



Heritage Report:

Preservation of Mansbridge Lock on the Itchen Navigation

Polly Whyte (2011)

**Produced by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
on behalf of the Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail Project partnership**

Hampshire & Isle of Wight
Wildlife Trust
Protecting wildlife. Inspiring people.



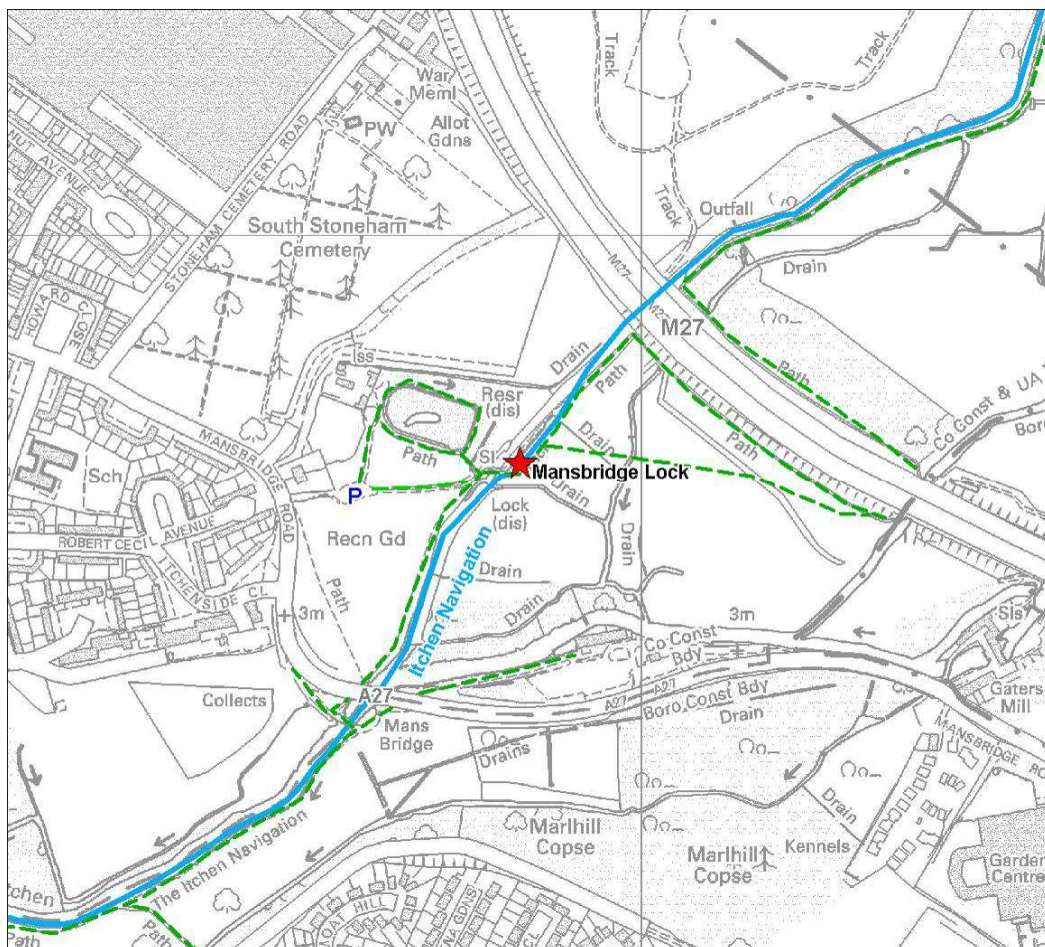
Introduction

The Itchen Navigation was completed in 1710 to carry barges loaded with coal and other goods from the seaport of Southampton to trading centre of Winchester. 15 locks and two half-locks on the 10.5 mile route helped float the barges up the Navigation. Most of the locks were 'turf sided'; there was only brickwork or stonework at the head and tail of the lock to hold the lock gates. Turf sided locks were a design used on navigations in the early 1700s. They required a large volume of water to fill due to their sloping sides. Nearly all locks on later canals had brick-lined chambers. The survival of several turf sided locks on the Itchen Navigation makes the waterway nationally important as very few others in the country survive in their near original state.

The Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail Project was led by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust from 2007 to 2012. The aim of the project was to conserve the Itchen Navigation and to repair some examples of the heritage features found along its length. The project received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in October 2007. The project was also funded and supported by: Environment Agency, Winchester City Council, Eastleigh Borough Council, Natural England, Hampshire County Council, Southampton City Council and the Inland Waterways Association.

Wessex Archaeology produced a heritage report on the Itchen Navigation in April 2005¹. This is available on the 'History' page of the Itchen Navigation project website: www.itchennavigation.org.uk Wessex Archaeology (2005) describes Mansbridge Lock as regionally significant and of the utmost importance as one of the original elements of the Itchen Navigation. Issues identified in the report are: interpretation, preservation of surviving historic remains and removal of vegetation. Mansbridge Lock is jointly owned by Eastleigh Borough Council and Southampton City Council.

Mansbridge Lock is located at: SU 44883 15791



¹ Wessex Archaeology (2005). *Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail Hampshire. Heritage Report for a Conservation Management Plan*. Salisbury: Wessex Archaeology.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the preservation work were to:

- remove vegetation that was obscuring the lock from view and causing damage to the structure
- stabilise and preserve original brickwork and stonework
- interpret the structure to help local walkers understand its significance

Methods

Vegetation management

When the lock was examined by Itchen Navigation project staff in 2007, very little of the structure was visible due to tree and scrub growth. Scrub and small trees were cleared from around the head and tail of the lock by volunteer groups from October 2007 to January 2009. Herbicide stump treatment was used on tree stumps on top or close to the brickwork. Remains of the built structure of the lock were found at the head and tail of the lock, both brickwork and stonework. The brickwork at the head of the lock was more complete, although a void in the brickwork was visible in the NW gate pier. A wooden footbridge with brick foundations has been built directly over the tail of the lock.

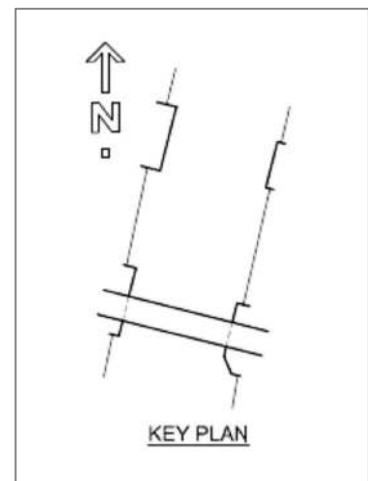
Brickwork repair

After the remains of the structure had been revealed, SFK Consulting was contracted to produce a specification to repair and stabilise the brickwork and stonework.

Following the production of the repair specification, TST Ltd carried out the brickwork repair on Mansbridge Lock from Oct 2009 to May 2010. The following steps were taken to preserve the remains of the structure:

- moss and vegetation were scraped off from the front of the brickwork
- tree stumps growing into brickwork were removed
- brickwork joints were raked out and re-pointed
- bricks damaged by frost were pieced in individually
- voids in the brickwork were deep pointed
- lime capping was added to the top edge of the brickwork to shed water away from it

In addition, Cintec anchors were installed on the NW, SE and SW gate piers.



Interpretation

An interpretation panel was installed by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in January 2011. The panel shows an artist's illustration of how the lock would have looked when the Navigation was in use by barges. A milestone was also installed next to the lock in August 2010 as part of the Itchen Navigation Art Project. The milestone helps interpret the lock as it details where the barges travelled to and from, the goods carried and the tolls paid. The image on the following pages shows the interpretation panel design at Mansbridge Lock.



Barging through

How many paces is it from the brickwork at the far end of the lock to the brickwork under the footbridge here? It was a tight fit for the 20 metre (70 foot) long barges.

Bricks for barges

What's so interesting about some old bits of brickwork? Well firstly, they are not just old; they are really old – over 300 years old in fact. The bricks are part of an old lock, which was used for floating barges of goods up the Itchen. Before the railways arrived, barges were the most efficient way of transporting coal, timber and wool between Southampton and Winchester.

Follow the towpath

The whole barge route is called the Itchen Navigation and you are currently standing on the old towpath, which runs the entire length of the waterway.

This lock is unusual, because bricks and stones were only used to hold the gates in place and were not used to build the lock chamber walls. Instead chalk was probably used to build up the lock sides to hold the water in.

One of the bargemen was called Mr. Edward Knapp. He and the other bargemen paid a toll to the Itchen Navigation management company for every half mile that their barges travelled along the Navigation.

HWT Page 2 of 2

The Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail Project is conserving this wonderful waterway. The project is supported by:



www.hwt.org.uk

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Protecting wildlife. Inspiring people.



Discussion

The upstream gate piers were constructed of bricks entirely, whilst the downstream gate piers were constructed of a mixture of stone and brickwork. One piece of stone was found in the SW gate pier which had detailing of part of an archway, suggesting the stones used in the lock may have been reused from a nearby building. Metal 'dog cramps' were found holding the stonework together at the tail of the lock.



Carved stone found in SW pier



Metal dog cramp in SE pier stonework

Metal pins were found in the original brickwork at the head of the lock. They may have functioned to hold timber cladding onto the gate piers.



Metal pins in NW pier

Photographic documentation

Before vegetation clearance by Elliott Fairs (Feb 2007)



Volunteers clearing vegetation from NW gate pier by Elliott Fairs (Oct 2007)



During scrub clearance by Bob Painton (Oct 2008)



Deep void in brickwork of NW gate pier by Bob Painton (Oct 2008)



Contractors rebuilding NE gate pier by Polly Whyte (Nov 2009)



Contractors adding lime camping to NE gate pier by Polly Whyte (Nov 2009)



Contractors repairing SE gate pier by Polly Whyte (Nov 2009)



SE and SW gate piers by Polly Whyte (Nov 2009)



Mansbridge Lock following brickwork repair by Dennis Bright (Jun 2010)





Mansbridge Lock from footbridge by Polly Whyte (Jun 2010)



Milestone at Mansbridge Lock by Dennis Bright (Sept 2010)



Mansbridge Lock interpretation panel by Polly Whyte (Jan 2011)



References

Course, E (1983). *The Itchen Navigation*. Southampton: Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group.

Wessex Archaeology (2005). *Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail Hampshire. Heritage Report for a Conservation Management Plan*. Salisbury: Wessex Archaeology.