

# The Fleet Lagoon and Chesil Beach

*A unique coastal environment in Dorset, UK*

## The Fleet

The largest brackish water lagoon in Britain. It is 13km long with a salinity gradient from east (marine) to west (brackish). The depth varies from 4 metres in the east to less than 1 metre in the west. The width varies from just 65 metres at the Narrows to around 1 km at Butterstreet Cove. It is connected to the sea at Ferrybridge at its southernmost extremity.

## Chesil Beach

One of the most important shingle beaches in Britain. It is a linear storm beach and an important example of a tombolo. It is 22km long and the pebbles are graded from large at the southern end to very small at the north-west end. Most of the pebbles are either flint or chert, mixed with some pebbles of quartzite and other minerals.

The beach is highest (~14 metres) at its southern end and widest at Ferry bridge. The width varies from 150-200 metres.

## Habitats associated with the area

Sand flat	Freshwater marsh
Mud flat	Saline lagoon
Salt marsh	Shingle beach
Reed bed	Landshore cliff

# The Fleet Study Group

Established in 1975 by the late Dr Elsie Burrows, a world algae authority from Liverpool University. The inaugural meeting was held at the Dorset Institute for Higher Education (DIHE), now Weymouth College, on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1975. It is a voluntary organisation bringing together a wide range of scientific and local interests. It meets three times a year, usually in March, July and November. The Group has received, and continues to receive, the full support of the Ilchester Estates, the principal landowner in the area.

From time to time the Group holds symposia to discuss results of recent research. These have been held in 1981, 1985, 1993 and 2000.

## Group objectives

- The collection, collation and dissemination of scientific, historical and other relevant information about the Fleet, Chesil Beach and adjacent areas
- To assemble and maintain an archive of relevant information
- The identification of gaps in our knowledge about the area and topics for future research
- The consideration of environmental effects of natural and anthropogenic changes

Anyone interested in contributing to these objectives is encouraged to contact the group.

# Composition of the Group

The Fleet Study Group membership comprises:

Representatives of Ilchester Estates and Natural England. Representatives of Dorset Council, the World Heritage Site team and the Dorset Environmental Records Centre have also attended.

And scientists with interests in:

Geology	Ecology
Geomorphology	Botany
Palaeontology	Ornithology
Sedimentology	Fish
Hydrology	Invertebrates
Historical archives	Mammals
Archaeology	

The current chairman is Ed Harland, Tel 07824 365556, email: [ejharland@chesilbeach.org](mailto:ejharland@chesilbeach.org).

Membership of the Group is by invitation to those expressing an interest in appropriate topics and wishing to further the Groups objective. The present membership consists of both amateur and professionals who have worked in the study area on a relevant topic.

The Group is unfunded and there is no membership fee.

## Site importance

All or part of the study area is subject to one or more of the following designations:

**Special Area of Conservation (SAC)** under the EU Habitats Directive

A **wetland of International Importance** under the RAMSAR convention of 1985

A **Special Protection Area (SPA)** under the directive for the conservation of birds

A **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**. Listed 1951, 1957 and 1986 by the NCC, predecessor to Natural England.

A **Designated Bass Nursery area** under the Bass (Specified Areas) (Prohibition of Fishing) (Variation) order 1999

### **Chesil Bank and the Fleet Nature Reserve**

Within the **Dorset and East Devon World Heritage Site** (Jurassic Coast) listed by UNESCO

Part of the Dorset **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB)

Part of the **West Dorset Heritage Coast**

## Working on the Fleet and Chesil Beach

The Fleet and much of Chesil Beach are owned by the Ilchester Estates. Permission to work on the Fleet or Chesil Beach south of East Bexington must be obtained initially from the Ilchester Estates warden, Charles Wheeler, at the Chesil Bank and the Fleet Nature Reserve office located at the Chesil Beach Visitors Centre, Portland Beach Road, Portland, Dorset. 01305 760579. E-mail [info@fleetandchesilreserve.org](mailto:info@fleetandchesilreserve.org).

The Fleet Study Group would like to receive a copy of the results of any work carried out and these documents will be held in the Fleet Study Group archive.

## Fleet Study Group Archive

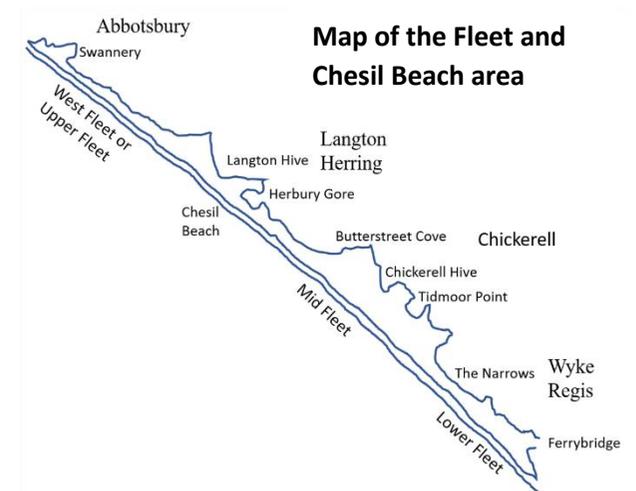
The Group maintain a collection of nearly 350 papers and items relevant to the study are. This was held in the Weymouth College Library for many years but is now held by a number of Group members until a new home can be found. In addition to the physical copies held by the Group an electronic database of known published data is also maintained.

## Website

The Group have a website [fsg.org.uk](http://fsg.org.uk) where more information about group publications and activities can be found.

# The Fleet Study Group

*Founded 1975*



**The Fleet Study Group collates and disseminates information, and encourages research, on the Fleet Lagoon, Chesil Beach and Portland Harbour, Dorset**