

How Things Work: to Stop Milford being flooded.

Most of us, particularly dog walkers, will know of the green boxes on poles that stand along the Danes Stream but many, like me, won't know what they do. There's one by the road bridge in the village and another on New Valley Road. So our "How Things Work" group went last month to find out. Lynn Peck had kindly arranged the visit.

Basically the poles are water-level telemetry stations that measure the height of the water and relay this information to control a sluice gate in the dam further upstream. This earth dam, 200 yards wide, crosses the Stream's valley to the west of Downton Lane. It can be seen from the large layby on the B 3058, which is where our group of ten met to walk down the Lane, climb up onto the dam and meet Fergus Reid. Fergus is the Environment Agency's Asset Surveyor for West Hants and the Isle of Wight. We followed him rather nervously down steps into the damp, concrete bunker under the dam where we stood on a grating looking at the Stream flowing below us. The bunker holds an array of equipment receiving the information and lowering or raising the sluice gate automatically as necessary to regulate the flow of water and prevent flooding further downstream and in the Village. The gate can be moved manually if all else fails though this looked a pretty tough job.

Fergus explained that before the dam was built in 1989 the Village typically was flooded once or twice every ten years. After the heavy rain we had early this January the dam held back a huge volume of water, around 15 feet deep across the valley, as we could see from the line of flotsam still on its banks. Any overflow runs through a gully to the sea at Taddiford Gap. *(The dam with the sluice gate and our group can be seen in the photos. The overflow gully is just outside the picture to the left).*

After the visit we retired to the Beach House, reassured that we could drive home dry whatever the weather.

