

MWHG ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



Kingfisher, *Dr Mark Howarth*



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups

Chair's report:

Joe Savill started off this report last year by saying, who would of thought we would have been hit by a global pandemic and had so much of our work disrupted? Another year has passed and we find ourselves still very much affected by the Covid 19 pandemic and the measures we have taken to limit it. We have done what we can in these conditions, and since the advent of vaccination, many of our volunteers have been able to resume their activities in a socially distanced manner.

I am able to review my first year in the Chair, and to feel quietly proud of everything we have managed to achieve despite the tumultuous changes going on around us. I will leave you to read the reports from the leaders of individual projects, whom I would like to thank them for their amazing enthusiasm and commitment to the work and to the volunteers who help them.

Our Management Team (MT) has changed and grown, and firstly we are enormously grateful to have Jane Scotland join us in the role of Treasurer. Jane was the treasurer of the Friends of Pagham Harbour, which was wound up last year. So fortunately she has experience of working with small charities which have big ambitions! Paul Bedford has bought us a wealth of knowledge about the Manhood Peninsula and its drainage issues. Alex Ainge started the West Wittering Tree Nursery on the Parish allotments. She has been a Trustee but has stepped down from that role for personal reasons but she is continuing as a volunteer with the Manor Green Park group. I would like to thank Alex on behalf of the whole organisation for her amazing hard work over this year both with 'in the field' projects and as the secretary to the MT.

The landmark of this year has been the final work to complete the five year ***Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands***, FLOW. Project which was extended to June 2021. Thank you to the Heritage Lottery Fund, MWHG received an £545,300 grant to carry out the project. Over the 5+ years that we have worked on this project we thank Jane Reeves, Chris Drake and all the volunteers who have mapped the waterways, restored them, produced reports for each Parish and one Town Council, eaten lots of cake and become a happy family! Equally, great thanks go to Nikki Timney our IT and Social Media specialist and Emily Sabin our social engagement officer, both of whom have excelled in helping achieve the end of the Project.

The final evaluation report, a major piece of writing submitted by Jane Reeve to the HLF is a great summary of all the work and can be seen on our new website. I would like to add my personal thank you to all the staff who have worked for FLOW and include in our gratitude, Wendy Peters, our accountant who has kept the project on the straight and narrow financially especially after the sad loss of our Hon Treasurer David Scott. We wish to thank ***Steph Evans from Chichester District Council*** who sat on the FLOW Board; and ***Mike King*** who set up and compiled our independent evaluation reports.

Speaking of our new website we were able to launch this in the early summer this year and I would encourage everyone to visit it and look at the content. Nikki and Jane Scotland worked very hard with **Simon Cooper, from Scoopswab** to bring into reality all the aspirations we had for a new website and they have succeeded. There is lots of information on the site, especially about volunteering!

While the FLOW team was working away at the waterways, the other MWHG groups were also hard at work! Our groups who look after the Manor Green Park and the East Beach Pond continued their sterling efforts once we were allowed to work together again. At the same time the Selsey Photo Archive group were able to do some scanning of photos from home, and the first of the collections of photos from Tom Cready's archive, have now been scanned and the originals are now preserved at the West Sussex Records Office. The Group is continuing to add photos from other collections, and to add Blog articles and introductions to the photos. Dr Bill Martin has also been working on the history and route of the Selsey Tram, with the intention that the whole route will be walkable and have information boards along its length.

Our wonderful FLOW volunteers continue to maintain the ponds in some of the Parishes and we are encouraging other Parishes to review the action plan they received from FLOW and continue the work. Finally we were runners up in the National Biodiversity Network's species recording group awards. We were beaten to first place by the UK Mammals Society, who published the first red list of UK endangered UK mammals.

So, many thanks to everyone from MWHG who has been reporting sightings of species, and please do keep it up! This coming year we will celebrate our Silver Anniversary, the group having been set up in September 1997. Watch out for celebrations!

As with all charities, we are only as good as the work of our members and volunteers, to whom I extend my heartfelt thanks, we continue to look for grant monies, to develop our projects, and we are actively seeking new Trustees to help in the running of all our work. If you would be interested in the role of Trustee, please do contact me for more information.

Let us hope that in the coming year we can get back to something approaching normal...but better!



Dr Lesley Bromley
MWHG CHAIR

Lesley launches one of the Selsey bug hotel seals designed by Art Students Carleigh Barker and Rosie Harris To follow the trail visit <https://grappling-litten75b73.netlify.app/.../walks> and...#zoeb all #destinationseley #lovefromseley

Selsey Photo Archive Project

It was not possible to promote the newly created website as planned in 2020 but a soft launch did take place via local media and online. Leaflets about the project are now also in circulation.

However, much work has still been going on, with volunteers working individually from home and zoom catch ups. Thanks to this effort the Tom Creedy collection has been catalogued, scanned, transferred to archival storage materials and safely delivered to the West Sussex Record Office, for long-term safe keeping. Tom was a key member of the Selsey Society who extensively copied photos and postcards relating to Selsey and also photographed particular places and events. Preserving his collection and making it more accessible were primary aims of the project. So it is great that the first of these has been achieved and, with a further 250 photos added to the website, we are making good progress with the second.

Work then turned to dealing with the rest of the wider Selsey Society Archive of images, including some fascinating collections of slides. All of these images have now been catalogued and the scanning of selected images is now well underway.

We are very grateful that the project has also received donations and loans of photos from local residents and other people with past connections to Selsey. Several of these collections have also been scanned. So, the project continues to grow, develop and fascinate.

None of this would have been possible without the efforts of an extremely committed and conscientious group of volunteers. I would like to thank them all for this, as well as Selsey Town Council and West Sussex Record Office staff for all their support. Do visit the website if you've not already done so yet. www.selseyphotoarchive.co.uk

Joe Savill



*MWHG is part of the national scheme being coordinated by Natural England to draw together a **Nature Recovery Network** and this article puts the importance of our area into perspective.*

Underwater forests draw down carbon too – why do we ignore coastal habitats?

The climate crisis means that countries around the world are not only looking to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions – but also to increase natural carbon sequestration.

The UK government, for example, is committed to a massive increase in woodland cover – some 30,000 hectares (300km²) per year – to meet its legally binding 2050 net zero greenhouse gas emissions, GHE, target. Together with re-wetting half the country's degraded peatlands and bogs, this will help offset residual emissions in other sectors.

However, as an island nation with the **12th longest coastline** in the world - Marine and coastal habitats are rich in carbon, but are entirely overlooked in the GHG inventory. GHG inventories are national accounts of emissions that cause global warming, from transport, construction, agriculture etc. and underpin any country's national and international reporting requirements for greenhouse gases. They include a category for land-based carbon sinks, such as woodlands and peat bogs. Coastal habitats such as saltmarshes, seagrass meadows and kelp forests, are not currently included in the UK's inventory.

Large areas of these habitats have been lost or damaged by agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries practice, so their exclusion potentially hides a national loss of carbon. Indeed, globally it is estimated that the CO₂ lost from degraded or vanished coastal wetlands is equivalent to the annual greenhouse gas emissions of the UK.

The trouble with woodland

The government's much publicised but largely unrealised tree-planting ambitions currently meet around a third of the required 30,000 hectares per year. There are many reasons why woodland expansion is desirable, but it's also a tough ask. Land is a valuable commodity and woodland creation always comes with an opportunity cost: the goods or income that the land might otherwise provide.

The costs of tree planting are mostly upfront and it can be many years before a woodland breaks even financially. Yet even in the 1980s, with government subsidies that perversely incentivised the creation of plantations in the least appropriate areas, the highest planting rates never topped what we now need to see on a sustained basis for the next three decades. Trees also take a long time to grow. Some argue that by the time the carbon is locked into the trees and the soils it will be too late to stop runaway temperature rise.

Others point to the multiple benefits that woodlands provide, such as timber, recreation and natural flood protection, as reasons canopy extent should be expanded.

Carbon coastline

Given these issues, it's worth noting that the UK is surrounded by some of the most productive actively sequestering habitats on the planet. Often referred to as "**blue carbon**" habitats, saltmarshes and seagrass meadows lock carbon down by trapping organic material into sediment, which can build at rates similar to temperate woodland plantations.

Meanwhile, kelp forests grow on rocky surfaces and so don't sequester carbon locally, but produce and release large amounts of carbon via erosion. Some of this carbon then makes its way to be sequestered in sea lochs, offshore sediments and the deep sea.

It's perhaps surprising that these extensive sources and sinks of carbon are ignored in the UK government's greenhouse gas accounting, given that 28 countries around the world *are* including coastal wetlands in their national response to climate change.

What lies beneath?

The exclusion is primarily due to some significant knowledge gaps. To date, estimates of the UK's coastal and marine carbon stocks and flows come from a single study in Scotland, which suggested nearly 8 million tonnes of marine-derived carbon is sequestered around the Scottish coast each year.

When these quantities scaled across the whole of the UK will be much higher, but the full extent of many of the country's coastal carbon stores is unknown. Mapping underwater habitats is a challenging and costly process, requiring a combination of direct and remotely-sensed observations, and computer modelling.

Another unknown is precisely how carbon is sequestered, partitioned and stored over space and time. Kelp forests are more extensive around the UK than seagrass meadows and salt-marsh, and we need to identify the sinks where the kelp's carbon ends up. The **Help the Kelp** project has been set up in Sussex; and research has shown how to grow seagrass.

But these knowledge gaps shouldn't be a hindrance. Importantly, including these habitats in the greenhouse gas inventory would also benefit conservation efforts. Protecting and restoring seagrass meadows, saltmarshes and kelp forests would supply a host of additional ecosystem services. Together they provide nurseries for many commercially important species such as cod, sea bass, crab and lobster. They also reduce coastal flooding and erosion and play a major role in maintaining water quality.

Pippa Moore, Prof of Marine Science, Newcastle University, and
Nick Atkinson. Associate Fellow, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology,
CEH, reproduced from the *Conversation*.

HLF FLOW, Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands, Project

The FLOW project finished in June 2021¹ and there was a celebration at Rymans Gardens in Apuldram for the hardworking volunteers and partners that supported the project. Cream teas were eaten and a glass raised to acknowledge the huge successes and achievements made during the project.



Parish Reports

The parish reports which make recommendations about future wetland and drainage improvement work have been completed for all the parishes surveyed. A huge thank you goes to the volunteers that helped with the surveying of ditches and hedges, collation of data and the amazing 2 volunteers who also created maps. The reports are available on the MWHG website.



¹ The project was designed to finish in March 2021 but HLF granted a short extension in view of Co-Vid impacts

Physical improvement works (for 2020-21)

Despite the pandemic we had a busy work season from October 2020 – March 2021 carrying out conservation management of many sites with a brilliant volunteer team.

Number of physical working party sessions	69
Number of total physical work sites for 2020 / 21	20
Number of volunteer hours spent on improvement work	1227.5 = 205 days



Species Surveying

We have continued to carry out species surveys at many sites: checking a site before work takes place and then following up on improvement work to monitor species colonisation of new habitat opportunities.

Number of species surveying sessions	80
Number of sites surveyed:	24
Number of volunteer hours spent on surveying	614 = 102 days

Mink monitoring

Key trained volunteers have been very diligent and committed to carrying out important mink monitoring work and a full report by Nick Gray is available on the MWHG website.

Number of mink monitoring sites	11
Number of mink monitoring sessions	72
Number of volunteer hours	140 = 23 days



Project statistics summary

Funding gained in extra grants	£47,963
Funding gained for other flood groups	£23,687
Funding gained in non-cash contributions	£18,947
Number of Parish Councils engaged	10
Number of landowners engaged	30
Number of sites identified for improvement	90+
Length of ditches surveyed (km)	300+
Number of ditches surveyed	1500
Length of hedges surveyed (km)	30+
Area improved (51 work sites)	55000m ²
Volunteer hours	2020+ days
Cakes eaten	1550



Water voles have moved into 25% of the FLOW sites that were improved within 2 years, and at times before we wanted them to! Opening up the sites so that they are wetter for longer and removing invasive and shading willow, has created an opportunity for a many other species to colonise, including water voles. If only we had beavers and we could leave them to it!

BIG THANKS

Thanks to all the volunteers who have helped with surveying, admin work, events, tool maintenance, physical work, refreshments, GIS, mink monitoring, carrying equipment, and turning up whatever the weather, the smiles, laughter and support.



**Jane Reeve, FLOW
Project Manager**

MWHG's first Community Wildlife Officer

Sarah Hughes² is now working full time for CDC and her work is focused on the proposed **Strategic Wildlife Corridors (SWC)**, which connect the South Downs National Park to the Chichester Coastal Plain. These are vital routes for wildlife to move across the landscape, which is now more important than ever, due to the amount of development proposed in the area - thousands of houses between Chichester and Emsworth a six miles stretch as well as on the Manhood Peninsula - in addition to the threats from Climate Change. It is essential that we work with land-owners, developers and local people to safeguard our wildlife and the habitats that they use. However, until these proposed corridors are agreed and written into the CDC Local Plan the areas will remain threatened.

Sarah Hughes

² Sarah Hughes was the MWHG's first part time paid Community Wildlife Officer and CDC helped with administration of the post.

The New MWHG Website

The launch of the new MWHG website, at the end of spring 2021, was the culmination of a number of recent modernisations within the charity and a fantastic way to celebrate over 20 years as an active Group. As MWHG's Website and Social Media Officer, I was entrusted to design the new website to better showcase the Group's achievements and aims, while incorporating the wonderful new logo and branding created by Claire Munday.

No major renovations had been made to the old website for almost 10 years and with 6 active projects, and more starting soon, it was quite an undertaking to bring this online content up to date. Thank you to the staff, members and volunteers who made this possible by contributing project histories and progress photos. Special thanks go to Simon Cooper, from Scoopsweb, who did an excellent job building the final design and working with us to make a vibrant and unique website.

A key reason behind the re-design was to ensure the aims of the 5 year long Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands, FLOW Project, would continue to be met. It was a fundamental part of FLOW's work to educate people about the environmental importance of wetlands and to teach traditional conservation techniques. Through FLOW's webpage and the 'Learn' section of the website, relevant learning resources and management guides are now available for landowners, pupils and organizations.

Other exciting additions to the website include the 'Discover the Peninsula' area, which allows users to explore locally important sites for wildlife and heritage. Here, visitors can also see photos of recent archaeological finds, tips for helping wildlife, and stories of famous figures from the past. It is intended that our members will continue to expand on this historical research and to blog about their green passion projects - I look forward to seeing this content grow!

Please contact us at hello@mwhg.org.uk if you would like to contribute to the website and be sure to visit www.mwhg.org.uk to see our latest news.

Nicola Timney
MWHG Member
Website and Social Media Officer for the FLOW Project



Manor Green and East Beach Pond

Unfortunately with the lockdowns and concerns about the number of volunteers permitted on site our work days were rather limited this year. All we have been doing is keeping the site tidy and providing a safe environment. Our usual plan has been put on hold as CDC are bringing in a contractor to provide more surface water by rolling back a large strip of the marginal vegetation - roughly 2 metres in width - along the eastern side. In addition, they are dredging the outlet channel and surrounding reed beds.

Dave Haldane

WSP volunteers return to Manor Green Park

Delighted to add as short postscript that WSP, large global organisation that creates sustainable engineering solutions, was able to return to the Park to assist. Staff are allowed to take two volunteer days per year to volunteer in various sectors. WSP volunteers had already visited Manor Green Park to build the compost bins a few years ago. As we had used wooden pallets for the bins, they slowly deteriorated and needed to be replaced.

So, on Friday 22nd October, eight new and enthusiastic volunteers from WSP came to Manor Green Park to mend and rebuild the bins. They soon got to work on moving the well-rotted compost so they could reconstruct two new compost bins. Many thanks to WSP.



Sheila Wilkinson

Sheila has been working tirelessly with volunteers at Manor Green Park for at least 4 years and with MWHG from the start. Her enthusiasm and care for the work carried out at MGP has been second to none. Sheila has provided refreshments at every meeting and kept the volunteer group together. This summer, Sheila stepped down as Lead Volunteer, but continues to work at the park when family allows!

Alex Ainge

Heritage:

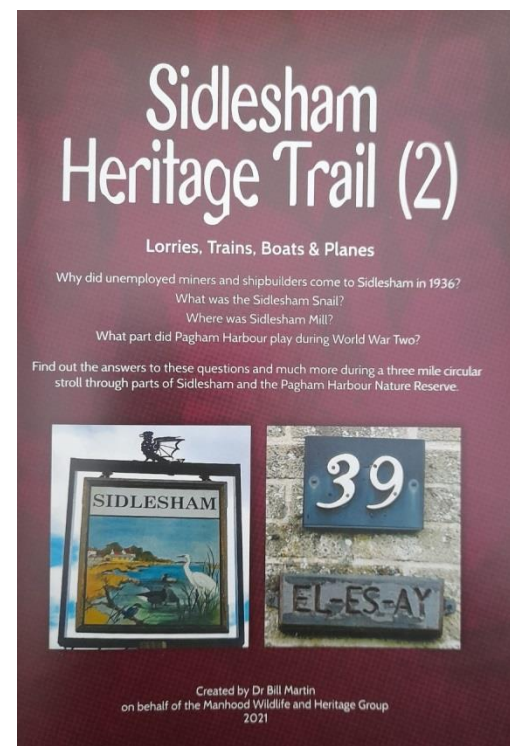
The Sidlesham Land Settlement Association (LSA) project is on-going with the aim of getting the LSA house in storage at the Weald and Downland Living Museum rebuilt so that the LSA Story will have a permanent home.

Sidlesham Heritage Centre aims to maintain the profile of the overall LSA project. It can be found in the windows of a glasshouse at Little Orchard Nursery, a former LSA smallholding at No 74 Lockgate Road (P020 7QQ)

Another heritage trail leaflet 'Sidlesham (2)' has been printed and is available from the RSPB Visitor Centre and on the MWHG website. This is a 3 mile circular walk covering the lower southern part of Sidlesham, the quay and RSPB Nature Reserve.

A '*Walk The Selsey Tram Way*' project has started which aims to update the walking leaflet and provide an interactive map, signage and information boards at the location of the 11 stations along the route. The launch date is set to coincide with the 125th Anniversary of the first train - 27th August 2022.

Dr Bill Martin



Publications:

Ditch management for people and wildlife

Avoid flooding and support the wildlife that live in your ditches



Available via the MWHG website

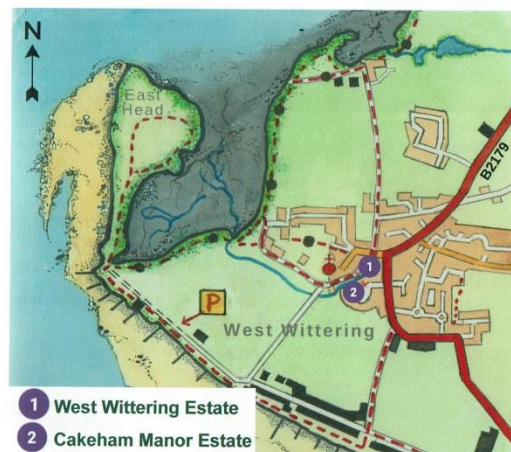
Excerpt from the FLOW *Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands Trail Guide* on the Manhood Peninsula

West Wittering

At the mouth of Chichester Harbour, West Wittering is renowned for its large expanse of firm sand and East Head, a sand dune spit with salt marsh nestled behind it. Common seals can be spotted here at high tide.

 Approx. 2 miles with optional 1.5 mile add on.

1. From the western end of the main beach car park, take the footpath right, overlooking saltmarsh on your left. Look for wading birds such as the orange-billed **oystercatcher**, listen for the 'peewit' calls from a **lapwing**, or spy a camouflaged **curlew** (right) with its long, downcurved bill.
2. After a third of a mile you will emerge onto a triangular grassy field. Keep right and follow Coastguard Lane. At the first footpath fork, turn left to walk between caravans and out across a small field.
3. Hop over the stone stile leading up to St Peter and St Paul's Church. Walk towards the church and exit the churchyard through a gate on your left.
4. Turn right, passing the primary school on your left. When you emerge onto the lane which runs south to the beach car park, you'll see both the FLOW wetland sites in front of you as they are opposite each other. There is a narrow gravel footpath that separates the sites and is a good place to view the stream from.
5. Continue back to the car park by heading down the same lane you drove in on.
6. To make your walk 1.5 miles longer, go back to point 1 and head straight onto the spit to walk a circular loop around East Head. You can either walk on the beach or along the boardwalk through the dunes, keeping to the permissive paths.



Parking: West Wittering Car Park, Pound Rd, PO20 8AJ
Public transport: Bus 52/53 stops in the village

Text by Jane Reeve, maps by Peter White and illustrations by John Davies

Joe Savill: A thank you

I wanted to write a separate thank you for Joe, for all the work he has done and continues to do for MWHG. When I took over as Chair last year I was aware that his were big shoes to fill, but in the past year I have come to realise just how big they were.

Joe is a co-founder of the group and has worked tirelessly for the Wildlife and Heritage of the Manhood Peninsula since its inception. He was Deputy Head at North Mundham School helping to develop an environmental area for the pupils when he had the idea of setting up an action group and rang Jill Sutcliffe who was then running the Selsey local branch of the Sussex Wildlife Trust. They worked together to launch the group acting like one of those Austrian weather indicators – when one was busy the other was free and could work for the newly emerging group and vice versa!

Joe set up and has led the Blue Plaque project, continues to administer the Eileen Savill Prize, to run the Selsey Photo Archive, and to develop new projects in Selsey such as the Tree Nursery and Pollinator Highway with WSCC.

He gave up being the Chair last year after 23 years of being involved in order to have more time for himself and his family, which is very deserved, and as the succeeding Chair I understand the extent of his contribution and can only just keep saying thank you Joe, you have made the group what it is and we all want to thank you.

Joe's contributions are so many and various it is hard to know where to start, he has steered the group through the growth and development of the FLOW project, keeping all the other elements of our work well to the fore and leading a process of reflection and development on our future. He has recruited Trustees, including me, has developed new projects and supported the on-going work in Selsey. He knows so many people and, if he himself can't help, he knows a person who can! He has chaired the Management Team with an even hand, and progressed the group with a firm hand on the tiller bringing us all along with him.



We are delighted that he is continuing to work with MWHG so we take this moment in his career with the group to say again Thank you Joe we look forward to many more years of working with you.

Lesley Bromley
MWHG Chair

Funds and Finances

The full accounts for 2020-2021 prepared by Wendy Peters and Jane Scotland have been signed off and are available on the MWHG website. The Heritage Lottery Fund, HLF, money which supported the ***Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands*** project was extended for 3 months until June 2021 in view of the impacts of the pandemic on volunteering for which we are very grateful.

The incipient tree nursery has been kindly given room by the West Wittering Parish Council at their allotments and has attracted funding support from Hendy, the Chapman fund and the Sussex Community Fund. These funds have enabled a start to be made on creating the first of these nurseries. The aim is to collect and grow local seeds of trees and shrubs which are well adapted to the salty conditions of the Manhood Peninsula and train people about their care thus providing local stock for a range of projects. Having improved the blue network of wetlands there is much to be done for the associated green network with many of the hedges being scrappy or missing altogether amounting to some 395 kms.

Acknowledgements:

Thanks to all the volunteers including those involved on the MWHG Management Team; the Portsmouth Water Biodiversity Grant which will be used to fund the updating of the MWHG *Water Vole Action Plan 2011-20* to cover the period 2021-2030; and which is overseen by a Steering Group; Accountant Wendy Peters; TCV/OVO - the Conservation Volunteers, TCV, provision of 1,000 free trees and planting party organised by Chichester Harbour Conservancy.

HLF-funded FLOW project: Staffing - Jane Reeve, Christopher Drake, Chloe Goddard, Mike King, Peter King, Emily Sabin and Nicola Timney. FLOW Board, Steph Evans, CDC, Dr Lesley Bromley, Joe Savill. Supported by a range of interested groups and individuals on the Manhood Peninsula including the Parish Councils, farmers and landowners.

Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group is a registered charity (England & Wales 1147335). Company registration number 07629112 (England & Wales); Registered Office, 55 High St, Selsey, West Sussex PO20 0RB.