

Hampshire Water Festival 2009 Report



This year's festival was held on Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th July at Staunton Country Park, Havant. It offered the usual mixture of exhibitors for adults and children: plants, smoothies, bacon sandwiches, face painting, pond dipping, chilli jam, fudge, bread, venison and much more. Staunton Park is popular with families anyway & the Water Festival brought in huge crowds estimated at 17,000 over the two days.

The Hampshire Mills Group's stand was in the marquee which was very hot until we undid the side curtains. We took the display boards with added photographs of Havant & Emsworth mills, kindly provided by Tony Yoward, our information leaflet to encourage more people to join the HMG, books about mills & milling to sell and flour. We were so successful on the first day that we ran out of Longbridge stone ground flour, but in the afternoon Dave Plunkett brought stone ground flour and biscuits made from Eling flour to sell. And before opening on Sunday a shuttle service of Basil, Gavin & John Silman got 13 more bags of flour from Longbridge to the Festival site!

Your Treasurer went to the opening speeches on behalf of HMG. We began with a welcome by Graham Roberts of the Hampshire & IoW Wildlife Trust, Jackie Branson, the Mayor of Havant, Roy Perry, the Deputy leader of HCC, Stuart Roberts, the Chair of the Hampshire Water Partnership and others.

A representative from Portsmouth Water then reported that they are conscious that too much water is being removed from Hampshire's rivers each year and is proposing a new winter storage reservoir at Havant Thicket. They estimate that there will be about 15% less rain per annum by 2040 so urgently need to create new reservoirs. Following local consultation this will include recreational facilities including wildlife habitats, cycle paths, picnic & play areas.

The next speaker Martin Burton, chair of the Hampshire Water Partnership, reported the findings of a research group based at Southampton University. Hampshire is unusual in drawing all its water from its own chalk rivers (there are only 200 chalk rivers in the world and we have 8 of them), and 70% of this is ground water (i.e. from rainfall which will mainly fall in the winter). The models in the report calculate that by 2080 the water table will be 4 to 5 metres lower and that in summer the Itchen, for example, will start 5 kilometres from its present source. Towns like Basingstoke will therefore find themselves what the experts call 'water stressed' unless we use less water and put as much as possible of what we use back into the rivers.

HMG will continue to support the Hampshire Water Partnership and hope to be back at Staunton Park next year. It was a very successful weekend and we are all grateful to John Christmas, Carol O'Shaughnessy, Tony Yoward, Andy Fish, Mick Edgeworth, Gavin Bowie, Basil Hunt, Dave Plunkett, John & Margaret Silman who worked so hard representing HMG on our stand.

Eleanor Yates

Photos By Tony Yoward

