

THE PORTAL



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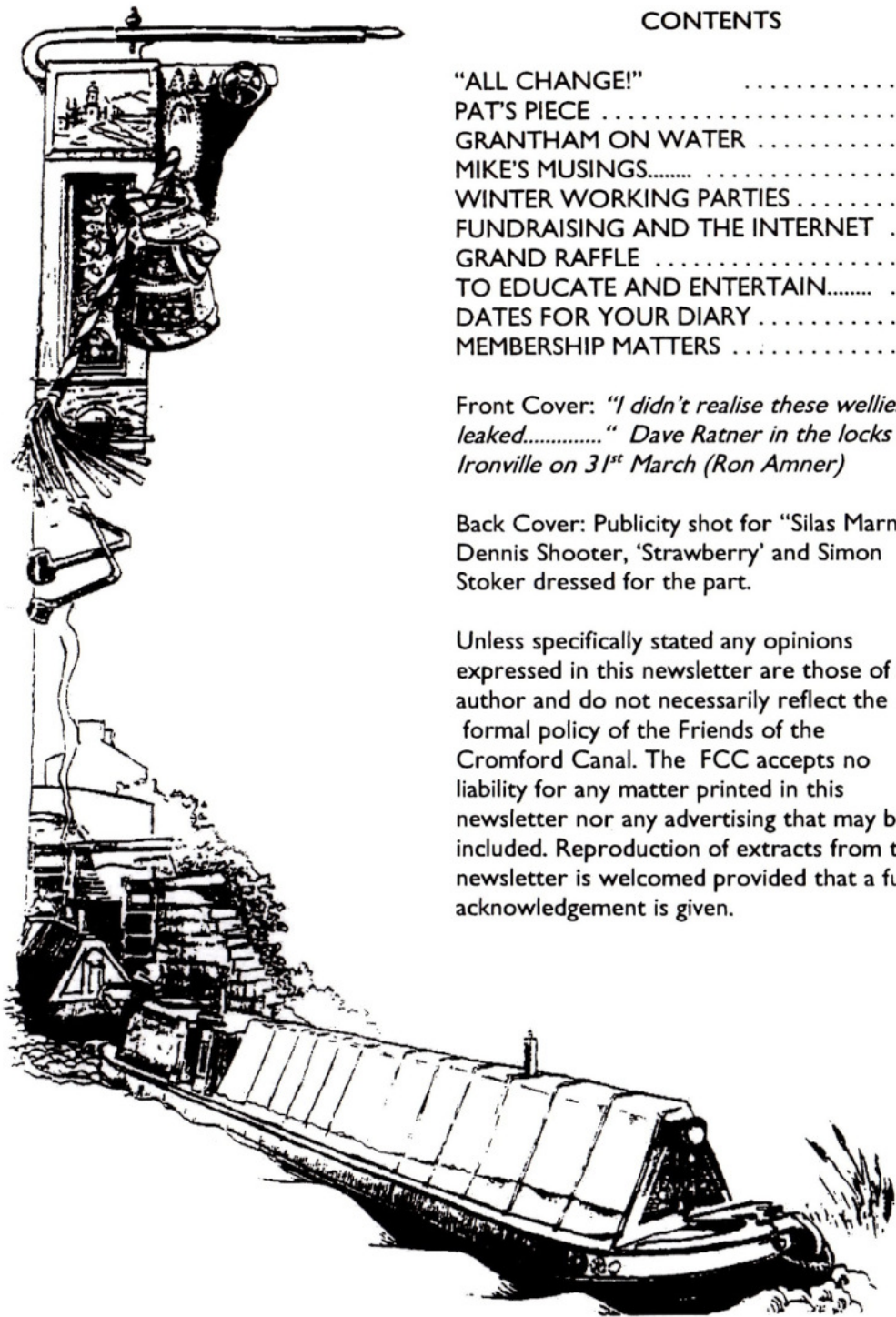
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Front Cover: *"I didn't realise these wellies leaked....."* Dave Ratner in the locks at Ironville on 31st March (Ron Amner)

Back Cover: Publicity shot for "Silas Marner": Dennis Shooter, 'Strawberry' and Simon Stoker dressed for the part.

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"ALL CHANGE!"



An apology: this issue is rather later than the Trustees (or the Editor) would have liked. The reason is to be found inside the front cover: we have had what is known in political circles as a Cabinet Reshuffle, with the result that that particular page of The Portal is markedly different. Unlike Cabinet Reshuffles in the Real World of Politics, ours was done amicably over a pint in the Derwent Arms in the course of a Trustees' meeting.

With Mike Kelly standing down for a year, Pat has moved to take his place and John Baylis has kindly agreed to step into the breach for just one year - a gesture appreciated by us all. Graham White has been sitting in on our meetings for some time and has now agreed to take on a formal role, though he wants to see this developing and changing as he settles in. Not mentioned on the "Official List" are Jan Colombo and Meg Tarlton our Minutes Secretaries (note - NOT "Minute Secretaries" - they ARE normal size!) who between them compile the minutes and send them out and pull the rest of us

up when they don't understand what we're all rabbiting on about - a good thing as two fresh pairs of ears don't always understand the context of what we're saying. All of this was decided a little after the AGM, so that's delayed the production of this issue.

You will see under our "Dates for your Diary" that there have been a number of dates added for events not usually associated with canal restoration. That's because the Sales Stand will be in attendance there and **YOU ARE WANTED** to come and help. You don't have to come to them all: I'll be turning up on the Sunday of Cromford Rally to help and other people helping for a day will take the strain of some of the more busy members of the team.

If helping out at a rally on 8th and 9th September isn't your "thing", you could always help out on our first Working Party of the winter on the same weekend at Ironville locks, where tree removal is on the agenda.



You will have read elsewhere, or heard at the AGM that Mike Kelley decided to step down as Chair of the FCC during his final stint working in the Sudan. The amount of time he was required to be in the Sudan, coupled with the decreased time available back in the UK prompted Mike to relinquish the Chair for at least a year. Mike will oversee the Smotherfly management group formed by the FCC to enable local input into this valuable asset, both for the FCC and the local economy and environment. I was elected as Chair by the April Trustees meeting, and am honoured to take on this sometimes-difficult task.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mike for all the valuable work he has done as Chair since March 2002. If it was not for him I would probably not have become involved with the committee of the FCC at all: he deserves all our thanks.

The next twelve months promise to be either a time of great success for the FCC or of great disappointment. The ongoing quest for planning permission for the Smotherfly/Pinxton project draws near to its end and if successful the FCC will require fund raising on an epic scale to turn the Erewash diversion channel into a water holding canal. There has been a myriad of voices raised against this project, and the FCC have diligently undertaken the required studies etc to answer the objections raised, at considerable cost, as yet with no outside funding for this particular project.

"May you live in interesting times" is supposedly a Chinese "curse". It is meant to be the first part of a three-part curse. The second part is "May you come to the notice of those in authority". The third part is "May you gain everything you wish for". Well, the FCC are certainly in interesting times, personally I would be quite happy to have this curse come true. The problem is this "Chinese" curse seems to have been invented in the USA around the time of World War II and repeated by President Kennedy in the 1960s so all is not as it seems.

Talking of coming to the notice of those in authority however, leads me to mention the Inland waterway restoration & development projects in England, Wales & Scotland, Third Review Report December 2006. This document is published by the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council and reviews the progress of canal and river navigation restorations. The last report was published in 2001 before the FCC was even a gleam in Mike's eye, and the Cromford Canal came out of it quite badly. The Cromford Canal was treated as two projects, Ambergate to Cromford and Langley Mill to Ironville as if total restoration would never be an issue. I quote from the new report. "Council welcomes formation of the Friends of the Cromford Canal in 2002 and the revised ambition to seek the restoration of the whole canal rather than two sections each side of Butterley Tunnel as in last review. As part of the World Heritage Derwent Valley site around Arkwright's Mill, this project is of national heritage significance. Ecology and water resources

studies have been carried out for the Langley Mill to Ironville section where, given funding success, restoration is planned to start around 2008 and work on the Pinxton Arm may be boosted by a planning gain deal. Council suggests two priorities – formation of a trust with professional advice and a full feasibility report to give the project more strategic influence and Local Authorities confidence they should incorporate restoration line into local plans.” I think I should point out that when IWAAC say “formation of a trust” they refer to a

formal partnership of stakeholders for instance District and County Councils, British Waterways etc. The FCC would like nothing better than to follow IWAAC's advice to the letter. I therefore invite those organizations and personalities who have used the previous comments concerning the Cromford Canal contained in the 2001 IWAAC report as a reason not to become involved in a partnership group, or to belittle or obstruct the FCC's efforts, to join with the FCC in wholeheartedly welcoming the latest IWAAC review.

GRANTHAM ON WATER

from Peter Stone

Roll up! Roll up! for a great Canal and Community Festival this Spring Bank Holiday – in beautiful countryside and with FREE admission.

The Inland Waterways Association's National Trailboat Festival 2007 is to be held on the Grantham Canal over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend, Saturday / Sunday / Monday, 26th 27th 28th May.

Grantham on Water is the popular title of the IWA's National Trailboat Festival 2007 which, this year, is being hosted by the Grantham Canal Restoration Society at Woolsthorpe-by-Belvoir, on the Lincolnshire / Leicestershire border. Admission is FREE and all are welcome – whether or not you know anything about canals and boating. It will be a great day out for all the family, set in lovely countryside below the imposing Belvoir Castle

[The title 'Trailboat' refers to narrow boats and similar vessels, of up to 30ft in length,

which can be towed on trailers by 4x4s and similar vehicles – and hence gain access to isolated sections of the inland waterway network]

Aims of the Festival:

1. to raise awareness of this 'forgotten', beautiful, rural canal – with the East Midlands public as well as the waterway fraternity ...
2. to celebrate and secure the recent restoration of the 4½ miles from the A1 to Woolsthorpe to navigation and ...
3. to encourage 'the powers that be' to support the re-opening of a further 5 miles through to Redmile. The resultant 9½ miles, linking a series of pretty villages with excellent pubs, will be a major addition to the national boating map and contribution to the leisure,

environmental and educational facilities of Grantham, the rural Vale of Belvoir and the region

The Grantham Canal:

The 33-mile, British Waterways-owned canal was opened in the 1790s, linking Grantham with the River Trent and the national waterway network at Nottingham. Traffic declined following the opening of the Nottingham to Grantham railway in 1850 and the canal was closed to navigation in 1929.

Nonetheless – and despite having some four-dozen bridges flattened in the 1950s and 60s and losing its River Trent link to road works in the 1970s – the canal remains in remarkably good condition. Its towpath – never much troubled by mechanised craft and refurbished in recent years – is one of the finest long-distance walks in the East Midlands

Restoration campaigning started in 1969 and over £6 million of improvements have been achieved in the last 15 years. The canal gained 'Priority 2' status in British Waterways' own 'Waterways 2025' list of restoration priorities, published in 2004 and, in 2005, a full-time Regeneration Manager was appointed by the Grantham Canal Partnership. Even redevelopment of the Grantham Canal Basin and a replacement link to the River Trent are currently under Local Authority consideration

However, with the British Waterways financial cutbacks of the last few months, the climate has significantly changed. BW no longer has the money to restore further 'remainder waterways' and the Grantham's efforts could again grind to a halt. That's why it's so important for Trailboaters, waterway friends and the public to rally round. Show that you

care; celebrate what has recently been achieved and make it clear to 'the powers that be' that their investment is worthwhile and must be continued

THE BASIC FACTS:

Where?

Based alongside The Rutland Arms ('Dirty Duck'), Woolsthorpe Wharf, Woolsthorpe-by-Belvoir, NG32 1NY [GR 843351] – approximately 5 miles west of Grantham, Lincolnshire

When?

Spring Bank Holiday Weekend, Saturday - Monday, 26th - 28th May. 10.00am - 6.00pm each day

What?

The IWA National Trailboat Festival 2007 – a canal and community get-together, making the most of 4½ miles of restored waterway accessing the Vale of Belvoir

Boat Trips on the historic canal
Canal boats from across the country
Rural Craft demonstrations
Theatre, Folk Songs and Jazz
Fishing Displays
Water Activities for Children
Terrier Racing & Dog Agility – well-behaved dogs welcome
Society and Trade Stalls
Birds of Prey
Clog Dancing
Face Painting & Children's Entertainment
Real Ale
Quality Catering by local farmers and cooks

... and much, much more

How much?

Festival admission will be FREE A modest charge will be made to cover the Park &

Ride costs

How to get there?

By Car:

Best accessed from the west, by leaving the A52 at Whatton ... and from the north, east and south by leaving the A1 at the A607 intersection. Follow the brown signs for 'Belvoir Castle' and then 'Grantham on Water'.

[For SatNav / MultiMap reference, the postcode of Belvoir Castle is NG32 1PE]
A Park & Ride shuttle service will operate all day from the Festival car park [at GR 823343] off the Belvoir - Woolsthorpe road

By Train:

The nearest principal station is Grantham (GNER & Central Trains)

By Bike:

The Festival site is on NCNs 15 & 64

What else is there to see?

Belvoir Castle will be holding a special Spring Bank Holiday families' weekend: '2 for the price of 1' admission vouchers will be available to all visiting Grantham on Water beforehand. Also: excellent rural walks, pretty villages and great pubs, Muston Meadows National Nature Reserve

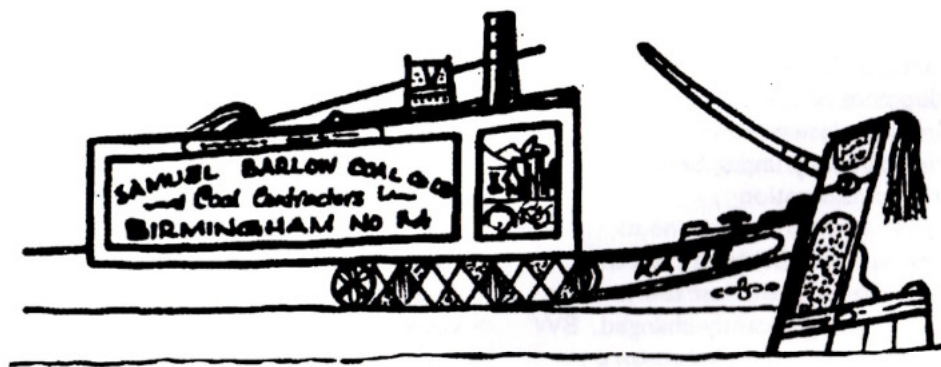
Accommodation?

Excellent Hotels and Guest Houses available locally – some at special rates

Further information?

Keep up-to-date at

www.granthamcanal.com





Further east towards Grantham, a £350,000 EMDA grant has facilitated major forestry and dredging work, undertaken by contractors 'Land & Water'. Here, no fewer than 4 L&W vessels struggle to move a submerged tree trunk to a point where it can be lifted out of the cut. As a result of the EMDA-funded work, 4.5 miles of Canal - from Woolsthorpe to the A1 - will be open to navigation during the Trailboat Festival. The Grantham Canal towpath is an excellent long distance footpath: this section is also National Cycle Route NCN 15'



Preparations for the Festival have continued all Winter. Here, BW's versatile workboat 'Mudlark' is seen dredging outside the Rutland Arms ('Dirty Duck') at Woolsthorpe Wharf. The land-based exhibits - including the FCC sales stand - will be in the field to the right. Trip boats will enable people to take their first cruises on the Grantham Canal this century!

In the last two editions of this magazine I had stated I had not received much response from my appeal to the people of Pinxton for help in running and managing the Smotherfly Site once planning approval is granted. I then received a welcome call from Councillor Norman Taylor who is approaching four Pinxton organizations with a view to each having one representative on a Smotherfly Management Team, which would work under the direction of the Trustees of the FCC. Once planning permission is granted for Smotherfly we will need this management team to run the site

To help with our funding needs on 19th to 22nd July two 66-year-olds; myself and Dave Tinkler – along with Tony Brooks, will attempt to walk the 56 miles of the Derwent Valley Heritage Way from Ladybower Dam to Derwent Mouth at Shardlow. **WE NEED BUSINESS SPONSORSHIP.** Can you find some for us? If so please use the contact addresses in this magazine.

For the weekend of 31st March and 1st April an agreement had been reached with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) to help them clear out the considerable amount of rubbish that had been tipped into this Grade II Listed historical lock flight. Sixteen members of the FCC turned up, but unfortunately no one from the DWT came to help. We pulled out hundreds of plastic bottles and beer cans, a refrigerator, a large lorry tyre, a motorbike frame, two bicycle frames, three children's peddle cars, two

suitcases, a go-cart, and bags full of discarded plastics. We were unable to get a gas cylinder out and had to leave that behind. I am sure DWT will thank us for helping them, but how disappointing that we were not able to work together on this structure that they own.

For those who were unable to attend our 5th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Cromford Canal (FCC) that was held at Ironville Church Hall on Monday 26th March 2007; the following is taken from the Chairman's Report. A full programme was offered, which included not only the Chairman's Report, but also a Historic Film Show & Pictures of the Cromford Canal. There was to have been an address by our new Patron Julian Richards, but he had a foot injury the day before and could not drive. Julian is an archaeologist, writer & broadcaster and you may have seen him on 'Meet the Ancestors' and 'Timewatch' or heard him on Radio 4.

As this was our 5th AGM it is fitting to ask what have we achieved during this time? Well the following are bulleted points of some of our achievements to date:-

- The line of the canal is protected (BUT not any required diversions)
- Formation of an active and dynamic committee
- Registered as a charity, after objections from wildlife lobby
- Production of our quarterly magazine, 'The Portal'
- Production of award winning website
- An Email network for members

Two books written and published
Our own sales stock and sales stand
Our own photographic Exhibition
Our own dedicated Archivist with the
best collection in the country
Sales stand and displays at several events
each year

A key feature of the World Heritage
Weekends

A key feature at the Cromford Festivals
Many working parties with WRG, DCC
and soon DWT

Dealt with several planning issues
concerning the canal - Hall Road access
bridge, Butterley Tunnel Housing,
Stoneyford Cottage and are still dealing
with the Smotherfly ex-open cast site.

Soon we will be looking at plans for the
Stevenson's Site at Bullbridge

Designed and printed our own handout
leaflets

Established our own notice boards

We became partners in the Derwent
Valley World Heritage Site

Became partners in the Amber Valley
Partnership which includes Renaissance
Ironville

Obtained strong political support from all
MP's along the route, Geoff Hoon, Judy
Mallaber, Dennis Skinner, Patrick
McLoughlin, and our MEP and all Parish
Councils.

We have met with Councils, and MP's
several times

We have had several sponsored walks,
two in the last year alone

We are members of the East Derbyshire
Regeneration Initiative (EDRI)

Had many articles published about the
canal

Ensured the canal is no longer seen as a
lost cause

Trying to work with BW to get the
Ironville locks re-watered – but this is
proving to be very slow progress!

All of the above has been done as a
labour of love, without any personal
financial gain.

During the year we have had several
work parties, organised by David Tinkler
supported by Graham White. Some of
the work parties were:-

Repair and renovation to the Derbyshire
County Council (DCC) horse boat 'The
Duchess' for October Festival
4/5 March and 18/19 Nov 06 with DCC
at Leashaw weed clearing
13/14 Jan 07– Waterway Recovery
Group at Codnor Park Reservoir
11/12 Feb 07 with DCC at
Whatstandwell tree clearing
31 March & 1st April 07 working with
Derbyshire Wildlife Trust at Ironville
Locks

Val Roberts & Mike Harrison head the
Sales Team – and what a good job they
do. They have:-

Attended all the FCC Social Events
throughout the year
Plus Pinxton Push Sponsored Walk
Public meeting at Matlock
Cromford Village Festival
A week long display at County Hall
Matlock
Cromford Steam Rally (By the backup
Team)
World heritage Weekend - Cromford
Produced & packed 4,000 Christmas
cards. Now working on 2 new designs
Maintained a stock of Canal Guide books
and several retail outlets
Run a postal service for sale items
Maintain stock levels

This summer they will be at:-
Grantham Trail Boat Rally 26th - 27th May
Cromford Village Festival 16th - 17th June

Sunday 15th July Codnor Medieval Fayre –
War of the Roses re-enactment
IWA Nation Festival – St Ives 23rd - 26th
August
World Heritage Weekend 20th - 21st
October
Can you help? Spare a day or an hour or
two to help out at one of these events?

To run a society such as ours requires
many hours of dedicated work from
some wonderful people.

Yvonne Shattower - Membership
Secretary and takes on this role without
any help. She has hundreds and hundreds
of member's contact details and every
quarter is at the forefront of getting our
magazine 'The Portal' out. Which
required all addresses to be printed and
magazines packed.

Brian Dominic – Webmaster of our
award winning website and Editor of this
the 'Portal' magazine. He is also one of
the main organisers of World Heritage
Weekends.

Val Kelley – Social Events Organiser. She
never misses a Committee Meeting and
acts as my secretary with all contact
details on file. Recently she collected a
£300 cheque on behalf of the FCC from
the 'Shoulder of Mutton Biker's Club' at a
Halloween party in Somercotes.

Hugh Potter – Archivist, a mine of
information about the canal's history. Has
the largest collection of Cromford Canal
archive material anywhere.

Bob Bullock – Handling all our finances as
Treasurer and producing clear
spreadsheets of our accounts. An Action
Committee comprising John Boucher, Pat
Morriss, Peter Stone, Trevor Robson and

David Ratner. Dave also keeps the notice
boards looked after & leaflets to the
public houses around the route of the
canal.

Then we have our new secretaries – Jan
Colombo and Meg Tarlton, the IWA &
ECP&DA representatives John Baylis &
Howard Smith – without the work these
did earlier the FCC wouldn't be here.
We have a Wildlife Committee
comprising of Chris Deuchar, Richard
Biggin, Judith Wooley and Trevor
Robson. All working as a Labour of Love.

Our biggest project this last year has
been the Smotherfly Site. Smotherfly has
been a long and hard fought project and
our thanks must go to: John Boucher,
(Our consultant engineer) Pat Morriss
(Vice Chairman) Reverend Steve Parish
(Local Authority Liaison Officer) – Steve
lives in Warrington a long way away from
the canal. All their considerable work is a
labour of love – Free of Charge.

A great deal of work has gone into this,
but before I inform you what we have
been doing let me take you back to April
2006 when we realised we had to raise
money for this project. The 'Pinxton
Push' sponsored walk was organised
which saw over 220 walkers took part. It
was opened by Jonathan Webster GM of
Hardys & Hansons Brewery – also our
sponsors. The walkers included Geoff
Hoon MP – then Leader of the House of
Commons & Judy Mallaber MP, Chief
Constable of Derbyshire, David Coleman,
QPM, plus several local councillors
including Jack Brown MBE. We raised a
grand total of £4,249.81

The scheme design for Smotherfly
required extensive engineering drawings
and earth calculations, all prepared by

John Boucher. The following are events pertaining to Smotherfly this last year:

Derbyshire County Council (DCC) stated they will not force UK-Coal to implement their agreement until FCC application is resolved

Local Authority opinion was we needed an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Government ruling said we did not need an EIA

Halcrow Group conducted a Flood Risk Assessment

UK-Coal gave permission to excavate foundation of Office Bridge II. J.C Balls contractor provided a mechanical excavator free of charge. The bridge footings were found at first attempt

17th May 2006 Planning Application submitted to Amber Valley BC and to Bolsover BC (Joint application submitted in accordance with advice we had from them at the time. Bolsover later requested separate application)

Objections were received from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, (DWT) Environmental Agency (EA) & English Nature.(EN) Basis for objections were - EA wanted changes to the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and further ecological assessment. EN wanted surveys done before application was approved. DWT objection was complex and to a large extent determined by considerations well outside of the Smotherfly Site.

Wildlife Sub-Committee formed – Chris Deuchar, Richard Biggin, Judith Wooley and Trevor Robson

In June an Amber Valley BC Planning

Officer asked us to withdraw our application, due to objections received and we did not have the surveys required. (It had been almost impossible to find out WHAT was required until our application was submitted) Due to time constraints we refused to withdraw application

Wildlife Sub-Committee drew up a report to answer the DWT wildlife issues

Ecology Report carried out for Smotherfly by ECUS
Pat Morriss, John Boucher, Chris Deucher, Rev. Steve Parish, Anthony Darbyshire, had several meetings with DCC Planning, and AVBC Planning. Extra landscaping was deemed to be required. Oakes Surveys of Ripley carried accurate surveys, and muck balances, and pegged out the waterline prior to another meeting with AVBC & DCC planners

ECUS cleared EA objections. Still awaiting confirmation from EA and EN

A 'specialist consultant' will be required to carry out a detail design of the Pye Bridge Cut Off Embankment

If deemed to be required - 16th April it will come before the AVBC Board

To run Smotherfly we will need a lot more money, so further fund raising will have to take place. We need business sponsorship – can you point us in the right direction?

Another key event this last year was the release of the Ecology Study conducted by Black & Veatch to cover line of the canal from Langley Mill to Ironville. The report was launched at Ripley Town Hall on July 10th 2006 and DCC and DWT attended. What this study shows is the most

preferred route for the canal from an ecological standpoint and its affect on wildlife especially the reserves. (This does not mean from an engineering point of view it is the preferred route) Then the FCC and DWT met to discuss issues on 7th December at the Bakewell offices of Natural England with Dr Tom Moat of NE in the Chair. As reported in the Portal this was a major step forward in what had been strained relations, prior to this.

The second World Heritage Weekend last October was a tremendous success. The horse boat 'The Duchess' had been restored by Dave Tinkler's team and the first cargo for many years of coal was delivered by horse boat to Lea Wood Pump House. This together with the traditional canal painting demonstrations, traditional rope making, musical organs, our second sponsored walk of the year and of course our sales market and photographic display all made to a great weekend. Make a note in your diary for this year's World Heritage Weekend on 20th and 21st October.

Other events of importance during the year have been; the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWAAC) have now stated they will treat the Cromford as one whole rather than two halves as they

did before; and that **THE CANAL IS NOW OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE**; whereas the other local canals the Derby and Grantham are 'regional' importance. The University of Derby have undertaken a survey for their students of the canal line from Langley Mill to Stoney Lane (Our thanks to Tony Brookes for his help in this) Hardys & Hansons Brewery funded the FCC for a total of £5,000 last year – which is deeply appreciated – Our thanks go to Yvonne Shattower & Peter Stone for their work in this regard.

Finally the ECP&DA continue to work on the canal extension at Langley Mill. Shire Developments have re-submitted their planning application for open-casting just north of Langley Mill Marina, they will reinstate the canal afterward up to Hall Road.

Finally, on a personal note, I had hoped to retire this spring, but finances require me to work another year, which will take me away from England more than ever. To be Chairman I am required to Chair meetings, which I will be unable to do for one year. Therefore I will be taking Sabbatical year and the Committee will elect a new Chairman for this period. I will continue to be a Trustee and work on the Committee and intend to look after the management of the Smotherfly Project.



WINTER WORKING PARTIES

from the camera of Ron Amner



The first Working Party cut reeds at Leashaw - here a trolley load gets tipped out of the way. The gentleman on the right is our new Secretary, Graham White.



The job made a bit of a mess of the towpath.....



March saw us tree clearing at Gregory Tunnel - Dave Tinkler's saying "Why is it that I ALWAYS end up on THIS side of the canal?"



At least DCC had got a tractor to shift stuff.



The end of March saw us at Ironville locks, shifting rubbish.....



..... but cutting the trees back will have to wait.

FUNDRAISING AND THE INTERNET

from Patrick Morriss


One of the many spin-offs from the growth of the Internet over recent years has been the ability to reach a wider audience and engage in different ways to raise funds.

Firstly there is a search-engine named Everyclick.com this organisation is prepared to share the revenue it generates every time we use a search engine to look for information. This is how Everyclick describe their activities, "Everyclick.com is a search engine that gives half of the revenue it generates to charity. Use it to raise money for your favourite charity whenever you search the web. Last year search engines generated close to £3.2 billion - just imagine how your selected charity could benefit if you and your friends all used everyclick.com to support them whenever you searched the web. All you need to do is select the charity you would like to support, there's absolutely no charge to you or the charities involved. The Independent 18th April 2007 described Everyclick's operations, as "One of the more established sites is everyclick.com, the fastest-growing search engine on the internet, with 850,000 searches last month half the advertising revenue from every search goes to charity, an average of a penny per search. Users can choose to support any of the 190,000 registered charities in the country, and more than £150,000 has been donated to charities through the search engine so far." So far the FCC have raised only £10.81, not much but there are only 12 individuals plus one corporate supporter using it to make a

total of 796 searches so far. Why not join the list of people who have made everyclick.com their search engine? It will not cost you a penny, better still get your company, university or school to use it and nominate the FCC as the charity of their choice and secure some of the .com money for the FCC!

Secondly, many of you will have heard of, or use the Bay online auction site. By the time you read this, the FCC should be registered as an eBay charity. This is how eBay describes how charities can benefit from a seller giving a percentage of their selling price to a charity. "Sellers are the lifeblood of eBay for Charity, so we're thrilled to welcome you.

Supporting a favourite charity while selling on eBay.co.uk is easy. Not only can you make a difference by donating between 10% and 100% of your item's final selling price, but you also benefit from your listing really standing out.

Your listing will be marked with the special blue and yellow ribbon , and will include the benefiting charity's logo and mission statement. Buyers can also easily search for charity items both on the main site and on the eBay for Charity hub page. Often this can mean more bids and even more selling success!

After your item sells, your chosen charity will find your donation paid into its bank account, along with Gift Aid (if you've ticked the box) and an eBay fee donation."

So eBay add some of their own money to

the pot! Better still if you register under the Gift aid scheme, all this is of course more fully explained on the ebay website.

If any of you have items that are easily posted and collectable (remember the eBay site is worldwide) and do not want to get involved with selling on ebay, then providing that you are willing for the

GRAND RAFFLE

As mentioned in the last Portal and in "Pat's Piece" the FCC will require funds on a large scale in the next twelve months. You will find ten tickets for this raffle included with this copy of the Portal. Please do your best to sell these tickets (there is always plenty more available for those of you who want them!) either way please return ticket stubs/unsold tickets to me before the draw that will take place at Cromford Wharf during the World Heritage Weekend on Sunday 21st October 2007. This event is a grand day out even if you don't win the raffle. The draw has A Footplate day at the Midland Railway, A Landrover Freelander for the Weekend and a Hot Air balloon trip as the first three prizes as well as other items to win.

whole proceeds to go to the FCC then I will be happy to list the items on eBay for you, please contact me to organise this.

I apologise to those of you who find the Internet a big turn off, but the FCC must really try and trawl for every penny that is out there!

from Patrick Morriss

If any of you wish to donate prizes especially the type of voucher or token that can be posted please let me know, the better the prize selection the greater the chance of securing funds for all the FCC objectives in the immediate future. We need prizes suitable for posting as well as picking up on the day as we intend to sell raffle tickets at all the events we are attending this summer.

If any of you have influence with any commercial enterprise who might be persuaded to give us a prize even better as the FCC website will be listing the prizes this summer and we will be happy to feature the donors details on our publicity material.

TO EDUCATE AND ENTERTAIN.....

from Simon Stoker

In the 1970's and 80's I was involved with the Cromford Canal Society operating the Cromford - Ambergate section of the canal. Part of our operation included the operation of traditional horse-drawn narrowboats which carried

up to 10,000 passengers a year.

Early in 1984 my office phone rang and a breathless voice at the other end of the line said: "Hello, this is the Beeb Beeb See" (or so it sounded.) Immediately

thoughts dashed around my brain as to what the BBC should want with our shoestring operation. We had in the past done various bits and pieces for both BBC and ITV but those were mainly local news stories, apart from the by-election stunt for the Tory candidate which entrapped some of the country's top-flight journalists on board, but that's for another time.

It transpired the Beeb were in the process of setting up to make a new adaptation of George Eliot's 1861 novel "Silas Marner", and they wanted some background sequences for their film. "Oh yes, that's not a problem. We can help there", I said blithely whilst calculating a

possible fee which might help our meagre earnings.

A few weeks later the Production Team arrived to look at the chosen location. During the intervening period I had rushed out to buy a copy of the Eliot novel. Like most people I knew of the author and of the novel, but had never actually read it. It was set in the mid-eighteenth century at a time when canals were not only relatively crude but not so common. This bothered the Beeb not at all. They just wanted 'local colour'. We made tentative arrangements to meet again to discuss detail but that did not happen.



The chosen location, Bridge I. Ben Kingsley in foreground

In fact a strike at the BBC caused chaos with production schedules and we thought our chance of a half-decent fee had gone but early the next year the whole thing was 'on' again. Could we supply a boat with a horse. Could they film from this angle, that angle, any angle? Production teams are not renowned for their knowledge of practical canal operation – why should they be? – so we had patiently to explain to the Director that if we put the camera in such and such a position then 120ft of towline would gently but firmly drag it into the canal. The Director wanted a shot of the boat passing through a bridge. Problem: bridge is on a bend. He will see the horse and not the boat, or the boat and not the horse. The two are 120ft apart. Solution: put the camera on another boat on the other side of the canal. Lovely picture but I had to explain that 60ft of steel boat weighing 9 tons and heading directly for their camera had no brakes, could not stop within 75 yards and DID have a large turning circle at exactly the point they wanted the camera to be! They accepted the risk.

The lead actor would be Ben Kingsley (who had won Best Actor in 1982 for Gandhi) and the cast also included , among others, Jenny (Railway Children) Agutter, Patrick Ryecart, Oscar Quitak, Nick Brimble, Jim Broadbent, Freddie Jones, Chris Langham, Angela Pleasance, Frederick Treves and Patsy Kensit. The budget was over £1.5 million. (About £3.2m today) Sadly we would not delight in the company of either Miss Agutter or Miss Kensit but would have to make do with Mr Kingsley. This, to me, was reward enough.

The conversation came round to our fee, and for the first (and only) time in my life

I was delighted to say to them: "You better call our Agent!" for we had signed up with a locations and film agency a while before. This ensured not only a proper contract but a decent fee.

We spent the next few weeks converting our traditionally-decorated narrowboat into a drab broken day-boat. Modern PVC sheets were painted to look like old tarpaulins, ropes were changed from polyprop to hemp, and anything else exposed was covered in crepe paper and then painted in drab colours. Our resident signwriter made up new "old" side boards which were an anagram of myself and my right-hand-man, Dennis. For filming the boat was re-named "Nathaniel" after one of the original carriers on the canal. On the morning of 29th March 1985 the Film Crew arrived!

In order to film a very short sequence with one actor the BBC had around THIRTY people. First to arrive was the catering wagon. In truth this was a small pantechnic which contained a complete fitted Wrighton kitchen! Next came the Crew Bus – nobody on board, this was used only for eating meals at little tables (with flowers) on board. Shortly after came not one but three trailers with fridge/freezers on board, each with its own little generator. A number of converted caravanettes were the costume and make-up departments. Lastly there was a Transit with the camera equipment. Crew members arrived in their own vehicles in dribs and drabs. The catering staff got busy cooking at 9.30am and the camera crew opened the back of the Transit. They did no more than reach for a large wine box of some claret or other and pour themselves a drink. There was grumbling because they actually had to walk 300 yards to the location. The

weather was not kind. A grey drizzly overcast hung over us, but I suppose it added to the 'atmosphere'.

The Director approached and instructed Dennis and I to attend the costume van.

There a nice confirmed bachelor dressed us in what the Costume Department had decreed would be 18th century boatmen's clothes (long waistcoat, linen shirt, breeches and hose with a leather hat for me!) and then to the make-up van.



Dennis Shooter (L) and Simon Stoker with 'Strawberry'

The attention to detail was amazing. I had already grown my beard longer than normal but they wanted a rust-coloured face. Dirt on hands and under fingernails. I was dimly aware of another person next to me in that van and said Hello. It was Ben Kingsley not being uncommunicative but getting into 'character'. By some unseen signal the whole crew downed tools and headed for food. A long queue stretched towards the catering van whose menu would not have disgraced a three star restaurant (at least two main courses and a variety of sweets). The Director told us to join in as we were now paid

BBC hands. I was last but one in the queue. The last man was Ben Kingsley. "Shouldn't you be at the front?" I enquired innocently. "I'm only the bloody actor", he replied.

Eventually someone thought we ought to get something on film. It was well after lunch and the weather had not improved. So we made our exits (stage left) to the actual location some 300 yards along the towpath.

"Go and jump in that puddle", said Continuity. "What on earth for?" said I.

“Because the Director needs you to be dirty and splashed with mud”. “But the camera can’t see me from the chest down, I’m behind the cabin.” “Ah. But he might change his mind and want a different shot. Then I’ll get bollocked!” So I jumped in a puddle. The Director still failed to understand that a horse-drawn boat cannot start on cue or stop on its

mark. It needs time to get going and more time to stop. This meant man-hauling into position, giving a good push out into the channel (at which point extra handlers jump over wall to get out of the picture) and only then can the boat start work. We had little radios to tell us what to do. “Stand by.....” “Turn Over....” “ACTION”.



After the first Take. Camera boat in background. Dog Muttley on cabin roof.

My radio crackled alive. “Get on with it please”. On the first Take the horse took up the strain, the boat lurched into the channel and we passed through the bridge in fine form. I had forgotten the camera boat was right on the point where the stern would swing outwards to round the corner and very nearly clobbered not only it but the 6 men and the expensive Arriflex it contained. (16mm Fuji negative film, since you ask). “CUT” “Go Again”

Meaning the boat had to be stopped by

hand on a bad corner and then, with horse disconnected, manhandled backwards 150 yards to the starting point. Narrowboats don’t like going backwards. And small horses don’t like picking up heavy boats on a repeat basis. The horse was ‘Strawberry’, a small-ish former pit pony who was getting on in years but still able to do a normal pull. After getting a boat moving there is actually very little work for the horse. However, doing it time and again can be exhausting.



Ben Kingsley In character and in rain

It took FIVE takes before the Director decided he was happy. Each time the boat had to be manhandled back to the start point. Each time Mr Kingsley had to get back to his position. Each time the extra handlers had to push us out and each time poor Strawberry had to start off a stationary boat. I was beginning to wish I HAD hit the camera boat on the first take. "Check the gate" The clapper / loader inspected minutely the beautiful

and expensive Arri for hairs in the gate (or spiders, dandruff, former directors etc) and 30 crew plus ourselves and a horse held breath until: "OK" And we had more or less finished. The Sound Man

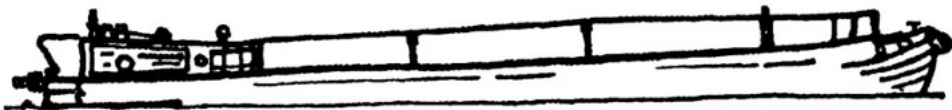
wanted some extra tape of horse hooves

on the gravel so we walked Strawberry up and down a bit. He got his furry microphone too close (we omitted to tell him the horse was fed mainly on oats at that time of year) and a tired and very flatulent animal nearly blew out his transistors.

Then the entire BBC disappeared as though through a time tunnel. One moment they were all over the place, the next nothing. Nary a thank you. Our fee was £2000 (£4200 in 2006 values). Dennis and I got £34 each as walk-on extras (the standard fee at the time) and my wife's dog Muttley got another £34 for patiently sitting on top of the cabin while mad people filmed her. I paid off my extra handlers with a tenner each, they deserved more.

Well it was fun to do.

By the early 90's that canal was well on the way back to dereliction as all work had stopped. Mr Kingsley got an OBE and then a well deserved knighthood. We got eight and a half seconds' airtime!



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 21st May Social Meeting at Ironville Church Hall, starting at 1930.
Speaker: John Lower of the Chesterfield Canal Trust.
- 26th - 27th 28th May The National Trailboat Festival at Woolsthorpe-by-Belvoir
near Grantham - Sales stand in attendance
- 9th - 10th June Belper Steam & Vintage Event at Eyes Meadow Duffield - Sales
stand in attendance
- 15th July Codnor Castle Medieval Fayre Stoneyford Lodge Boat Lane
Stoneyford Nr Langley Mill - Sales stand in attendance
- 16th July Social Meeting at Ironville Church Hall, starting at 1930.
Speaker: Pat Morriss on "Those Revolting Peasants" (The
Pentrich Revolution)
- 4th - 5th August Cromford Steam Rally Alfreton Road Brackenfield (Tansley) -
Sales stand in attendance
- 25th - 26th - 27th August IWA National Festival Hemingford Meadow St Ives Cambridge
- Sales stand in attendance
- 8th - 9th September Festival of Transport Darley Dale Matlock - Sales stand in
attendance
- 8th - 9th September Working Party at the bottom section of the Ironville locks.
Meet at the railway bridge at 10am, parking at the reservoir
car park or Jacksdale community centre car park. You can also
park on Parkside Drive, Adelaide Walk and Waterside which
are roads in Ironville near to the work site. The task is to cut
down trees, that are growing in the lock walls, and disposing of
them. We are arranging for a certified chainsaw operative to
cut the larger trees but we would like volunteers to bring Bow
saws and or loppers if they have them.
- 17th September Social Meeting at Ironville Church Hall, starting at 1930.
Speaker: Cliff Housley on "Wipers Times" (Sherwood
Foresters"
- 19th November Social Meeting at Ironville Church Hall, starting at 1930.
Speaker: George Eye on Codnor Castle

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

from Yvonne Shattower

As I write this report, the calendar tells me that it is now summer, but I have to say that it doesn't really seem like it with the grey skies and cold winds. However, the swans are starting to nest and the blackbirds are getting lively, so summer must be on its way!

Looking back over the membership records for the last year, it is disappointing to find that we have, for the first time, had a net loss of members. Up till now, new members' numbers have balanced or exceeded the losses, but over the last year we have had a reduction of 27 overall. As usual, most people who have failed to renew have not given any reason, (possibly their renewal notice is still behind the clock on the mantelpiece) but I am aware of several members who have left the area, and have chosen not to renew. Please do encourage your friends, neighbours and family to join us so that we can keep our numbers up. If you have found a yellow reminder in with this copy of the 'Portal' your membership is seriously overdue and this will be your

last copy of the magazine!

The standing order payments have worked out quite well, but unfortunately some banks seem unable to read the instructions and a few have been paid monthly rather than annually. Refunds are being arranged for members who have been affected, but I would ask you to check your statements, especially in the early months, if you pay by this method. Another slight problem has been with names - sometimes the account initials do not tie up with the name I have for the member, and I have to do a bit detective work.

Your Committee have a very full programme of events lined up for this year, so we hope you will come along and support us. Watch out for dates in your 'Portal', and if you can help in any way we would be more than pleased to hear from you. We have also got some interesting speakers lined up for Members meetings later in the year - again, watch out for details in the magazine.

Membership records are computerised. Your entry is available for inspection if you send an SAE to the Membership Secretary.



