



**Sussex Ouse
Restoration Trust**

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Terry Owen

October 2015

Ted's Gearbox Puzzle ...

During the summer months, when the continued restoration of Isfield lock was in full swing and the rebuilding of the chamber wall was approaching completion, all work involving our dumper had to be put on hold when a serious problem with the gearbox was detected.

Despite all the efforts of our Project Manager Ted Lintott to sort the problem out himself, necessitating much use of that wonder product *swarfega*, we were eventually forced to concede that the gearbox had to be seen and treated by the experts.

So for 4 or 5 weeks the team down at the lock had to make do without the dumper whilst it was repaired.

That presented our restoration fund a hefty bill, but nowhere near as hefty as it would have been if one of our members, Kevin Murphy, hadn't stepped into the breach to undertake the actual repair work.



Ted tackles a different problem at Isfield lock.....a faulty gearbox !

'Grow Your Tenner'

The 'Grow your Tenner' initiative is nearly with us again. Last year SORT benefitted by over £1000 from the scheme which all went into the restoration fund.

Between 10am 13th October and 5pm 18th November, or whenever the fund runs out if sooner, you can donate £10 through localgiving.com.

For every £10 donated 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?

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

CONTACT DETAILS

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2015 AUTUMN MEETING

On **Thursday 19th November** the annual Autumn joint meeting of SORT and IWAKES will take place at the **Upper Room, Perrymount Methodist Church, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 3DN.**

There will be an illustrated presentation by members of the SORT Committee on our work at Sutton Hall Lock, Isfield.

Our Chairman, Bob Draper, will talk on the History of the Trust and the Navigation, IWA Honorary Consultant Engineer Roy Sutton will talk us through the technical side of the restoration, Project Manager Ted Lintott will bring us up to date with the restoration works and yours truly, Terry Owen will offer up a short presentation on the history of the Isfield lock site and the former paper mill.

Teas and coffees and biscuits will be available to members and a fund raising raffle will take place.

Meet at 7pm for a 7-30pm start

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**Diary Dates
2015**

**Thursday
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**Thursday
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ISFIELD (SUTTON HALL) LOCK

Restoration work on Isfield Lock has not suffered as a result of the poor summer we have experienced this year.

Work has been maintained throughout the summer months and nearly all the objectives set for 2015 have been achieved. Completing the rebuild of the remaining 5m section of the west chamber wall was the top objective and I can report that has been achieved.

To give some idea of the amount of materials required on such a task I can also report that 45 tons of concrete and 20 tons of old half bricks (or 'plums' as they are known) were used to complete this last section.

The lock side has been back-filled, landscaped and the newly-sown grass seed has already taken. The resulting picture is so much different to what we have been used to as the site takes on a whole new, dare I say, smarter appearance.



The completed west wall



Isfield lock September 2015

The upper lock cut has also been cleared and the towpath raised and re-instated along its length and the long-awaited stop plank groove liners have been delivered and have been put into place.

All this work was achieved despite a 5 week period when our trusty and hard working dumper was out of action with a broken gearbox. I am happy to report that the problem has been fixed and the dumper is now back in action.

Future plans are now on the table and these include sourcing timber for and building the lock gates, sourcing the timber for the stop planks, sourcing and fitting a lock ladder, putting into place safety fencing along the length of the lock and thinking about an interpretation board on the lock side to spread the word about the history of the Ouse Navigation and the work that S.O.R.T. are involved in.

So there is still plenty of work for Ted Lintott and his small but very capable group of restoration volunteers down at Isfield lock, although they now have their sights set on Iron Gate Lock on National Trust land at Sheffield Park as reported opposite.

TEN YEARS ON

This summer has been an important landmark in the work being carried out on the restoration of the lock chamber at Isfield.

The work has been completed in 10 seasons since the lock site was cleared as work began in earnest in 2006. I don't think any of us involved in those early days could have foreseen exactly how much work lay ahead.

Two early photographs make for interesting viewing. Was it really THAT bad?





PAUL

Looking back through the many hundreds of photographs I have in my 'Isfield collection' I came across several of former project manager Paul Morris.

As has been said before the first years of the restoration would not have progressed as they did without the time, work and commitment that Paul put into the project. I certainly have many happy memories of days spent at the site under the guidance of Paul.

With Paul's passing early in 2012, SORT were extraordinarily lucky to have had Ted Lintott take over the task of project manager with equal enthusiasm.

Those of us who have worked at the lock know what a thankless task it sometimes is.

This picture of Paul sums him up, six feet down a hole, spade in hand, no working gloves, and mud everywhere.

I now repeat what I said in the last Newsletter. What tasks could you get involved in on the restoration sites at Isfield or Iron Gate? None are very glamorous, all probably involve a little dust or mud but all are important to the overall progress of the restoration. You could be helping to mix concrete, shift bricks and hardcore around the sites, cleaning bricks for reuse or maybe just helping to keep the site clear of scrub and encroaching vegetation. Join the working parties, you will love it!

IRON GATE LOCK

We have known for sometime that Iron Gate lock situated on the southern edges of the grounds of Sheffield Park Gardens is a possible future full restoration project.

Although little work has been carried out at the lock over the past two years regular site visits have been made and this winter we will be making site visits to discuss with the National Trust the next stages of any work to be carried out there.

Below are two recent photographs taken at the site which emphasise the amount of work that lies ahead.



THE SORT NAVVIES CHRISTMAS LUNCH 2015

Our Annual General Meeting was held at *The Royal Oak* pub in Barcombe on Thursday 16th April followed by an evening of skittles in the pub's skittle alley.

We will be returning to the same venue for the annual Christmas lunch. Following a great meal there last year to celebrate the same occasion we decided long ago to make a return visit. As well as offering a full Christmas meal with roast turkey and a Christmas pudding the pub offers alternatives including a vegetarian option.

So if you fancy joining the annual festive gathering of the 'navvies' put the date in your diary. Nearer the time numbers will be taken and the menu made available for the pre-ordering of your food choice.

Lock Walks

The series of short walks visiting the lock sites along the Ouse Navigation continues. In September 15 members gathered in Lindfield and in glorious sunshine headed for Pym's (Pim's) Lock close to Dean's Mill just a stones throw north of the village.

The lock chamber is fairly intact but is very overgrown with surrounding trees and scrub. However the walls of the chamber have been treated to a concrete screed and a series of graded concrete steps have been laid along the lock floor.

The lock is situated on the river course and the water flow is controlled by an automatic sluice gate.

Closer examination of the lock walls where the concrete covering has fallen away revealed a surprise. The lock appears to have been constructed of stone which as far as our knowledge of other locks goes makes it the only lock on the Ouse so constructed. To confirm this a closer examination would be required.

As a real bonus and a treat we were then allowed access to Dean's Mill, courtesy of the owner, film director Nick Bloomfield. The corn water mill stood alongside the former paper mill and actually operated until the 1980's. As a result most of the working mechanism and other paraphernalia remains within the building. However the wheel requires a complete restoration, something we understand the owner is contemplating.

Upon leaving the mill we walked east to East Mascalls following the river, to view the site of East Mascalls lock and the former water mill; Both have long since disappeared from the landscape without trace. The 3 mile walk concluded by following the river once again back to Lindfield.



Pym's Lock reveals stone walls?



Dean's mill's water wheel



Pym's lock from the sluice gate

Open University Paper

Whilst researching for a paper she was submitting towards her Open University MA degree Rosalind Eyben stumbled upon Isfield lock and engaged Ted in conversation and picked his brains about the Ouse and the Navigation. He in turn referred her to my good self and I was able to help her with her research.

The end result was a 5492 word essay entitled "Gentlemanly Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution in the Sussex Ouse Valley". Quite a mouthful and I will be honest when I say it is quite a read as well!

Ted features in the essay by way of a splendid photograph taken at Isfield lock. However where Rosalind lets herself down is the fact that she states that Ted is from the 'Ouse Conservation Society', an unfortunate error on her part.

Bluebell Railway

The May edition of the Bluebell Railway Newsletter featured an article about the Ouse Navigation and the efforts being made by SORT to restore Isfield lock and more close to home plans to possibly restore Iron Gate lock in the future. Mention was made of the exciting possibility of a future link between Sheffield Park station, the restored Iron Gate lock and the gardens at Sheffield Park.

It's good to know that the Bluebell Railway and the National Trust are sympathetic to our long term ambitions.

Spreading the word

In April this year, 50 walkers undertaking the 42 miles of the Sussex Ouse Valley Way as part of the 10 year Anniversary celebrations of that long distance footpath, ventured upon Isfield lock and the restoration team.

They were treated to a 15 minute talk and conducted tour of the site by Ted (shown below). I know this was very much enjoyed and appreciated and as a result three walkers immediately signed up to become members of SORT.

For those who are not aware the public footpath that passes by the lock is part of the route of the Sussex Ouse Valley Way.



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.