

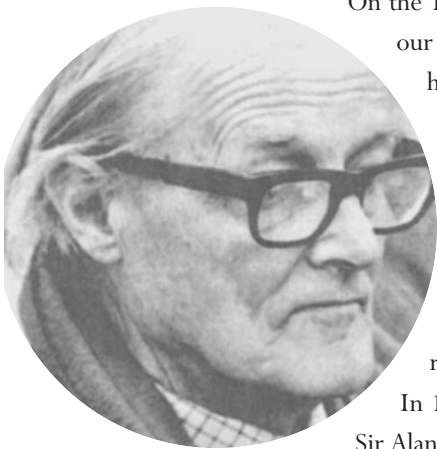


1999

Autumn News

Protecting the Solent for Future Generations

Sir Hugh Casson CH KCVO

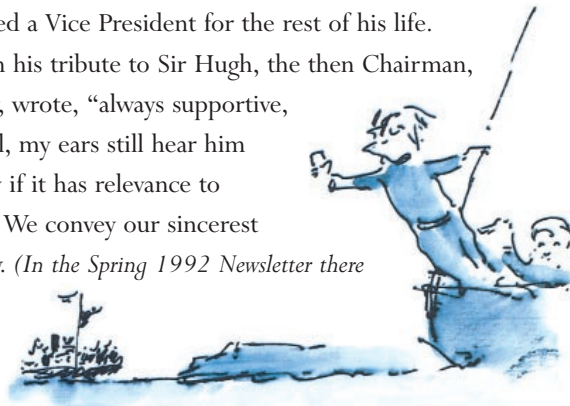


On the 15th August 1999 Sir Hugh Casson, a founder member of our Society died at the age of 89. He liked to tell the story of how, one day in 1956, he and Teddy Haylock, also a founder member and both keen sailors, were out in the Solent when they fell to discussing the horror of the proposal to build a nuclear power station at Newtown Creek. It was out of this discussion that the decision to form a society was made. A member of Council from the outset he was President for twenty three years until his retirement in 1991, and remained a Vice President for the rest of his life.

In 1991 in his tribute to Sir Hugh, the then Chairman, Sir Alan Boxer, wrote, "always supportive,

sometimes gently critical, my ears still hear him

saying, 'protect what is of the past but only if it has relevance to today; one should avoid mummification.'" We convey our sincerest condolences to Lady Casson and her family. *(In the Spring 1992 Newsletter there appeared Sir Hugh's cartoon of himself bidding farewell to the Society. It seems appropriate to publish it again.)*



A Reflection

This will be the society's last Newsletter of the Century and contains the sad news of the death of Sir Hugh Casson who founded the Society forty years ago. Both events give cause for reflection. How was it that we came to be, what has been achieved and where do we go from here? It was the vision of what could happen to the Solent that prompted Sir Hugh and his co-founders to form a Society to safeguard the Solent, "so that its unique waters and shoreline would be preserved for the enjoyment of their own and future generations". Nearly half a century later there are more people than ever benefiting from that vision and, at a recent meeting, the Environment Agency was able to say that Solent waters are cleaner now than they have been for 150 years. While the Society cannot claim all the credit, it is perhaps because of the concerns and local influence of organisations such as ours that there is a new found vigilance both nationally and internationally over environmental matters; and there is no indication yet that our work is done.

STOP PRESS!

At the recent Labour Party Conference in Bournemouth, Mr John Prescott made a surprise announcement that the New Forest was to be given National Park Status. We await full details before being able to make an assessment of the implications of this decision.



Dibden Bay

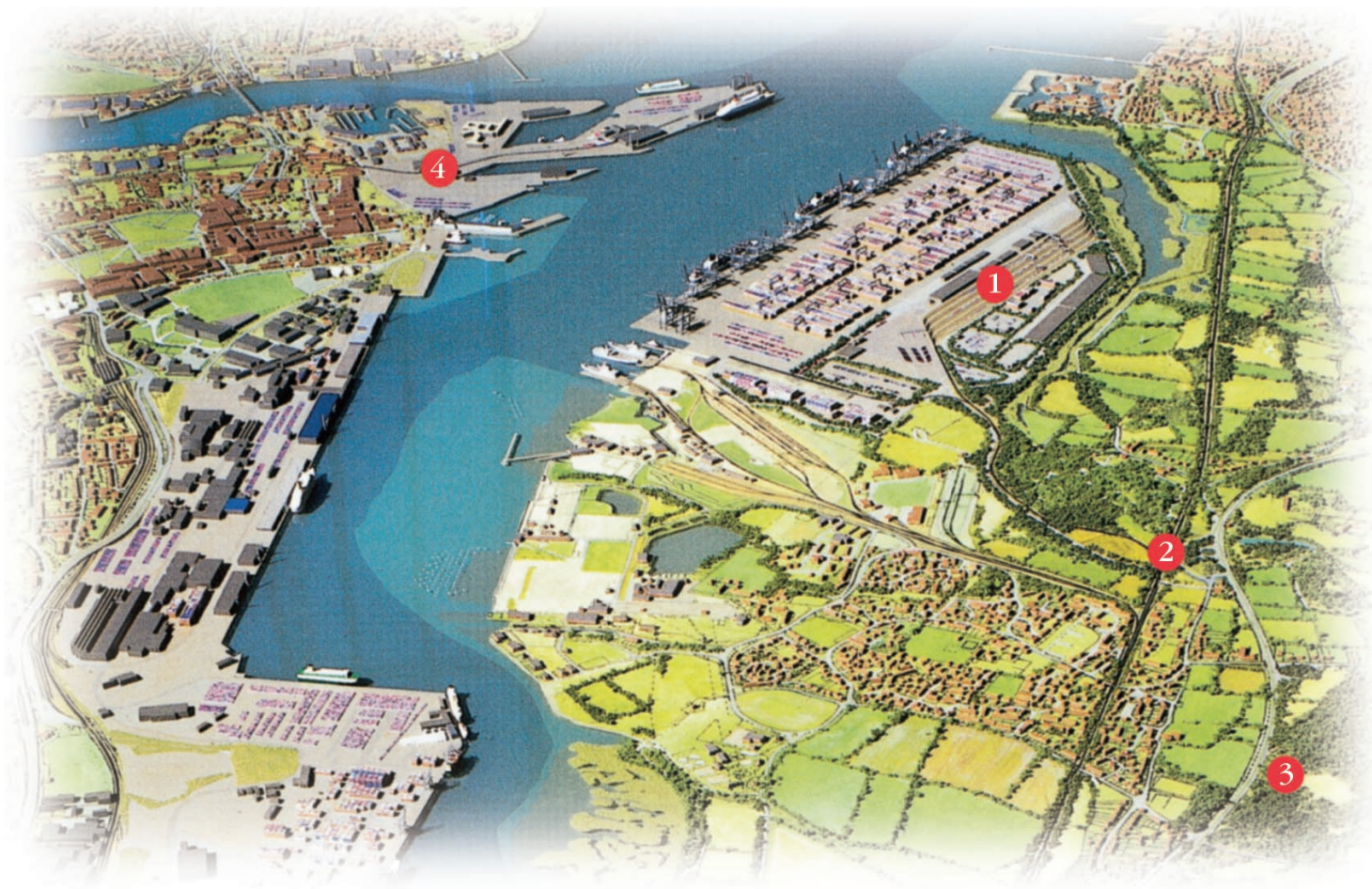
Glancing back through our Newsletters, it was in the Spring edition of 1995 that we first drew attention to Associated British Ports' (ABP) emerging plans for the development of a Container Terminal at Dibden Bay, and updates have appeared in subsequent editions. Over the years we have studied Consultants' reports, a very thorough and comprehensive Scoping Study for an Environmental Impact Assessment, (long promised but as yet unpublished), and attended the Dibden Forum established by ABP to consult with local interests, concluding in last Autumn's public exhibition and the publication of their "Dibden Update" document.

We have expressed our concerns over the consequences of the movement of the next generation of Container Vessels on the Solent and Southampton Water and on other users of these waters, and on the visual and environmental impact of such a development on the shoreline of the New Forest and on SAC/SPA sites. We have also been hopeful that the Government would declare, perhaps as a part of a "comprehensive transport policy", whether or not they consider the provision of a new container terminal in Southampton as being a matter of national as opposed to purely commercial importance. In this we have so far been disappointed. Otherwise we have been consistent in saying that we would await the publication of the detailed planning applications and the promised Environmental Impact Assessment before taking up a final position on the development. Frankly there would have been little point in doing otherwise, but we have kept in touch with both ABP and Local Authorities in order to monitor progress and have visited the site.

We were therefore a little surprised to learn that in May, rather than publish the long promised Environmental Impact Study as the next step, ABP had submitted a draft Harbour Revision Order (HRO) for the development to the Department of the Environment and the regions (DETR). In their turn the DETR have consulted with the Local Authorities, English Nature and the Environment Agency, particularly seeking their views and advice as to whether they believe that the environmental effects of the seven "works" defined in the HRO will be sufficiently significant to require the Secretary of State to call for a full Environmental Statement to be produced under the EIA Regulations. We understand that when this process is complete and ABP have the DETR reaction to their draft HRO, they will submit their revised application simultaneously with the Planning Applications for road and rail links to the new container terminal.

We had not expected authority for the development to be sought in this way though we can understand why ABP have chosen this method. Once in possession of such an Order, which spells out the scope and detail of the seven "works" to be undertaken, they can then carry out what works they like without need for any further planning applications or outside scrutiny. We have thus written to the DETR requesting that the HRO as currently drafted be turned down on the grounds that it contains no environmental safeguards.

We now await the publication of the HRO in its final form together with its attendant Planning Applications and Impact Assessments. We shall then consult with others and decide whether the revised documents justify our raising any formal objections and if so prepare to present these at a Public Inquiry which we have long expected will be called for.



Dibden Bay Development

KEY: ① The Proposed Terminal Site ② Railway Line
 ③ A326 ④ Eastern Dock

Portsmouth & Gosport

We have often commented on the lack of a comprehensive and coordinated plan for the redevelopment of Portsmouth, Gosport, Fareham, the historic harbour they all share, and the Millennium enterprises. It was thus with some hope in our hearts that we welcomed the City Planning Officer, Mr P Newbold to our July meeting to update us.

He explained the complexity of bringing together such a variety of sometimes incompatible interests to devise a plan acceptable to all, but hoped that the Portsmouth Harbour Management/Development Plan would be published by the end of July. The plan would concentrate on the needs and employment of a population of 190,000, the provision of a further 9,000 homes by the year 2001 as well as for up to 6 million visitors a year which it is hoped that the regeneration plans will attract. At the time of writing (mid September), we understand that a draft document has been circulated to local authorities for comment, but it is not yet available for public scrutiny.

So far as we can gather current plans for the regeneration programme involve the expenditure of some £300 million by the year 2001. The Berkeley Group who it seems have been awarded the contracts for the whole development on both sides of the harbour, have recently deposited plans for a £40 million revamp

of Gosport's historic Clarence Yard. The DETR have also recently approved plans under the Transport and Works Act for the construction and operation of an opening bridge for pedestrian and restricted vehicular traffic across Forton Lake between Clarence Yard and Priddy's Hard, which is also included in the redevelopment plans.

Ideas for the transformation of Portsmouth and its harbour first appeared in the late 1980s. It is perhaps the lack of a comprehensive plan from the outset that has ensured that relatively little of the work will be completed in time for the Millennium celebrations, and that on New Year's Eve the controversial Tower, which has finally received planning approval, will be only 50 as opposed to 500 feet high. Two years ago we expressed the view that the lack of public consultation and a comprehensive plan would result in piecemeal uncoordinated development and it seems that we were not too far from the mark.

Meanwhile, back at the Gunwharf some 90,000 sq ft has been allocated for the construction of twenty bars, cafes and restaurants for which UK's biggest ever drinks license at a waterfront location for 26 bars has been granted.

Water Matters

In our Spring Newsletter we were able to give you a full report following our visit to Southern Water Services at Otterbourne. In September the Area Environment Planning Manager of the Environment Agency, Mr Bob Edmunds, attended our council meeting and was able to further update us.

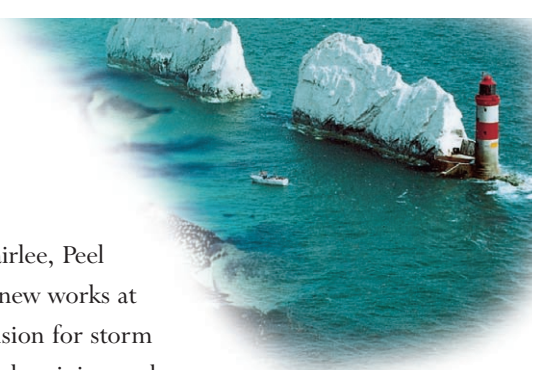
Perhaps it would be helpful to explain where the Environment Agency fits into what seems an ever increasingly complex scheme of things. In short it is responsible for the control of land based pollution of coastal waters including discharges from pipelines from land to any distance out to sea. It is also responsible for the management of inshore water quality having statutory responsibility relating to the environmental quality of controlled waters out to three miles below MLWM. In carrying out these duties it is required to achieve EU Commission objectives set under the Urban Waster Water Treatment, Bathing Water and Habitats directives. The designation of the Solent as an estuary under the first of these, requires that all discharges into it have to receive secondary treatment, and the Shell Fish and Hygiene directives under which the Solent is also designated requires the Environment Agency to demand that disinfection (ultra violet), tertiary level treatment is applied. The Agency has now agreed with Southern Water that these targets will be met within the Assets Management Period (AMP) which ends in 2005.

This agreement means that within this timescale a new outfall will be installed at Pennington into the deep water channel to ensure a dilution of at least 50/1, and this will be followed by treatment to tertiary level. The same will apply to the

discharges from Fairlee, Peel Common and the new works at Budds Farm. Provision for storm water will be made by piping such flows via existing outfalls where a dilution of 50/1 can be achieved. The Seaclean Wight project continues as planned though the pipeline from Bembridge to Sandown has had to be re-routed to avoid a peat bed and the alignment of the outfall crossing the "reef" in Sandown Bay has been modified to avoid habitat damage.

The 1998 Bathing Water Quality Report showed a general improvement in the Southern Region (Bournemouth to Ramsgate). The Solent shores contain 18 designated beaches but over the 13 years since sampling began the results have been erratic so that one should not perhaps read too much into the fact that for the first time all 18 beaches met the EU requirement.

However, 81% of the 360 monthly samples taken during the 1998 season achieved the very stringent guideline standards, which is most encouraging. The tests at Southsea were significantly worse than elsewhere and the results of the 1999 season are, we are told, worse still. We have reported on this a number of times before and remain concerned that despite the very considerable effort and expense of both Southern Water and the Local Authority the source of the pollution, which seeps from landward and percolates onto the beach for some 100 yards either side of Southsea Pier at low water, remains unidentified.

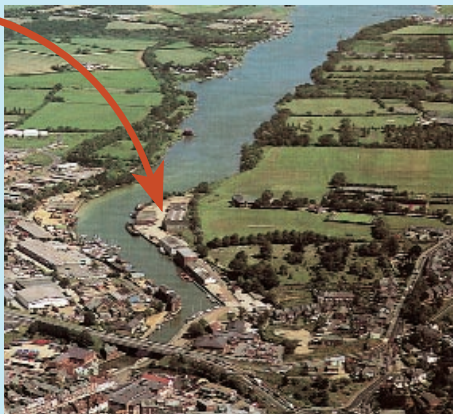


The Isle of Wight

Newport Harbour

The Society has expressed its extreme concern over a planning application for the construction of a hotel and restaurant complex on the eastern entrance of Newport Harbour.

The proposed dominant location in the upper reaches of the Medina River Valley should be allocated for development only in the context of an overall plan for the harbour and not in isolation.



East Cowes

East Cowes Town Council have somewhat reluctantly given approval to East Cowes Marina owners Dean and Reddyhoff for a development scheme which includes a four storey block of 18 flats, a facilities building a public house, four marina related industrial units and car parking. The project will also involve the infilling of a yacht basin. The go ahead was given on the basis that the public access would be assured and that the applicants increased their contribution to social housing from £15,000 to £60,000.

The Western Yar

With kind permission of the Commissioners, Council held its October meeting at the Harbour conference room at Yarmouth. This enabled them to be briefed by the Harbour Master, Mr Nick Ward, on the Western Yar Management plan to which the Society contributed and to hear from Miss Jess Pennington the Island's recently appointed Estuaries Officer, about the Eastern Bank Enhancement Scheme which she has proposed and in which the Society has agreed to participate. The visit allowed members to see the site for themselves, and to discuss developments in the Medina Estuary for which Miss Pennington is also responsible.

Chichester Harbour

East Head

In July, Chichester Harbour Conservancy submitted a planning application to the District Council for a rock barrier to reinforce the spine of the Hinge at East Head where erosion is proceeding at an alarming rate. It was expected that the Council would deal with the matter at its August meeting so that the urgent works that are needed could be carried out in October.

This problem has been with us for a long time, gets worse each year and has so far relied on private funding to save the situation. None the less, the Council decided to allow time



for consultation, as if there had not been enough already, and declined to take the application until its October meeting. This means that even if all goes well from now on the Conservancy will not be able to carry out the work before March 2000, the cost will be greater, requiring substantial additional contributions to the East Head Defence Appeal fund, and what is much worse is the very real risk that the winter gales will breach the Hinge before the defensive works can begin.

Bridgefoot Path Emsworth

The works to enhance the appearance of Bridgefoot Path



which forms a large part of the Eastern boundary of the Emsworth Mill Pond are now virtually complete. The Society has contributed to the cost of the Interpretation Boards which form part of this scheme, describing the history of the Mill Pond and identifying the birds to be seen in this habitat.

Dell Quay

The new classroom at Dell Quay was opened on 10th September at a ceremony attended by members of Council. The classroom has been created by converting a former workshop building owned by the Conservancy and will satisfy an increasing demand for educational facilities to support organised visits to the Chichester Harbour area. The Society has contributed toward the cost of the conversion.



Warsash

The Environment Agency in conjunction with the Onyx Environmental Trust, The British Marine Industries Federation 'Navigate with Nature' Programme and the River Hamble Harbour Authority has secured funding from the Landfill Tax Credits Scheme for the provision of waster management facilities, specifically aimed at boat owners. The scheme based at Warsash was launched in July and involves the installation of a free sewage pump-out facility, storage for recycling used batteries, waste oil, paper, glass, cans and plastic.

New Books

[The Ecology, Conservation and History of the Solent](#)

The author Colin Tubbs was one of Britain's best field naturalists, ornithologists and experts on the ecology and management of estuaries heathlands and woodlands. He was also a member of Council for a number of years. His last book, completed shortly before his death in October 1997, provides a valuable background to the evolution and ecology of the Solent. It is published by Packard Publishing Ltd, Chichester (tel 01243 537977) at a price of £60 hb or £35 pb.

[The Rhythm Of The Tide](#)

Dr Jeremy Thomas "Tales Through The Ages Of Chichester Harbour" is a beautifully written and fascinating series of tales, fiction based on fact, illustrated by fine line drawings and colour photographs. This well-reviewed book by an author who has sailed Chichester harbour since 1945 and who chaired its Advisory Committee from 1993 to 1997 is available from S.M.H. Books, Pulborough (tel 01798 831260) at £14.95

Lecture Programme

We would welcome the opportunity to speak to local organisations and clubs on "The Solent, Problems and Opportunities." if you would like to arrange such a talk, please contact our Secretary, Mrs Judy Davies.



Secretary: Mrs. J. Davies, 17 Acacia Road, Hordle, Lymington SO41 0YG
Phone: Day (01590) 612345. Evening (01425) 621524