

PWCo Draft Book – Notes supplied by Andy Neave

Portsmouth Water Company had harboured plans to develop water resources in the Ems Valley since 1905 (Neave; 2007), but neighbouring organisations to the east (Chichester, Worthing and Brighton) thwarted such proposals, preferring instead to protect potential resources for their own future use. A 1957 'West Sussex Survey', which considered the future of water supplies for the county, appeared to rule out any possibility of the Company developing the Ems source; but just two years later, the experience of the 1959 drought led the Board to seek the powers to develop a new source in the valley. Ministerial approval was also finally received in 1962 for the Company to put down an exploratory borehole at Walderton. The amalgamation strategy was also pursued vigorously and in 1963 the Company took over responsibility for water supply in the area following the recommendations of an Inquiry Inspector.

Following the submission of a draft Order for the development of a new source in the Ems Valley, a Local Inquiry was held during 1961 as it had been impossible to reach agreement with the objecting authorities (Neave, 2007). The outcome was that an abstraction licence was granted, limited to 2 mgd. The Company installed simple electrical starters and controls in a large 'garden shed', soon after - with such urgency for new resources the source could be utilised whilst the construction of the permanent buildings took place. Despite storage facilities not being in place at Racton, water was being pumped into supply by March 1963 (Neave, 2007)

As a result of a dry winter of 1964/65 and the possibility of a water shortage in the following summer, the Company applied to the Minister of Housing and Local Government for a Drought Order to temporarily increase the abstraction at Walderton to 5 mgd. Although the Drought Order was granted for six months from 2nd July 1965, a wet summer ensued and the powers were not needed other than for a brief period. The availability of more water at Walderton had been confirmed by the original test pumping exercises (limited data available on PWCo files), and so the Company had persuaded the Sussex River Authority to collaborate in a series of long-term pumping tests during 1966/67. The continuous tests ran from July 1966 through to the autumn of 1967, whilst at the same time the River Authority undertook a hydrometric study of the Ems Valley. Despite much information of minor importance still on file at the PWCo offices, attempts to locate this important information has failed.

By the latter part of 1967 the tests had been completed and the Company applied for a licence of up to 8 mgd. The application was advertised and a meeting of the Sussex River Authority was held in early 1968 to hear the objections; by that time the Company had resolved all of the objections through various compensatory measures and the Licence Terms were issued. One key condition was the requirement for a compensation discharge to the River Ems at Westbourne when flows in the river fell below a specified level.

As a result of the source at Walderton being developed, the one at Woodmancote, to the north-east of Emsworth, which had been used for many years as the principal source for the Chichester RDC area (up to 1 mgd), was relegated to use as a standby source.

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Lavant

As was the case at Bognor Regis, plans for further sources to supply the Chichester and Selsey areas were being prepared by the Chichester Corporation during the purchase negotiations. At that time Fishbourne and Funtington were the sole sources for the city of Chichester and the bulk supply to Selsey. A potential source at the confluence of the Lavant and Chilgrove Valleys and just to the north of Lavant Village near Chichester had been identified for investigation. More details are given in the chapter about the Chichester Corporation undertaking. In February 1964 application was made to the Ministry once agreement had been reached with the Brighton and Worthing undertakings to satisfy their objections. By October of that year, an Order authorising abstraction at the rate of up to 5 mgd had been received. As Neave (2007) reports, the delays that had dogged the development of a number of other sites were not repeated at Lavant and the whole scheme, which involved the drilling of three boreholes, the construction of the permanent pumping station building and pumping main to a second service reservoir at Chalkpit Lane, Lavant, was completed in 1967.