

Fordingbridge
Conservation Group

also known as

THE FRIENDS OF BISHOP'S POND



www.bishopspond.uk

WHERE IS BISHOP'S POND?

Bishop's Pond lies to the east side of Normandy Way in Fordingbridge and is approached through a gate in the hedge in Cottage Mews beside the three houses (12, 14 and 15) that face it. To preserve the privacy of the residents, please do not use the path in front of the houses.



The area outlined in red shows the full extent of the Bishop's Pond reserve. The Pond itself is in the wider southern area with a woodland extension to the north towards Oaklands Close.

Since this aerial view was taken, some of the tree cover has been reduced in the interest of health & safety.

We regret that due to health and safety factors the Pond is only accessible when we have a working party on site. These are held three times a month and visitors are always welcome to drop in to find out about the Pond and our work in supporting and enhancing its wildlife. Working Party dates are published on our web-site and on notice boards by the Pond and in Fordingbridge.

WHAT IS BISHOP'S POND?

Bishop's Pond is a small area of the old Parsonage Park estate that was left when the estate was sold for development in the 1980s. For many years it had been a farm pond and some local residents can remember duck shooting there in the 1960s.

However, the Pond has a much longer history. Its story can be traced back into the 12th century to its beginning as a medieval fish pond linked to the neighbouring Woodfidley Manor, the remnants of which are still preserved within the ancient moat in the next door property. The 1840 tithe map shows that Bishop's Pond was at that time one of two fish ponds but it is not clear when the other disappeared.



The arms of Richard de Clare
in Westminster Abbey



Ralph, Lord Stafford

Over time, the Manor passed through the possession of a series of powerful owners, including Richard de Clare, Ralph Lord Stafford and Henry Duke of Buckingham who in 1446 passed the advowsom of the Manor of Woodfidley to King Henry VI who almost immediately gave it to the forerunner of Kings College, Cambridge. In its earlist days the Pond would have fed the lay rectors charged with caring for the Parish Church of St. Mary, Fordingbridge, but the College rented the manor out to a succession of farmers who enjoyed the same benefits as the former lay rectors. Eventually, it became just a farm pond.

In the late 1980s the developers gave it to the District Council who passed its management to the Town Council. A Friends Group was formed then which did a lot of splendid work, including installing a dipping platform, but did not survive. In 2009 a fresh attempt was made to provide care for the Pond with the formation of Fordingbridge Conservation Volunteer Action Group which has now (2018) adopted the name **'Friends of Bishop's Pond'** to make clearer what we are about.



Henry, Duke of
Buckingham



Kings College, Cambridge
as it was in the 1660s

Today, Bishop's Pond dries out from about the end of April to the end of October. In recent years this drying-out has become an increasing feature, to such an extent that it seems we should now consider the Pond 'a *winterbourne*'. While in many ways this is disappointing it results from the Pond being groundwater fed with a dropping water table. It does, however, mean that we need to appreciate the range of creatures that live in it during the winter months (of which more later), and must also focus to a greater degree on enhancing the surrounding landscape to increase its benefit for insects and other wildlife. The Pond is a small reserve, a green lung in the middle of Fordingbridge's increasingly developed environment and needs to be cherished.

Our current programme involves three aspects of work

Maintenance

The grounds have to be maintained, so much of our work is rather like gardening and has to be repeated year on year if the site is not to become just a wilderness.



Enrichment

For many years we have been introducing plants to enhance the environment offered by the site, one of our earliest being the Wood Anemone. We now have an increasing colony of these early spring flowers.



Research

With both local and wider expertise – usually freely given – we seek to add to our knowledge of the Pond.

Our species list is constantly growing.



MAINTENANCE

When we accepted responsibility for the Pond in 2009, the site was choked with cut branches following a major felling of the alders that had surrounded the pond. Leaving these had allowed brambles to weave a huge cat's cradle. It took us several weeks to cut our way in. In the years that have followed, we have concentrated on trying to maintain a pond while also keeping the surrounding landscape free of the more dominating plants.

Regrettably, it has now become clear that the pond has adopted the nature of a 'winterbourne'. In consequence, we have had to rethink how it can be managed. The most recent ecological survey shows that it does have 37 resident species throughout the winter period, a number of which are well equipped to deal with the summer droughts. This indicates also that it should not be under-rated just because it dries out in the summer months. There are some interesting species in that list of 37.



Climate emergency is also affecting our approach to the management of the landscape areas. We have a number of ancient ash trees, some shown on maps from the 1800s. These are not all in good condition and we are aware that ash die-back disease is not far away. Their loss will dramatically alter the nature of the site, so we have been planting young ash and oak saplings, though well aware that it will be decades before they can begin to compensate for the loss of these major trees.

A lot of our work is rather like gardening. Footpaths have to be kept clear. Brambles and nettles need to be kept under control. Huge numbers of sycamore seedlings have to be pulled out of the woodland area every year, and a similar clearance of willow seedlings made through the pond to prevent it becoming woodland. These are just some of the tasks that we tackle year on year.

ENRICHMENT

We have divided the site into seven areas for management and enrichment purposes. In 2019 we cleared a south-facing bank in order to create a wildflower enriched area to benefit insects.

The decline of our native insect populations is worrying and a site such as Bishop's Pond needs to be managed to help to offset this to the greatest extent we can.

As part of our ongoing work to this end we have planted wood anemones, wild daffodils, snowdrops, pulmonaria, water figwort, both red and white comfrey, bog bean, teasels, yellow loosestrife, buddleia, hemp agrimony, primrose, honeysuckle, great mullein, foxgloves, white dead-nettle, common and red valerian, purple loosestrife, and yellow archangel.





The hedgerows were created when Bishop's Pond was first set aside as a designated site nearly 30 years ago. Now old, they need attention and some sections need replacing. We have been given 100 saplings from the 'I Dig Trees' organization through The Conservation Volunteers nationally and as quickly as we can (largely dependent on how many volunteers we have) we will begin to take out the defective sections, not least those over-run by brambles, and replant them with our saplings.

We have sunk five cisterns into the pond in order to give us some standing water all through the year. Carefully provided with escape routes in case any of our slow worms or hedgehogs, etc. get into them, we want to try to provide for as wide a diversity of wildlife as possible.

To assist this, early on we put up nest boxes and a bat box. We have established log piles and twiggery stacks both of which provide excellent cover for invertebrates and a foundation for fungi. And we are constantly looking for additional ways in which we can add to our policy of enriching the natural environment of the site.



RESEARCH

We have been greatly helped by the willingness of professional friends to assist us with first class research into the origins and current situation of the Pond. To date, we have had the benefit of

- A General Environmental Survey (mainly botanical) undertaken by Ian Ralphs of the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre in 2009.
- A Mycological Survey undertaken by Alan Hart and Sue Rogerson of the Hampshire Fungi Group in 2009.
- An Archaeological Survey done by Michael J. Allen of Allen Environmental Archaeology in 2014.
- An Entomological Survey undertaken by Paul Brock, Scientific Associate of the Natural History Museum, London in 2015 and author of the acclaimed *Insects of the New Forest (2011)* and *Insects of Britain and Ireland (2014)*.
- A Hydrological Survey undertaken by Mr Andrew Lawton from 2016 onwards.
- A Great Crested Newt Survey undertaken by Lindsay Carrington Ecological Services using DNA water-sampling methodology which took in all other newt species in 2017.
- A Freshwater Invertebrates Survey undertaken by Mr Robert Aquilina MCIEEM of Aquilina Environmental based in Christchurch during the winters of 2017 and 2018 which revealed what a valuable winter habitat the Pond is.

We have also been assisted by discussions with Dr Naomi Ewald Director of Policy and Research for the Freshwater Habitats Trust who has given us helpful guidance about dealing with the problems presented by ponds such as Bishop's Pond.

We continue to monitor the site, constantly adding to the species list. As we can obtain them, we would like to add bat, moth, and botanical surveys to fill in some of the areas we know should be better represented in the species list. What we do know already, is that Bishop's Pond needs to be preserved. It may be small but it holds considerable environmental value which, of course, was why it was awarded SINC (Site of Interest for Nature Conservation) status by Hampshire County Council in 2011.

WHO ARE THE FRIENDS OF BISHOP'S POND?

The Friends of Bishop's Pond is a volunteer group comprising activists who work on site and others who support the aims of the group.

The Friends elect a Management Team.
Currently the Management Team comprises

Mrs Susan Bennett
Mr Ian Ruddock
Dr Richard White

The Management Team meets two or three times a year and its members act as de-facto trustees for the group, overseeing finance and membership, publicity, and health and safety.

It also sets the site working schedule which is normally three two-hour sessions a month, varied according to season. We aim to be sensitive and recognize that if we have had heavy rains and severe frosts or snow we can do more harm than good by being on site. When this happens we try to get word out in good time to cancel a working party.

Details of our Working Parties are published on our web-site (www.bishopspond.uk) and in notices on noticeboards at the entrance to Cottage Mews in Normandy Way, by the entrance gate and in Fordingbridge town centre. Further information can be found on our website. Information is also shared on social media (at present including WhatsApp and Facebook).

HOW CAN I BECOME A FRIEND OF BISHOP'S POND?

You can contact us in several ways:

- by our email address **info@bishopspond.uk**
- by text message to 07751 937060
- by message from our Facebook page (Friends of Bishop's Pond)
- or fill in your contact details on one of our Membership Lists if we are attending a local event

However, why not visit us when we are on site for an introduction to the team and also to the site itself? We are always happy to give enquirers a walking tour of the site (we do this anyway at the start of each meeting) and to describe what we are trying to achieve.

If you can handle a pair of secateurs, we can find something for you to do on site. But, if you have other skills that could benefit the Friends, or would like simply to be associated with the work we are doing, do let us know. We need all the support and help that we can get and, even if you can only offer one session a month, it can help to make a lot of difference to how effective we can be. So please don't hold back if you think that you would like to become a **Friend of Bishop's Pond**.

CONTACT US

Email: info@bishopspond.uk

Website www.bishopspond.uk

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Text message: 07751 937060

