

Memories of Bosham's Sewerage System

Way back in 2006, a band of happy volunteers decided we wanted to understand how Bosham's sewage system worked and what, if anything, we could do to try and encourage Southern Water (SW) to improve the situation. Quite a lot was achieved as a result of our fun with the sewers. The main team on this project was Eric Hinkley, Sid Gerke, Peter Stern and myself. I have to say, right from the beginning, we found SW very helpful with our researches and also responsive to our requests, where they were realistic.

The diagram shows the main system as we discovered it originally, and it has changed little since then, except for manhole sealing work and improvements to the pumping stations. There are five pumping stations in south Bosham. Fluid is sometimes under pump pressure and sometimes simply runs under gravity.

To illustrate the complexity, I remember explaining to an owner of a property on the Eastern side of Delling Lane, near the Berkeley Arms, that when they pulled the plug, the fluid was directed to the pipe in Bosham Lane, thence westwards until it got to the Critchfield pumping station near the rear of Leat Cottage. From there it was pumped back up to Delling Lane until it got to the manhole in the middle of the road. At overload times it would jet out of the manhole in front of his property! From there onwards, if not under pressure, it would drift under gravity down Green Lane to the Stumps Lane station where (with luck) it would be pumped to the Harts Farm processing station.

Once when we were looking at the system on Shore Road, near Street End, Sid Gerke, who was the most amazing water diviner one could possibly meet, wobbled his sticks and said, "The sewage is flowing the wrong way—from the Town Hall station back up towards the Sailing Club", ie uphill. We laughed, but just out of interest opened a manhole and indeed the sewage was flowing towards the Sailing Club! Sea water had leaked into the system at high tide, the Town Hall pumping station couldn't cope, and its holding tank had filled up by about 1.5 metres, providing a head of pressure, which caused the phenomenon.

Waste from the Town Hall station gets pumped eastwards, and if you stand near the entrance to Harbour Drive you can often still hear the gurgling as the waste passes by on its way to the Stumps station (labelled 'Taylors Lane' on the map). Whenever there is a fault in the Stumps station or it gets overloaded, SW have permission to discharge into the creek. We used to report every incident, which was signalled by the toilets gurgling in Stumps End, but gave up when it became too regular. This remains a real worry, but can only be solved by massive investment and attention to planning details with new developments.

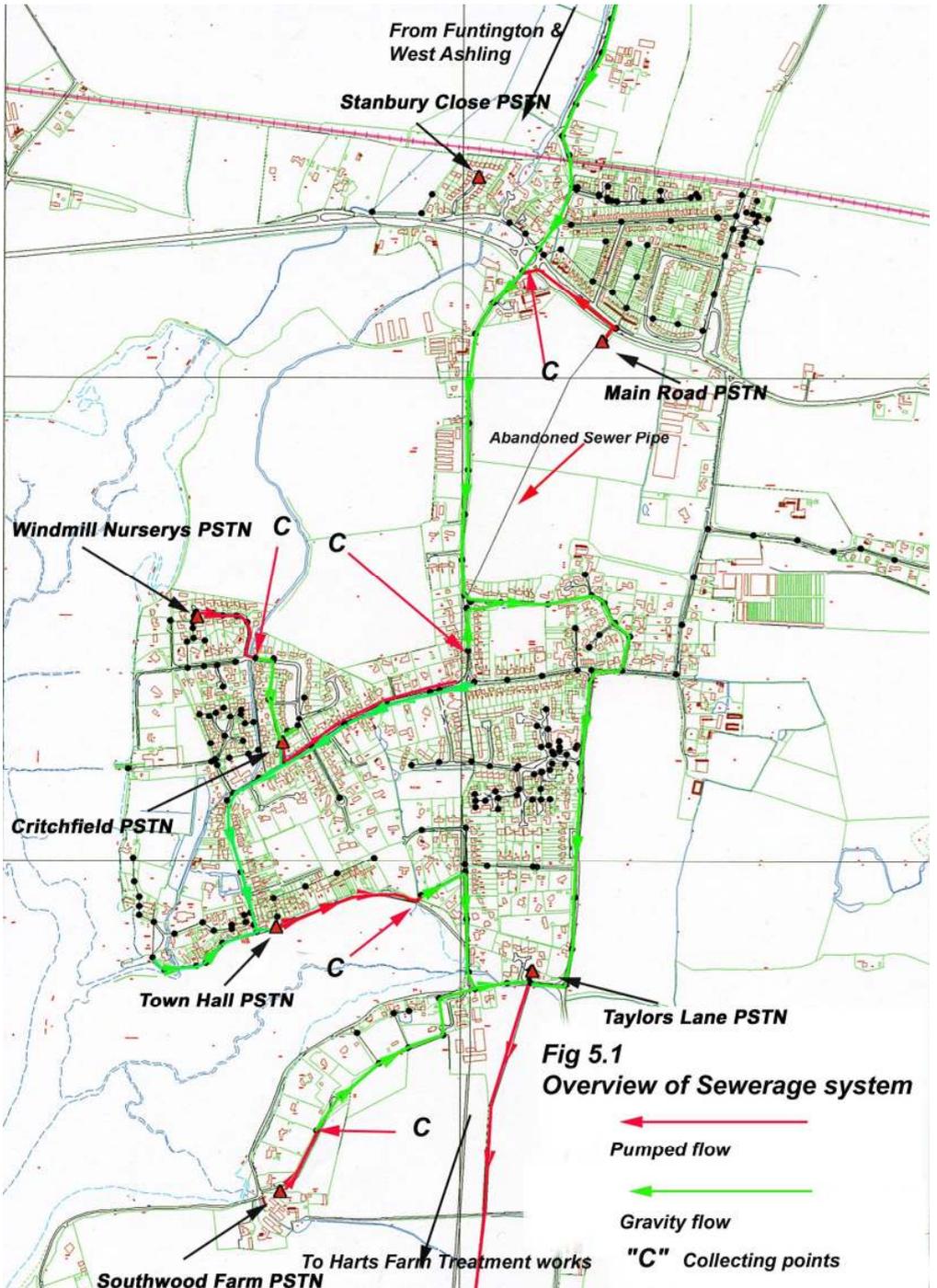
After repeated complaints, concerning the frequent breakdowns at the Stumps station, SW renewed all the pumps and there have been far fewer failures since then.

One of the mysteries which always worried us is that if you look carefully you can see a small disused pipe going all the way from the Main Road station to Harts Farm. For some reason we have never been able to discover why this is not used. We always hoped it could be used to allow more sewage to flow from the Stumps station to Harts Farm in overload times. Watch this space.

The diagram does help to understand the complexity of the system, what is under pressure and what is under gravity. What is clear is that it cannot cope at times of high rainfall. It goes without saying that every new development just adds to the problem and only a complete rethink will solve the problem of outflows into our harbour. Happy researches!

Peter Price

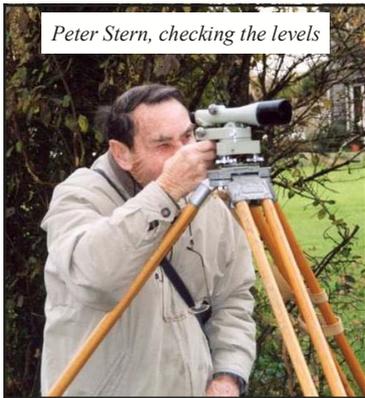
BOSHAM'S SEWERAGE SYSTEM



A bad day at Stumps pumping station



Peter Stern, checking the levels



Sid Gerke—diviner extraordinary



Photographs by Peter Price