



NEWSLETTER

Editor: Terry Owen

October 2016

LIFE BEYOND ISFIELD?

After over 10 years of labour carried out by SORT's small but enthusiastic band of volunteers work at Isfield Lock has wound down, although to complete the restoration there is still much to do.

During more recent times SORT has explored other locks on the Ouse and weighed up the possibility of each of them becoming a future full restoration project. I can here report the results of those enquiries to date (see page 2).

But firstly the latest news from **Isfield Lock**. Sadly I have to report that over the summer holiday period the site suffered some acts of vandalism. Apart from the theft of some tools from the storage unit several years ago, tools which were subsequently recovered nearby, the remote site on the banks of the Ouse has been left alone by those who wish to cause trouble and loss to others. However between July and September our plastic patio tables and chairs were damaged and thrown into the lock, and the new lock ladder, which awaits installation, suffered the same fate. Additionally the information leaflet holder offering leaflets to passers-by went missing. These are relatively minor acts of vandalism but none the less damaging to our work and the site. The fact that they occurred during the school summer holidays points the finger towards the probable suspects.

But what about the restoration itself? As reported above, the work has wound down already, before the approaching winter weather that usually forces this action. The area around the lock has been tidied, landscaped and grassed over. The fate of the storage unit and 'horsebox' site office will be determined by the direction of future projects and timing of the outstanding work.

Fencing has been erected between the lock site and the public footpath. All remaining bricks have been cleaned, carefully stacked and covered. The lock ladder has been recovered from the lock, not without some difficulty, and successfully installed.

The upper cut, having been profiled and cleared, has filled and provides an impressive insight into how it might look when one day the lock is operating again (see below).

So what work does remain? The actual lock chamber, aside from the removal of the WW2 concrete barrier at the top end of the lock, is virtually complete. There is of course the huge task of gate installation but that will be a matter for future discussion and will be an expense that will severely test the finances of SORT.



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Many of you will be aware of the basic clearance and explorative work carried out at **Iron Gate Lock** on National Trust land at Sheffield Park. For a time it was thought to be the front runner in the race for SORT's attention, and several days were spent by our work force in conjunction with N.T. staff clearing the lock of trees, scrub and rubbish. Bricks were also recovered and stacked.

But unfortunately, at the time of reporting the idea is on the back-burner and no work has been carried out for about two years. The N.T. commissioned a full option assessment for the potential restoration from the Museum of London's Archaeology unit. That report was published in August this year and was disappointing as far as SORT's ambitions are concerned. In brief it concluded that the option they were recommending did not feature the full restoration of the lock. It suggested "recording and stabilizing the existing remains." In their words this would have "very little impact or change" to the ecology or the landscape and would be of "low cost with small fee for maintenance and recording". SORT have answered some of the points brought up by the option assessment and have held meetings with the N.T. since its publication, but the immediate future restoration plans we had hoped for at Iron Gate Lock seem to have stalled for the time being.

However within the past 12 months we have also explored and worked on another option and gone beyond just viewing the site, assessing the condition of the structure and making ownership enquiries. **Polebay Lock** lies west of Sheffield Park and east of The Sloop pub at Freshfield, deep in Wapsbourne Wood on the northern edge of land owned by Ian Johnstone, someone who has sympathies with our restoration objectives. The north bank of the river at this point is owned by Freshfield Mill Farm.

Working parties have cleared the site and invasive trees have been felled and cleared. This work exposed a lock structure that offered opportunities for a full and successful restoration. But examination of the Environment Agency (E.A.) main maps by Roy Sutton has shown that both arms of the river at this point are designated 'main river'. Therefore any structural work would require the permission of the E.A., something that would probably be impossible to achieve under the current regime and something that puts any ideas SORT has for the lock also on the back burner.

The recovery of many of the original-build bricks from within the lock chamber will not begin until a final decision on future plans for the lock is made.



Polebay Lock—looking upstream



Polebay Lock—looking downstream

Oil Mills Lock, which lies about 500m south of The Anchor Inn and 1km north of Barcombe Mills, has also been visited (*see opposite*). It lies on land currently being redeveloped and on which a new property is being built after the old cottage burned down two years ago. Unfortunately following an inspection by Roy Sutton it was discovered that the lock has been re-surfaced thus reducing its overall size and depth. It would require a complete re-build if ever the lock became a serious contender for restoration.

And so the search for a suitable lock for our next restoration continues. There is always of course a danger with a volunteer work force that without a project and a purpose to their volunteering, enthusiasm could be dampened or lost. We need a project, something to focus on.

You can rest assured that over the winter months we will be seeking that project which will focus the enthusiasm and energy of our volunteers and committee. Isfield Lock stands as an example of what can be achieved by so few in a relatively short period of time.



Oil Mills Lock

‘Grow Your Tenner’

The ‘Grow your Tenner’ initiative is already with us again. During past years SORT has benefitted by over £1000 from the scheme. All the money donated goes into the restoration fund.

Between 10am on Tuesday 18th October and 5pm on Thursday 17th November, or whenever the fund runs out if sooner you can donate.

So to donate £10 or more go to

<https://localgiving.org/charity/sort/>

For every individual donating £10 the scheme matches that with another £10 and by adding in Gift Aid SORT actually receives about £23 for every £10 donation.

So if you have a spare ‘tenner’ donate it to our restoration fund and see it grow?



Ted wandering and wondering where we go next

SORT’s Autumn Meeting:

Thursday, 17 November, 2016. 7:00pm for 7:30pm

In the Upper Room, Perrymount Methodist Church, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 3DN (near the railway station, about 200yds up from the Clair Hall)

"Railways of the Sussex Ouse Valley": Sam Bee (of the Bluebell Railway) will give a talk on the coming of the railways to the Ouse Valley in the mid-nineteenth century, and their impact on the Navigation.

This will be a joint meeting with Solent & Arun Branch and Kent & East Sussex Branch of the IWA.

Hear about any update on current restoration projects

Refreshments will be available.

There is ample parking round the back of the church.

Please enter by the side door.

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

SORT COMMITTEE

A vacancy and some changes

There will be a vacancy on the Committee in the near future.

Julie Draper, after over 12 years as our Treasurer, wishes to stand down. So we are looking out for a replacement to take over as soon as possible

Obviously some experience in money matters and bookkeeping would be beneficial to anyone applying to take on the task of looking after SORT’s finances.

If you are interested please contact our Chairman, Bob Draper (chairman@sxouse.org.uk).

Other changes on the Committee will see the membership taken over by Terry Owen in 2017 and the web-site updated and over-seen by Derek Wright.

Lock Walks

The next 'lock walk' will take place on Saturday 6th May 2017. The walk will start from the public car park at Ardingly Reservoir at 2pm and we will make our way across mainly farmland and along a section of the old railway line to view Fulling Mill lock. The walk is about 5 miles in length.

This is a rare opportunity to see this lock which lies on private land and is thanks to permission granted by the owner of Fulling Mill Farm.

Our last walk took place in April this year and we were able to walk through Wapsbourne Woods and down to view Polebay Lock which at that stage had not had any clearance work carried out. A dozen or so SORT members enjoyed the woodland walk along the Sussex Ouse Valley Way from Scaynes Hill to the lock (see below).



Join us next Spring to see what Fulling Mill Lock has to offer?

THE SORT NAVVIES CHRISTMAS LUNCH 2016

We will be returning to the **Royal Oak** pub in Barcombe for the annual 'Navvies' Christmas lunch. the third year in a row, on Thursday 8th December. They offer a full Christmas meal with roast turkey and a Christmas pudding as well as alternatives including a vegetarian option.

So if you fancy joining the annual festive gathering of the 'navvies' put the date in your diary and contact Ted Lintott as soon as possible. He is already taking bookings and your food orders.

Have you got anything you think should be published? If so please send me your stories, memories, photographs or thoughts for possible inclusion in the next edition of this Newsletter. I'll do my best to publish it.

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