

Maritime History of Chichester Harbour

Rough background notes by Ian Friel, former Principal Curator of Chichester District Museum. History on the Solar Boat, 8th Feb 2005.

Itchenor, Bosham Creek, Harbour Mouth



Ian Friel sailing up Bosham Channel, probably quoting Bede.



Ian with Bosham church in the background

*The Sussex men that dwell upon the shore
Look out when storms arise and billows roar,
Devoutly praying with uplifted hands,
That some well laden ships may strike the sands,
To whose rich cargo they may make pretence,
And fatten on the rich spoils of Providence.*

William Congreve (1670 – 1729)

Nowadays, the Harbour is busy with yachts, dinghies and motorboats; it can difficult to see it as place that has seen both trade and war – but it has.

Geology and sea level change

This history of the Chichester Harbour has to be seen in the context of geology and coastal change. Southern Britain is sinking, and has been for many thousands of years. In geological times, when the sea level was much lower, the Harbour was carved out by rivers flowing south via the Solent River into a possible Channel River. Over the course of time, as sea level rose, the river valleys became the Harbour that we know today.

Between about 2500 and 1500 years ago, the sea level on the South Coast was 1 or two metres lower than today. This generally means that, whatever land you can see at the edges of the Harbour today, there was more of it in Iron Age and Roman times. Some of this surface has been submerged, and other bits – particularly on the coast, have been eroded by longshore drift caused by the currents and prevailing wind, that push sand, silt and gravel eastwards along the Sussex coast. Dramatic things have happened; East Head, as is well known, is under assault from the sea. When you compare a map of 1778 with one of today, you find that it has turned about 90 degrees into the Harbour.

Land reclaimed and land lost – Middle Ages

However the picture is complicated, because in the Middle Ages and later, there were attempts to reclaim land for farming, generally by building sea walls to cut off areas from the sea water and make the land available for grazing. The sea fought back, in 1340-1, for example, people at Chidham (opposite Bosham) complained that they had lost 40 acres of land (half arable and half meadow) to the sea in the previous 50 years; West Wittering complained that over the same period it had seen much land flooded, and a large amount also covered by blown sand. The West Wittering people also complained that rabbits from the Bishop of Chichester's warren on Cockbush Common (where the modern car park is) were munching a lot of their crops every year!

Prehistory

Our picture of the maritime history of the Harbour is a partial one. For prehistoric times, before the Romans invaded in AD 43, we know very little indeed. This may have been primarily a hunting and fishing area in the prehistoric period, rather than a settlement zone. From 600 BC, there was saltworking going on – producing salt from seawater. Iron Age saltworking sites have been found on the shores of Bosham and Thorney Channels, but no definite settlement sites.

There may have been some sea trade entering the Harbour in the last century or so before the Roman conquest and we know that this area was in contact with Iron Age and Roman Gaul.

Romans – Togidubnus and Fishbourne

The local tribe, the Atrebates, were generally friendly to the Romans, and it is possible that the great 1st-century AD Roman palace at Fishbourne was preceded by a small Roman army enclave, that may even have been here before 43 AD, possibly in the 30s. Perhaps a kind of “military mission”.

The area was Romanised enough for a major temple to be started in Chichester by the 50s AD, with the aid of the local Roman-controlled king, Togidubnus. It has been suggested that the Fishbourne Palace, probably begun in the 60s and built c 75-80 AD in its final form, was built for him. It's a reasonable enough assumption, but there is no direct proof at the moment.

The palace site had a quay and it is likely that supplies for the earlier Roman military presence, and some materials for building the place, came in by sea.

There were other sites around Bosham, including what may have been some sort of imperial shrine. The Museum has a large stone head of an emperor, found at Bosham, which would have come from a statue close on 3m (9 ft tall). Roman saltworks existed at Chidham and other places, and there was tiliary at Copperas Point near Dell Quay, and Roman buildings existed in other places – for example, Roman building material has turned up on Bosham Hoe.

Anglo-Saxons

Britain ceased to be a part of the Roman Empire in 410 AD. Germanic invaders and settlers – Angles, Saxons and Jutes - began to move in during the 5th century. The ones who settled in this part of the south coast were called the South Saxons, and that is where the name Sussex comes from.

Dicul, St Wilfrid and Bosham – AD681

We know very little about the maritime history of the harbour between the 400s and the 1000s. However, there are some intriguing bits of evidence. In 681, the later saint Wilfrid found a small community of 5 or 6 Irish monks at Bosham, led by a man named Dicul. This may sound very odd, but in the 6th and 7th centuries, one of the ways in which Christianity was spread around the British Isles was by monks and priests from the Irish Celtic Church sailing out on missions to found monasteries and hermitages. We don't know when Dicul and his fellows got to Bosham, but the likelihood is that they got there in a small boat. Possibly they found the area largely empty of people and reused a Roman ruin.

Quote from the Venerable Bede:

There was, however, a Scots monk named Dicul, who had a very small monastery at a place called Bosanham, surrounded by woods and the sea, where five or six brothers served the Lord in a life of humility and poverty: but none of the natives was willing to follow their way of life or listen to their teaching.

Bede (673-735)

A 15th-century tradition puts the birthplace of another Anglo-Saxon saint, St Cuthman, just across the water from Bosham at Chidham in the late 7th or early 8th centuries, and a curious field-name in Chidham parish may contain the early Irish name Colman.

Bosham has the longest Christian history of any place in Sussex, and there are few places in England with a known earlier Christian settlement.

The whole of the Manhood Peninsula south of Selsey (Manhood means “Manwode” or “common wood”) was given to the Church in 683 by Caedwalla, King of the West Saxons, to support the new see of Selsey, where a small cathedral was built.

We don't know if the Harbour was receiving any sea trade in the Anglo-Saxon period, but there was probably shipping activity of another sort. Between the late 8th and 11th centuries, western Europe was hit by waves of sea-borne attacks from Danish and Norwegian Vikings.

Vikings and Chichester

In England, all of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms crumbled before the Vikings, apart from the West Saxons, led in the latter 9th century by King Alfred. Part of his strategy involved creating large fortified settlements called burhs, of which Chichester was one. A garrison was placed there, making use of the old Roman walls. In 894, the main Anglo-Saxon Chronicles notes that a Viking fleet:

“raided up in Sussex near Chichester, and the garrison put them to flight and killed many hundred of them, and took some of their ships”.

The immediate question this poses to me is: where did they land their ships? The obvious answer is Chichester Harbour, because the Vikings commonly used waterways to penetrate inland, and landing in a sheltered harbour would have been far preferable to landing on an exposed beach.

So, are there Viking ships still in Chichester Harbour? Is there a mass grave of Viking warriors waiting to be found – one of these has turned up in the Midlands.

There may have been other attacks in the Harbour – a local tradition says that the Vikings stole the bells of Bosham Church then lost them at the bottom of the Bosham Channel when the boat was upset, an area still known as the Bosham Bell Pool and in which you can still hear the bells toll!

Bosham – Canute, Godwinsons, Harold and William 1

The West Saxon kings eventually re-conquered England, and made it into a single kingdom for the first time. However, the ruling class in England by this time was not just Anglo-Saxon, they were Anglo-Scandinavian, and for more than 20 years in the 11th century England was ruled by Scandinavian kings.

The most famous of these was Canute, about whose famous exploits Thackeray wrote the following:

Will the advancing waves obey me Bishop, if I make the sign?
Said the Bishop bowing lowly, 'Land and sea, my Lord, are thine'.
Canute turned towards the ocean – 'Back!' he said 'thou foaming brine'.

From the sacred shore I stand on I command thee to retreat;
Venture not, thou stormy rebel, to approach thy master's seat;
Ocean be thou still! I bid thee come not nearer my feet!

But the sullen ocean answered with a louder, deeper roar,
And the rapid waves nearer, falling soundly on the shore;
Back the Keeper and the Bishop, back the King and courtiers bore.

And he sternly bade them never more to kneel to human clay,
But alone to praise and worship That which earth and sea obey;
And his golden crown of empire never wore he from that day,
King Canute is dead and gone; parasites exist always.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811 – 1863)

Unfortunately, the tradition that associates him with Bosham seems to be an 18th-century invention, both other important figures in 11th century England did have a close association with Bosham and Chichester Harbour.

The Godwinson family were major landowners in the south-east before 1066; they were also major troublemakers. Bosham belonged to them, and they seem to have had a hall and a port here. Holy Trinity Church at Bosham seems to have been begun in about their time, and there are passing references to them and Bosham in contemporary sources.

In 1049, for example, Swein Godwinson sailed into Bosham with seven ships. Wanting revenge on his cousin Beorn over matter relating to land and influence over the king, Swein asked Beorn to ride to Bosham with him. Thinking he would be safe as a relative Beorn did so, but at Bosham Swein's men dragged him aboard ship and took him to the West Country where he was murdered. Even for the 11th century, this was regarded as an horrific crime, and Swein was exiled.

Another of the Godwinsons, Harold, had a claim to the English throne, and in 1064 he set out on a voyage from Bosham (it's illustrated in the Bayeux Tapestry), which eventually landed him up in Normandy, where Duke William (it is said) tricked him into swearing not to take the Crown.

However, Harold did just this in 1066; William and his Normans invaded, and England was conquered. There is little convincing evidence that the defeated Harold was buried at Bosham, but Bosham itself became a manor owned by William the Conqueror. It was the only one in the whole of Sussex that he kept in his hands. Possibly he made use of the port to keep in touch with Normandy.

Harold Godwinson, the last Anglo-Saxon king, must have sailed down Bosham Creek through the same waters that we are on today.

The Medieval Port of Chichester

We only begin to get definite signs of Chichester Harbour as a trading area in the 1100s. The city of Chichester:

1155 Royal charter for Chichester (confirmed up to 1685) Chi held a franchise of the ports of Horemouth and Undering (C18 Customs Port was co-terminous). Franchise limited in 1700-1914 period to collecting tolls on goods shipped thru Dell Quay. Farrant 1976a, 14.

Horemouth probably meant “dirty mouth” in the sense of clogged with silt, and was the old name for the entrance to Chichester Harbour. Undering covered the coast from the Witterings round to Pagham Harbour.

It's sometimes said that Chichester was the 7th largest port in medieval England. This may be true in one way, but its misleading. Chichester did not have any direct connection to the sea until the Canal was built in the 1800s. In the Middle Ages and later, its main quay was at Dell Quay, about 2 miles from the city.

Under England's first proper customs system, set up in the late 1200s, Chichester became the head port of a customs zone that stretched into eastern Kent. It was a huge area, but in physical terms the medieval sea trade of Chichester was always fairly small.

Until the 1400s, the main local export, as in much of medieval England, was in the form of wool or sheepskins. This was either sent round the coast to bigger ports, or direct to France or Flanders. Some grain was exported, but not much. In the 1400s, as cloth manufacture grew, Chichester again followed the national trend and exported cloth, but it was pretty small scale.

The main import was wine from southwest France and other places, landed at Dell Quay, Bosham and Emsworth.

The trade of a truly large medieval port like Southampton may have been at least ten times greater than that of the whole of Chichester Harbour.

Some local ships took part in naval expeditions put together by English medieval kings in their many wars against France and Scotland, and during the Hundred Years War in the 14th and 15th centuries, the CH was at risk, like the rest of the south coast, from French raids. The danger was so great that in the 1300s the Bishop of Chichester built himself a fortified manor house up the river Arun at Amberley.

Medieval Settlements and Churches

Settlements and churches grew up around the Harbour. At least 9 churches were built on the Sussex side, eight of them between the 11th and 13th centuries, pointing to considerable settlement growth.

The cloth export trade collapsed in the mid-1500s and English merchants had to find new trades.

For most of its history, Sussex has been an agricultural county. The Chichester area, with the fertile coastal plain for arable and the Downs for sheep and cattle grazing, has long been one of the richest in agricultural terms. Just as the medieval sea trades were based on wool, Chichester Harbour's sea trade from the 17th to the early 19th centuries was based in one way or another on grain, much of it transported around the English coast by coastal shipping.

The port of Chichester

The city of Chichester did not have a direct connection to the sea until the construction of the Chichester Canal between 1818 and 1822. However, for centuries before this, Chichester had its own port, located at Dell Quay on Chichester Harbour. The medieval name for the entrance to Chichester Harbour (and perhaps at times for the whole Harbour) was Horemouth.

The actual quay at Dell Quay is said to have been built or rebuilt in about the 1530s or 1540s. In 1580 it was substantial structure, 90 ft (27 m) long and 49 ft (15 m wide).

Dell Quay was the only place in Chichester Harbour legally allowed to receive foreign trade, but there were other places in and near the Harbour that were also used to load and unload ships used in the English coastal trade:

Salt Mill at the head of the Harbour

Itchenor

Bosham Creek

Wittering (later corrupted to Undering), which covered the area from between Selsey and Pagham to Sidlesham Mill

Smuggling was also carried on in various parts of the Harbour and on the coast.

As early as the 1580s, Chichester Harbour was sending grain to London. In 1614 some 690 tons of wheat left Chichester Harbour, along with 86 tons of malt. Malt is basically barley that was steeped in a vat, laid out on floor to make it germinate so that its starch turned to sugar, and it was then dried in a kiln. It was an essential ingredient in brewing.

Malt-makers, or maltsters, grew in numbers in the Chichester, Bosham and Emsworth areas, and some of them became rich as the rise of large-scale beer and ale brewing created a growing demand for malt. In the wars of the 1689-1713 period, for example, a lot of Chichester malt went to Portsmouth dockyard, to brew beer for the navy.

In the 18th century, the coastal export of wheat declined sharply, to be replaced by the export of flour, which could be sold at higher prices. It is no accident that the number of mills around the Chichester Harbour began to increase in the 1700s.

Little wheat or malt was exported abroad from Chichester Harbour until the 1690s, but as trade duties on corn were abolished, they expanded rapidly. Dell Quay was the only legal quay for foreign trade. By 1735, Chichester Harbour was the 6th largest corn exporting port in England. In the 1740s, wheat exports from Chichester Harbour were averaging over 5,400 tons per year, along with 3,500 tons of malt. By the mid-1700s corn exports from Chichester Harbour were equal to those from the rest of Sussex and Kent; that said, foreign trade only made up about 9%-10% of the Chichester

Harbour trade in the 1700s, and declined further in the 19th century. Chichester Harbour was primarily a harbour for coastal traffic.

Other local exports included woad and copperas (iron pyrites) for the dyeing industry, and oysters. Between the 1670s and 1720s, Chichester Harbour oysters were going to places as far away as London and Holland; in one year, about 800,000 were exported, which suggests that a large local oyster fishery existed. Very little iron or timber was exported through Chichester Harbour.

Chichester Harbour did not have enough ships to carry local trade: much of it went in vessels from other ports such as Poole, Gosport, Arundel and even Brighton.

Most of these ships were very small. The average size of ships trading in the Chichester Harbour in the mid-1600s was 15-20 tons; this had risen to about 30 tons by the 1710s. Ships as large as 200 tons did use the harbour occasionally, but if you had been here in the early 18th century, most of the regular trading ships you would have seen would have been tiny. In 1715-16, out of 211 ships using Chichester Harbour, nearly 75% were of 30 tons or less.

To our eyes, C18 or C19 Chichester Harbour would probably have seemed very quiet. Annual average shipping movements went up from about 140 in the 1650s to around 300 in the 1730s. It reached over 450 by 1790, and a peak of over 680 in 1841. Thereafter, as coastal shipping began to face serious competition from the railways, numbers declined.

Even at its 1841 peak, however, this is still only an average of two ships per day!

There isn't much evidence as to where ships normally loaded or unloaded in the harbour. Only in one year, 1836, is there a clear breakdown. 42% of all cargoes coming in that year went to Emsworth, 28% to Dell Quay and 9-10% each to the Chichester Canal Basin and Itchenor. The remaining 10% was split between Bosham and three other places within the geographical boundary of the harbour, and four places within its legal boundaries, including Sidlesham and Bognor.

Place	Cargoes in	Cargoes out
Emsworth	171 (42.4%)	140
Bosham	4	19
Chidham	1	
Dell Quay	113 (28.0%)	107
Hunston		1
Canal Basin	40 (9.9%)	49
Itchenor	37 (9.1%)	43
W Wittering	1	
Selsey		4
Sidlesham	10	29

Bognor	15	1
Felpham	1	
Totals	403	392

New quays were built at Emsworth, Bosham and Sidlesham in the 18th century, and trade did grow, but Chichester Harbour was always limited by problems related to silting. The seaward approach to the Harbour was tricky, and the sand and silt bar at its mouth could make access difficult and dangerous. Published sailing directions from the 1600s onwards warned about the bar at the harbour mouth; when the Admiralty was looking for a new south coast dockyard site in the 1690s, they didn't even bother with Chichester Harbour because it was too dangerous. As the:

1863 *The Channel Pilot* said, the entrance to Chichester Harbour was very bad and “no prudent seaman, without a thorough knowledge of the Harbour, should attempt it without a pilot”. Nothing was done to improve navigation. Farrant 1976a, 35.

Although Chichester Corporation carried out repairs to Dell Quay and some other harbour structures, it very did little or nothing to dredge the Chichester Harbour to improve access. Dredging is a continuous process.

The one major attempt to improve Chichester Harbour's trade was the Chichester Canal, which took vessels up to a new canal basin at Southgate. It was flop, losing out the railways within 20 years or so.

By 1880, most of the trade coming into Chichester Harbour was in the form of coal, which went to Chi and Emsworth for domestic heating and the gasworks. In 1906, the Chichester Canal saw its last commercial cargo.

The sharp decline of C19 coastal shipping, and the development of much larger steamer vessels, meant that small harbours like Chichester Harbour were headed for commercial extinction.

Ship and boat building

Boat building may well have been carried on in Chichester Harbour in prehistoric times, but the evidence for it is very unclear until the 18th century. In the 1800s, Bosham was home to two shipyards, which built small wooden trading vessels. These died out in the early C20, and since that time the only boat building has been pretty much dinghy, motorboat or yacht building.

The first reference to a shipyard in Emsworth was during 1700 when John Smith was known to own a yard with two vessels on the stocks. He was wealthy, with house, yard, goods and money totalling £480 out of which material for his yard contributed £160. John Smith the younger was still running the yard in 1738. There was also a yard at Langstone owned by another Smith in 1738, Mr Robert Smith.

There were two brief, but significant periods of naval shipbuilding in Chichester harbour during the 18th and early 19th centuries. Thirteen ships

were built between the 1740s and 1810, with the main periods being 1745-49, mid 1780s and 1806-10.

A local shipbuilder called Chitty and his partners launched six craft for the Royal Navy between 1745 and 1749. Three were dockyard lighters of just over 100 tons each, but three were 5th or 6th rate warships carrying between 10 and 44 guns. The largest was the 815 ton HMS *Penzance*. The yard may have been at Itchenor.

The 897 ton *Roebuck* was launched at Itchenor in 1785, and a further four warships went down the slipways there between 1806 and 1810 during the Napoleonic War. Local ship builders Greensword and Kidwell built the vessels. The largest of these was the 36 gun frigate HMS *Curacao* that weighed 944 tons.

The *Transit* was launched in 1800. This 101ft long ship weighing 200 tons was sent to trade in the Mediterranean and was lost there in 1810. The design of her hull and rig were revolutionary, anticipating the clipper design later in the century.

The Apps family dominated shipbuilding at Bosham in the 19th century. William Apps was the first to occupy the Quay Meadow Shipyard in the late 18th – early 19th century. The yard consisted of a slipway and a shed where timber was prepared and boats built, a stone's throw from the church. As was common, the purpose of such small local yards was to service and construct vessels for the owner as well as to build vessels for others. In 1871 only four men and two boys were employed at the yard. Thomas Apps owned the 25 ton sloop *Prosperous* in 1837. While in 1842 William Apps owned a half share in three other vessels - the 25 ton ketch *William and George*; an oyster smack; and the 25 ton barge *Sally*. The Apps yard built the last sailing coaster at Bosham, the 76 ton *Good Hope*, launched in 1902.

A merchant, Thomas Smart, was also running a small shipyard at Bosham in 1871, and like the Apps yard, also employed four men and two boys. He owned – and possibly built – the *Busy Bee* that transported coal from Sunderland. He also built the 84 ton *Lady of the Lake*, also used for coal transport, and the *Dolly Varden*. When Thoma Smart died in 1894 his cousin Abraham Apps – Thomas' younger brother – ran the yard. After Abraham died in 1927 the yard became known as Scovell's yard.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows a 'Shipbuilding Yard' at Bosham at 480350 103860. The old mud Wall sea wall ran from the yard to Chidham and was used as a route across Bosham Channel. A second shipbuilding yard at Bosham was located at 480755 103880. A shipbuilding yard is also marked near Hendy's Quay in Emsworth at 475230 105510. It is located within a cluster of associated industries including timber yards, a saw mill and a smithy. The oyster carrier *Terror* restored by Dolphin Quay Boatyard in Emsworth, was thought built in Emsworth originally during the second half of the 19th century.

Small boatbuilding and yacht building developed during the 20th century. During World War 2 the Admiralty worked on LCIs (Landing Craft Infantry) at Birdham Pool.

Motor launches, landing craft and other small war vessels were built at Emsworth, Bosham, Birdham and Itchenor. The remains of landing craft can still be seen at Itchenor.

Birdham Pool, one of Britain's first marinas, opened in 1937. Chichester Yacht Basin opened in 1964.

Fishing

Fishing is probably far and away the oldest economic activity that is still carried on in the Chichester Harbour. Unfortunately, it is also the most difficult to document until fairly recent times!

Sea fish, crabs, lobsters and oysters were all caught.

Local oyster beds existed into the 19th century, but as these were worked out, local fishermen began to move away to work beds off Shoreham and even France. The pattern with an oyster fishery was to dredge the oysters up, and bring them back to port and put them in oyster ponds or coves to keep them alive and fresh.

For most people, fishing was probably only a part of what they did, conditioned by the seasons and other factors.

In 1817, the biggest fishing ports in the harbour were Emsworth (30 boats), Bosham (25) and West Wittering (10); all other places had not more than a handful each. Some boats fished just in the Chichester Harbour, but bigger ones went out to sea.

J D Foster of Emsworth built up an oyster dredging fleet of some ten vessels in the late 19th century, but his oyster beds became polluted by the local sewage works and in 1902 some Emsworth oysters eaten at a banquet in Winchester led to sickness and death, followed by the closure of the local oyster fishery. It was revived again after WW1, but it was ended by WW2.

Chronology:

1585-6 CH sends large no of barrel staves + 186 qtrs of wheat to London (about 55 tons). Reger 26.

Early C17 East Wittering had at least 2 shipwrights, John Hewitt (d 1607) and Isaac Hatch (1618), tho neither prob worked there. Reger 30.

1614 Chichester Harbour exports 2330 qtrs of wheat (690 tons) and 290 qtrs of malt (86 tons). Reger 26.

1637 Chichester Harbour also exported dyestuffs. Exported 20 tons of woad and 10 tons of copperas stones plus wheat and malt and barrel hoops, all to London. Reger 25.

C17 Making & export of malt becomes important at Chi and Havant: malt became increasingly important after mid C17 when retail productions of beer & ale began to supplant domestic production. Easy for clothiers to change to being maltsters. As well as Chichester and Havant, smaller scale maltsters existed at Emsworth and Bosham. From C17 on, coastal trade was more important to Chichester Harbour than foreign trade. Reger 22.

1650-1750 Much of Chichester Harbour trade was carried in ships from other ports; within Chichester Harbour, Chichester ships predominated, followed by Bosham and sometimes Sidlesham, but ships also came chiefly from Hythe (Hants), Gosport, Poole, Christchurch, Arundel and Brighton. Andrews 1954, 97.

1656-7 -1731 CH trade shipping tonnages

	Foreign	
	Av	Max
1665	15	20
1699	38.4	125
1713	30.4	80
	Coastal	
	Av	Max
1656-7	15	35
1708	18.4	80
1731	27.8	200

Andrews 1954, 97.

1656-1731 Av nos of CH cargoes per year

Years	Coastal	Years	Foreign
1656-88	122	1662-86	19.9
1691-4	59	1690-7	2.2
1699-1701	186	1699-1714	11
1702-12	211.8	1718-23	18.7
1714-16	219.2		
1731	251	1731	58

Andrews 1954, 98.

1656-1731 Average annual coastal exports from CH (qtrs):

	Malt	Barley
1656-1701	5783	473.7
1702-16	6052.1	374
1731	4801	-

Andrews 1954, 100

Chi malt trade went mostly to Devon 1656-92;

- 1662 10 maltsters export through Chichester Harbour. Reger 22
- 1660s Chichester and Havant malt exported to W Country. Reger 22.
- 1670s Reorganisation of customs ports; port of Chi was now restricted to boundaries below (1680); sole port of entry was now at Dell Quay; Emsworth was now part of port of Portsmouth. New situation may have helped Emsworth to grow. C17 or earlier Emsworth was already exporting corn. Reger 29.
- 1671 It was said that in 1661 a 40-ton vessel could get to Dell Quay (DQ) as easily as a 10-ton one in 1671, and that cargoes had to be unloaded into lighters half a mile below Dell Quay; also said that ships which drew 9 ft (c 80 tons +) could only reach Dell Quay on spring tides – some ships could reach Salt Mill at Fishbourne, though some put in at Itchenor, 3 miles below Dell Quay. Farrant 1976a, 15.
- 1671-1705 Customs service searcher/waiter stationed at Pagham (and at Sidlesham in 1680s). Andrews 1954, 96./
- 1672 Chichester Harbour had a customs officer in Emsworth; in 1836 it was agreed that Chichester would receive coasting documents from both sides of Chichester Harbour.
- 1680 Legal limits of Chichester Harbour (Reger 29):
- “From the Hermitage Bridge near Guisworth on the furthest confines of Sussex westward, from thence down the whole channel or river running southward to the harbours-mouth called the Hormouth, from thence in a supposed direct line eastward to Selsey Bill, thence eastward to Pagham point at the mouth of undering harbour, then to the most eastern part of the parish of Felpham in the county of Sussex aforesaid so back gain to Hormouth and so by the river north-east to the Key commonly known and called by the name of Dell Key scituated in the parish of Appledram, together with all the bays, channels, strands, harbours, havens, rivers, st....., creeks, places within the said limts contained...
- Much of Dell Quay’s harbour income was used on maintenance.
- 1689-1713 Much of Chichester Harbour malt trade went to Portsmouth Dock Yard during wartime (brewing for navy). Andrews 1954, 100.
- 1690s Nutbourne Mill at head of Thorney Channle blt, as merchants began to build quays in places that had better access and didn’t charge tolls. Chichester Corporation took people to court over it. Farrant 1976a, 15.
- 1693 Greenville Collins’ Great Britain’s Coasting Pilot advises that anyone entering Chichester Harbour should use a pilot, due to the shingle bar.

Farrant 1976a, 14. Acces to the harbour was so poor that Admiralty surveyors looking for a new South Coast dockyard site did not even bother with Chichester Harbour.

1697 Cost of repairing DQ reckoned at £80 in seven years by one witness, and at £30 pa by another; 1685-90 the lease of Dell Quay dues was worth £36 pa.
Andrews 1954, 96.

By 1700 Cut Mill (location) was seeing ships unloaded. Farrant 1976a, 15.

1700 First ref to a shipyard in Emsworth; John Smith d 1700 had a yard with 2 vessels on the stocks. He was wealthy, with house, yard, goods and money totalling £480, of which £160 consisted of materials in his yard. John Smith the younger was still running the yard in 1738. A Robert Smith had a yard at Langstone c 1738. Reger 30.

1715-16 Chichester Harbour av coasting trade ship sizes: coal & timber ships av 65-68 tons, corn trade to London & imports from London 32-33 tons, corn trade to W ports – 18 tons, trade from W ports 12 tons.
Andrews 1954, 97. Largest ship this year was 116 tons, but out of 211 ships, 152 ships were 30 tons or less (nearly three quarters).

1739 Ship of 100 tons could normally get to within 2 miles of Chichester.
Andrews 1954, 94.

1755 John King moved from Titchfield to marry and to build ships. Reger 30.

Before 1750 Hendy family of Emsworth built Hendy's Quay on Sussex side of Ems; built Slipper Mill and pond some time before 1750. Reger 29.

1714 Thomas Hendy of Emsworth was master of a vessel trading corn from Emsworth (EW) to Chi.

1731 Woodroffe Drinkwater builds a second quay at Bosham. Had better access than Dell Quay; Dell Quay dues dropped from £69 in 1731-2 to £12 in 1743-4.

c 1750 chart owned by SAS says that chief problem with Chichester Harbour was the bar at the mouth, which changed position with every storm, and even with every tide.
Andrews 1954, 94. cf map on p 95.

1755 Woodroffe Drinkwater opens new quay at Sidlesham; also owned the tidemill there. Farrant 1976a, 15.

C18/19 Few improvements made to Chichester Harbour. Farrant 1976a, 15.

1805 John Rennie surveys route for Chichester Canal. Farrant 1976a, 15. (idea revived in 1801).

1822 Chichester Canal opened; saw little traffic; most vessels still unloaded at Dell Quay, not the canal basin at Southgate. Farrant 1976a, 15.

1836 Only figures available on exactly where ships unloaded in Chichester Harbour - Farrant 1976a, 15.:

Place	Cargoes in	Cargoes out
Emsworth	171 (42.4%)	140
Bosham	4	19
Chidham	1	
Dell Quay	113 (28.0%)	107
Hunston		1
Canal Basin	40 (9.9%)	49
Itchenor	37 (9.1%)	43
W Wittering	1	
Selsey		4
Sidlesham	10	29
Bognor	15	1
Felpham	1	
Totals	403	392

1845 Chichester Harbour's coastwise traffic peaked at about 45,000 tons. Farrant 1976a, 32.

Late 1840s – early 1870s Chichester Canal taking about 5,000 tons of coal per year (much for Chi gasworks, which were by the basin).

1852 Port of Chichester was abolished. Western section from Bosham Channel was joined to Portsmouth and the eastern side to Port of Aundel (port of Littlehampton from 1869). Farrant 1976a, 32.

1852 Most of Bognor's coal was being landed on the beach. Trade probably ceased altogether after railway opened in 1864. Farrant 1976a, 35.

1852 Pagham Harbour trade consisted of about 68 vessels per year, av 25 tons each, taking coal and grain to Sidlesham Mill, and flour out. Farrant 1976a, 35.

1855 Chichester Harbour coastwise traffic declined to about 4,800 tons. Farrant 1976a, 32.

1863 *The Channel Pilot* says entrance to Chichester Harbour was very bad and “no prudent seaman, without a thorough knowledge of the Harbour, should attempt it without a pilot”. Nothing was done to improve navigation. Farrant 1976a, 35.

1865 Slight rise in Chichester Harbour coastal traffic to 1865.

- 1865-1914 Chichester Harbour coastal traffic declined to 1855 of below.
All Chichester Harbour's traffic was coastal by 1880. Farrant 1976a, 32.
- 1868 Chichester Canal rec 7,000 tons of goods, inc coal.
- By 1873 Tolls no longer collected at Dell Quay; Itchenor was probably by then more important as a landing place. Farrant 1976a, 35.
- 1880 Chichester Harbour and beaching areas round Selsey still receiving about 200 coastal cargoes with aggregate tonnage of 10,000 tons, and sending out 100 cargoes in vessels totalling 2,100 tons. Main inward cargo was coal (about 11,000 tons – sic). Much went to Southgate canal basin for Chichester gasworks. Farrant 1976a, 35.
- 1880 About 10 trading vessels still owned at Chichester, Bosham and Itchenor; ranging up to 144; the biggest were colliers, with smaller ones taking corn to Southampton and the west. Farrant 1976a, 35.
- 1888 4,500 tons sands bricks and coal received by Chichester Canal; 50,000 gallons of gas water and gas tar sent out. Farrant 1976a, 35.
- 1898 Only 704 tons of goods carried on Chichester Canal. Farrant 1976a, 35.
- 1906 Last recorded trading activity on Chichester Canal – cargo of shingle from Chichester Harbour.
Farrant 1976a, 35.

WW1 saw the construction of a short-lived training airfield on Cobnor Point, which closed in 1919.

RAF Thorney was built in 1938, and was used by both the RAF and FAA during WW2. Coastal defences were built in the Harbour.

At least 32 aircraft came down in CH in WW2, 13 of them in 1940; on top of these figures were crashes and other aircraft losses at RAF Thorney.