



Newsletter Spring 2009

Fletching Mill

As was communicated in the last Newsletter (Autumn 2008), SORT has been in consultation with the Environment Agency (EA) over their plans for remedial work at Fletching Mill weir. The EA have now responded to our initial letter to them on this subject, which expressed our concerns at their proposed approach i.e. demolishing the weir and destroying the habitat and ecology of the area. For those that have access to the Internet, our initial letter is published on our website at www.sxouse.org.uk/FletchingMill_Issues.htm. We have also published the EA's response in full (www.sxouse.org.uk/EA_2008_11_27.htm), together with our own follow-up submission back to the EA (www.sxouse.org.uk/SORT_2008_11_27.htm). For those members that we don't hold an e-mail address for, printed copies of these web pages are enclosed. (Apologies for the small typeface, but we're trying to save paper and money!).

As a result of the situation at Fletching Mill, SORT is making an urgent appeal for an ecologist (or person with some ecological background) to help us challenge the EA. We need someone with sufficient relevant knowledge to advise us on the ecological aspects of this matter. If water levels are permanently lowered at Fletching, then not only would hope of restoration of navigation be lost, but we firmly believe that environmental damage would ensue.

If you can help us to deal with the muddled thinking of the EA, then please get in touch with Bob Draper (contact details as at the end of this Newsletter) as a matter of urgency. Alternatively, Hazel Lintott, our Secretary on 01444 414413 will pass on your details.

Restoration work parties at Isfield Lock

By kind permission of landowner John Sclater, conservation / restoration work will restart at Isfield Lock on various week-ends from late April until mid-September 2009, plus a few Thursdays. Following completion of the removal of the bottom gate remains and all the silt from the lock in 2007, work in 2008 concentrated on the conservation and renovation of the East wall. Good progress was made with this task and 2009 will see this work continuing with the possibility also of a start being made on the wing walls north and south of the Lock on this East side.

Further detailed lists of dates will be published on our website www.sxouse.org.uk once they are set and anyone who has expressed an interest in taking part in work parties in the past will be contacted directly. We would be delighted to see any new working members there on these dates too, but please contact our volunteer coordinator Ted Lintott, via e-mail at tedl@talktalk.net, or by telephone 01444 414413, before you come along so that we can give you precise details of times and location.

Restoration Appeal

As ever, the purchase of materials for the restoration work at Isfield Lock made great inroads into our restoration fund last year. Whilst not such a high level of costs as in 2007, we will still need to buy lime, cement and sand to make up the conservation-grade mortar mix for bricklaying repairs, ballast for concrete, bricklaying and pointing trowels, lines, levels and all the associated paraphernalia. So if any members wish to make a donation towards next year's restoration costs, in money or material, please get in touch with Paul Morris (phone 01435 863683) or Bob Draper (contact details at the bottom of this Newsletter).

The Trust Needs You!

SORT desperately needs more committee members! We are scraping along with the bare minimum to keep the Trust operational. If you can spare any time at all to help with the running of the Trust, please let us know via either Hazel Lintott (secretary@sxouse.org.uk or tel. 01444 414413) or Bob Draper (membership@sxouse.org.uk or tel. 01825 763857). Particular roles might be publicity, fundraising, ecology / environmental, membership, treasurer or you might fancy specifically taking on our current fight with the EA! Whatever it might be, please let us know.

Autumn Public Meeting

The Autumn 2008 Meeting of SORT took place in the Newton Room of Southover Grange in Lewes on the evening of October 30th at 7.30pm. Members of IWA Kent & East Sussex branch (IWAKES) joined SORT for a very interesting talk from Nick Kelly on "The Lost waterways of Southern England". Nick's definition of "Southern" and "England" stretched somewhat as we roamed from Cornwall across the whole of the south before moving up through East Anglia and finally settling in Northern Ireland! But we can forgive him that for his excellent slides and wealth of knowledge on all things waterway-related.

Extraordinary General Meeting

Immediately prior to the Autumn Meeting we held an EGM of SORT to consider one item of business held over from our AGM in April:

1. To receive the Directors' Report and Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2007.

This document had not been received in time for the AGM. This very brief EGM took place at **6.45pm**. Those members of SORT present at that time voted unanimously to accept the Directors' Report and Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2007.

Talks

Your Chairman has given talks to a couple of local groups during 2008 – Danehill Historical Society way back in February and then Isfield WI in July. Three more are already lined up for 2009, but if you know of any suitably interested groups that would appreciate a talk on SORT, the history of the Navigation and our work at Isfield Lock, then please get in touch. It's good PR and a small donation to SORT funds is always sought!