



Christmas and New Year are not that far behind us but now seem ages ago. The terrible weather hung around too long and I hope your carpets stayed dry while you enjoyed your celebrations.

This is a short interim update to let you know we have not been washed down the Ouse in the storms! There'll probably be three newsletters in 2014 and all for a tenner or so. Such VFM for a small membership fee!!

I must thank SORT member David Hodgkinson, now living in Florida, who responded to my brazen begging in the last bulletin for scaffold poles and a gazebo. He has very generously made a donation to cover these purchases. Thanks, David – from David (and the rest of the committee).

Also, our thanks to IWAKES for the £350-00 they gave us at our joint meeting in November following our participation in the National Trailboat Festival they ran at Bodiam last May.

## **Admin News**

Membership renewals are taking place at the moment, many by bank standing order and others more traditionally. Our thanks to those of you who have already renewed. If you do not already pay your annual membership subscription by standing order, perhaps you would consider doing so in future years? It would save both you and us time, printing and postage costs. A personalised standing order set-up form is included with this mailing if you receive your Newsletter by post and don't already pay by this method. Those members who have given us an e-mail address can request their own form by e-mailing the Membership Secretary ([membership@sxouse.org.uk](mailto:membership@sxouse.org.uk)).

SORT is now registered with Localgiving.com, which is another way of donating to local charities and community groups. You can find us at <https://localgiving.com/sort>. Now and again the Government provides money to Localgiving.com which enables enhancements to be made to donations. For example, through to the end of February localgiving.com were running their "Grow Your Tenner" campaign, whereby each £10 donation was match funded until the pot of £500,000 was exhausted. With Gift Aid, where applicable, SORT received £21-53 for each £10 donation (£22.50 less a 4.3% handling fee). Before the match funding ran out, SORT received 61 of these doubling-up donations, totalling over £1,325. Similar initiatives will crop up from time to time, so keep an eye on the Localgiving.com website. Or just use it as an easy way to make a secure donation to SORT – you can even set up a regular monthly donation if you so wish!

## **Dates for your diary**

### ***26 April 2014 – A walk to Hamsey Lock***

We shall be walking from Barcombe to Hamsey on 26 April. Low tide at Newhaven will be at 3pm so the lowest water level at the lock will be about an hour later, which is when we'll be able to see most of the little that is left of the structure. We'll be meeting in Barcombe at about 14:00 and wander off to Hamsey. We'll also have a look at the two Barcombe locks and Pikes Bridge at some point in our stroll. Precise meeting location and time will follow in due course.

## **Plans for 2014**

Ted is still finalising our work plans for the year but the main focus will be on rebuilding the gap in the centre of Isfield Lock's west chamber wall. Once the currently very high water levels have dropped, we'll pump out the chamber, remove the scaffolding and dig down further to see what is needed to rebuild this section. Hopefully, there'll be a good clay base we can use. If not, some piling will be required before we start laying bricks, pouring concrete and putting in more scaffolding – not necessarily in that order!



If we just used concrete behind the new area of wall, we might need as much as 50m<sup>3</sup> of concrete. However, we do have lots of broken bricks we can use to reduce the quantity of the concrete, without losing any strength, and save a pile of cash. I expect we will also be finishing off the remaining ground paddle (see below) and the stop plank channels.

Talking to the National Trust about progressing the restoration of Iron Gate Lock in Sheffield Park will also, I'm sure, take place and hopefully we'll draw up a plan of work and some sort of timescale. In the recent bad weather the area of the lock will have been inundated, as it was last year, so first tasks once the area has dried out will be digging out a safe access ramp to the chamber. We'll be using the spoil to form bunds at each end of the cut and a raised area for the base of a storage / welfare area so that we'll be able to remove the silt in the chamber and salvage the bricks, coping stones, etc from the silt safely and efficiently.

## **Work in Autumn 2013**

Our efforts were all concentrated on Isfield Lock but unhelpful weather stopped us doing more work on the gap in the chamber's west wall.



However, we were able to make the top west ground paddle and restore the wall around it. There is not much more to do now so its completion and restored operability is not far away. That will be both of them restored and working.

We also topped off the end of the Wharf Wall. The whole of the wall is now complete. The landscaping behind it will come much later. The culvert seems to be relatively intact, well it is as far as we can see – a couple of metres. We've been contemplating excavating above it to see how far it goes. Might this reveal the exact position of the paper mill that was closed in the 1850s? Perhaps a little too ambitious for us at this stage.



More shaping and improving of the banks / towpaths took place when weather and conditions allowed.

## **So, how much water was there?**

I couldn't get near Isfield or Iron Gate Locks recently and the road to the locks in Barcombe was closed. I therefore continued following the navigation and did manage to take some pictures from safe (almost dry) places around Hamsey.

### **Hamsey Lock**

Hamsey Lock is the first lock on the Sussex Ouse, a mile or so north of Lewes and about eight miles from Newhaven where the river flows into the English Channel. This derelict lock is only visible at low tide so stood no chance of being seen on 2 January 2014!



This photograph was taken an hour after a high tide at Newhaven of 7.2 metres – one of the highest of the month. The lock is under water just below right of the pylon base in the middle of the view. The banks of the cut can just be seen.

The main Lewes-London railway is at the bottom and Hamsey Church at the top.

## Key Contacts at SORT

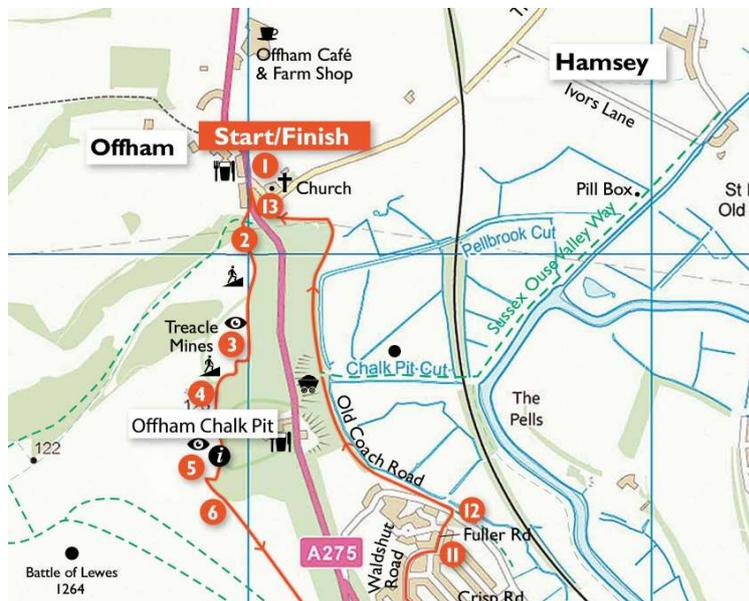
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## Volunteers Required!

We need more volunteers for our regular work parties on Thursdays and Saturdays. Please contact Ted Lintott, details above.

## And finally.... together with: A Bit of Local History!

Hamsey Lock is getting a bit of attention in this bulletin so I'm taking the easy way out on this section. Have a look at the Chalk Pit Inn's website for a bit of history on the way tonnes of lime were made from chalk from the quarry outside Offham. It was some way above the river and had to be delivered to barges for onward transport. It features one of the first funicular railways in Sussex. So, go to <http://www.chalk-pit-inn.co.uk/chalk-pit.wmv/chalk-pit.wmv.mov> to watch a short piece on the chalk pit, etc.



I've pinched this map from a document published on-line by [www.hamseyheritage.org.uk](http://www.hamseyheritage.org.uk) that is entitled Heritage Walks around Hamsey and contains lots of interesting information and easy to follow walks.

Hamsey Lock is not shown but is at the bottom end of the narrow cut, by Ouse in Sussex Ouse Valley Way – part of which we'll be walking on 26 April.

Treacle mines in Offham! Is that where treacle tarts come from?

That's all for now folks. Tot de volgende keer, as they say around the Dutch canals, and thanks for supporting SORT – David Evans.