

Great Progress at Isfield Lock

With the end of the summer comes the end of the restoration work that can be achieved at Isfield Lock this year. However the last six months have seen the work come on in leaps and bounds and all restoration targets have been met and surpassed thanks to the commitment of the regular working parties and the welcome dry weather that has been a feature of the summer in the southeast.

The target for 2009 was completion of the restoration of the east wall of the lock chamber. That was achieved, using original bricks and coping stones, by early August, allowing work to continue on the restoration of the downstream east wing wall.



...and after

The east upstream training wall then became the unexpected next target for the year. The stone wall had already been partially demolished. The bank was reinforced and back-filled and the wall rebuilt with original stone previously recovered and cleaned. During this work the ground paddle culvert was exposed, having been bricked up many years ago. The tunnel, found to be in perfect condition, was cleared of silt and a small amount of debris.



Before...

Much of what remained of the original wing wall required demolition and a complete re-build. That could not be achieved until the bank behind the wall was seriously reinforced over a length of two metres, a width of one metre and a depth of over two metres. September saw the completion of this reinforcement and the rebuild of the wall, with the dedicated working parties still unable to believe their luck with the favourable weather conditions.





Now with work coming to a halt for 2009 the east side of the lock is, at the end of a very successful restoration season, completely restored. The working parties, under the guidance of Paul Morris and organised by Ted Lintott, can justifiably be proud of the amount of work achieved in 2009.

The site and compound around the lock has been cleared, cleaned and secured for the winter months. *(Text and photos courtesy of Terry Owen)*

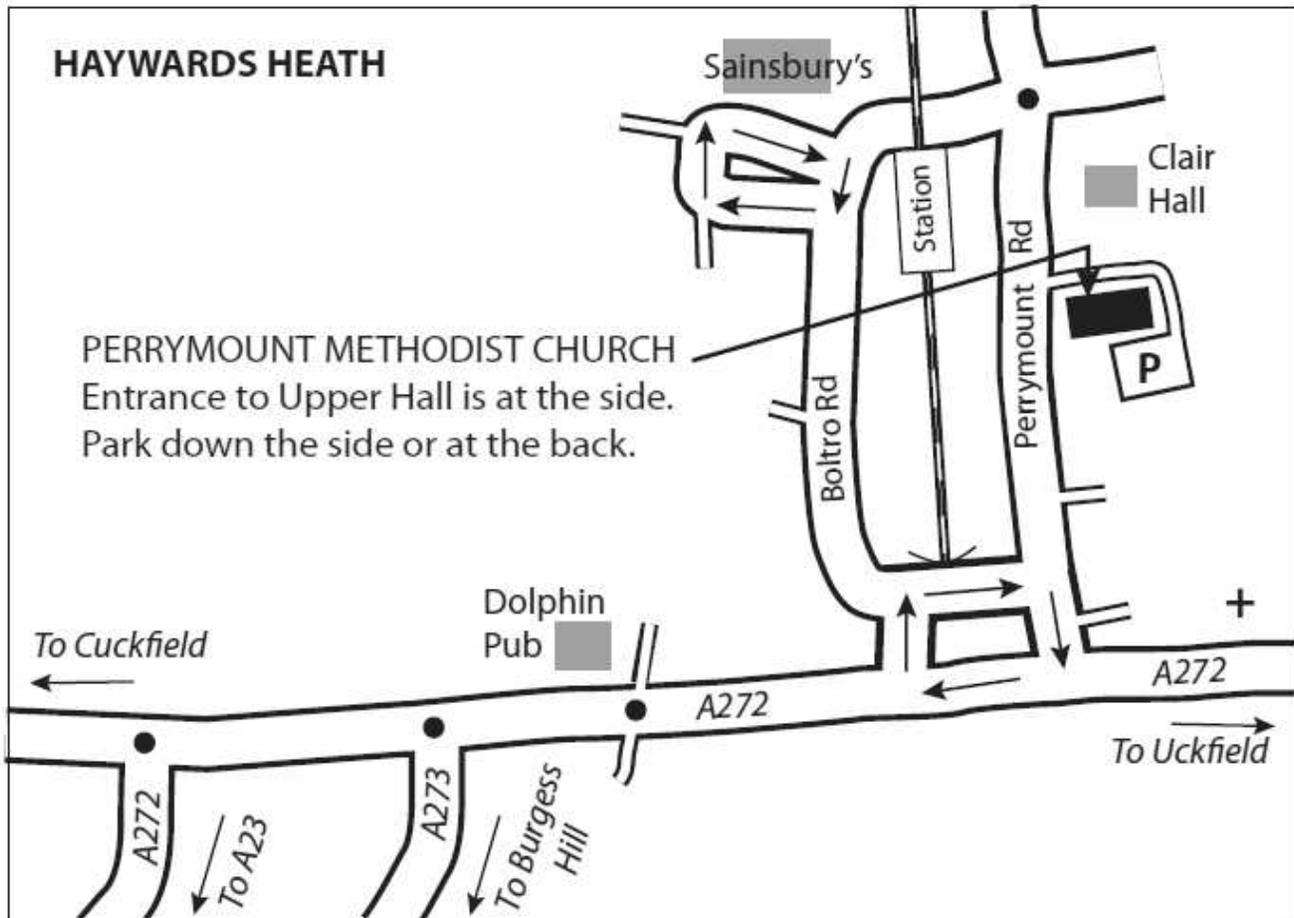
Before any 2010 working parties can resume in April a plan must be put into place as to the way forward in tackling the extensive restoration required of the west lock-chamber wall. This wall is off perpendicular from a line about 4' 6" / 1.37m above from the invert, where there is a horizontal shear line and the wall tilts inwards. The land on this side of the lock is adjacent to the public footpath and farm track. Our original plans for reinstatement of this wall called for a concrete heel behind the wall, but we cannot make a big enough heel to suit the clay soil here within the area available to us. An alternative solution is to raise the wall in 2-leaf brickwork and pour concrete behind it, extending the concrete down below invert level as a nib and about 2 m back from the wall. This design raises the question of whether we have the workforce capacity to achieve this, even in sections. Eight people will be needed on each occasion, probably three such occasions. Estimated annual expenditure on each section of the west wall renovation is £1300.

Restoration Appeal

The Sussex Ouse Restoration Trust will require funds and commitment equal and beyond that so far required in the work at Isfield to date, with the badly damaged west wall likely to provide many additional challenges to those so far met. This makes the appeal for funding and work-party volunteers for the tasks ahead of us even more important. If you can help in any way please contact our volunteer coordinator Ted Lintott, via e-mail at [tedl @talktalk.net](mailto:tedl@talktalk.net), or by telephone on 01444 414413, or Bob Draper (contact details at the bottom of this Newsletter). Some sort of sponsorship deal with a tool-hire company or building materials firm would be especially useful!

Autumn Public Meeting

The Autumn 2009 Meeting of SORT will take place on **Thursday 19th November**, 7:00 for 7:30pm. We will be presenting a selection of historic waterway videos in the Upper Room, Haywards Heath Methodist Church, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath (near the railway station, about 200yds up from the Clair Hall, see map overleaf). This will be a joint meeting with Solent & Arun Branch and Kent & East Sussex Branch of the IWA.



Charitable Status

The Chairman of the River Gipping Trust, Spencer Greystrom, came down to visit us at Isfield Lock in September. The River Gipping is similar in a number of ways to the River Ouse, significantly in that all lock sites are currently in private hands. Nonetheless, the River Gipping Trust was successful in obtaining charitable status about two years ago. Spencer has provided valuable information and advice on how this was achieved and your Committee will therefore be pursuing a reapplication with the Charities Commission during the coming winter. This will almost inevitably require some fairly major changes to our Articles of Association and Memorandum of Association, which will need to be brought up-to-date and in line with current Charities Commission guidelines. These changes will need to be ratified at an Emergency General Meeting of SORT – watch this space!

Fletching Mill

As was communicated in the last two Newsletters (Autumn 2008 and Spring 2009), SORT has been in consultation with the Environment Agency (EA) over their plans for remedial work at Fletching Mill weir. The EA's sole proposal in September 2008 was for demolishing the weir and destroying the habitat and ecology of the area. Since March of this year we have heard nothing more from the EA on this issue, so we are still waiting for their formal, published proposals before we can act further.

A Trip Boat for SORT?

At a recent Committee meeting the suggestion was made that perhaps SORT needed a trip-boat operation as both an income-generation and marketing tool. What do you think? Could this be a goer? It will need a dedicated team of volunteers just to get such a project off the ground. No need for crew volunteers yet, what is really needed first is a willing person to take on the task of a feasibility study as to who, what and where such an enterprise might be set up on the Ouse. If that person is you, please get in touch.

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 over Fletching Mill Weir! Whatever it might be, please let us know.