

Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group



Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2016
Volume 9 No 1



Photo © 2010 Sarah Hughes

MANAGEMENT MATTERS

The first phase of our Heritage Lottery funded FLOW Project has now ended and I congratulate all involved for the amazing amount of work completed in such a short space of time. A plan for West Wittering Parish has been produced which identifies opportunities to improve the wetland and hedgerow networks for the benefit of people and wildlife. We now look forward to supporting the actions required to deliver these.

Our application for second phase funding has been submitted and we are hopeful of a positive outcome. We receive the decision in September so please keep your fingers crossed.

Some of you may know that we have developed a partnership agreement with Vitacress Ltd. – one of Europe's leading suppliers of fresh produce, specialising in watercress, salads and fresh herbs. The company has a nursery in Runcton and the agreement sets out how we will support each other. On their part, Vitacress, amongst other things, are now sponsoring the Eileen Savill Award and two mink rafts. They have also given us a large container which will provide safe storage for our growing list of central resources. For our part, MWHG are mainly helping Vitacress to enhance biodiversity at its Runcton site, through survey work and the development of a conservation management plan.

Vitacress is so supportive of our objects that The Management team is excited to explore all the opportunities this relationship could offer as it develops.

Finally, I'd like to draw members' attention to two other opportunities.

Firstly, the quarterly Team Leaders' meetings, co-ordinated by Bill Martin, are now Open meetings so all members are welcome. It's your group so do take this opportunity to express your ideas, concerns or needs. Look out for the dates and times in the Diary of Events.

Secondly, the Selsey Parish Map has now been reprinted so, if you would like a copy, do get in touch.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!

Joe Savill



COMMUNITY WILDLIFE PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

It has been a busy time and in the Graylingwell and Roussillon area we took part in the RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch. It was amazing to see the range of species at Graylingwell Park. As part of the 'Festival of Winter Walks' we led a guided walk from Medmerry Harbour to Pagham Harbour, viewing the wading birds that depend on our harbours for refuelling and rest. We explored the area to the north of Chichester with a walk from Roussillon Park to Lavant. We were very fortunate with the weather and we enjoyed watching a small flock of long-tailed tits, *Aegithalos caudatus* and a lovely tiny bird, the firecrest, *Regulus ignicapillus* near the River Lavant.

National Nest Box Week takes place in the second week of February and gives a chance for people to encourage birds into the garden to roost. The idea is to put up nest boxes in the local areas, not only to protect the wildlife we already have, but to encourage even more birds to brood in our gardens. As more trees are cut down, birds lose their homes, so putting up boxes is a great way of helping our winged friends. We provide the opportunity for children to be a part of this national event at Southbourne and Chichester areas as part of the half-term activities.

In the Southbourne area, I am working with two Year 6 classes, fortnightly in Southbourne Junior School. It has been very inspiring working with the younger generation. The sessions have included: pond dipping; looking at all the invertebrate life within the school pond and recording the biotic readings; and the Greenshank Ringing Project, which provided an excellent overview on this special winter wader and highlighted that wetlands like Chichester Harbour are an important service station for migrating birds. Travelling from Sweden to Africa they need a place where they can rest and refuel. Disturbance is a big issue and birds get tired and hungry. If there is bad weather more fuel/food is required. Following this exciting project the next session we took the classes out on the Chichester Harbour Conservancy's Solar Boat. An excellent outing looking at all the winter waders that visit our harbours and with the special highlight of seeing a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*.

At Tuppenny Barn, work has ranged from events to reinstating the pond and hedgerow management. Tuppenny is an important wildlife area. They provide fresh produce, and they are a lovely team, in an amazing eco build and demonstrating 'field to fork' education. Explore their website, check them out on Facebook or pop in and meet the team on Thursday (10am – 5pm) and Friday (9.30am-4pm).

In the Fishbourne area, we have carried out water vole surveys at the meadows, which is an excellent site for these lovely critters and we were fortunate to watch a kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. We have held regular site visits and talks with local walkers with dogs about the impact we can have on our protected important sites. We are now in the midst of preparing for the Fishbourne Family Dog Show, which will be on Monday 13 July from 17.00 until 20.00 at St. Peter's Place, Community Hall, Fishbourne.

There is always so much to learn and understand, so we continue training. This has covered: Hedgerow Management, Social Media, Bat Sound Analysis and Conflict Resolution and Disengagement Training - all interesting and beneficial.

We attended the annual Sussex Biological Recorders' Seminar, which is always a tonic, meeting so many passionate people/groups who are doing so many amazing things on improving and safeguarding our biodiversity for years to come.

Special thanks go to all the teams, groups and individuals that we work with.

Sarah Hughes



ASH DIEBACK - CHALARA FRAXINEA

Many of you may remember a time in the 1970s when the whole country was worried about Dutch Elm disease and eventually we lost our elms. Selsey was renowned for its elms and I can remember them as a young boy while on the back of my mum's bike as she cycled from Chichester and we turned down to Church Norton, so I might play safely in the water there.

We are now faced with a similar problem with ash trees which are suffering from the disease *Chalara fraxinea*. Again we are destined to lose an entire species, and it is estimated that 25 per cent of our woodlands will be lost from this devastating problem.



Photo © 2016 Anthony Preston

You may feel this does not affect us this time as Selsey does not appear to have many ash trees, but as a tree warden, as well as a member of MWHG, I was asked to develop a survey methodology for the Tree Council which would enable the ash trees in a locality to be located and counted. This was important as the affected trees could not be removed from their location and had to be burnt on site. This had a considerable cost attached to it. So I trailed my methodology in Selsey. My survey on two sites, however, – Manor Green Park and the waste area between Ellis Square and Manor Lane - recorded 723 trees (at current rates, to remove this number of trees would cost £360,000)! I now need extra eyes looking for ash trees and I need to know the location so I might record it. If you are unable to provide a grid reference or GPS then a street name and location point e.g. between lamp post numbers 27 and 22 (new lamp posts have numbers). Once I know where the trees are we can look out for the symptoms of decline (so far we have not found any in Selsey). The current thought is that all ash trees have the disease as do the seeds and it is only a matter of time before the problem presents itself. It is possible, however, that some trees may be resistant, so we need to know if this is true. Thus trees are being left until the disease, caused by fungus spores, develops before removal.

Young infected trees show long dark diamond-shaped lesions around twigs or branches where the branch joins the trunk that will expand as the fungus grows. Young twigs may split around the infected area and the bark may discolour to a very distinctive orange-brown colour. The leaves become blackened and droop, dead areas can be seen in the leaf canopy of mature trees, usually at the crown.

I have reproduced two pictures from the Forestry Commission website – www.forestry.gov.uk. If you access this site go to the search box on the right of the screen and type in 'Ash dieback' and select the magnifying glass. You will then get around 1,650 results. Scroll down and select the 'chalara ash dieback symptoms', around item five last time, to see typical indicators.

Dr Anthony Preston

DONNINGTON AND APPLIEDRAM

2016 got off to a flying start and there is excellent news to report.

Five years ago Sarah Hughes, Community Wildlife Officer, was instrumental in organising the planting of a native hedge at Mile Pond Farm, behind the Apuldram Centre (AC), but then her remit changed to working north of the Manhood Peninsula. However, as her partnership working with the AC has evolved and in view of its proximity to Fishbourne/Chichester Harbour, Sarah has recently been able to renew her involvement with this hedgerow. It is wonderful to have Sarah back on board, and just in the nick of time, too.

It was always the intention to lay this hedgerow once it had become established. This is to ensure that it thickens from the base, keeps a tidy appearance, improves the wildlife corridor and doesn't obscure views of the South Downs and Chichester Cathedral from the Salterns Way Cycle Path that it runs alongside. With many thanks to Sarah for organising everything, a couple of training days took place in January under the expert instruction of Roger May, South of England Hedge Laying Society (www.sehls.weebly.com). In all, 18 trainees (including some Southbourne Parish Councillors and AC staff/clients) enjoyed learning how to lay a hedge in the Sussex style. A small, core team of MWHG volunteers returned with Roger for a third day to finish the task. Weather conditions varied from cold/frosty to mild/misty starts but, though wet and muddy underfoot, we were fortunate to avoid those rainy days. On the second morning we were treated to a low fly-past by six mute swans and on our final day, the yaffle of a green woodpecker rang out, perhaps commenting on the less than perfectly straight line of our handiwork!

The Apuldram Centre (www.apuldram.org) deserves further mention and our thanks for allowing use of their facilities and for providing warming bowls of soup on Day 2 that we enjoyed in the comfort of the shop/café.

I shall continue to monitor this hedgerow with interest and see just how much growth it puts on during the year ahead.

Felicity McStea

EAST BEACH POND'S NEW BENCH



In 2011 it became necessary to dredge the outlet channel of the pond and the silt removed was put on the spit beside the channel. It has taken many different methods and hours of work for East Beach Pond Group to restore the spit to an attractive area which then became a perfect location for a new bench. Chichester District Council was applied to for permission to add a bench and the pond group were delighted when the Council not only agreed, but offered to fund it.

The development of East Beach Pond as a community asset took some years. When Selsey Town Council invited ideas for Millennium Projects in 1997, Rex Clements was someone who submitted a plan to turn the area into a wildlife area. It took another 5 years for funding and work to be forthcoming and East Beach Pond Group was formed when Rex and Joe Savill got together to bring the area up to scratch.

The group grew after Sarah Hughes was appointed as Wildlife Officer for the area and encouraged so many to become involved. Since then there has been a regular core of nine volunteers who take great joy and pride in being part of Rex's dream.

Other commitments and interests have meant that Rex has decided to step back from the weekly meetings, although he has been encouraged to retain his supervisory role and join the rest of the group for coffee as often as possible.

So we were even more delighted when CDC approved a plaque for the bench:



Rex on the bench

In appreciation of all the hard work by
Rex Clements
and members of East Beach Pond Group

The bench was installed on Monday, 21 March, in readiness for a surprise unveiling at the usual Tuesday Pond Group meeting the next day.

It could not have gone better! The sun shone, Joe, Gina and Sarah were able to attend and Rex was taken completely by surprise and quite overwhelmed on finding his name on the plaque.

Sheila Wilkinson

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE - HERRING GULL STYLE

Love them or abhor them, over the past decade herring gulls have become an addition to urban avifauna – and they are here to stay. A while back some enterprising members of the gull community discovered that the high roof ledges on inner city buildings made a very acceptable alternative to windy, congested cliff breeding places, with excellent food sources at landfill sites, al fresco eateries and snack bars. The message spread and they moved in. More recently they have expanded their range to the suburbs, where loft extensions have included flat roofed gables to increase ceiling height. Hence we have them as very close neighbours.



I can't say they are among my favourite birds. Handsome they may be; they are also extremely noisy. Their charismatic mewling calls echoing over the sea lose their appeal when amplified by a chimney flue at 4 a.m. on a summer morning, competing all too successfully with the more attractive dawn chorus of our garden song birds. Like all birds that live and breed in communities, though, they have a wide vocabulary; and I have become intrigued.

'The Birds of Britain and Europe...' *Messrs Heinzel, Fitter and Parslow*, has much to say about herring gull plumage variations but confines their verbalisation to ...'many wailing, chuckling and yelping notes' expressing phonetically the commonest as 'kee-yow' and 'a loud, echoing gah-gah-gah, uttered in the spring.' Our neighbouring male gull stands on our chimney pot scanning the surroundings and periodically uttering a rapid ka-ka-ka-ka, which I imagine is to stake his territorial claim, and which continues well into the early summer. If I look out of our velux window my head is level with his feet. Fortunately he does not appear to regard me as a threat!

The most spectacular event takes place much earlier, towards the end of February this year. It involves the gulls lining up along a roof ridge, sometimes numbering six or seven individuals. Alternate gulls point their bills skywards and utter a loud single-syllable cry which could be described as a 'yelp' but at close range is more like someone shrieking at full volume. Immediately these gulls duck their heads down and their neighbours repeat the performance. These alternate calls follow one another so closely that they only just avoid overlap, but the display is as carefully choreographed as Kylie Minogue's backing dancers and can last ten minutes or so. It is most likely a kind of pairing routine. I am told they mate for life. Sometimes one of last year's offspring joins the line, edging cautiously up to the others, seeming to feel it should join in but not quite knowing how. The adult birds ignore it and it eventually flies off. Some householders have put a row of spikes along their roof ridge to stop the birds landing.

When the young hatch the air soon resounds to their begging calls, a querulous, high-pitched sound. Later they can be seen patrolling their 'ledge'. A parent's approach is signified by the 'patrol' speeding up so the young bird is rushing up and down. How does it know? No call is heard, but within a few seconds the adult lands, delivers a meal and leaves. Then the performance starts over again. These cries are somewhat irritating on a warm summer afternoon when it would be so nice to sit outside for a peaceful cup of tea (or even an early G&T or glass of wine). Anyone who has been near a big seabird colony, marvelling at the volume of noise and constant coming and going, will recognise this behaviour, as the young gulls need to gain weight and fledge quickly, becoming independent before the harsh winter weather arrives.

Then, one day last summer, while in our loft room, I heard a new noise, a very soft noise almost like a quiet grunting sound. Curiosity aroused, I just had to see what was going on. This was a tricky manoeuvre, involving standing on the loo seat and leaning as far as possible out of the small window in order to see round the chimney stack to the neighbour's flat roof. There they were; two adult herring gulls standing very close together side by side, their heads and bills almost touching, making these soft little sounds. It had to be herring- gull speak for 'I love you'. Ahhhh – maybe they are not so bad after all.

Gina Scott

Photo © 2010 Carole Hampton



WILDLIFE STORY

I have had a close relationship with wildlife since I was seven years old and developed an understanding of bird calls, particularly of robins and blackbirds. My bedroom window is open 24/7, allowing outside sounds to resonate throughout the room. Often throughout 2015 I would be awakened at 5.30 a.m. to the sound of agitated blackbirds, their nest being raided by a magpie.

I would slip on my shoes and rush out in the cold morning air, with just a coat on, ready to chase off the offending corvid.

During the autumn of 2015 I bonded with a robin that would come to my hand for mealworms and maggots. After a couple of weeks I ran out and he seemed to stop coming. Although a robin came close every morning when I put bread on the bird table, I was never really sure if it was the same one but it would stand inches from my feet, even with soggy bread raining down.



Photo © 2016 Anthony Burnand

March 2016 came along, my door was open and since I never have any heating on, the door open or closed makes little difference. I came in from the garden only to find a robin hopping around indoors. The last thing I wanted was to break the trust I had for this little chap, as he flew into the bathroom, the bedroom and lounge, I called him over to the door, he flew nearby and flew out and I was relieved. Thinking that was that, I thought no more about it until over the next few days the bird came in three times.

The penny dropped, I also have a passion for spiders and had wondered why some of my long-term overwintering female arachnids had disappeared. A garden spider *Araneus diadematus*, and a large house spider *Tegenaria* were among the spiders that had disappeared.

During a cold spell in April, both parent robins were following me around the garden for morsels to give to their chicks. Choosing between spiders and this bright eyed pretty little robin was not difficult, I opened the shed door, and in he went, hovering up at the corners, perching on the handlebars of the bicycle, and clearing the shed of spiders. In fact the robin will go in any of the sheds even if I am in there, he has also entered the vacant hutch used by the ferrets.

I wonder if I should resign from the British Arachnid Society.

Anthony Burnand

A Memorable Easter Monday in Highleigh

Storm Katie managed to bring down two large conifers in Highleigh, Sidlesham on Easter Monday. The trees fell at an angle of 90 degrees to one another blocking both Highleigh Road and a lane known as Critchell's Lane. According to a neighbour it happened at about five in the morning. We became aware of it at eight in the morning when Robin my husband went to check why one or two cars had come back up the road. I went out to look and saw a tree so large it looked as if a massive barrier had been erected in the road.

Robin, who has done a lot of tree felling in his time, set about the trees. No chance of help from anyone official on a public holiday. With the help of tree surgeon Steve Bacon of Tree Services Ltd who freely gave of his time, and neighbour Mr Bone, who could use a chain saw and kindly came to help, a dent was made in the tree in Highleigh Road. After a few hours it was possible for traffic to get through. There was also the conifer in the lane to tackle which had cut off any entrance or exit, and by then it was down to Robin to finish the job.

It was fortunate that it was a public holiday as traffic in the mornings can be busier than usual as the road is used as a thoroughfare to places of work.

Considering the size of the trees very little damage had occurred. Several neighbours lost their Internet connections for a while and there was damage to fences. However, the size of the trees meant several days of extra work cutting and clearing the site.

The day generated a good deal of interest with neighbours coming out to help move what they could off the road, or to chat. Some even met neighbours they hadn't seen before, due largely to the fact that most people drive in and out of their homes and don't tend to walk as there are no pavements or paths'

All in all an unusual and memorable day and a lot of wood for the wood-burning stove.

Val Gatehouse

Photos © 2016 Val Gatehouse



Orchid Count

Wednesday 8 June 2016

Action: To carry out the annual count of the southern marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*)

Location: Land at Crablands, Selsey, with the kind permission of the owners, the Bunn Family.

A team of 8 MWHG volunteers led by Jane Reeve arrived at the Crablands site to find conditions far from favourable. The land was very overgrown with large patches of the dreaded hemlock water-dropwort (*Denanthe crocata*) up to 1.5m (5') high and infested with the caterpillars of the moth *Depressaria daucella*. According to data obtained from the Sussex Moth Group this moth and its greedy hemlock-water-dropwort-eating caterpillars are very common in the Chichester and Walberton areas. Photos of both moth and caterpillar are available on the Sussex Moth Group's website at www.sussexmothgroup.org.uk

Despite the conditions Jane led and manoeuvred the team successfully across the site. With the orchid count completed our final figure was 690 rounded up to 700. Undoubtedly this figure would have been higher had it not been for severe overgrown conditions.

Many thanks Jane for the refreshments. They were most welcome.

Peter White

Photos © 2016 Peter White






Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands (FLOW) Project

It has been a very busy 6 months for the FLOW team and the time has flown by. We have been using West Wittering Parish as a pilot area to trial our new ditch survey sheets so that we can assess the condition of all the ditches in the Parish. Unfortunately, the timing was such that this fieldwork took place over the winter so it was quite challenging to get around all the fields in the cold windy and rainy weather.

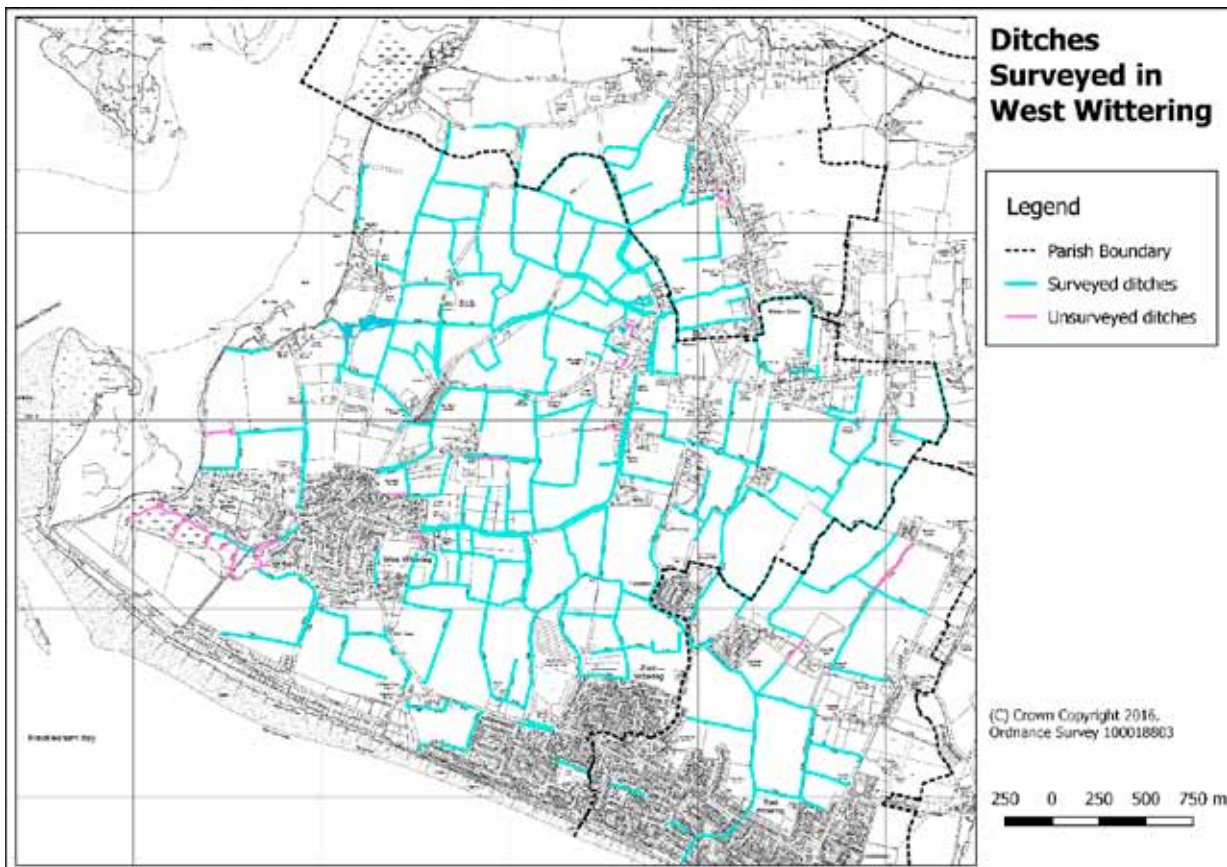
We have been warmly welcomed by the West Wittering Parish Council and given lots of useful information which helped us to get access to most of the large landowners. We were fortunate that everyone that we approached allowed us to tramp all over their land looking at the ditches and hedges.

We will be giving out regular updates via our e-bulletin but here are some statistics on our results so far:

Number of ditches surveyed	304 ditches (268 in West Wittering Parish) (21 in East Wittering Parish) (15 in West Itchenor Parish)
Length of ditches surveyed	10 kilometres
Approximate % ditch coverage of the parish	92%
Number of hedgerows surveyed	162
Length of hedgerows surveyed	12 kilometres
Number of volunteers involved	9
How many ditches surveyed by volunteers?	78
How many volunteer hours in total used?	70 hours
How many training sessions delivered?	3 training sessions plus 2 in the field follow up sessions
Number of main landowners worked with	16, plus, ditches also surveyed along the roadside, council owned land, and residential areas where it hasn't been necessary or practical to approach all the landowners.
Number of landowner reports written	6
Number of follow up habitat management discussion meetings	6
Number of Ash tree records to date across the Manhood Peninsula	153

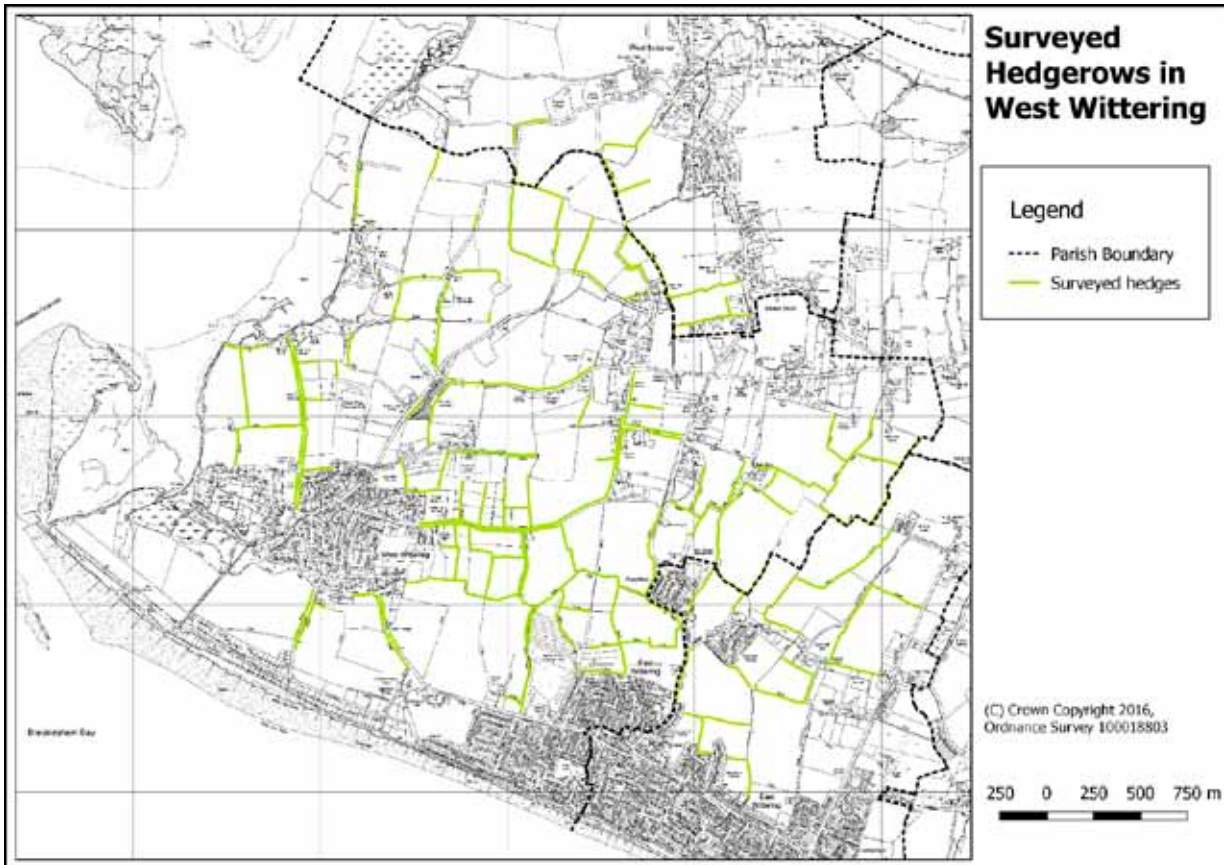
We have had some great help from volunteers in our surveying work in West Wittering but the standout person who gave up a great deal of his time is Ian Godfrey who surveyed 40 ditches and 27 hedges – what a star . At the moment we are currently writing up an Action Plan for the West Wittering Parish with management suggestions on how some of the ditches can be enhanced to create better wetland habitat and if there are any flood water storage opportunities.

Over the last few months we have been putting together the application for the next HLF Grant application to give us the funds to carry on with our ditch surveying work across the rest of the parishes on the Peninsula (Birdham and West Itchenor already done by Tony). This has been a large undertaking and has tied me to the computer and left Chloë finishing off the fieldwork and making brilliant maps, using GIS, with all the collected data. See some of her brilliant work below.



This shows where the ditches in the Parish has been surveyed and which we were not able to do. This was partly due to access, the ditch being totally overgrown or infact missing. The main road ditches on the B2179 and Piggery Hall Lane could not be done because of the speed and volume of traffic.

The hedges that were surveyed were mainly associated with ditches as many across the area sit side by side, offering an important habitat. We have used an abbreviated short hedgerow surveying form, provided by the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre, that can easily be completed in the field and which focusses in the tree species within. We are looking to identify areas where more hedges can be planted, where gaps can be filled and if there are any good candidates for laying.



Once the application is in at the end of May, we have to wait 3 months for the HLF to make their decision. We will find out in September if we have been successful and it is a 'yes' then we will be recruiting for volunteer helpers – the fieldwork and the data entry side. During the summer gap I hope to be out in the fresh air carrying out water vole surveys, so please let me know if you fancy joining me. It will be lovely to see everyone again as I am aware that I haven't been out and about much.

Thank you so much for your help and support

Jane

Sheepwash Lane, West Wittering 2016

Photo © 2016 Jame Reeve



WALKS LEAFLETS OUTLETS

Our walks leaflets can be purchased from the following places:-

Chichester District Council, Selsey Office
Hunston Post Office (Tramway Walks only)
Raycraft, High Street, Selsey
RSPB Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve
Selsey Printing and Publishing
Selsey Town Council Office

MWHG Website

www.mwhg.org.uk

At the moment, the only section which is regularly being updated is the "Current Programmes" page. New content and updates are regularly required for example on wildlife, heritage, etc.

All contributions welcome.

email: website@mwhg.org

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

10 June (Spring/Summer)
10 November (Autumn/Winter)

USEFUL WEBSITES

Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group -
<http://www.mwhg.org.uk>
Recording the changing seasons -
<http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/>
Local wood recycling - http://www.aldingbournetrust.co.uk/services_recycling.htm
Local - Bags made from 100% recycled clothing - <http://www.thegreendoor.co.uk/>
Sussex Bat Group -
<http://www.sussexbatgroup.org.uk/>
UK moths - <http://ukmoths.org.uk/>
Bug life - <http://www.buglife.org.uk/>
Mammal Society - <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal/>
Green shop - <http://www.greenshop.co.uk/>
Environmental calendar -
www.countmeincalendar.info
Swift Conservation -
<http://www.swift-conservation.org/>
Wildcare Shop for products relating to ecology, Park management or conservation. -
<http://www.wildcareshop.com>

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



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