

# THE PORTAL



THE JOURNAL OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CROMFORD CANAL  
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The Portal is the quarterly magazine of the Friends of the Cromford Canal. CONTENTS

The Friends of the Cromford Canal exist to promote the restoration to navigable condition of the whole of the Cromford Canal.

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Last dates for acceptance of articles - end of March, June, September and December, for publication the following month. All articles for publication should be sent direct to the Editor, and can be submitted on paper, as text files on a 3½" diskette or preferably by e-mail to the Editor at: [REDACTED]

If YOU have any talent for writing, drawing or anything you think would be of interest to other readers, PLEASE contact the Editor.

The Editor is NOT responsible for blank or missing pages in this magazine - if you have any, please return it to the Secretary at the address alongside.

"BODY AND BACKBONE" .....	3
NEWS UPDATE .....	3
CHAIRMAN'S CHAT .....	6
LETTER TO THE EDITOR .....	7
A PROFILE OF THE EDITOR .....	8
MEMBERSHIP MATTERS .....	9
THE BULLBRIDGE GAP .....	12
OUR FRIENDS ELECTRONIC ...	13
TECHNICAL TERMS EXPLAINED: GAUGING .....	18

Front cover: A traditional Water Can (sometimes known as a Buckby Can, from the place where there was a shop selling them).



# "BODY AND BACKBONE"



**W**ell, that's the job done! You've formed the friends, you've all paid your subs, and the Cromford Canal is going to get restored. **WRONG!!** It ain't as easy as that, and we've already got problems. As Amber Valley Borough Council haven't yet safeguarded the route of the Canal, it's still at risk from unscrupulous (or otherwise) developers who may attempt to build on the line and then demand exorbitant sums of money not to.

Also, there are still protracted negotiations to take place with the wildlife lobby, who have already moved from an attitude of "no way" to "we could work with that".

There's a lot more lobbying to do, both with local and national government (though I'm pleased to

say that the Amber Valley MP is all for the scheme) and there is going to be practical work to be done some time over the winter.

Before that, you'd better find your walking boots, as on September 8<sup>th</sup> we're holding a sponsored walk. Not only is this a good chance to raise money for the cause, it'll let you walk virtually the whole route and let you see at first hand some of the problems the restoration of our Sleeping Beauty faces.

Don't think that that's all we want from you - bodies are needed too! We've managed to recruit a Publicity Officer (Welcome, Christine!) but volunteers are going to be needed for all sorts of jobs. Do YOU have a skill we could make use of? Contact the Chairman!

## NEWS UPDATE

Our Chairman usually tries to keep our members informed of special developments by Email where possible. Of course not all have Email, although fortunately most do. This is a far, far cheaper way of communication with the membership than 'snail mail' and certainly much quicker. If you have not been receiving email(s) then maybe yours is one of the addresses we have with

a mistake in them somewhere, it only needs one small feature wrong for the address to be unworkable. If you would like to receive these Emails and are not, then please write to: [chairman@cromfordcanal.org.uk](mailto:chairman@cromfordcanal.org.uk).

There are a number of news items to bring to your attention. The first concerns Amber Valley BC, who have just granted planning permission for a new house. Nothing special in

that, except this house will be on the 'listed' historic embankment of the remains of the 200-year-old Bullbridge aqueduct. Yes, they are going to build between the retaining walls of this structure. Considering the verbal and written support that AVBC have shown to us, this is a little odd, to say the least. Apparently the line of the canal was not protected, as we had understood it to be. The owners of the land have kindly offered to sell it to us, but the price is a little too high for us to be confident of raising the capital concerned. So this will now become another obstacle to overcome in that most difficult of damaged areas, but overcome they will be.

The second item is 'Committee Members'. We currently have a very small number of committee members, who quite frankly are over worked, some are even holding similar positions with other societies. If we do not get more members coming forward to help our committee it will slow our pace down considerably, and set our progress back. We also need people to help man display stands throughout next summer. We have been invited to many this year, but we have been unable to find the man and woman power to do this, which is very unfortunate. (If you feel you can help, please contact any of the names shown on the Portal magazine)

On Sunday 8th September our first sponsored walk of the line of the canal will take place. You will

find a sponsorship form with this magazine. If you cannot tackle the 14 to 15 miles then try one, or maybe two of our "bite sized portions", each being approximately 5 miles long. If you are unable to walk, we need people in place along the way at strategic points to guide, or help in crossings.

The first "bite" starts at Langley Mill Basin at 0930 and covers the course of the flight of locks up to Codnor Park Reservoir, Ironville, where we hope to arrive at about 1100.

The second "bite" starts at about 1100 and continues the walk to Bullbridge. However, it isn't all walking: to highlight the potential link between the Butterley Tunnel and the Midland Railway Centre, there will be a train ride between the two portals, starting at Newlands Inn, Golden Valley, changing to the standard gauge train at Swanwick Junction to continue the journey to Hammersmith. For this, a special Rambler's ticket will be available, costing £1-50.

The final "bite" will be from Bullbridge to Cromford Wharf (The easiest stage). Hopefully, this should start from Bullbridge at about 1300.

A bus will be arranged to bring people back from Cromford to either of the two stages where cars may have been left, or you may prefer to make your own arrangements for someone to pick you up at a point.

Fourthly, as from 1<sup>st</sup> July we have become a corporate member of



the Inland Waterways Association, hence their logo appearing on the cover. This provides a number of benefits, from a powerful voice and vast pool of accumulated knowledge and expertise to insurance cover for any event we may hold.

Following our Public Meeting in Riddings in April, we applied to the Charity Commissioners to be registered as a Charity. Their initial reply answers some of the questions raised at that meeting as follows:

"In your 12 June letter you asked specific questions in relation to the Constitution and I would advise as follows using the same numbers as your letter;

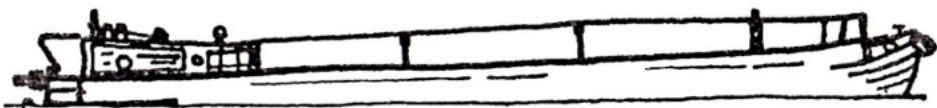
1. The clause to which I think you are referring is J 2, the professional charging clause. This clause is to allow trustees who are solicitors or accountants to be able to undertake "one-off" jobs on behalf of the charity. It does not extend to craftsmen.
2. As an unincorporated association, it would be the trustees who would be responsible not the membership. For information I am enclosing a copy of CC3 which fully sets out the responsibilities of the trustees.
3. Whilst the trustee body have discretion in respect of acceptance of individuals as members, if for the avoidance of doubt they wish it to be stated within the constitution they could have an additional clause within F to read "No person shall be admitted as a member of the Charity

unless their application for membership is approved by the trustees".

4. If the trustees feel that in the interests of continuity that they would prefer to stagger the re-election of the trustee body, this is acceptable. The trustees will need to delete clause H 3) and replace it with the following: "One third (or the number nearest to one third) of the elected Executive Committee must retire at each ACM, those longest in office retiring first and the choice between any of equal service being made by drawing lots". Should the trustees after consideration wish to make these amendments they will need to call a general meeting in accordance with the provisions set out in clauses T (Notices) and U (Alterations to the Constitution)."

We now await their further comments on our draft Constitution and we will need to bring these and other comments to our next Public Meeting in Sawmills.

Finally, before we can get anything moving with this wonderful project of ours, we need a Feasibility Study, and maybe more than one. Such studies are not cheap, but we will not be able to raise money, or get the Councils to listen seriously to us until these are in place. So far one man, Patrick Morriss is looking into arranging for this for us. He needs help, can you offer any?



**O**n March 13<sup>th</sup> 1937 the then owners of the Cromford Canal announced their intention to close the canal. Sixty-five years later to the very day, on March 13<sup>th</sup> 2002, the Friends of the Cromford Canal announced their intentions to reopen the canal. An amazing coincidence or not, we have served notice that we are here and we intend to see the Cromford reopened. The sort of progress needed to re-open the Cromford is being made, from that day in March to the time of writing this we have reached 300 members, had numerous meetings and several articles written about us. The Arkwright Society has been the first to request corporate membership of the FCC, which we were delighted to accept. The Arkwright Society are a long established and highly respected group, so to have them request membership of the FCC, even as our Constitution was being drawn up, I consider to be a privilege and extend my welcome to them.

I see an aspect of our project as having the potential to become one of the major tourist attractions of the East Midlands, not only that, but a unique feature of British tourism. We all know of the success of the Standedge tunnel, on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, which was re-opened last year by Prince Charles. Thousands of visitors

are flocking there to have the experience of travelling through a canal tunnel, something, which unless you have been 'boating', most likely will not have done before, which of course, is the majority of the population. So people are keen to have this experience for themselves.

Imagine this 'attraction' for our own Butterley tunnel (3,086 yards +) coupled with a steam railway trip. Tourists would be able to enjoy the equivalent of the 'Standedge Experience' through the Butterley tunnel, but return on the preserved steam hauled train the other way, courtesy of the Midland Railway preservation group at Butterley, Ripley. What a potential we have and what an impetus to get the whole of the Cromford reopened.

So far, a small, but very dedicated group has volunteered their services as the committee, all serving (Including myself) in an 'acting' capacity, until elections can be arranged. My heartfelt thanks go out to them all, for without their sterling efforts we would not be where we are now. However we do need more help. If you are able to offer your services to help with events, such as manning a stand at Lee Wood Pump or other venues, then please let us know. A new organisation such as ours needs volunteers to come forward from the membership for as we continue to grow, so does the



workload. Sheila Smith, our acting Treasurer, and her husband tell me they are working harder now 'in retirement' than they did when they were 'working'. So you see we need your help. Once we get names of people who would like to become

actively involved we can then arrange for elections to committee. So please do help and let us spread the workload a little and help with the renaissance of the canals. What a great time this is.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From Chris Deuchar:

Just for the record, in the Editorial, there is a reference to the 'mistake made with the Grantham'. I assume this was in connection with the Grantham restoration NOT starting at the Trent.

As I was closely involved with the restoration in the early 1970's I think a bit of clarification is needed. Basically we had no choice.

Well over half the blockages on the canal are in Nottinghamshire and no less than seven in the first mile. These include a major road, a huge sewer, a gas main and an 'impossible to replace' access road. No one -least of all Notts CC who had created most of the blockages - was going to spend the millions required to get through West Bridgford when, at the time, the whole scheme had no credibility

at all.

The possible alternative route via the Polser Brook was dependant upon gravel extraction which was not planned to occur for several years hence. Therefore, to get some credibility - and demonstrate the enthusiasm of those involved - work had to start elsewhere. Currently over a quarter of the mileage is fully navigable and a third of the locks. It will happen - but there is still a lot of inertia to overcome. I agree, it would have been so much better if we could have started at the navigable end - but it was not to be.

(Editor's Note: I'm very happy to put the record straight on this matter. If we CAN restore from Langley Mill up, it will make a great deal of sense, but events elsewhere may require a re-think on this.)



# A PROFILE OF THE EDITOR

I'm a comparative newcomer to inland waterways preservation, though I've preserved something or other since I was at school. My first love was public transport: I rode on Nottingham's and Derby's last trolleybuses and was actively involved in the establishment of a possible transport museum at Plumtree near Nottingham, where amongst other things, I edited the newsletter..... though the technology of typing "skins" for duplicating was totally different to today's technology. We (I include my wife Susan in this) established the first transport rally in the East Midlands, the Robin Hood Rally which took place over a good number of years in Nottingham.

By this time I'd got married, but got involved in restoring and presenting stationary engines at the local traction engine rallies as these were cheaper and easier to manage than buses. The trailer made the Mini groan a bit, though.

I got involved with the National Vintage Tractor & Engine Club, at one point attaining the dizzy height of Chairman, but a young family and open-spoked flywheels revolving at 700 rpm don't mix. Besides, by this time I'd taken on a cottage to restore.....

Our present home at Golden Valley was sold to us by the Derbyshire Historical Buildings Trust

over 20 years ago as a "sound shell", leaving us to finish it off. We moved out of our Nottingham home in the February and moved in at Spring Bank Holiday! Of course, an old house is NEVER finished.....

I'd always been a railway modeller and it was this that got me involved in a project "to put a bit of 2' gauge railway track down" at the Midland Railway Centre. That "bit of track" is now a passenger-carrying line nearly a mile long, with a collection of locomotives and rolling stock which includes a loco which I have recently re-commenced restoring. There were also publications, including guidebooks and technical manuals and also a magazine to be edited, which I did for a good few years, improving the quality of production and reproduction in the process. Thank goodness for modern technology, both on the word processing and reproduction fronts!

Unfortunately, eventually the narrowboat got in the way..... We'd had boating holidays for a good number of years. In fact, our first canal holiday took us down the Anderton Lift before it was closed, so you can tell how long ago THAT was!

I'd always dreamed of owning a narrowboat and eventually just under four years ago I realised that ambition, though not in the usual



way: I bought a wreck for £500 with no bottom plate, no engine and nothing of a cabin except for the steel frame.

It's now fully restored and cruising, but the doing of it was probably the greatest challenge I've ever taken on and it gave me great pleasure to prove all the doubting Thomas's wrong and eventually get it

restored, refloated and re-fitted. By now I'd discovered the Internet and reported on the restoration to one of the newsgroups there. I developed Web Sites for the boat and the narrow gauge railway and then I read an article in the Ripley and Heanor News about a group wanting to restore the Cromford canal.....

## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

*by Yvonne Shattower*

Membership has grown steadily over the last few months, although there was a lull at the beginning of June when applications suddenly stopped for a couple of weeks. Where did you all go to? We now seem to be back to normal, with letters dropping through my door on most days. As we go to press, our Membership total is 368. Two of our Members live in Scotland, one even sent me a Scottish £5 note.

Thanks are due to the many people who have taken Membership forms for distribution, and we must thank the Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs for allowing us to put forms out on their display at Crick and other venues. Please let me know if anyone needs further supplies. Forms can, of course, be downloaded from our Web site, which will save everyone money.

Hopefully some of these

magazines will have been delivered by hand. Are you able to help with this in the future? We will be sending out nearly 300 magazines, and my calculator tells me that the stamps will cost £57.00 if I have to post them all. Please contact me or the Editor if you can help with this vital part of our campaign.

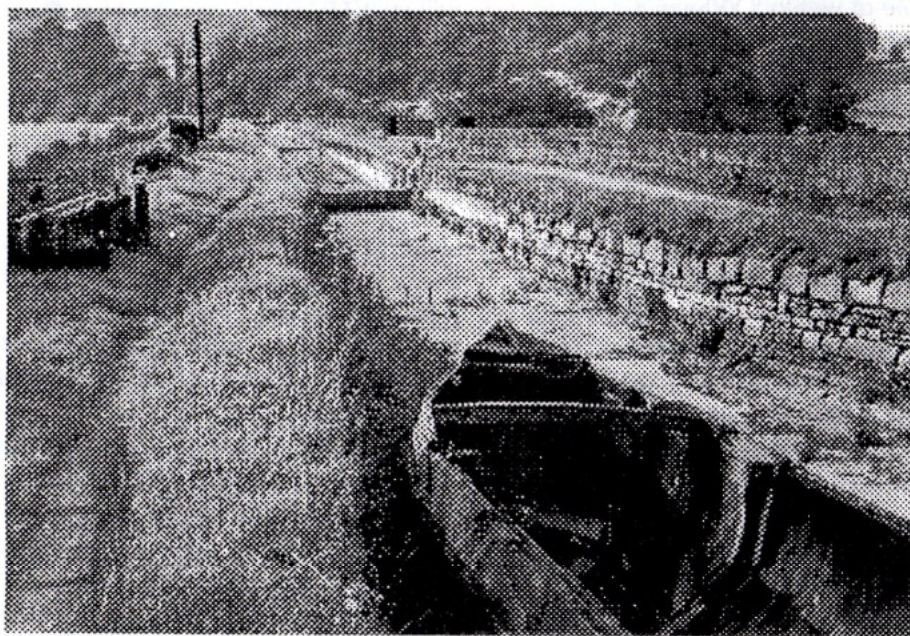
As you will see from the back page, I have been dragged into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and now have an email address! I don't pretend to know how it works, but by and large I send out messages and get replies! However, we do need accurate addresses to do this, and recently our Chairman had several E mails rejected because of incorrect addresses. If you change **ANY** of your details, either postal address or email, please let me know so that we can keep you up to date with our plans. You might miss something really exciting!





The aqueduct as I remember it.....

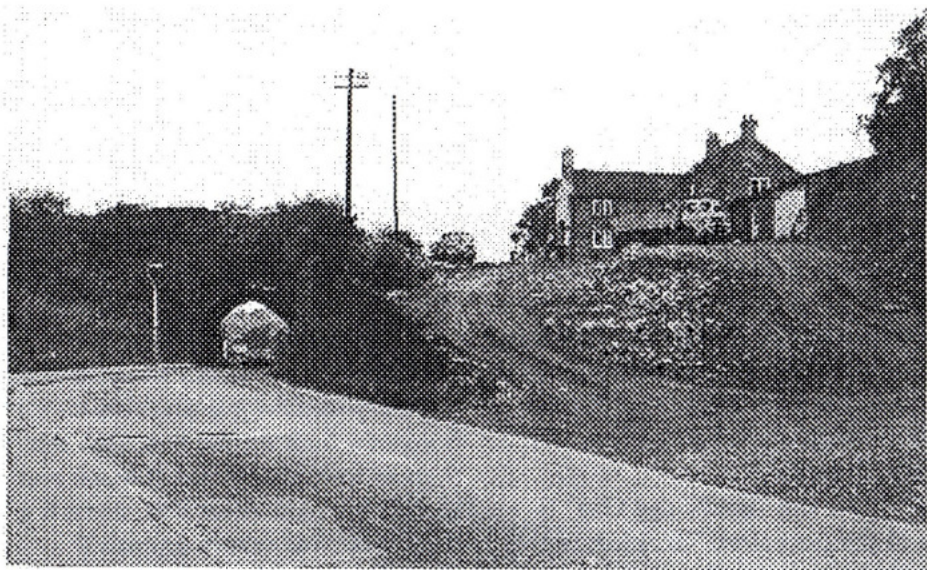
*(Frank Rodgers)*



..... and the view across at towpath level

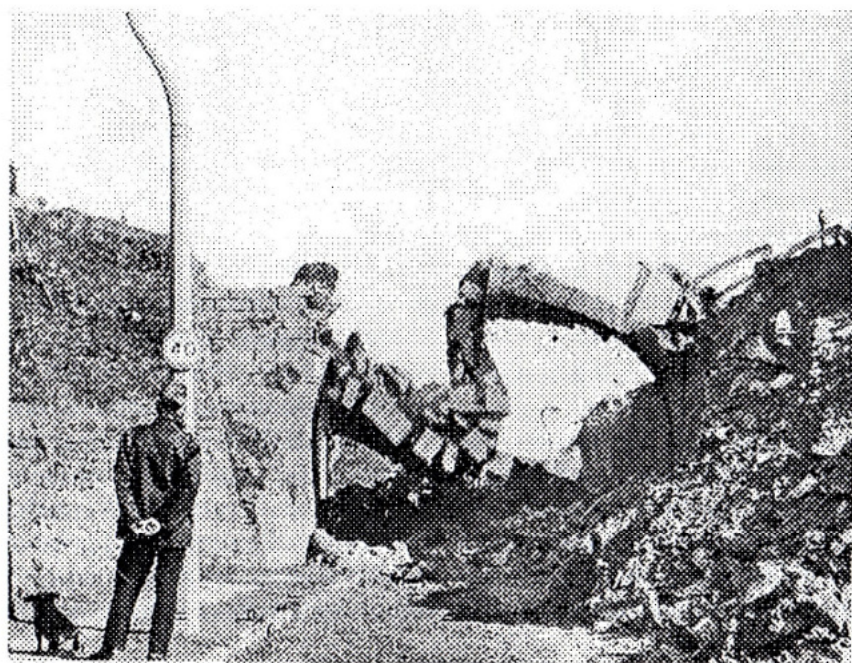
*Frank Rodgers)*





The work of demolition begins

*(Stevenson's)*



The final blow as the aqueduct comes down

*(Stevenson's)*



# THE BULLBRIDGE GAP

by *The Editor*

I remember Bullbridge aqueduct (just) – we used to stop at the traffic lights in my parent's 1939 Austin 10 on our way to Derbyshire for a day out, and later it prevented anything other than a single-decker preserved bus getting from Nottingham to the Tramway Museum at Crich: to do that you went through Derby and came up the A6 to “storm the mountain” from Whatstandwell.

As the “Bullbridge Gap” is one of the perceived “problem areas” in our proposed restoration I decided that I'd best take a look at the current situation in the area, so set out one afternoon after work for a scramble around on foot. The first problem was to find the actual site: my memory played tricks as to where the aqueduct actually was and the whole area is now covered with many more trees than when it was still there so my first exploration on the Butterley tunnel side of the gap was abortive: all I found was a railway bridge from the old Riddings Junction to Ambergate line, part of which was taken over to form the Midland Railway Centre.

I decided on a change of tack, and went to where I could find the only bit of canal hereabouts that is still in water, in front of the Canal Tavern at Bullbridge, which once competed in DLT's Saturday morning

Pub Quiz on Radio 1 - not a lot of people know that..... here, the canal up to the bridge has been kept in water as a Decorative Feature, with the canal stanked off by the humped-back bridge which carries the road from Bullbridge to Crich.

Walking away from the bridge, the canal swiftly disappears as a watery feature and there's a bungalow built on the line, with the former towpath fenced in down one side of the plot. After this, there is a walled-off area where animals (I suspect horses) have been kept and the canal takes a sharp right-hand curve onto the remains of the aqueduct itself. This starts out confidently enough striding out across the valley, but then comes to a stumbling halt where it was demolished. The former towpath comes down a set of wooden steps to the side of the railway, where a foot crossing with a pair of stiles maintains the right of way. Visibility in both directions on the railway is good, but modern trains are faster and much quieter than the ones which ran here when the aqueduct was still in existence, so the “STOP – LOOK – LISTEN” signs are not there for fun!

Once over the railway, the path descends to road level, where visibility is much worse for motorists than it is for train drivers. Having



crossed the road, the path scrambles steeply up the other side but is not as well used as the one down. With some effort it's possible to get up past the house which used to be on the canal side and which has taken the canal bed into its garden to a more easily restored dried-out section of canal bed, which was much further over than I'd originally thought, hence my initial confusion.

All in all, the engineering problems are not insurmountable – a Ponty-whatsit style replacement

between two new abutments and with one supporting pillar between the road and railway (all in Derbyshire gritstone?) would carry the canal high above both and provide spectacular views up and down the valley, but we will need the cooperation of the landowners to make the scheme succeed.

I'm indebted to Hugh Potter for providing some photos from his collection, showing what was there before it mostly got swept away and the trees grew.



## OUR FRIENDS ELECTRONIC

*by The Editor*

Things are starting to pick up (slowly) on the email list: certainly to the extent that I can report here.

John Reeve came up with the following on Leawood Pump House:

"I am one of the volunteers which operate & maintain the Leawood Pump house & Middleton Top Engine. I have been involved with the pump house for approx 20 years and used to help when it was run by the Cromford Canal Society. I also used

to help with the horse-drawn boat "John Gray" and have many happy memories of steering the boat and guiding the horse. I look forward to seeing boats on this section of the canal again!!

Three of our members attended the meeting in Ironville and I believe one invited "The Friends" to place some publicity material in the pump house during our steamings. Unfortunately, nothing materialised for the Easter weekend. However, as we talk to our visitors (nearly 700, yes - seven hundred, over the Easter

weekend), we are telling them about "The Friends" and there is much interest.

I do hope that the publicity officer can put together a few display panels and we will make space in the Pumphouse for them.

Our steaming dates for the rest of this year are:

August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>,  
October 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

If the weather is good, we regularly get 300-400 visitors each day we steam and it has been as high as 700 in a day!! We think we are a good place for "The Friends" to recruit more members and raise awareness to the general public.

If the publicity officer wishes to come and see what space is available, we do our maintenance work every Monday evening approx 7:30 to 10:00 pm. Any volunteers are always welcome!! We can also be contacted via the Ranger service at Middleton Top or the Junction Workshop.

We look forward to pumping water further south than the end of the aqueduct!!

One other point - during the meeting at Ironville, someone asked who had moved the covered boat "Duchess" from Cromford wharf to the wharf shed at Leawood - We did!! - we are using it to transport coal from the wharf to the pump house while we are repairing the other work boat.

Moving coal (2 tons at a time) by boat to the pump house is much the easiest method."



John Harwood said of the restoration proposals:

"For discussion purposes only there seems to have been a general assumption that we will never see boats (other than purposes built trip boats perhaps) back at Cromford for sundry reasons including wildlife lobby etc. Should we accept this as a foregone conclusion or should we set out with an objective of getting there - after all what's the purpose of bringing tourists nearly to a tourist area, what's the purpose of restoring a canal with no boats - walkers, fishers etc are already catered for at the top end it's only boats that are missing. Clearly we should not set out to get there regardless of all other considerations but so far there seems to be an air of defeat on the length before we begin!"

My response was:

"I think we could look forward to boats from the rest of the system getting at least to Lea Wood Pump House,"

David Hancock said of the wildlife debate:

"I strongly agree with John's comments. If we accept that the canal is not to have boats then fill the thing in and let nature reclaim it. I am sure all the things of Special Interest



would soon disappear. Canals are artificial waterway created by people to allow movement to boats carrying goods. There is no practical use for them without the boats.

Flora and Fauna can be protected by intelligent planning and some flexibility. We should campaign for the restoration of the canal to navigable status as a primary objective. The other issues need to be of a second order, not dismissed or ignored but integrated into the plan to restore navigation."

John had the last word:

"Well at least there's some discussion going! I would happily accept some reasonable restrictions on boats travelling through to Cromford e.g. maximum number beyond Lea Wood at any one time - say 8 then one in one out, speed limit of 2 mph beyond Lea Wood, maximum 3 nights stay at the wharf (strictly enforced!), the wharf without boats is - well not a wharf is it."

Tony Eyre said of much the same subject:

"Boats on the canal - whatever next? Sorry about the sarcasm, I am neither a boat person nor a wildlife type but yes of course we must set out with this intention and hope to win the wildlife lobby over by showing care and consideration for their concerns. I just want to see the canal looking good and alive. A navigable waterway

with the odd passing boat and the flourishing of water-based wildlife are not necessarily contradictory aims surely?"



It was great to hear from Robin Jeffcote, one of the County Council's Rangers, who said:

"Just as a general point there is a winding hole at Leawood Pump, no problem turning boats here subject to the water levels! I have long advocated boat traffic on our section as this ultimately would be beneficial to wildlife by keeping a clear navigable channel down the centre of the canal. At present with restricted water flows, very little dispersal of animal and plant communities take place down the entire 5 mile section and as some of you will no doubt know the flow at present is not north to south on the whole section.

A second point to raise is the maintenance of this section. At present it all has to be done from the towpath. This is inefficient and can be damaging to the canalside wildlife, far better to do it from a work boat.

Another suggestion I have made is that of being in a position of being able to take educational parties down the canal to look at the wildlife, rather than from the towpath. This would be a stunning way of introducing children to wildlife and

the importance of canals (by their construction) in providing these man-made habitats that are now so important and valued.

I would consider it crucial for the long term well-being of our section, for it to be restored to full navigation. We can argue at a later stage over what provisions need to be made in the interest of the S.S.S.I.

Another thought about the decline of the water vole population which we have attributed to mink taking advantage of the towpath closure during the foot and mouth epidemic would give us the golden opportunity to restore the canal in such a way that would be beneficial to water voles and allow for significant increase in their population. Restoration of sections of the canal with natural stone edging would provide additional habitats that are not there at present.

Make a point of looking for the nature conservation advantages that restoration can bring rather the negative disadvantages of navigation."

John Harwood replied with:

"Thanks so much for your posting, as I have mentioned before I started this topic just to get some discussion going and now we have this gem from somebody in a position to speak on their subject. I hope the chair is in a position to take note (are you there Mike?).

I have long got hot under the collar when the naturalist lobby has spoken against canal restoration

(in my book canal restoration (properly done) wins hands down over runway and motorway construction every time) - indeed if we are to stop affecting the environment then all building of whatever nature will have to stop. One can rest assured that BW take their environmental responsibilities very seriously nowadays."



One favourite topic on inland waterways Internet communities is "Which is the longest tunnel / highest / most heavily locked section of canal (the answer to the latter being, of course, the Wardle Canal!) And we're no exception:

Ian Cupitt started THIS one off:

"When built, according to Charles Hadfield's Canals of the East Midlands, Butterley Tunnel was 2966 yards long. Hadfield also gives 2978 yards and 3000 yards as alternatives. It was later lengthened to 3063 yards when a railway was built over the western portal. More recently the A38 road was built over the, now disused, railway. I believe that the A38 is probably wider than a double track railway so it seems that the tunnel is now longer than 3063 yards, but how long is it?

Butterley stands 9th in the list of canal tunnels, just behind Blisworth which is 3076 yards. Have we moved up a place without



realising?"



Another query came in under the heading "When is a lock not a Lock?"

"Between Buckland Hollow Tunnel and Bullbridge Aqueduct the canal narrows to a stone built chamber which looks like a narrow lock, but without recesses for gates. There were no locks on this section of the canal so what is this? My guess is that it is a gauging point to check the loads of the working boats. Can anybody throw any light on this?"

Chris Morriss threw some light on it:

"I saw this last Sunday when I went with my brother to photograph the bridge on the long disused old Sawmills canal bed. (The canal route was changed here when the Ambergate and Pye Bridge railway was built.)

According to family memories (my mother was born just along from there), it was a gauging point. It seems that there used to be a stone building next to the canal at this point, which was the office for this. The building has long since gone, but there is an obvious change of direction and construction of the towpath wall here."

Our revered Chairman said:

"It could have been used for gauging,

but more likely it would be used to put stop planks in should a breach occur, especially as the canal is above houses below."

However, Chris retorted:

"No, when I first saw it I thought it was a simple stop-plank location, but it's a full-length narrow boat in length. It's still in fairly good condition considering how much crud has been bulldozed into the canal bed along this stretch. I wonder why they were checking the boat loads at this point?"

..... at which point Hugh Potter waded in with:

"I think it was a gauging narrows too, like they had on the BCN, with probably a toll house alongside. From the Minutes of the Cromford Canal Co comes the following which suggests there was a toll point in this area. I guess this was it.

Printed accounts for year to 14.5.1803. Includes abstract of goods navigated on the canal by commodity totalled for Bull Bridge and Langley.

In order:

	Bull Br	Langley
Coals	27990	83773
Lime & Limestone	21884	7843
Gritstone	2674	30
Calamine & Slag	1161	....
Timber & Slate		

457	1632
Corn & Groceries	
614	831
Iron & Lead	
1708	897
Sundries	
994	1283

(Figures for goods carried in 1802-3 reveal interesting information regarding the destinations or origins of the commodities. A comparison of the tonnage figures for the various

commodities listed suggests that lime, limestone, gritstone, calamine and slag were largely internal traffics as relatively little of the tonnage through Bull Bridge passed Langley Mill. In contrast, coal, timber, slate, corn, groceries, iron, lead and sundries appears to have been mainly traffic to or from other waterways)

This leads us nicely into:

## *TECHNICAL TERMS EXPLAINED: GAUGING*

*by The Editor*

**W**hen canals were first built, their promoters expected them to make money. This they did by charging tolls (so much per ton per mile) for users to carry goods in their boats. These varied depending on the cargo: heavy, bulky cargoes generally cost less to transport than light valuable ones and a range of tolls were set by the Canal company and shewn on signs at the various wharves and docks along the canal. In some cases, preferential tolls for traffics the company wished to encourage, for carriage in one particular direction or for short journeys might be charged – in other cases, goods carried to or from competing waterways might attract punitive tolls.

However, this all assumed that the various toll clerks in their

little offices alongside the canal knew how much the boat was carrying, hence gauging. When a new boat was built (or an old one modified) the first thing that the owner had to do after work was completed was to take it and have known weights placed in the hold. The distance from a fixed point on the hull to the waterline was then carefully measured. More weights were added and a range of measurements obtained, from which it was possible to easily work out how much cargo was on board at any one time. The information for each boat was then copied (by hand) and sent out to the toll clerks, together with details of the boat's name, owner (or steerer) and Gauging Number, which was usually marked in a prominent place on the boat.



Boats using the Birmingham Canal Navigations (or BCN) carried a cast-iron plate with their number on and many of these have survived (or been reproduced) to the present day, though not necessarily attached to the boat they were intended for. When the boat appeared at a toll office, it was thus now an easy task for the toll clerk to hold a marked stick against the marked point on the boat's side, measure how much of the boat was out of the water and refer to his ledger to work out how much cargo was on board, and

charge a toll accordingly. The special narrow spots at which this all happened were called gauging points.....

Nowadays, there is a licence system in force (based on boat length) for the vast majority of pleasure craft on our inland waterways: only the traders in the north-east pay tolls in the "old-fashioned" way, though this is set to change if BW have their way. This is widely seen as about the only good thing in their current review of licencing arrangements.

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