



Newsletter Autumn 2011

Excellent Continued Progress at Isfield Lock

As the 2011 restoration season draws to a close at Isfield Lock on the River Ouse, the working parties can be satisfied with another good year where the targets set for progress at the site have once again been achieved.

Restrictions on access to the site during the shooting season, the loss of daylight hours as we head into winter and increasingly difficult working conditions as the weather gets wetter mean that the volunteers are required to secure the site for the winter months ahead and wait until the first spring warmth heralds another chance to get on with the restoration.



The 'ole on 23rd June after much concrete pouring



Work complete for the 2011 season

The target for this year was to demolish the second section of the damaged west chamber wall and then rebuild it. That has been achieved. The work certainly presented more challenges than previously encountered, with three-quarters of the original chamber wall requiring demolition and rebuilding. In addition, new coping stones had to be made as the original stone ones had either been lost or were too badly damaged to be re-used.

Whilst this was going on another group of volunteers were busy exposing and cleaning the west wing wall and the wharf wall at the upstream (north) end of the lock, that originally served the paper mill that once stood here on the west side. This required the felling of a 70' alder tree, courtesy of WRG and with the express permission of the landowner. This tree had grown straight out of the wall and obviously prevented any restoration from progressing. The wing wall was restored completely with most of the final pointing being carried out by a Southampton University civil engineering student Fiona Harlow who spent one day a week at the lock during her summer holidays. The wharf wall awaits more work.

2012 will present new challenges once again. Before the next section of west chamber wall can be begun, a deep and extensive hole in the invert below the lower gate needs to be repaired. At this stage this task is the target for 2012. Until it is fully investigated the extent of the repair is unclear and therefore the amount of time available to proceed with the next section of chamber wall is uncertain.



Fiona with her trusty pointing trowel

Although progress may seem slow to outsiders real progress is being made down at Isfield lock. This progress is down to the regular group of volunteers from S.O.R.T. and in particular Paul Morris and Ted Lintott who between them make sure the work proceeds during all of the available working time.

In addition it has to be said that the IWA contribution towards the restoration programme in the form of insurance, the expertise in design from Roy Sutton and this year the availability of £2500 in a restricted donation fund courtesy of a S.O.R.T. member has enabled the restoration to proceed with confidence.

S.O.R.T looks forward to 2012 and can see that there may be just a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. *(Text and photos courtesy of Terry Owen)*

We are also now looking at opening up a "second front" at Irongates Lock, which is located in the water meadows below Sheffield Park Garden. In partnership with the National Trust, we have undertaken a survey of the lock site and this has been sent to Andy Jesson, the head gardener at Sheffield Park. Initial work will concentrate on tidying the site and removing any trees and shrubs that are damaging the remaining lock structure. Work is now in abeyance however whilst we discuss future plans with the Environment Agency (see later news item below).

Restoration Appeal

Estimated annual expenditure on each section of the west wall renovation was £1300. However, such good progress has been made again in 2011 that funds have been eaten up much quicker than we had hoped – to the tune of nearly £3,000 once again.

As mentioned in the restoration report above, in 2011 SORT was helped by the gift of 2 larger donations that materially enhanced the restoration work at Isfield. We are very grateful for this and for IWA's assistance in making the gifts possible. SORT is now registered to receive Charitable Taxation with HMRC. This will substantially improve future funding as the taxation at 20% is now recoverable on any donation made with a Gift Aid declaration and gifts of Property and Shares can be made to SORT with substantial taxation benefits to the donor. Our Gift Aid claims going back 6 years are now underway and a substantial amount will be recovered from HMRC in this way. We are very grateful to our Chairman, our

Treasurer and our new Membership Secretary Ken Pollock for their work in achieving these refunds. Whilst this may all seem to be very good news and we are very careful with all our expenditure, the bills continue to roll in and all members are urged to consider helping us with our 2012 restoration work by making further donations, if possibly via Gift Aid.

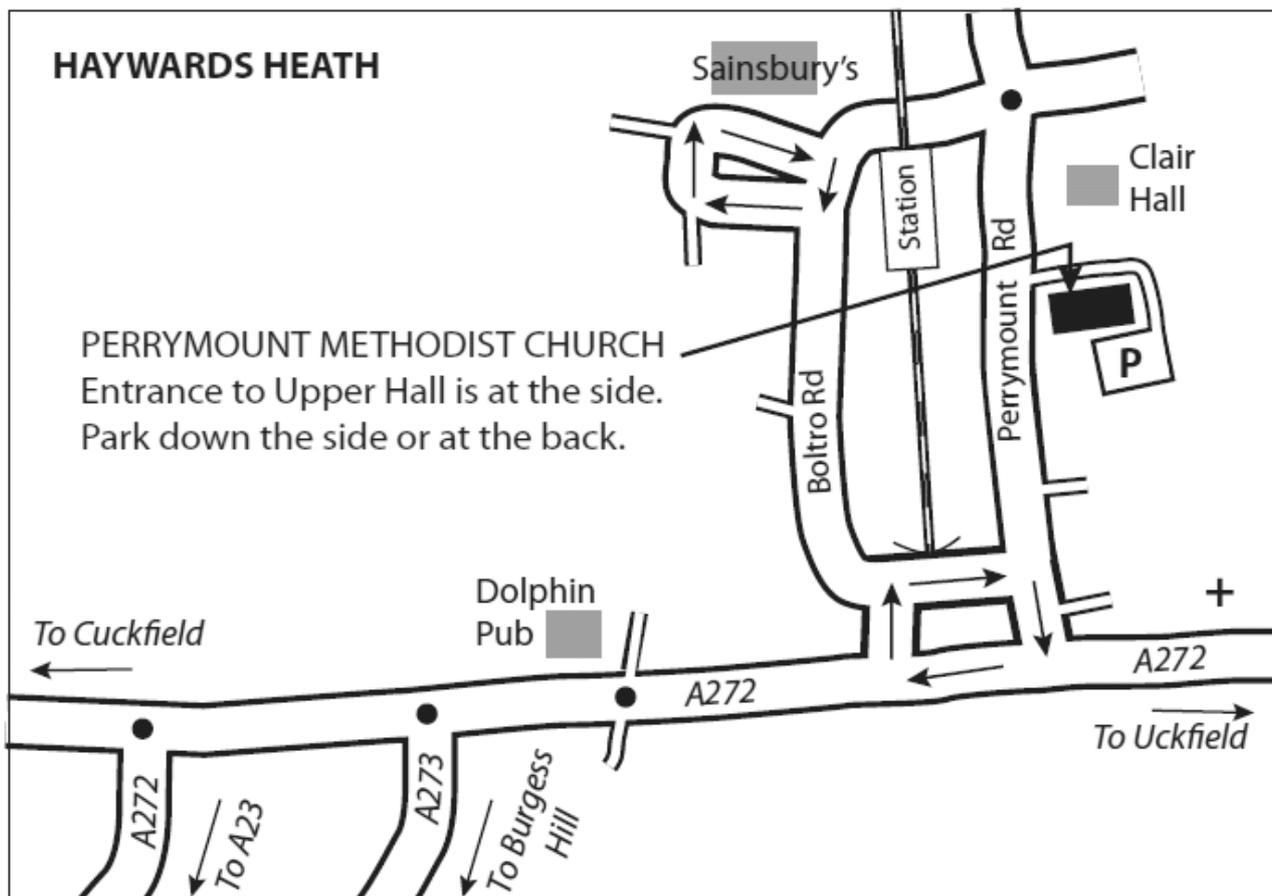
The appeal for work-party volunteers for the tasks ahead of us is now even more important. If you can help in any way please contact our volunteer coordinator Ted Lintott, via e-mail at tedl@talktalk.net, or by telephone on 01444 414413, or Ken Pollock (contact details at the bottom of this Newsletter). Some sort of sponsorship deal with a tool-hire company or building materials firm would be especially useful!

Autumn Public Meeting

The Autumn 2011 Meeting of SORT will take place on **Thursday 17th November**, 7:00 for 7:30pm, in the **Upper Room, Haywards Heath Methodist Church**, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 3DN (near the railway station, about 200yds up from the Clair Hall, see map below).

Linda Wilkinson, Chairman of the Chichester Canal Trust, will give a talk on the Chichester Ship Canal. This will be a joint meeting with Solent & Arun Branch and Kent & East Sussex Branch of the IWA.

Please put the date in your diaries now, look forward to seeing you there.



Re-engaging with the Environment Agency (EA)

Members of the SORT management committee Bob Draper, Hazel Lintott and Roy Sutton met with the EA at their Worthing offices on 11th October. A free-ranging discussion covered SORT's main aims and objectives and how these allied or clashed with those of the EA. We have defined many areas where our aims are congruent or complimentary. In particular we have offered to work with the EA's consultants on their major initiative supporting their pilot scheme for the Water Framework Directive in the South-East of England in the Adur and Ouse catchments. This is the MORPH project (Middle Ouse Restoration of Physical Habitats), for which central funding is available from Defra. This project addresses up to 10 sites on the River Ouse where the EA wishes to improve the river habitat or water quality through improvements, renovation or removal of various structures in the river, in particular fish passes, sewage outfalls, weirs and so on. Our offer to assist in the early stages of analysing and planning for these works has been accepted and we will be working with the EA's consultants Royal Haskoning in the detailed design of works at those sites amongst the 10 that have most relevance to SORT and its aims. Our first meeting with them is on 8th November; we will report back on our progress in due course. We are hopeful that this work will avoid any more disasters such as the summary removal of Fletching Mill weir in 2010. The EA tell us that they are striving for a "no regrets" solution on each site where all interested parties are catered for in the adopted design and works undertaken.

Your Committee look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our Autumn Public Meeting – Thursday 17th November from 7pm in Haywards Heath, details as given overleaf.