

Bembridge and St Helens Harbour Association



APPRAISAL OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF BEMBRIDGE HARBOUR

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PART 7 HARBOUR USAGE

This version DOES NOT contain maps, illustrations and some tables from the 1995 edition.

Please be aware that the report describes the situation in 1994/5, and has not yet been updated. This pdf publication is intended to form the basis of a re-appraisal project.

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7 HARBOUR USAGE

7.1 SUMMARY AND AIMS

7.1.1 SUMMARY

The growth and decline of the original uses of the Harbour are briefly described. The current usage is considered and described under four headings:

- commercial
- leisure
- residential
- educational

Conclusions are drawn as to the necessity for proper maintenance of the Harbour and the need to keep a balance between the demands of the three major uses of the Harbour -- commercial, leisure and residential.

7.1.2 AIMS

To outline the various ways in which the harbour is used; to identify businesses, homes and leisure facilities; to identify areas for further research.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

Construction of the embankment which formed Bembridge Harbour in the north of Brading Haven had two original purposes: to provide a branch railway line linking Bembridge and the remainder of the Island and, at the same time, to provide a commercial port for general transport to the eastern end of the Island.

With access to all parts of the Island by rail, and close proximity to Portsmouth by sea, the harbour was particularly suited to the importation of heavy goods, particularly coal for which special facilities were provided. A gas works with gasometers was built adjacent to North Quay, St Helens, and this was fed by its own narrow gauge railway.

Commercial use grew through the end of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries with the quays being rebuilt in 1932. However, commercial traffic declined later in the 1930s, partly due to improvements made to Medina Wharf in Newport.

Soon after the completion recreational activities in and around the Harbour developed. Foremost were sailing and golf.

Over the years the Harbour and its use has changed. Today, commercial goods traffic has disappeared and commercial activities are mainly represented by fishing boats and various marine industrial activities around the Harbour's boundaries. However, the Harbour remains essentially a working Harbour providing a base for inshore fishing boats at the eastern end of the Island, moorings for large numbers of pleasure craft -- both resident and visiting; facilities for maintenance and repair of all types of small craft and, not least, employment resulting from all these activities.

The original owner of the Harbour was Brading Harbour Improvements and Railway Company. It later came under the ownership of Southern Railway and subsequently British Rail. British Rail sold the Harbour Company to Bembridge Harbour Improvements Company (BHIC) in 1963, and BHIC was taken over by Zanen Dredging in 1981. Zanen Dredging did much to improve the usability and general state of the Harbour.

The present owner is Belize Investments SA as holders of the equity of BHIC. Although BHIC owns the freehold of the Harbour, control over much of the surrounding area has passed to a variety of industries, companies and organisations through leases and licences varying from 1 to 999 years.

In the following subsections reference is made to Maps 7:1 to 7:3 showing the locations of commercial, leisure and residential usage in and around the Harbour. Numbers and letters given in the text refer to the location of particular sites in the relevant maps. In each map the numbering sequence proceeds from the Duver, St Helens round towards Bembridge Point.

7.3 COMMERCIAL USAGE (Map 7:1)

Map 7:1 Commercial/ Industrial Activities about Bembridge Harbour.

Sketch map locating commercial/ industrial activities about Bembridge Harbour. Letters and numbers relate to 7.3 of the text

7.3.1 BOATYARDS AND LIGHT INDUSTRY

Not only has the usage of the Harbour shifted since the end of World War II, but the type of industry has changed also. Most wooden hulls have been replaced by fibreglass. Inboard motors have become outboard and new shapes have appeared: catamarans, trimarans and hovercraft. The old well-known names have gone: Woodnutts and Wades have been replaced by Attrill and Coombes, and the automobile has become important in the industry of the Harbour. Today many small businesses give technological and service support to harbour users and the large boatyards. If you need something of a marine nature you can probably find it around Bembridge Harbour.

The marine/ light industry is, with few exceptions, concentrated in three areas in the Harbour, i.e. at the south end of St Helens Duver (Map 7:1 area 1), along the Embankment between Fisherman's Wharf and the Corner (Map 7:1 area 2) and northward along the Embankment Road to Bembridge Sailing Club (Map 7:1 area 3).

7.3.1.1 Businesses at St Helens Duver (area 1)

Attrill & Sons Boatyard

The most eastward business on the Duver is Attrill & Sons Boatyard. The Attrills are an old St Helens family. In 1947 two of the brothers started a boatyard in a Nissen hut next to Woodnutts yard. Mike Attrill worked in Woodnutts Yard during the War while his brother, Gordon, was in the Navy. Today Attrills has large sheds and can store, repair and maintain about 100 boats. They employ about 5 people. Peak times for a boatyard are spring, when they are fitting out boats ready for the season and autumn, when the boats are laid up for the winter. Summer is spent mostly with small repairs and maintenance whilst during the winter they maintain, refurbish and repair the boats in their care.

Attrills have a mooring area (P) in the Harbour on the south side of the channel to the east of Fisherman's Wharf.

Mike Attrill's father was at one time a fisherman, yacht hand and ferryman -- using a rowing boat. Attrills built the last motorised ferry boat after the war, and operated a summer ferry service until 1993.

Hovertravel

To the west of Attrills is Hovertravel. In 1974 Hovertravel (founded in 1965) took over a part of Woodnutts Yard which had been closed down since the 1960s and used the larger sheds to repair and maintain their SRN6 hovercraft and modify and instrument the Hovercraft used in oil seismographic searches.

In 1981 the old sheds, by now quite dilapidated, were replaced by the two prominent hangers seen today. In these new hangars the revolutionary AP-188 hovercraft were constructed on hulls supplied by Fairey Allday Marine. These craft are used on the Ryde-Southsea run and they cost close to £1 million each to build. At present 17 Hovertravel staff are employed at the Duver Works (Robertson 1994a).

C D Dyer, Boatbuilder

On the other side of Hovertravel is C D Dyer, Boatbuilder, using one of the old Woodnutt sheds. There are three people working self-employed, mostly doing repairs and mostly in wood. In November 1994 there were 10 Bembridge Sailing Club 'One Design' club boats laid up.

Advanced Boat Construction Ltd

To the west of C D Dyer is Advanced Boat Construction Ltd, founded by Michael Souter, son of Wilf Souter of 'Souters' the internationally known Cowes-based boatyard, and named Advance Boat Construction when Alistair Hunt, a yacht designer, joined Michael Souter. They act as designers/ consultants for marine projects and are

currently involved with developing a catamaran-type vessel for use in the North Sea oilfields.

Duver Boatyard

Also beyond C D Dyer is Duver Boatyard, occupying more of the former Woodnutt sheds. The number working here varies and some are self-employed. Duver Boatyard has a mooring area directly in front of its sheds (S).

Ken Stratton Boatyard

At the foot of Mill Road on the end of the mill dam is Ken Stratton Boatyard (K) started in 1947. Mr Stratton is now semi-retired but he still undertakes some boat repairs and a little lobster fishing. The building itself is on the site of the Tidal Mill corn store. Part of the east facing wall is from that old building. He has a pontoon and mooring (T) in front of the site and a diesel fuel pump to supply the fishermen.

7.3.1.2 Businesses on Embankment Road up to the Corner (area 2)

Bembridge Outboards

Arthur Robinson started Bembridge Outboards in small premises in Kings Road in 1968. In 1973 he moved to the present building, the former Chamans Boatyard. The business sells, services and repairs outboard motors (from 2.5 to 275 hp) and boats for the increasing number of motor boat enthusiasts in the Harbour. There are 4 full-time workers and this number rises to 7 during peak periods. Bembridge Outboards has moorings in an area just across the road from the workshop. The yard has a capacity for the storage of up to 90 boats.

Bembridge Harbour Garage

Next is Bembridge Harbour Garage which is mostly automotive in character. There are two partners and about 5 people in total working here. At one time this site was used for laying up Blue Funnel cruise boats.

Nelson Engineering

The last in this group is Nelson Engineering (formerly Harbour Engineering). This firm specialises in machining and welding and is a very useful support to the nearby boatyards. There are about 5 workers. This site was once used by Walter Wade as a marine engineering works, and from 1949 to 1954 by Geoff Wade as G E Wade Marine Engineers. The name Harbour Engineering was first used in 1960.

7.3.1.3 Businesses btw The Corner and Bembridge Sailing Club (area 3)

The third area contains a variety of skills and crafts.

Bembridge Boatyard

This site, formerly Wade's Boatyard, has been owned by Mr P Norris since 1986. We have no further information about this site.

Critical Section

In the Bembridge Boatyard sheds is a small (2 man) business, Critical Section, which specialises in making surfboards.

Bembridge Motor Services

Next to Bembridge Boatyard is Bembridge Motor Services (BMS) which has been on this site since 1979. Previous firms on this site have been Harbour Engineering and Bembridge Motor Marine Sales from 1976 to 1979. There are 5 employees working here at the moment. There are plans for growth, one of which is the rental and sale of personal water craft (PWC) which are becoming very popular for people who want the combination of speed and manoeuvrability of a motorbike on water. BMS continues to sell and repair motorcycles on the premises as their main operation.

The next building consists of a number of light industrial units which are for sale or rent. Two of those are occupied by:

Mainly Marine Ltd

Mainly Marine has been in business on this site since May 1994. Mr Marr, the proprietor, deals in outboards,

inflatable boats, fishing gear and general chandlery.

P & M Motor Marine

P & M Motor Marine has been in business on this site for four years and is mostly automotive. They are the only people to have been trading on this site since the units were built. All people working here are self-employed.

A A Coombes

Beyond is A A Coombes. At about the time the Attrill Brothers began on the Duver, Alan Coombes and Peter Scott started boat building in one half of a shed formerly used by Walter Wade. From there they moved to Bembridge Boatyard and then to the present site where the yard and sheds were built upon reclaimed land. In 1985 Alan Coombes retired and Bill Mitchell took over. Since its foundation the firm has built 200 scows for BHYC and others. The hull shape is now being produced in fibreglass from a mould taken from one of the earlier wooden boats. The yard stores up to 150 boats, from 6' to 41', not only from Bembridge but from Cowes, Seaview and the mainland. From the mainland has come for winter storage a wooden day boat (X Class) built to a Westmacott design. Unfortunately, it is not from Woodnutts (Leather 1994). A A Coombes has a fairly large irregular mooring area (V) south of the channel between Attrill's moorings and Bembridge Sailing Club. The firm employs 4 people.

Spinnaker Chandlery

Next to A A Coombes is Spinnaker Chandlery. The firm has been on this site since 1986, having moved from other sites in 1951, 1956 and 1971. Previous uses of the site have included an engineer's shop, a fish department and a squash court. There are two full time staff all the year round with part time assistance in the season, bringing the number of employees to around eight at most

Paul Newell, Sailmaker

Across Embankment Road in one of the Redwing stores is Paul Newell, Sailmaker (K), offering a much needed service to the sailing community. Mr Newell has been on this site for over 7 years. The store previously housed a Redwing sailing boat and the stores on either side of Mr Newell are still used for this purpose. Mr Newell has four employees at present. He does have plans for growth as resources allow, although not on this site. He will retain the building as it is.

Bembridge Harbour Improvements Company Limited.

The offices of BHIC are in the building directly opposite Bembridge Sailing Club. Half of the building is used by BSC for boat storage and maintenance. The Harbour Master and General Manager of BHIC is Capt. Graham Hall, who succeeded Michael Coombes who retired in 1992. Other members of BHIC staff include a Secretary, Assistant Harbour Master and Berthing Master.

7.3.2 FISHING

There are some 60 registered fishing boats working from the Harbour. Approximately 25 boats are worked full-time employing 35 fishermen. The remainder are worked part-time by up to a further 70 fishermen.

Areas fished extend from Cowes around to Ventnor. The most important catches are crab and lobster, prawns, grey mullet, bass and flat fish. Most boats either tie up at **Fisherman's Wharf** (4) or moor near Ken Stratton.

The investment in fishing boats varies widely. A small, old, one-person boat used for occasional fishing could represent an investment of less than £2,500, while one of the new well-maintained larger boats may be reckoned as worth over £50,000 including electronics and gear.

Captain Stan

Also on Fisherman's Wharf is Captain Stan, a fresh fish retail/ wholesale merchant who buys much of the catch brought to the Wharf. Live fish and crustaceans are kept in a large open bottomed vessel. At times of high river flow this catch must be taken to a tank in Portsmouth because of the low salinity of the water in the Harbour. A high proportion of crustaceans are exported to Spain.

7.3.3 MINERAL EXTRACTION

Before the Second World War shingle was dredged from the outer channel for use as railway ballast. Today, when the outer channel is dredged, the shingle is most likely to be sent over to Portsmouth to be used in building

motorways.

Sand has been taken from Bembridge Point at least since the enclosure of the Harbour. Barges delivering coal to St Helens Quay would load up with sand at The Point for the return journey. Today, sand and shingle are extracted and screened at The Point by the local firm of H J Bennett.

7.4 LEISURE USAGE (Map 7:2)

7.4.1 MARINE RECREATION

Approximately 400 leisure sailing and motor boats are moored in the Harbour. The majority are on drying-out berths but there are a limited number of deep water berths. Because of the continued service, support and winter storage capacity of the local boatyards, generations of mainland families keep coming back to enjoy sailing from Bembridge Harbour. During the summer fishing trips are available from boats operating from the Harbour.

Map 7:2 Leisure Facilities around Bembridge Harbour. Sketch map indicating the location of leisure facilities about Bembridge harbour. Letters and numbers relate to 7.4 of the text

Bembridge Angling Club (5)

With a steadily increasing membership of about 200, BAC has premises on North Quay. The Club holds 10 boat competitions annually, all outside the Harbour with no limit to area for fishing, often extending well beyond the Nab and St Catherine's Point.

Bembridge Angling Club prides itself on its conservation priorities:

Each competitive event is classed as a Specimen Competition in which only one fish of any species caught is allowed to be brought to the scales by any one club member.

Club rules stipulate minimum sizes of fish eligible for weighing-in which are larger than those required by the National Federation of Sea Anglers or the Southern Sea Fisheries Board.

Club activity has a minimal effect on local bait digging because worms are not regarded as a good sea bait, the preference being for fish baits (mackerel particularly) squid, etc. and commercial lures. The club regards excess bait digging as positively harmful.

The Junior Section, with an increasing membership, ensures a high standard of training for young anglers.

Bembridge Marina (6)

The Marina at the Yar bridge was built in 1980 by the Bembridge Harbour Improvements Company. It consists of seven pontoons with the inner four leased to 41 permanent holders while the outer and larger two and North Quay are used for visitors, but rafting or berthing alongside, it can accommodate up to a further 60 boats.

The size of vessels berthed at the pontoons varies from about 22' to 41'. Visitors to the Harbour are not only from Britain but from France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and some as far away as Spain. Visitors to the Harbour either take moorings, anchor on Point Beach or berth at the Marina. In 1994 there was a total of 5,900 boat-nights of visitors to the Harbour of which 3,800 were accommodated in the Marina.

Brading Haven Yacht Club (7)

Founded in 1950 the Club now has 1,250 members. The Clubhouse, recently enlarged and refurbished, is adjacent to the Marina and provides facilities both to members and visiting yachtsmen.

A full programme of events is offered throughout the year and a wide variety of boats are raced, including Mirrors, Scows, Toppers and Wayfarers. Cadets have their own separate events, besides taking part in the regular racing programme. A cruising section holds weekend and mid-week cruises through the season while the motor boat section runs cruises for motor boats. The Club moorings are in an area south of the channel and between the Club pontoon and Fisherman's Wharf.

Redwing Quay (8)

The Redwing class day boats were founded in 1896. The class has always allowed considerable leeway in design and boats have evolved over the years, keeping only the distinctive red sails. The Redwings have 24 distinctive green-painted stores, a Redwing quay with a crane, and a narrow mooring area between the Quay and Coombes' moorings. The green stores may look attractive viewed from the Harbour, but obstruct the view of the Harbour from Embankment Road.

Bembridge Sailing Club (9)

Bembridge Sailing Club (BSC), founded in 1886, has been in existence almost since the Harbour was enclosed. Although many of its early members had large yachts, the emphasis in the Club from the beginning was the sailing and racing of day boats, of which the Redwings are probably the most well known. The Bembridge One Design Association has sailed from the Club since the Club's formation. There are a number of other flourishing classes associated with the Club, in particular the Illusion class (mini 12 metre yachts) which races in the Harbour throughout the year. The Club has moorings between the Point and Coombes' moorings.

7.4.2 BEACHES

One of the things that attracts visiting boating families to the Harbour, besides reasonable mooring fees, is the nearby (hopefully clean) beaches.

Duver Beach (10)

The Duver Beach is probably the best known. The beach, promenade and associated buildings are owned by the Medina Borough Council which is responsible for the upkeep and repair of the beach groynes, the promenade and the 40 railway carriage beach huts which were set up in the late 1920s.

Most of the beach groynes have recently been repaired, although some people think they are inadequate to hold the sand. Most years the beach is awarded an EC Blue Flag. The great threat to the wellbeing of this beach is the wanton digging of holes by visiting bait diggers who leave the area looking like a small battle ground. It is hoped that this will cease if deep sand once more covers the beach.

Silver Beach (11)

The Silver Beach on the Solent side of Bembridge Point is an extension of the long beach from the Lifeboat Station. Here the currents turn towards the north and deposit sand in a large bank which is exposed at low tide. The beach itself is backed by low dunes. The only problem with the area is an occasional plague of motorcycles or four wheel drive vehicles speeding about. Sailboarding and jet-skiing are increasing in popularity off this beach.

Point Beach (12)

The beach on the Harbour side also serves as an anchorage for twin-keeled yachts. This is where the Bembridge Regatta and its shore activities take place every summer. This beach is on the lee shore of the prevailing wind and is liable sometimes to collect Harbour flotsam and jetsam.

7.4.3 WALKING

Probably the largest number of users of the area bordering the harbour are walkers and birdwatchers. Although the apparent impact of these people is small, both the effect of human activity on the SSSIs and the financial benefit to local businesses should be considered. Organised walks are held by the Ramblers Association, CMS, RSPB and IWNHAS among others.

7.4.4 CATERING

On the Duver Promenade is the **Bay Watch Cafe (A)** run by Mr and Mrs Boynton. This is leased from Medina Borough Council. It can seat 45 inside and in summer up to 50 outside. It is open in the evening every day in summer and at weekends in winter.

On the Bembridge side near the Bembridge Sailing Club is the **Toll Gate Cafe (B)** run by Mr Nutt. The cafe can seat about 40 people in winter and an additional 40 outside on the terrace in summer. It is open every day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The **Silver Beach Cafe (C)** was only open in the summer. It is currently used as a boat store and is unlikely to

re-open as a cafe.

In 1980 there were four pubs situated about the Harbour: in Bembridge the **Row Barge Inn** (formerly Marine Hotel) in Station Road (D), the **Pilot Boat Inn** at the corner of Station Road and Kings Road, the **Smugglers' Barn** attached to the Royal Spithead Hotel; and in St Helens, at the foot of the Duver, **Attrill's Ferryboat Inn** with its admirable adjunct of a ferry (run by Attrills) between Bembridge Point and the pub. Three are now closed -- the Ferryboat Inn (and in 1993 the ferry itself), Smugglers' Barn (demolished with the Royal Spithead Hotel), and Pilot Boat Inn (derelict after a fire) leaving the Row Barge Inn, possibly the oldest, still in operation. The present landlord is Chris Wallace and the pub, besides offering drinks has a considerable menu of food. Regular pub hours are kept. The two sailing clubs have facilities for members, and both also cater for outside functions.

With the demise of the Royal Spithead Hotel the availability of accommodation in the Harbour area shrank considerably. Ignoring summer rentals, there is the Row Barge Inn (D) and the houseboat **Xoron** (E), both open all year round, with the **Old Mill Caravan Park** (F) offering summer accommodation.

7.5 RESIDENTIAL USAGE (Map 7:3)

There are two main residential areas adjacent to the Harbour -- on the old North and South Quays adjacent to the Yar Sluices and St Helens (16) and on Embankment Road opposite Bembridge Sailing Club (18). But there are additional present and possible future sites extending around the Harbour perimeter.

Map 7:3 Housing and Residential Areas around Bembridge Harbour

Sketch map indicating residential areas about Bembridge Harbour. Letters and numbers relate to 7.5 of the text

Homes around the Duver

Starting at the north end of the Duver (13) there are three substantial Victorian houses which are single dwellings. At the south end of the Duver (14) there are two fine houses adjacent to Attrills boatyard. Beyond Hovertravel is Woodnutt's Cottage. On the western end of the Duver part of the last old boat shed is being used as a residence.

Homes near the Mill Pond (15)

Carrying on around the Mill Pond on the St Helens side, at about half-way there is a substantial bungalow (Olivers) situated well back from the Pond. As one nears the end of the Mill Pond there is a group of houses around the small inlet at the bottom of Mill Road. This inlet is a quaint but malodorous opening to the Harbour. On Mill Road are two substantial Victorian (or older) houses of some charm and character. The house on the Mill Pond side has been built from the remains of the old Tidal Mill and is an example of what the exteriors of residences should be like to fit into the character of the area. Unfortunately, this guide has not been followed elsewhere.

Homes on the quays (16)

This is part of the urbanised area of lower Latimer Road. On the North Quay, Selwyn Court (18 flats) is followed by North Quay (3 terrace houses) and then Yar Quay (21 flats) and, across the Yar, South Quay (14 terrace houses in 3 blocks). The land on the two quays was sold by BHIC/ Yarland Properties and was developed in the 1970s and 1980s with buildings in functional styles which were popular at the time, but do not enhance the landscape.

Houseboats (17)

The next area does not lack character. Houseboats have been part of Bembridge Harbour since before World War Two, although they were originally for summer use only. At present there are 19 houseboats on a variety of hulls and measuring from under 30 to over 100 feet in length. These include, so far as can be discerned: 1 Dutch Barge with mast, 1 small motor launch, 10 World War Two Landing Craft (1 large), 3 Motor Patrol Boats, 1 Torpedo Boat, 1 large sailing boat, 1 steel float and 1 largish diesel Yacht.

The condition of the houseboats varies widely from immaculate and flower-covered to abject neglect. Part of the reason for neglect is the fact that none are at present on leased sites, this lack of lease being a disincentive to improvement. The Harbour Company, in an exchange of letters, said **houseboats would be limited to a maximum of 17**. Additional houseboats in the Bembridge Boatyard area were put there prior to the lease being recovered by

BHIC. Further on, Pilot House, which is part of Bembridge Boatyard, is used as a residence.

Harbour Strand and Station Road (18)

The next area is again a crowded, almost urbanised area. On Embankment Road is Harbour Strand, the first development on the old railway station site. It comprises 17 terraced houses in three blocks. Once again, the exterior design can only be considered unfortunate.

Station road

Behind these, on Station Road, are a group of buildings of character and contrast, many of which were there well before the Harbour enclosure. Some have structures or foundations dating back to the 17th century. Beyond these to the south are a group of Victorian cottages originally built for railway personnel.

Development sites

Adjacent to this last area are two sites (G and H) which have been designated for residential development. Both present problems.

North of Embankment Road is the site of the former Royal Spithead Hotel (G) for which, at the time of writing, there is planning permission (on appeal to the Department of the Environment) for 27 flats. Whether it is financially wise to try to build such a block on this geologically difficult and aesthetically sensitive site is questioned by some. In addition, there is a growing feeling in the community that the site should be kept vacant to become a park. At present property prices this would be difficult.

During the last building boom developers put forward ambitious plans for inappropriate residential developments in areas outside the village envelope on the Duver, Bembridge Point and at Houseboat corner. These were all refused planning permission. Limited planning permission only was given in response to the 1989 application (see History Section).

7.6 EDUCATIONAL USAGE

Currently the educational potential of the Harbour is under-developed. With regard to educational visits, it has been utilised mainly by local schools, the Primary and Middle Schools, Bembridge School and Upper Chine School. Forelands Middle School, for example, has for some years conducted an annual environmental study of the Yar and its estuary culminating in Bembridge Harbour. The librarian at Bembridge has reported frequent enquiries from sixth formers undertaking projects on Bembridge Harbour. As the scope of subject areas of the present Rural Action Project indicates, there is much worthwhile investigation to be undertaken.

The Harbour Company's major concern is with the commercial, marine-related aspects of running the Harbour. Currently, unlike Newtown Harbour, the study, parking and toilet facilities are insufficient to cater for educational visits from mainland schools. Local schools have their own facilities close at hand and exhibitions of project work undertaken are regularly displayed in their schools. Some use of the Harbour has been made, with permission, by Institutes of Higher Education, such as a Hydrographic survey conducted by students from Portsmouth Polytechnic. Most educational research has focused on the scientific interest of the geology, flora and fauna of Bembridge and St Helens Ledges.

One aspect of the educational use of the Harbour which is flourishing is the annual Cadets Week presented by the combined efforts of Bembridge Sailing Club and Brading Haven Yacht Club. This is a major investment of voluntary time and effort in providing sailing tuition for future generations of sailing enthusiasts. Demand for places in Cadet Week remains high and involves different generations in teaching and learning. The annual influx of families also benefits the local economy.

7.7 CONCLUSIONS

7.7.1 HARBOUR GROWTH

Bembridge Harbour was built as a commercial working Harbour. Over the years the nature of the commercial activities associated with the Harbour has changed but substantial leisure activities have developed. All these

activities provide employment and enjoyment for a large number of local people.

Viewed on a straightforward commercial basis the financial viability of the Harbour appears difficult to say the least. Sources of income are limited to mooring fees, leases and licences of which permanent berths in the Marina may well be the most important. Fees from visitors are limited mainly to the summer months and very much by capacity. If the Harbour is to continue to provide at least the present level of employment and leisure activities and, hopefully, to increase both, then it is obvious that increasing and/or new sources of income will be required.

At present it is estimated that there are approximately 100 people engaged in work, crafts and services directly dependent upon the Harbour. Even with a 25% increase at peak time this is well down on the heyday of the Harbour between the Wars when Woodnutts alone employed 100. But it is considerable, and most are either self-employed or engaged in a very small business. Many of those interviewed felt that with the upturn in the economy they could expect growth in their businesses and growth in activity in the Harbour. The magnitude and direction of that growth will depend to a large extent upon two factors:

physical maintenance of the Harbour, and

maintaining a balance between the many competing demands for space in the Harbour and surrounding land.

7.7.2 HARBOUR MAINTENANCE

The majority of those interviewed felt that if the Harbour were allowed to silt up more than the present level, the viability of their activities will be endangered.

Before the Second World War when the Harbour was owned by the Southern Railway, that company had many dredging obligations both because of the 1847 Harbour Act and for its own commercial commitments. A small steam-powered grab dredger was kept continually busy dredging channels, dredging shingle and clearing wharfage. With the earlier closure of the Tidal Mill, and the later closure of Woodnutts, and the running down of the ship-borne scrap, coal and sand businesses, the commitment narrowed to merely keeping the channel open.

Under the 1963 Bembridge Harbour Act the maintenance obligations are only to satisfy the River Board (now NRA) and the Minister of Transport (clause 42.2). For many years this was interpreted to mean keeping the *main* channel open. The building of the Marina and Fisherman's Wharf have increased the dredging needs.

The present owners are fulfilling their statutory obligations and since 1990 have undertaken a planned programme of maintenance, upgrading and dredging. Improvements have included repair of pontoons, removal of a wreck and obstructing piles from areas of the Harbour, and repair of the groyne at the Harbour mouth to reduce the speed of silting (BHIC 1994a). Further dredging is planned. At a present cost of £5 per cubic metre dredging is an expensive operation.

Under the 1963 Bembridge Harbour Act all surplus revenue must be used to maintain and improve the Harbour (clause 31). However, this direction applies to the Harbour limits as defined by the Brading Harbour and Railway Act of 1896 (see map) and not to the land about it which was sold to Yarland Properties, a separate entity which had no such legal obligations.

Section 23 of the Act of 1963 grants BHIC power to 'dredge and sell materials from within the Harbour and channels and approaches thereto' and this provides another possible source of income.

7.7.3 ENVIRONMENT BALANCE

Since the Harbour was enclosed the three usages, commercial, recreational and residential with the additional demands of environmental protection, have jostled each other and settled down to some sort of temporary equilibrium. In the post-war era the demands of recreation and residence have become paramount until just recently when environmental considerations have been brought to the fore.

Due to demographic changes common to most of the Island, at present and probably well into the future, residential pressure will be the most common factor upsetting any established balance. Any planning applications proposed for the Harbour need to take account of the *Isle of Wight Structure Plan 1988: Policy E4* which states:

'There will be a presumption against development which will contribute to a possible coalescence of the urban area separated by the strategic gap between [area number] 6 St Helens and Bembridge.'

In the recent Isle of Wight Structure Plan (1994) 'strategic gaps' are renamed 'green gaps' but the policy is maintained.

Any residential development proposed in already built-up areas would need to be sympathetically designed and

sited. Residential development close to present and proposed SSSIs could possibly injure their value and endanger their existence as could adjacent extensive commercial expansion or land filling.

new marinas/ berths

During the past two years Bembridge Harbour has increased the number of overnight moorings considerably: from 3,660 in 1993 to 4,000 in 1994 (Hall 1994). Additional marina berths with associated facilities could attract more yachtsmen and increase Harbour revenues. Expansion of the present Marina is restricted by location and prior long-term leases in the area. However, plans are in hand to build new BHIC offices and additional facilities when the current Yar bridge building operation is completed. More deep water berths outside the present Marina would be useful but BHIC is constrained by leases extending over large areas of the Harbour which make this difficult.

A new Marina near Houseboat Corner with additional facilities could be attractive, but care would be needed with regard to location and size. Consideration would also be needed to minimise the impact on bird feeding and winter sailing areas and to keep a proper balance between moorings and berths.

7.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 To establish the priorities of the different groups -- residents and visitors, commercial and leisure -- using the harbour.
- 2 To monitor and record the number, size and type of craft using the harbour, including seasonal variations.
- 3 To consider the value to the community of economic activity in and around the harbour.
- 4 To monitor any changes in the physical characteristics of the harbour that may affect harbour usage.
- 5 To monitor any changes in harbour usage that may affect the facilities of the harbour as a whole or the ecology of the surrounding habitats.

7.9 SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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