

Cliff Facelift – Step by Step.

Residents and visitors will have been aware of the recent work to make good the thirty year old stepped access to Friars Beach from the woodlands and Highcliffe Castle car park. This work was necessary as the cost of their maintenance over the past five years had increased; additionally the main structural stringers were causing health and safety concerns, the estimated cost of replacement, £37K. with a life expectancy of twenty-five years.

Work often carried out in freezing conditions during this winter bears witness to the diverse skills of the two man coastal protection gang, Dave Reeves and Paul Goldbourne, with support from, Mike Brolan and Robin Scoffield of Neptune Pant Hire.

The new Iroko hardwood steps were built by R.F. Falla of Stony Lane Christchurch comprise four flights: 10/38/46/20 a total of 114, which beats the 76 steeper Zig-Zag westerly steps at the Steamer Point Nature Reserve. The old wooden and concrete steps with the zig-zag have gone – the new format gives a more direct straight approach to Friars Beach below or the Castle Woodland and car park above.

Tubular galvanized handrails are fitted perfectly situated which will be greatly appreciated by the 'not so steady on the pins - or not so fleet of foot' users. The hardwood steps are positioned at optimum height and width, of such texture as to give an immediate assurance of safety and confidence even when wet or sand covered. The construction work was completed in January - earlier than anticipated.

Many local residents use the beach and woodlands areas for their cardiovascular exercises. Following a couple sessions in one day, I concluded that new flights of steps gave a safe, controlled, physical workout. So much so, my home exercise machine is now redundant – any offers!

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