

## FLEET STUDY GROUP

Minutes for the 17th meeting of the Fleet Study Group, held on the 26th March 1982 in the Conference Room, Dorset Institute of Higher Education, Weymouth.

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

Mr Arthur Brandwood (University of Leeds) was welcomed to the meeting.

APOLOGIES: Dr E Burrows.

### MATTERS ARISING

1. Publications: (a) Mrs Fitzpatrick reported that offprints of both Dr Whittaker's and Mr Seaward's papers that had been published in the Proc. Dorset nat. Hist. & archaeol. Soc., vol. 100, were now available for purchase at the County Museum, Dorchester.

(b) Mr Green agreed that a grant of about £50 could be made available for the publication of Arthur Brandwood's paper on Littorina rudis in the next year's Proceedings. The editor, Dr N Webb, would be told to contact Mr Green.

2. Research Projects: (a) Arthur Brandwood outlined his post-graduate research project. He had found an interesting gradation in the shell thickness and colour in the Littorina populations along the length of the Fleet and was now proposing to collect more material in June and take them back to the laboratory for measurement and mechanical tests. He asked if the Shore Crab was found in the Fleet because it was known to predate on these molluscs. If so, this could be a factor affecting the distribution of the different mechanically constructed types. He would be using a mobile home and he was to contact Mr Green concerning parking and a water supply, etc.

(b) Dr Ladle reported that his student Caroline Pickering has already carried out a series of samples along the whole length of the Fleet and had found interesting oligochaetes, Chironomids and Anemonies. She would be starting to carry out quantitative work on three sites chosen on the basis of differences in sediment, Zostera distribution, salinity, etc. Dr Ladle would investigate how Zostera samples should be collected for Colin Tubbs, Dennis Seaward and Dr Burrows, their being interested in the taxonomy and distribution, the mollusc fauna and the epiphytes of the Zostera, respectively.

(c) Colin Tubbs had visited three areas of the Fleet on September 26th 1981 (letter to Dr Ladle) and had reported that... "all the Zostera material seen was Z. angustifolia and there appeared to be no morphological differences to that growing on the upshore mudflats in Langstone, Chichester and Portsmouth Harbours, although in the Fleet it is clearly growing under very different conditions. From the mouth of West Fleet westwards Ruppia maritima (possibly two spp.) seems to be nearly as common as Zostera". He also reports that the flowering period of the Fleet plants of Zostera is also similar to the above-mentioned harbours. Although the Abbotsbury area was not examined he did not find Z. noltii, which had been reported in 1932 from the Fleet (no locality given, but specimen examined at Kew) and more recently by Dr Whittaker. Z. marina did not appear to live in the Fleet although the Ferrybridge and Portland Harbour sites were not visited either.

(d) David Campbell, who is working on parasites of the bivalve Abra tenuis (not a snail, as reported in the last Minutes), is having trouble finding references for his project and had asked Dr Ladle for assistance, but there would appear to be very little previous work on this topic.

(e) Dr Ladle reported that water samples from mid and East Fleet had been tested for phosphorus. Although they show some variation at the different sites, all were low. The pH had been found to be around 8 in all the places sampled.

(f) Mr Green reported that John Fair was concerned by the large amount of "Flannel weed" in West Fleet this spring. Also for the first time, the thatchers had complained of the quality of the reed which had become tall and spindly. Could this be due to excess nitrogen in the water? The Wessex Water Authority will now be examining water samples from the Swannery and the Fleet itself (including Moonfleet). It was suggested that Dr West of the Water Authority be sent a copy of the Fleet Publication and that he should be invited to a future meeting. It is important that the group obtain copies of the results, if possible. Dr Whittaker suggested that Dr Robinson at Southampton should be put in touch with Dr West.

(g) Mr Seaward would communicate with Dr Thompson at Bristol about his possible interest in Akera in the Fleet.

(h) Mrs Fitzpatrick would get in touch with Dr Rodwell about Zostera distribution in the Fleet. He is preparing the National Vegetation Classification of the British Isles at Lancaster University.

3. Schemes affecting the Fleet: (a) Gabion mattresses at Chiswell - Dr Carr confirmed that some sections were being filled with alien material as there was not enough local material suitable.

(b) Ferrybridge - Work had started on a new boat yard. It was unlikely that a public enquiry, pressed for by the fishermen, would be held since time was now short. Dennis Seaward was anxious about the need to safeguard the Low Water Mark. Mr Green would look into this.

(c) Weymouth and Portland Sewage scheme - Mr Poole explained the new problem encountered by the engineers which has necessitated changing direction of the tunnel under the sea. John Churchouse complained regularly about the "mess" going into the Fleet whenever it occurs.

(d) Heritage Coast - Mr Womersley reported that the Management Plan Consultative Document would be published in two months and that the public would have until the second week in September to comment. It was suggested that this should be circulated to the members of the Study Group.

(e) Proposed Nuclear Power Station - Mr Womersley reported that the Dorset County Council informed the Central Electricity Generating Board that the development on either of the two proposed Dorset sites should not be permitted unless an irrefutable national or regional need can be demonstrated which cannot be met in an acceptable alternative way. The debate on PWRs and the Sizewell enquiry would no doubt delay further developments.

(f) Pebble extraction - Planning permission expires next year and would again be reviewed, taking Dr Carr's report in mind.

#### ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

Further projects - Mr Womersley asked the Group if original objectives had been achieved. It was felt a lot had been accomplished particularly with the printing of the Fleet publication, but still outstanding were several projects:

(a) Sedimentation study - Mr Poole said that he would have time later in the year to make a start on the project.

(b) Historical records about changes in the Fleet - Dr Whittaker was anxious that the Strangways documents at the County Records Office were studied especially in relation to the history of the Fleet during the last 500 years or so; little known events such as the purpose and building of the Works Wall and the attempt to drain the Fleet in the 1630's could be followed up. Mr Poole said he would look into this.

(c) Swan survey - Mr Green would like someone to look into the strange behaviour of the Swans last year when they went as far as East Fleet to feed. Perhaps a Manpower Services student could be employed.

(d) Narrows survey - Mr Seaward felt that an in-depth study was needed on

the Narrows. It would need coordinating with the interested parties. Dr Whittaker agreed to approach Dr Farnham in the first instance to see whether he would undertake the diving. It was hoped the survey could be carried out during the weekend of the 26th/27th June to coincide with the date of the next Study Group meeting.

The date of the next meeting was fixed for Friday, 25th June 1982, at the Dorset Institute of Higher Education, Weymouth.

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The next meeting of the Fleet Study Group will be on FRIDAY, 25th JUNE 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.
4. Any other business.