

FLEET STUDY GROUP

Minutes for the 16th Meeting of the Fleet Study Group, held on the 27th November 1981 in the Conference Room, Dorset Institute of Higher Education, Weymouth.

PRESENT: Dr M Ladle (Chairman)
Dr A Carr
Mr J Fair (Strangways)
Mr E Green (Strangways)
Mr G Poole
Dr J Whittaker
Mr J White
Mrs J Fitzpatrick (Secretary)

David Campbell, a research student of Dr Gibbs, was welcomed to the meeting.

APOLOGIES: Dr E Burrows, Miss J Nall, Mr D Seaward and Dr C Tubbs.

MATTERS ARISING

1. Publication of the Fleet Papers - The papers produced by the contributors to the Symposium held at the County Museum, Dorchester, in March 1980, have now been published as a booklet entitled "The Fleet and Chesil Beach, structure and biology of a unique coastal feature". Edited by Dr Ladle and printed by the County Planning Department of the Dorset County Council, some 300 copies are available at £1.75 each (cost price was £1.25). 50 copies are being held for sale at the County Museum and 20 copies by the Dorset Naturalist' Trust. Complimentary copies have gone to authors and members of the Study Group. Mr Green asked for 50 copies to be sent to the Swannery where they would be put on sale. It was agreed Dr Ladle should send copies to Colin Tubbs, Bill Farnham and the research students now working on the Fleet. The rest would be held at the County Planning Department with Mr R Burden. Owing to the urgency of production, authors had not been able to check their papers and several errors has crept in. Dr Carr's errors were being amended by the Planning Department. Mr J Fair was concerned about several errors in his Bird Report and Mrs Fitzpatrick agreed to see if the most serious of these could be altered - Common Tern should read Little Tern (p. 67). On the whole, however, it was felt that Dr Ladle had done a good job and his efforts were only to be commended.

2. Research Projects - (1) Biology of the macrofauna, especially amphipods in the Fleet. Dr Ladle reported that Caroline Pickering would begin sampling next week. She would be defining the limits of her study after these preliminary investigations. She would be consulting Mr Fair.

(2) Parasites in the snail *Abra tenuis* - David Campbell a research student of Dr Gibbs and jointly supported by Birmingham University and the Marine Biological Station, Plymouth, outlined his project. He proposed to study the life history of the parasites of this snail and would require gut samples of dabbling ducks and would need to net fish in order to discover the possible hosts of these parasites. Mr Fair suggested he contacted Cyril Ford of Langton Herring, the Secretary of the Wildfowlers Association.

(3) Zostera survey - Colin Tubbs had already carried out some survey work on Zostera in the Fleet and had sent a short report to Dr Ladle.

(4) Water sampling - Dr Ladle intends to collect water samples when visiting the Fleet with his research student, Miss Pickering. After an initial run, he would be in a better position to see what work was worthwhile in the future. He felt that we should press for a NERC studentship to work on pollution studies in the Fleet next year. Mr Green and Mr Fair suggested that there were both summer and winter sources of pollution. All sources of pollution, including that from the birds themselves, therefore, should be examined. Mr J White felt that NERC were in a better position to finance such studies than the Nature Conservancy Council at present.

(5) Dr Whittaker had been sent a copy of a BSc dissertation entitled "Intraspecific variation and distribution of Littorina rudis (Maton) in the Fleet" (April 1981) by Arthur Brandwood, formerly of Reading University. Dr Whittaker had collected specimens from Mr Brandwood from the Fleet. He felt that a paper should be prepared for the DNH & AS Proceedings as the work had been commended by mollusc experts in the British Museum (Nat.Hist.) and elsewhere.

(6) Mr Fair suggested that if more work was needed on the flora of the Chesil Beach, Mr D Moxom should be contacted in the spring/summer. It would then be possible to look at the flora of the shingle in areas away from the Little Tern colonies.

(7) Dr E Burrows had asked for Zostera samples. She would like to examine the epiphytic algae on the Zostera spp. over a 12 month period.

(8) Mr D Seaward had mentioned that Dr Thompson at Bristol University had some thoughts on the populations of Akera. Although this comment arose from a mistake in the Agenda (Akera should have read Abra) it might be worthwhile to follow this up.

3. Schemes affecting the Fleet (1) Chesil Sea Defences. Dr A Carr and Mr J White reported that both the Nature Conservancy Council and the Dorset Naturalists' Trust (Miss J Nall, pers.comm.) maintained their objections concerning the placing of experimental gabion mattresses on the crest of the beach. During the discussion that followed, concern was again expressed over the enormous expense, the likely failure and the introduction of alien material to fill the mattresses.

(2) The new Ferry Bridge. Work has already started on the scheme. Concern was expressed by Mr Green and Mr White at the speed with which events were taking place and that no proper liaison was being carried out between the County Planners and the Wessex Water Authority, the owners of the land and the NCC. Mr Green and Mr White agreed to check whether the safeguards previously stipulated were being honoured by the engineers. Mr D Seaward had also expressed his concern by letter over this point of safeguards.

(3) Proposed Nuclear Power Station. Mr Green said that Lady Tessa Agnew had sent members of the Fleet Study Group invitations to attend a meeting on December 14th. This meeting was to follow that arranged by the County Council at Weymouth on 11th December 1981 where factual information about the scheme is being given to all interested parties. Dr Ladle and Mrs Fitzpatrick unfortunately could not attend but Mr White, Mr Poole and Mr Fair would be attending together with other panel members such as Mr Bond (County Councillor), Mr Swindle (CC), Miss H Brotherton (DNT), Mr Griffiths (Langton Herring Action Group), etc. Members of the public of West Dorset could then ask questions. Mr White explained the NCC's role as advisors to the Central Electricity Generating Board. All five sites had been studied in the same way by the same people in order to give impartial informed opinion concerning the natural history value of the sites. The alternative to this situation would possibly have been that the ecological values would have been largely ignored.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Sargassum threat to the Fleet - Dr J Whittaker had received a letter from Dr W Farnham indicating that Sargassum was already in Portland Harbour and that it was only a matter of time for it to get into the Fleet, especially to areas as far up as Chickerell Hive Point. This seaweed can penetrate waters with salinity as low as 15‰ which could mean that at least the East Fleet would be at risk. The Zostera beds would probably be unaffected since Sargassum needs an anchorage. There could be a serious sedimentation problem. Mr Fair suggested Dr Farnham should come and talk to the local fishermen about the identification of this seaweed and possible means of control. Dr Farnham expressed his continued interest in the algae of the Fleet and hoped to do more work shortly.

2. Future Meeting Place/Secretarial help/Finances - Since the Dorset Institute of Higher Education, Weymouth, was in danger of being closed, it was felt that the

County Museum, Dorchester, should be approached for a meeting place and to house the Archives. Mr Green said that the Strangways Estate would in future see to the typing, duplication and posting of the Minutes and Agenda. He also agreed that the Study Group could claim minor expenses from the grant (e.g. Dr Whittaker should send his bill for copyright of the photographs used in his paper to the Estate).

The date of the next meeting was fixed for Friday, 26th March 1982, at the Dorset Institute of Higher Education, Weymouth.

FLEET STUDY GROUP.

The next meeting of the Fleet Study Group will be on FRIDAY, 26th MARCH 1982, at the Dorset Institute of Higher Education, Cranford Avenue, Weymouth, at 4.00 pm.

AGENDA.

1. Matters arising from previous meeting.
2. Research projects - progress reports.
3. Schemes affecting the Fleet, particularly the proposed Nuclear Power Station.
4. Any other business.