

Mick's Musings

Changing the Lock(down)

So, for the first time in our 23-year history the AGM has been postponed! (see page 6). This will not come as much of a surprise as most other gatherings throughout the year have met with the same fate, and it has always been our first concern to keep our members safe.

However, no matter how threatening and overpowering the events of the past few months have been, some of the spin-offs as far as the society is concerned have been downright beneficial.

People who once could go out freely were confined to their homes (and I can vouch for this) get bored very quickly. Once the TV starts showing repeats, and you've completed your last jigsaw, most people turn to the internet for light relief. Anyone who has a waterway interest or wants to know what is happening locally, seem to have found our Facebook page and become MOWS Facebook members. This in turn has resulted in some people extending this to become full society members and long may this trend continue.

Our website too gets many hits and people are generous in praise of how informative it all is.

Our committee meetings, which were always held at a local hotel, are now out of necessity held via Zoom and e-mail has proved to be a worthy extra to the telephone for that important message. Once the lockdown eased our work parties, have been co-ordinated via our online volunteer database, and vital parts of our AGM content will be circulated via e-mail wherever possible.

So, despite everything, the lockdown has been, on balance, somewhat beneficial to the society.

Nothing can replace face-to-face interaction and I look forward to the day that can happen, but in the meantime (and thanks to the internet) we're doing very nicely thank you!

Mick

Mick Clowes

Work Party at Thrussington Mill Lock

At the invitation of the owners of Thrussington Mill, three of MOWS volunteers went along to look into the possibility of holding several work parties within the lock chamber.

The plan was to completely clear the chamber of 150 years' worth of silt, vegetation, saplings and trees, repair what was repairable and to reinstate a recently acquired lock gate (we believe from the Soar Navigation). The final act would be to install a fence on the towpath side and an interpretation board to allow passing walkers on the Leicestershire Round footpath to appreciate the structure in the context of its working life.

The lock has had a chequered past, as the towpath side wall was used as a "practise piece" for the Royal Engineers to test out explosives during WW2 and is now in a ruined state. Despite all this the investigating team decided it was a project well worth doing and a work party was organised for the following Sunday.

Lock gate rescued from the Soar Navigation - some tlc required via a repaint, dummy balance beam and paddle



Welcome to the jungle!

The initial work party volunteers were divided into two teams. One worked on clearing the existing lock wall, whilst the other worked on the opposite side removing vegetation and saplings to let in the light.

The present floor of the chamber consists of about a metre of silt, but is flat and gave a good working platform.

Thrussington Mill Lock chamber – there's definitely a lock wall in there somewhere ... promise!

A massive bonfire (always an essential) saw the vegetation disappear, but reveal a tree stump and several large stone blocks amid a carpet of old bricks from the towpath side wall. This leads us to assume that the blast was directed towards the existing wall to minimise flying debris.



As the photographs show, the initial clearance brought dramatic results revealing brickwork in various stages of disrepair and beautifully dressed stone blocks making up the quoin and gate recesses at either end.



Gate recess showing beautifully dressed stone blocks forming the quoin

Work party 2 saw the mill owner using his digger and dumper truck to effect further clearance whilst the volunteers cut back towpath side trees to give sight lines into the chamber, and started to attack the vast swathes of ivy that sit atop the extant side wall. This revealed the collar-retaining slot hand-dressed into the coping. Tower scaffolding was erected to allow work to be done on a piece of overhanging brickwork and just before the end of the session a great discovery was made. Whilst attempting to remove a massive stone block from the floor of the chamber the digger uncovered one of the blocks that made up the quoin recess on the towpath side and a measurement across of 14'6" confirmed this to be the match to the other side.



Additionally, the large block we were removing turned out to have the quoin recess too showing it to be part of the stack, and two nearby blocks turned out to be others from the same stack including the coping, with the distinctive carved collar retaining slot. Amazing.





Upstream paddle hole revealed

Meanwhile at the other end, a paddle hole was uncovered with the brickwork all intact and leaving us plenty to explore. As further work parties are held (Covid-19 rules permitting), we look forward to more fascinating discoveries as, bit by bit, the old lock gives up its secrets.

Collar-retaining recess cut into towpath side



Similar recess on opposite existing wall

This is an ongoing project and further reports and photos will appear in future newsletters. The society would like to thank the owners of Thrussington Mill (and their neighbours) for their invitation and hospitality.

Eye Kettleby Lock Site

After narrowly missing out with our bid to buy the Eye Kettleby Lock site, we have taken steps to contact the new owner. He wishes to remain anonymous at this point, but knowing of the covenant existing to allow restoration and after appraising him of the society's future plans, he has expressed an interest and may be willing to assist in some way in the future. Further details will be announced when we know more.

AGM Cancelled

Sadly, due to the Covid-19 situation, we thought it prudent to postpone our Annual General Meeting (normally held in November) until we could conduct this in safety. There was discussion at our committee meeting about the possibility of holding this via Zoom. But because we would not know how many members could Zoom in, it was decided that this would not be workable. That said, it was agreed that the Chairman's annual report and the accounts would be sent out to members in November. All members will be notified when/if we can reschedule.

Committee News

In August we held our first committee meeting since March ... via Zoom, of course. We are holding these meetings monthly. We now also have two new 'honorary' members, namely Glynn Cartwright of Melton Matters and our representative on MBC, Cllr Simon Lumley.

Since our Summer newsletter with an appeal for **Society Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary**, we now have a new Treasurer. Lorraine (Lorrie) Forman put herself forward, so many thanks to her for volunteering for this role.

Still on the lookout for ...

anyone who could fill the positions of:
Publicity and Fundraising. These **do not** need to be committee roles.

If you think you may like to support the society in a more pro-active way, please contact the chairman – details opposite.

Welcome to new members ...

Sue Bell - Life member
Valerie Brightwell - welcome back
Pat Heasman
Sue Hensman
Paul Hensman
Gary Jesionowski
Robert & Sharon Sheridan - Corporate membership
Eddie Smith
Frank Walters

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