th November in the Brookfield Hotel. Attended by some 75 SMPPA members and their friends, and accompanied by the usual excellent food and perfect service of the Brookfield team, the evening was convivial and extremely pleasant.

Catherine and Nick Madina and Bill Keeble were the producers and leading lights in a Slipper Pond version of what happened to Noah and his ark. Other members of the Committee made up the rest of the cast, all to the huge amusement of an appreciative audience! The raffle followed and, as ever, our thanks to everyone who gave donations so generously. Thanks also to the Brookfield Hotel for their lunch voucher for 2, to the Sussex Brewery for their Sausage Supper for 2 and to the Emsworth Co-Op for £20 worth of vouchers.

Spring Talk

The Spring Talk this year will be held on Friday 8th April 2016 at 7.30 for 8.00 pm in the Pastoral Centre in the Square in Emsworth when John Smith will talk about 'The General Responsibilities of the Environment Agency with Particular Reference to the River Ems and the Slipper Mill Pond'.

John is the Team Leader for the Environment Agency for Chichester and East Hampshire and a staunch member of the Lower Ems River Management Group.

All are welcome to this very informative and relevant Spring Talk.

Dates for your Diary

8 th April	Friday	Spring Talk
Summer		Party
Autumn		Work Parties
28 th October	Friday	Annual General Meeting, Hewitts, South Street, Emsworth (was the old Day Centre)
26 th November	Friday	Annual Dinner, Brookfield Hotel.

Contacts

General:	Nick Madinaveitia	01243 377749
Treasurer:	Mark Phillips	01243 376756
Membership	Sharon Corbett	01243 389994
Social Events	Betty Smith	01243 371576
Publications	Jo Greenfield	01243 371134
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	RSPCA	01239 667541
Environment Agency	Pollution	0845 9881188
	Flood line	0800 807060

Publications

All on sale to support the Association.

Please contact Jo Greenfield if you wish to purchase the Bird Book, Notelets or Cards

