

2015...a landmark year for SORT at Isfield Lock?

Spring is upon us and another year lies ahead for the restoration work down at Isfield Lock. The conditions over this last winter have made it impossible to make any real progress with the work because the lock and surrounding area flood regularly during the winter bad weather. But the structure and site have survived and now await continued progress with the restoration and if the summer weather permits it this could be a significant year for the lock and SORT. The west wall re-build should be completed this year which will conclude the re-building of the actual lock structure. We have come a long way since the lock was first exposed to the public and SORT members who walked up river from Isfield village for a site inspection in 2004. Eleven years later and there is much light at the end of the tunnel. But to achieve this goal and push on with the other work still required Ted Lintott and his restoration team will once again require all the help we can offer.

A.G.M. and Skittles Night

The Annual General Meeting will take place at 'The Royal Oak' in Barcombe on Thursday **16th April**. Official Notice of the meeting will be sent to you soon and those planning to attend are requested to let Bob Draper, our Chairman, know.

As with last year we have also booked the use of the wonderful skittles alley at the pub and all members are invited to join Committee members and those attending the AGM in a game or two of this ancient, entertaining and enjoyable pub game.

The Royal Oak serves excellent food and so the opportunity is there for you to enjoy some pub food at the same time. It is also your opportunity to talk to Ted Lintott and other Committee members about the restoration at Isfield and any other relevant SORT matters.

IWA Raffle

In the last Newsletter I highlighted last Autumn's IWA Raffle which aimed to benefit restoration projects run by IWA Corporate Members that were nominated by those purchasing the tickets. Well I am please to say that SORT has recently received a cheque for £146 from the IWA as a result of those nominations. This will be paid into the restoration fund and put to good use over the coming months. May I take this opportunity to thank all those who bought tickets and nominated SORT.

Membership

SORT Membership currently stands at around 90. Now membership is important for any organisation and our annual membership fees and donations are invaluable in helping to finance our aims. If you know of anyone who might be interested in becoming a member why not persuade them to join.

Let's reach 100 members this year.



"Ted comes to the rescue" (find out how on page 4)

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Diary Dates

2015

Thurs 16th April

AGM & Skittles

Sat 26th Sep

Lock Walk

Nov

Autumn Meeting

(t.b.a)

ISFIELD LOCK—End of a Season

All major work at Isfield Lock was forced to cease with the approach of Christmas as the winter weather got the better of the working parties and made further progress impossible. The site flooded and the mud became a total handicap.

Occasional site visits are being maintained to check on the site and to carry out routine maintenance and cleaning of equipment and tools and of the site itself. No work will commence now until late March or April depending upon the underfoot and weather conditions during late winter and early spring.

But 2014 **was** a good year. Despite the constant call by Project Manager Ted Lintott for more volunteers the hardy few who have worked Thursdays and Saturdays in all conditions have pushed on with the work and achieved much.

The last Newsletter reported on the work carried out during the summer which reached a point whereby the rebuild of the west chamber wall, which has been the main focus of restoration for the last three years, had begun. When the work ceased at the end of the season the rebuild had progressed a little further but was effectively brought to a halt as the working conditions worsened.

However we remain confident that the west wall can be completed during 2015 even though the work has provided probably the biggest challenge in terms of work and materials required since restoration began.

In anticipation of completing the wall repair, questions have been asked as to whether we have considered a strategy for actually finishing the restoration. However there remains much to do on site which will occupy our attention for some while yet. The site will require landscaping and the upstream cut still requires profiling completion. The downstream ramp, put into place at the start of the work back in 2006 will require removal, a task that may well be beyond the limits of the equipment we currently have on site. I recall how at the time tons of hardcore were imported to the site to allow the ramp to be built after earlier attempts merely sunk into the mud and disappeared. The eventual success of the finished ramp was obviously vital to the clearance of the chamber and work required on the chamber walls. Soon we will have to remove it and of course dispose of the spoil.

That then leaves two further problems. Firstly there is the concrete dam which we believe was installed during WW2. It will require demolition and removal but a decision has already been made that it will not be taken away until the last minute when it has been decided what type of gates are to be installed. As it stands it currently provides a barrier to water and debris for the chamber and a support to the lock structure.

Then there is the question of lock gates. Where do we get the money? They will be far and above the most costly part of the entire restoration. Who do we get to build them? Could we build them ourselves? Could we source the wood ourselves? There will be major decisions to be made when it comes to completing the restoration by installing gates.

But its not all about the lock itself. The container is showing signs of serious erosion after many years of service. It was purchased for £100 back in 2006, and was hauled on the back of a trailer towed by Paul Morris in his Land Rover across country lanes and fields to be installed on site as our secure equipment store. We fear that the only way we will be able to move it off site will be to break it up and take it away in pieces. Another task for the future.



2006: Building the ramp and installing the then white painted container

Xmas Dinner

A wonderful three-course Christmas lunch was enjoyed by the SORT working party volunteers at 'The Royal Oak' in Barcombe prior to Christmas last year to celebrate not only the festive time of year but a successful year of restoration at Isfield lock. A good choice of food was on offer and it was agreed by all that the pub did us proud with the quality and quantity served up. So successful in fact that we have already made enquiries to return there at the end of 2015 for a similar lunch.

Autumn Meeting

Last November SORT held its annual joint Meeting with IWAKES at Haywards Heath and enjoyed a fascinating talk and slide-show by Colin Smith, the co-author of the book 'Sussex Watermills'.

Few can have more knowledge of the subject and we were treated to a historic journey through Sussex, its rivers and some of the many mills that once provided the essential power and livelihood for the County. With an obvious personal knowledge of all the mills of Sussex Colin gave us an insight into their past owners, their particular use and the present-day condition and use of the buildings that have been left behind. Many of the mills discussed were relevant to the Ouse. Such is his knowledge it became apparent that he was required to limit the extent of his talk to fit into our evening time schedule.

Afterwards he stayed behind to answer questions and talk to members attending the meeting.



Colin Smith—Guest speaker at SORT/IWAKES Autumn Meeting

SORT Walk to Iron Gate Lock

As part of the plans to enable SORT Members to walk to all the lock structures or sites on the Ouse navigation the latest walk took us across Sheffield Park N.T. land to the southern limit of their property and the site of Iron Gate lock on the River Ouse.

The lock lies along a short cut off the river and is in poor condition. During winter the area and lock site regularly floods. Many will know that SORT spent time at the site during 2012 and with the help of N.T. staff from Sheffield Park the site was cleared and the lock structure exposed.

Although no work has been carried out over the past 2 years and the vegetation has begun to take over again, there continues to be a possibility that future restoration could take place and SORT are in continued communication with the N.T. over the future of the lock.

The three mile walk to the site was enjoyed by those attending who were able to see for themselves what lies ahead with any future restoration plans at Iron Gate.



Two views of Iron Gate lock. An overgrown site pictured during the recent walk to view the lock and a flooded site taken two years ago during winter after the site had been cleared.



Roy Sutton—Volunteer of the Month—September 2014

A bit of rather good news that nearly slipped by without becoming general knowledge, was that Roy Sutton, SORT's very own IWA Observer and engineering expert, was voted the IWA Volunteer of the Month award for the month of September 2014. From personal knowledge I know Roy spends an extraordinary amount of his own time working on various work parties across the country as well as attending all the SORT Committee meetings and visiting, advising and working hands-on down at the restoration project at Isfield lock.

He is also always on hand to offer his expert opinion and advice when it comes to working alongside or meeting with outside bodies and organisations in relation to SORT's work on the Ouse. Well done Roy and congratulations on the award.

Lock Walk—Dean's Mill, Pimm's Lock and East Mascalls lock

The next Lock Walk will take place on **Saturday 26th September 2015**. The walk will start at **2pm** from the car park behind Lindfield Church. Turn off the B2028 High Street down Brushes Lane / Dukes Road, the car park is at the end of The Wilderness which is just 50m on the left.

The walk is about 4 miles in length and will visit the site of East Mascalls lock but before that, and with special permission from the mill owner, Nick Bloomfield, we will visit Dean's Mill in Lindfield and the adjacent Pimm's Lock.

Pimm's lock, named after the owner of the paper mill that once stood on the site, cannot be accessed from the public footpath to the north of the river so this visit is rather special.

The walk is along footpaths, across fields and firm tracks and paths with just a couple of stiles. As we will be visiting private property can we ask that no dogs are brought along on the walk.

A reminder will be sent out to everyone nearer the date but we do look forward to as many of you as are able to come along and enjoy what should be an interesting walk and viewing of this unique site.



Dean's Mill



River Ouse towards Pimm's Lock & Dean's Mill

Grow Your Tenner

The 'Grow Your Tenner' initiative, where for a limited time you could donate £10 via localgiving.com, has just come to an end after three months and has once again proven successful for raising money desperately required by SORT for its future restoration plans. The scheme matches every £10 donation with another £10 and adding in Gift Aid we actually received £23 for every £10 donated.

More than £1000 was raised during this initiative which is considerable and invaluable to our restoration. We are very grateful to one particular donor, you know who you are, whose generosity has been exceptional. SORT thank you.

ISFIELD LOCK GATES

If you ever wondered whatever happened to the remains of the lock gates removed from Isfield lock during the clearance of the silt from the chamber in the early stages of restoration well here they are. Indeed they have rested in the same position since they were removed. They sit against a wall of outbuildings at Vuggles Farm and are in a sorry state of gradual further decay as time and weather conditions are not so supportive of preservative as the wonderful air-tight, wet silt conditions they rested in for 150 years prior to their discovery.

Efforts to find a good home for them have been exhausted and so they are doomed to a life lying against a hidden farm building.

TED'S FISH

The 'one that got away' picture featured on page 1 shows Ted doing his best for the fish population of the Ouse down at the Isfield lock site. This two-foot pike found itself stranded in the shallow water of the cut north of the lock after one of the floods that inundated the lock site last Autumn. Armed only with a pair of rubber gloves our intrepid hero waded into the water and after a short chase and battle to restrain the fish managed to capture it before posing for the must-have photograph and returning the fish to the river.

I hope the fish was grateful for the efforts Ted made to rescue it.



The Gates—Since the photograph was taken SORT have covered the gates to help protect them from the elements

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