

Society celebrates 50 years of success

Solent Protection Society celebrated its 50th Anniversary in May with a lunch for over 150 members and guests at the Royal Yacht Squadron in Cowes.

Guests including Mr Peter Viggers, MP for Gosport and Mr Chris Huhne, MP for Eastleigh, heard Terry Gerald, Past Chairman of the SPS Council, thank Maldwin Drummond, President of the Society since 1991. Maldwin handed over the position to Peter Nicholson last November.

Maldwin Drummond, a founder member of Solent Protection, talked about the Society since its inception in 1956, including the successful opposition to an oil refinery in the Hamble River, a nuclear power station at Newtown River and a coal fired power station at Fawley.

New SPS President, Peter Nicholson, spoke about the future of the Society and we print his address here, in full, for the benefit of those who were unable to join us at the luncheon.

"As most of you will know, large areas of the Solent and the adjacent land are now subject to statutory protection. We have areas of outstanding natural beauty, special areas of conservation, sites of special scientific interest, protected wrecks and, no doubt many other categories.

One might ask therefore, and it would be a perfectly reasonable question, why is an organisation such as the Solent Protection Society still needed at all?

I believe that the answer to that is quite simple. All these organisations look at just one aspect of the Solent or its surroundings and inevitably they tend to focus on their particular interests and sometimes tend to be unable to see the wood for the trees.

The Solent Protection Society, however, keeps a watch over all aspects of the Solent and all related activities. We are the only organisation to do this.

As many of you are aware, there is a Marine Bill now pending which is likely to be very important for us. The implications for the area are most unlikely to be considered thoroughly in Whitehall without prompting from organisations such as The Solent Protection Society.

The Society has put forward a Proposal for a Marine National Park in the Western Solent and suggested that this be included in the Bill. If properly set up this must make sense, although many people will be afraid that it will simply bring with it increasing levels of bureaucracy and management by civil servants with no relevant local experience.

It will need careful planning to be successful and existing harbour authorities will probably be reluctant to support any proposal like this, but I understand that the Department of the Environment have reacted quite favourably so far to our Paper on the matter. We expect to hear more in the Autumn.



Photo: Peter Viggers MP, Peter Nicholson, President of Solent Protection Society and Chris Huhne MP at the Society's 50th Anniversary Lunch.

It is essential that we are allowed to make our contribution in order to try to head off the unexpected and unintended consequences which inevitably occur when legislation is framed by people who do not have genuine local experience to guide them.

Looking further to the future, pressure for more development can only increase.

Not all development is bad of course. Many of our best loved landmarks in the Solent were once new. The Royal Yacht Squadron castle is an example and there are many others with which we are familiar. This pavilion and our new haven have been approved in the last few years and you will all be aware of other excellent developments.

Leisure activity is increasing steadily and will continue to do so. The pressure for more marinas will always be there. As an ex marina operator myself, I certainly recognise the need for marinas, but I do suspect that we are pretty close to saturation point at the moment.

There is also always going to be need for further economic development and we must not be Luddite about this. Our aim is not to stifle good development and I hope we shall always be wise enough to spot and encourage appropriate new schemes.

We are going to be increasingly conscious of the importance of developing sustainable energy programmes and we shall be hearing more and more about the consequences of climate change, although no one seems to be able to tell us, with any confidence, just what these may be.

There are always going to be conflicting demands on the Solent. We are determined to ensure that the Council of the Society and the people who advise us, have the relevant knowledge, experience and, if I may say, wisdom, to ensure that all new proposals are objectively considered and that properly balanced solutions are suggested to the decision makers.



We have a strong and experienced Council, which works hard, but I cannot miss this opportunity of mentioning that we do need further good representation by people who live in Portsmouth and in Southampton so, if there is anybody who lives in or near either of those cities, who would like to volunteer, do please get in touch.

We only have to look out of the window here and admire this magnificent view to know how important it is that we all play our part in guarding the Solent and its coastline. The Society is doing all it can to achieve this, and to ensure that the Solent is preserved and developed in such a way that future generations will thank us. However, and this is a big however, if we are to have sufficient credibility to be taken seriously, we do need the maximum number of members.

Membership of a Society like ours tends to grow only when there is a crisis and we are threatened with some horrendous disaster or development. The Society was formed under such circumstances, but membership does tend to dwindle away. I would ask you all, if you are not already members, to join. It really costs very little. If you are already members, please do everything you can to recruit as many others as you possibly can. The more members we have, the more we can do."

The President proposed a toast to the future of the Solent Protection Society.

Update on the East Head – Sept 2006

The short-term project to re-cycle beach material from the north west tip of East Head to cover and reinforce the berm at the Hinge and so re-establish the walk-way on East Head, was completed last summer. It has proved a successful temporary measure with some seventy percent surviving last winter's weather. A further replenishment will be required in 2007.

A more permanent hard engineering solution is proving more difficult to achieve with the various interested parties still discussing long-term strategies. Much hangs on the long awaited DEFRA Coastal Defence Strategy. The Chichester Harbour Conservancy has commented on the first draft of the pertinent section, Pagham East Head Coast Defence Strategy. In the light of their comments there has been some redrafting and a further meeting between consultants is due.

This was expected in July but the Coastal Defence Strategy has been complicated by the large scale managed retreat scheme being proposed for the Medmerry frontage at Selsey. If this receives Ministerial approval, there is a possibility that the same principle might be applied to East Head.

Meanwhile the Conservancy continues to monitor both the Hinge and harbour entrance. Planning approval for the second short-term recharge expires in June 2007.

There has, however, been one action, the name has been changed from Pagham East Head Coast Defence Strategy to the draft Manhood Peninsula Strategic Review.

Marine National Park

Our Marine National Park report was summarised in the Spring Newsletter. We have now had a number of useful responses to it, and the research project mentioned in the newsletter has now been set up, generously financed by the Laing Foundation.

The responses, of which more are likely, give a mixed message: encouragement from some conservation bodies, constructive comments from Hampshire County Council, English Nature and the Chichester Harbour Conservancy, but, sadly, opposition from some boating and fishing interests. We are following these up, wishing to meet key organisations, particularly the RYA, National Trust, New Forest National Park Authority and some yacht clubs and harbour authorities, and we have been in touch with DEFRA officials through the Solent Forum as a result of the short talk we gave at a Forum meeting.

Meanwhile, Kate Pike, a lecturer and researcher from Southampton Solent University who is undertaking our research project has made a good start, including interviews with key people (some in company with us), and assembling useful data from a variety of sources. Her report, due at the end of October, will form a major input to the next step in our work, where we follow up our original report by reviewing its ideas in the light of research, comment, and progress in the Government's Marine Bill.

At this stage it is worth explaining, in the light of comments received, that we are not advocating a further level of bureaucracy 'imposed from above', nor are we proposing a reduction in recreation levels. Our concept is a locally-based version of the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) likely to be included in the Bill to operate at a national level. We hear frequent complaints about the number of authorities involved in controlling marine development, and, as we understand it, the MMO is intended to coordinate or replace these, reducing bureaucratic complexity. A Marine National Park would achieve just this, with local stakeholders taking part, acting as a harbour authority, recreation manager and conservation body for the sea area above and below high water, outside the jurisdiction of the existing Harbour and Local Authorities.

Parliamentary Panel

Following the fiftieth anniversary luncheon Peter Viggers, MP for Gosport, approached Edward Marris, Chairman of the Council, offering to co-ordinate an All Party Parliamentary Group to liaise with the Society on issues relating to the Solent. The offer was quickly accepted and to date most of the MPs with constituencies on the Solent have agreed to participate. However we envisage that membership of the group will not be restricted to those with a constituency interest in the Solent but will include parliamentarians from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords who have an interest in the Solent.



We believe that having this type of parliamentary support is unique for a regional amenity society and we are most grateful to all those who have indicated they will participate. The current plan is to have an initial meeting between representatives of the Council and the Parliamentary Group before the end of the year. The objective of this meeting would be to exchange information and discuss matters of mutual concern and we would then form our future programme. There will be a full progress report in the next Newsletter.

The Fishing and Fish of The Solent

The Solent is part of the Eastern English Channel. The main fisheries are small scale, working within the coastal zone 0-12 miles. Beam trawl fisheries target Sole and take a Plaice by catch, trammel nets and other trawls are also used to catch Sole. Cod catches originate from offshore trawlers and inshore gill-netters. Whiting is also caught. During the winter there is a pelagic fishery for Herring and a pair trawl fishery for Bass. There are also long-line fisheries for Dogfish, Conger Eel, Bass and Ling, a dredge fishery for Scallops and Oysters and a pot fishery for Whelks. The main countries exploiting these stocks are UK, France and Belgium.



Conger Eel © Paul Naylor

Activity in the flat fish fisheries has consistently increased from 1975 until the 1990s when it reached a plateau. The Plaice stock is currently considered outside safe biological limits. Although the Sole stocks are considered to be within safe biological limits, exploitation of the stock is considered to be excessive and unsustainable. The status of the Whiting stocks is uncertain whilst the Cod is outside safe biological limits. In February 2004, the European Union introduced new regulations aimed at facilitating Cod stock recovery over the next five to ten years. These measures include controls for the setting of total allowable catch (TAC), fishing effort limitation (number of days at sea and gear restrictions) and restriction on landing ports, stowage and transport of Cod.

The status of the world fish stocks is a serious environmental issue. Over-fishing is generally acknowledged as the greatest single threat to marine wildlife and habitats. Many fish stocks are widely reported to be in a state of serious decline.

Impacts of Fishing

Every year hundreds of thousands of marine mammals, turtles and seabirds are killed needlessly in fishing gears all over the world. In many cases these deaths could be avoided, or at least reduced, by introducing the use of 'dolphin', 'turtle' and 'seabird'-friendly devices, or by banning the use of damaging practices and the introduction of areas in which fishing is prohibited.

As the crisis of over-fishing of our seas deepens, we can all contribute to the responsible management of fish stocks by demanding that the fish that we eat is from sustainably managed stocks and that the ways in which it is caught or farmed cause minimal damage to the marine environment.

In trying to compile a general list of fish species likely to be found in The Solent I have used The Marine Conservation Society's UK and European Marine Fish Database.

This categorises the species found in The Solent according to The Marine Conservation Society's Ratings. **These highlight the species which are not:**

- Vulnerable to exploitation and/or assessed by the World Conservation Union as threatened
- From over-fished stocks and/or stocks where data is deficient
- From poorly managed or un-regulated fisheries
- Caught using methods which are detrimental to other marine species and habitat

Rating 1 The most sustainably produced seafood, including fish from certified fisheries i.e. those certified as environmentally responsible fisheries by organisations such as The Marine Stewardship Council.

Ratings 2, 3 and 4 There is an increasing cause for concern, based on the information available at the time of publication.

Rating 5 Fish to be avoided on the basis that all or most of the rating statements apply.



Great Scallop © Paul Naylor

Fish in Group Rating 1-2

Can be eaten with a clear conscience

1. Alaska or walleye pollock (MSC certified)
2. Bib or pouting (line caught)
3. Black bream or porgy or seabream (line caught)
4. Cape hake (MSC certified)
5. Clam (sustainably harvested)
6. Cockle (sustainably harvested/MSC certified from Burry Inlet)
7. Coley or saithe (from North Sea & West of Scotland)
8. Cuttlefish (trap caught)
9. Dab (line caught or seine netted)
10. Dover sole (from Eastern channel)
11. Dublin Bay prawn (pot or creel caught from Northern stocks only)
12. Flounder
13. Grey gurnard
14. Herring or sild (from North Sea, Eastern channel, Skagerrak & Kattegat/MSC certified from Thames Blackwater)
15. Hoki (MSC certified from New Zealand)

16. King scallop (sustainably harvested)
17. Lemon sole (not beam-trawl caught)
18. Lythe or pollack (line caught)
19. Mackerel (line caught/MSC certified from Cornwall)
20. Mahi Mahi (line caught)
21. Megrim (trawl-caught from West of Ireland and Western Channel)
22. Mussel (sustainably harvested)
23. Oyster (farmed Native & Pacific. Oysters taken from the Solent are reset in seed beds for growth to maturity when they are harvested for human consumption)
24. Pacific cod (line caught)
25. Pacific halibut (line caught)
26. Pacific salmon (MSC certified from Alaska)
27. Red gurnard
28. Red mullet (not from Mediterranean)
29. Salmon (Farmed organic and/or Freedom Food certified only)
30. Spider crab
31. Sprat (from the North Sea, dolphin friendly)
32. Whiting (from English Channel)
33. Winkle (sustainably harvested)
34. Witch (line caught)

Fish in Group Rating 5 Should be avoided for a clear conscience

1. Alfonsinos or golden eye perch
2. American plaice
3. Argentine or greater silver smelt
4. Atlantic cod (from overfished stocks)
5. Atlantic halibut
6. Atlantic salmon (wild caught)
7. Black Scabbardfish (trawled from Northern Stocks)
8. Blue ling
9. Brill (beam-trawl caught from the North Sea)
10. Chilean seabass or Patagonian toothfish
11. Dogfish (inc. catshark, nursehound)
12. European Hake
13. Greater forkbeard
14. Grey mullet
15. Grouper
16. Haddock (from overfished stocks)
17. Ling
18. Marlin (blue, Indo-Pacific & white)
19. Monkfish
20. Orange roughy
21. Plaice (from overfished stocks)
22. Rat or rabbit fish
23. Red or blackspot seabream
24. Redfish or ocean perch
25. Roundnose grenadier
26. Seabass (trawl caught only)
27. Shark

28. Skates & rays
29. Snapper
30. Sturgeon
31. Swordfish
32. Tiger prawn (except organically farmed)
33. Tuna (except dolphin friendly, pole and line caught yellowfin and skipjack)
34. Turbot (from North Sea)
35. Tusk or torsk
36. Wolfish



Bass © Paul Naylor



Ling © Paul Naylor

Harbour Fish found in Chichester Harbour

The following list is from studies done in Chichester Harbour by Dr Paul Farrell of Portsmouth University in 1999 and 2004

15 Spined Stickleback	Five Bearded Rockling	Pollack
Spot Goby	Garfish	Pout
Ballan Wrasse	Gilt Head Bream	Reticulated Dragonet
Bass	Golden Grey Mullett	Sand Goby
Black Goby	Greater Pipefish	Sandeel
Butterfish	Horse Mackerel	Sea Scorpion
Common Dragonet	Lesser Pipefish	Shanny
Common Goby	Lesser Weaver	Smelt
Corkwing Wrasse	Lumpsucker	Sole
Eel	Painted Goby	Spotted Dragonet
Sprat	Topot Blenny	Transparent Goby
Tub Gurnard	Worm Pipefish	

These species are likely to be found in other similar Solent harbours and estuaries and as these areas are confluent with The Solent they can reasonably be included with the other offshore and pelagic fish. This makes a total of some 106 different species, illustrating yet another rich seam of diversity and interest in the character of the Solent Waters.

By Dr Chris Willard

I would like to thank the following for access to their data sources and which can be visited on-line for greater information and detail:

[Southern Sea Fisheries](#)

[The Marine Conservation Society](#)

[Portsmouth University Marine Biologist, Dr Paul Farrell](#)

Photographs by Paul Naylor from his book
- *Great British Marine Animals*.

Solent Water Quality

We are currently overloaded with regulations and classifications that will affect the way that the Solent is managed in the future. We have SAPs, SSSIs, Ramsar sites etc. But there are also the quality regulations – The Bathing Water Directive, The Shellfish Directive, The Habitats Directive, The Freshwater Fish Directive, The Groundwater Regulations, The Water Industry Act, and The Water Framework Directive. DEFRA is the organisation with overall responsibility for managing this nightmare of conflicting requirements and there is a need to do this without unduly damaging our present enjoyment of the pleasures of living close to a great natural facility. The Solent Water Quality Conference organised by the Solent Forum was an opportunity for all interested parties to discuss the way things may go in the future.

1. Plans are well advanced to provide information boards at our bathing beaches which will indicate the quality of the water to the public. These are promised in 2008. They will provide a classification of the water as Excellent, Good, Sufficient or Poor, give details of short-term pollution and “abnormal occurrences” and show when bathing is prohibited. So that you do not drive 50 miles to a closed beach this information will be available on the internet...

2. The work to upgrade sewage treatment now means that the only major source of pollution is caused by nitrogen leaching into rivers and reaching the Solent. This is causing the growth of green weed and algae [*Enteromorpha*, *Ulva*] which can be seen in most of the local harbours and there is a proposal to designate the Solent a “Nitrogen Sensitive Zone”. If this happens then there should be funds available for nitrogen stripping equipment at sewage works. This weed

creates problems for the invertebrates and smothers other vegetation reducing the amount of feed available for birds and fish. It is especially serious in the 3 large harbours of Portsmouth, Langstone and Chichester.

Under the “New Habitats Directive” DEFRA are to review all existing licences for discharge, but this is not likely to have much effect on the natural run off from agricultural land.

3. Pollution from boats is not thought to be a problem except for copper contamination in places like the Hamble River where there is a large concentration of boats leaching copper into the water. Even here, the only place where it is causing concern to DEFRA is around Bursledon Bridge where the levels are approaching the environmental quality standard of 5ug/litre.

4. Ballast Water. Ships travelling without cargo now use sea water as ballast to provide stability instead of solid material. When they reach port this is discharged to make way for the cargo. So we are seeing organisms imported with the ballast from all over the world. In the Solent there is evidence of *Styala Clava* from Korea, *Sargassum Muticum* from the Pacific and *Undaria Pinnatifida* from Japan. This sort of ingress could change the nature of our marine vegetation by displacing the local varieties.

5. For the future the Solent will remain one of the busiest recreational waters in the country, home to two of its major harbours, the major oyster fishery in the country and the receptacle of a lot of the water that is collected in the local land area. It is important to see that this is well managed in everyone’s interest.

Conservation Plaque Awarded for Bird Watching Hide at Beaulieu

In November 2005, Lord Montagu officially opened a public bird watching hide at Keeping Marsh on the North Solent National Nature Reserve. This is a high quality timber building with a 50 metre board walk for public access to ordinary and disabled visitors on the Beaulieu Estate. It was constructed by the Marchwood Conservation Volunteers under the direction of English Nature and it took over a year to complete. The location is on the riverside walk near the Agamemnon Boatyard at Buckler’s Hard.

The SPS Council chose the project as a worthy recipient of an SPS Award Plaque and this was presented on June 12th by the chairman, Mr Edward Marris.

In unveiling the plaque he said: “Lord Montagu has been supportive of the work of the Society from its inception and one of our two vice-presidents for a great many years. As a consequence the Society has been very aware of the conservation projects undertaken by the estate. The Society gives award plaques, usually one per year, to local organisations that have undertaken something exceptional for the local community. In 1989 the Estate was given an award for work on The Swatch Way Closure, and in 1995 the Society gave a donation towards the cost of work on Gull Island, home to a colony of black headed gulls”. He said that the Society was very grateful to the Estate for enabling the construction of the hide and to English Nature and the Marchwood Volunteers for their contribution to the project.

In receiving the award, the Hon Ralph Montagu gave particular thanks to the Marchwood volunteers for all their hard work.

Mark Later, of English Nature, said that if the majority of people using the riverside walk footpath came down to the hide for just ten minutes to appreciate the wildlife, it would be a very worthwhile achievement.



Photograph by John Davys

Lecture Programme September 2005-2006

During the year the following lectures about the Society and Solent birdlife were given by Dr Chris Willard:

27/09/05	The Island Sailing Club	(Society's Presentation)
28/11/05	Bishop's Waltham Natural History Society	(Solent Birds)
16/02/06	The Royal Thames Yacht Club	(Solent Birds)
28/02/06	Christchurch Sailing Club	(Society's Presentation)
13/04/06	Emsworth Sailing Club	(Society's Presentation)
19/06/06	Lymington Probus Club	(Society's Presentation)
07/09/06	Sway Probus Club	(Solent Birds)
11/09/06	Friends of Old Portsmouth	(Society's Presentation)

John Power gave the following lectures about the work of the Society.

Cowes Probus Club	(Society's Presentation)
Cowes Townswomen's Guild	(Society's Presentation)

Chris Willard is available for illustrated talks about the work of the Solent Protection Society, Birds of the Solent and Birds of the New Forest. Please contact the Secretary.

Society's Secretary on the Move

The Society's Secretary, Judy Davies, has recently moved to Gloucester to be nearer her family. However, Judy will continue to deal with the Society's business in the same effective way as she has done in the past. If you need to get in touch, her new address is:

**The Secretary,
Solent Protection Society
2 Stambourne Lane,
Wanswell
Berkeley GL13 9RZ**

**Telephone number 01453 511175
Email: secretary@solentprotection.org**

Speakers

During the year Solent Protection Society's Council were fortunate to have a number of guest speakers address the Council on various topics. These included:

Ron Hancock	–	Associated British Ports
Derek Bound	–	Southampton Civic Society
Ian Jackson	–	MCA, Pollution & Salvage Dept
Neil Jacobson	–	Crown Estates
Captain Steven Young & Commander Kendall Carter,	–	Port of Southampton
Clive Chatters	–	Chairman, New Forest National Park Authority
Dave Lowthion	–	Environment Agency
Mike McKeown	–	Southern Water
Peter Cusdin	–	South East England Development Agency

Hamble River Marina Extension Refused

The River Hamble is at the very centre of UK Yachting and, as a result, subject to intense demands on space, both afloat for moorings and ashore for marine related service industries and for parking for the many who drive to join yachts or walk beside the river.

Use of space gives rise to conflicting opinions and decisions. One such situation was resolved last month concerning the application by Hamble Yacht Services to extend their pontoons and marina 33 metres into the channel. This received the blessing of the Harbour Authorities in spite of the loss of the secondary channel that would have resulted. The Solent Protection Society was concerned about this loss of the secondary channel, and a representative spoke against the subsequent planning application. Eastleigh Borough Council had the same concerns and rejected the application.



© Graphics Workshop

The matter went to Appeal, and again the Solent Protection Society submitted a written objection and appeared at the Hearing. We are pleased that the Inspector supported the view of Eastleigh Borough Council and the Appeal was rejected.

The Inspector considered that the two main issues were firstly the impact on safety and ease of navigation, and secondly whether development would lead to loss of an open recreational area. Of particular interest was the description by the Inspector of the Hamble River as "parochial monument of a sort" and that she continued by stating that its recreational benefit was a substantial one that the local plan sought to preserve. She wrote that "being an open River is what makes it unique and different". The Solent Protection Society most certainly supports that view.

**To join the Solent Protection Society,
please contact The Secretary
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