

THE PORTAL



THE JOURNAL OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CROMFORD CANAL

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FRONT COVER: Another load of dredgings about to move along the canal from the dredger to the unloading site at Whatstandwell. See page 14.

Photo: Editor

BACK COVER (TOP): FCC President Brian Blessed receiving the cheque from Councillor Juliette Blake. This will be spent on the Sawmills length of the canal, including two interpretation boards. See page 18.

Photo: Freda Raphael

BOTTOM: One can hardly believe that this picture is taken on the Cromford Canal. The tree clearance carried out by Derbyshire County Council has really opened up the view. The passing tug with a loaded mud hopper is the first motor boat ever to use this stretch of canal in its 200 plus year history.

Photo: Hugh Potter

The aims and objectives of the Friends of the Cromford Canal

THE RESTORATION, RECONSTRUCTION, PRESERVATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE CROMFORD CANAL, ITS ASSOCIATED BUILDINGS, TOWING PATH, STRUCTURES AND CRAFT AND THE CONSERVATION OF ITS NATURAL CHARACTER AS A NAVIGABLE INLAND WATERWAY SYSTEM FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC



EDITORIAL

from Mike Harrison



Welcome to *The Portal* No.34

This Spring, Val and I actually managed to get away on the long boating trip which we had originally planned for last year. It has therefore been a little longer between Portals than normal and we have been absent from a few FCC meetings. However, things have been moving on in our absence and progress is being made.

Firstly, as you may have noticed on the committee list on the inside front cover, we now have a new webmaster. George Rogers has kindly offered to take on this important job after Giles Metcalf stepped down at the AGM. Giles is moving out of the area and we wish him well in his new home and thank him for his efforts. George is also involved with the Waterway Recovery Group, so he sounds like just the chap we need. See his articles on pages 5 and 20.

The Sales Department is also continuing to increase its activities. Eric and Beryl Singleton are doing a great job and have quite a full programme for the rest of the year. It is very important to keep spreading the word at these events. See page 17.

There is also good news from Sawmills. Following on from the FCC work parties, the Bullbridge and Sawmills Area Civic Society (BASA) have made very impressive progress on tree clearance along their length of canal, particularly around the gauging narrows. This length is owned by Lockwoods who have agreed to lease the canal to the FCC for a peppercorn rent. This will mean setting up a company limited by guarantee, which is in hand at the moment. It will also mean that work can proceed with bringing in an excavator to clear the canal channel and rebuilding the stonework of the narrows. Freda Raphael and Gill Hirst of BASA, who are keen FCC supporters, have both sent in items describing their activities. See pages 8 to 11.

All this Sawmills activity also received a boost by a grant from Councillor Juliette Blake, whose ward this is in. The cheque was received from councillor Blake by our president Brian Blessed. See back cover and page 18. The intention is that some of this money will be spent on two interpretation boards once the problem of planning permission and the costs involved with that have been resolved.

The same problem is still holding up the Smotherfly project. It is over two years since planning permission was granted, but Amber Valley Borough Council are still finding extra conditions which need to be met, all of which are adding considerably to the cost.

Finally, this leads me on to this year's sponsored walk. The need to raise funds is ever present and we need as much support as possible for this event. John Barker, our publicity officer, has taken on this project which will be from Langley Mill to Pinxton on Sunday September 26th. See the entry form enclosed with this issue. We need **your** help.

Please note the press date for the Autumn 2010 issue is October 18th.



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by Patrick Morriss



My apology if this is not totally up to date. I am off on holiday and so this is being written two weeks before the normal press date, also it may be a little shorter than usual. All negotiations, talks, meetings etc. take longer to come to fruition at this time of year as various 'players' disappear for a week or two or delay meeting until after their return etc. The Cromford Canal Partnership inches closer towards agreeing the terms of reference for a scoping study to determine the ground rules for the full feasibility study for the whole canal. It has proved and is proving difficult at times to get all involved to acknowledge that the Cromford Canal runs from Langley Mill to Cromford and Pinxton. It is not just the sections in county council ownership or the section that is an SSSI. Hopefully we can all agree the 'baseline' for any further studies and agree the data on which further studies will access for their conclusions.

Negotiations have reached an impasse with UK Coal regarding Smotherfly, but the month of July should see some sort of decision one way or another.

Some of you will no doubt have heard of the 'saga' regarding the application for planning permission at Sawmills for a couple of interpretation boards on the canal. National government policy requires local councils to charge a fee of £335 per board as they are classed as advertisements. However, if we had been a business application rather than a charity application the fee would have been £95 per board, being responsible people the FCC applied for planning permission, many organisations don't bother. On my return I will be seeking a meeting with Amber Valley's new MP to talk about canal matters in general and this ludicrous state of affairs where a charity seeking to enlighten the public gets charged well over three times the amount that a commercial organisation would be charged for an advertisement. Come on government, both local and national, get off our backs!

Nationally not much has been heard since the general election in May regarding the future of British Waterways. The idea was that BW was going to become a 'mutual' organisation. This might have been something like the National Trust, making greater use of volunteers and giving the body more of a chance to obtain funding from other sources, whilst reducing the amount of political interference in short and long term planning for the waterways. Whilst in opposition the new government – or at least the Conservative part of it – had plans to amalgamate the Environment Agency's navigation interests with the BW canals and rivers. We will have to wait and see what transpires.

Our sales teams and others are out and about representing the FCC at a whole host of events this summer, canal related and others. The showpiece event for the FCC has always been the Derwent Valley Mills Discovery Days events at the end of October. The demonstration horse boat is always popular notwithstanding the problems we have had in past years getting the motive power there. Last year problems with the canal that had been steadily showing themselves since we started attending this event manifested themselves



rather more visibly. Despite a very high water level and a powerful horse, the boat ran aground on several occasions and the reed growth in other places severely restricted the width of the channel. Following a walk along the canal with Chris Coombs of DCC a few weeks ago, the decision was taken not to run the horse boat in 2010. A very regrettable decision but reed growth and water depth continue to work against us.

I suggest that for the summer and in the period running up to the Discovery Days weekend, the FCC should promote a petition to Derbyshire County Council something along the lines of: 'We the undersigned petition Derbyshire County Council to ensure that for 2011 canal conditions between Leawood Aqueduct and Cromford Wharf are such that the canal can be navigated by horse drawn craft and that steps are taken to reintroduce the much lamented horse drawn passenger boat as operated in the past'.

I understand, but may be mistaken, that the recent dredging at Whatstandwell cost in the order of £140,000. How does this work out at a cost per metre compared to other dredging elsewhere in the country?

Given the moves nationally to make greater use of the 'third sector' i.e. volunteers in waterway issues, perhaps given the undoubted need for the country to cut both national and local government spending, greater involvement by volunteers and volunteer fundraising on the Cromford Canal might be appropriate? The sooner the Cromford Canal Partnership becomes a legal entity the better!

FCC DISPLAY TRAILER

Many of you will have seen the FCC display trailer, made to look like a narrow boat cabin, as a means of attracting attention at some of the outdoor events attended by the sales team in the last three years. The picture below shows the trailer adjacent to the FCC stall at last year's National Waterways Festival, when it helped to impress the judges sufficiently to lead to winning the prize for the best canal society stand.



However, the committee feels that we are not getting the amount of use from the trailer as perhaps we should and would like to see it have more outings than it does at present. We are therefore looking for any volunteers among the membership with a tow bar on their car who would be able to tow the trailer to any of these events. It is quite light and easily towable. If any of you can help with this, please contact any of the committee.



WEBSITE MATTERS

from George Rogers

Hi all, and welcome to a new era. Giles, the previous webmaster, rescinded the reins at the AGM in order to facilitate his move from the area, and as a new representative of the committee I wish to thank him for all his hard work keeping the website up to date over the past years.

My purpose of writing this brief piece (aside from pleasing our editor who is eternally requesting more articles) is to ask for your help, and bring a few other items to your attention.

So first, a plea for help. Being a student, I currently find myself at the start of a three month summer break, but not being a typical student I don't intend to spend it all idling the time away! Instead, some of my time is to be devoted to website improvements, and this is where you come in.

I am asking you all to let me know what you would like out of the website. It is your canal and I want to build the site around you and your ideas. So, what would you like to see? How often do you visit the site? Is there anything about the current site you particularly like or dislike?

Obviously, any changes made will take time – any ideas will be discussed at the next committee meeting and development isn't going to happen immediately. Any ideas requiring more technical development will be considered but they will not come to fruition until next year, as we need to change the web host before then.

You can let me know your ideas either by email at:

web@cromfordcanal.org.uk

or by writing to me at:

2 Main Rd, Whatstandwell, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 5HE.

I can't promise I will respond immediately but I will let you know that I have received your comments where possible.

Aside from the website, you can also find a certain amount of information about the Friends on the group's facebook page, or you can join the yahoo membership group. For both, follow the links on the home page of the website.

Thanks for your time, I look forward to receiving your ideas and to weaving them into a member-orientated website,

George Rogers
New FCC Webmaster

Oh, and of course – if you have forgotten, the FCC website can be found at:

www.cromfordcanal.org.uk



FCC NEWS UPDATE
- so what *is* happening

from Mike Kelley



- **Smotherfly** - Still very little movement with this project. UK-Coal (the owners) have made us an offer through an intermediary, but it was not one we could seriously consider. A substantial amount of money has been spent in order to meet the conditions set by Amber Valley Borough Council (AVBC). Most of these conditions have now been met, but the Planning Department of this council are still finding even more areas of information they want from us.

- **Saturday 27th & Sunday 28th March** - The new nursery pond at Smotherfly was planted up with wild plants from the locality, as a condition of the planning conditions. The feeder stream was in full flood at the time making this job quite difficult to do.



Cold and wet work on the nursery pond



Photos: Mike Kelley



• **Sunday 4th & Monday 5th April** - Eric and Beryl of our Sales Team took the sales stand to Cromford Wharf for the Easter Holiday. It was cold and the response from the public somewhat disappointing.

• **Monday 12th April** - Our President, Brian Blessed, came to Sawmills near Ambergate, gave us a wonderful talk and viewed the work being carried out on the canal there. (See page 18).

• **Saturday 17th April** - Eric and Beryl took the sales stand to Ambergate station for the day. Such activities help to get us noticed by the general public, and encourages new members to join.

• **Monday 19th April** - This evening was our Annual General Meeting. Our Chairman, Pat Morris went into detail outlining our current status. Afterwards we all enjoyed a slide show from our Archivist, Hugh Potter, who put up slides taken of the canal in the 1960's. The meeting was well attended.

• **Saturday 24th April** - Our Sales Team went to the Jacksdale Heritage Day. It was a day when the history of the local Codnor Castle was on display, by the Codnor Castle Preservation Society. There were men in armour and bow and arrow practice.

• **Sawmills Land Lease** - I met with the owner of the canal at Sawmills, who agreed to lease the canal there to us for 15 years. We now have to form a separate company, limited by guarantee, to pursue this further.

• **Sawmills Planning** - Part of the money donated to us by Councillor Juliette Blake via Brian Blessed is to be used to obtain and install two Interpretation (information) Boards at Sawmills. These will explain to the public the rich industrial history of the area. We were told, via Email, the cost for a planning application would be £95 for two boards, and so we submitted the application. AVBC Planning then rejected the planning application and informed us the cost would be £335 for each board. (You may have seen the article and supportive editorial comment on this in the Derby Telegraph). I attended a meeting of Ripley Town Council to try and sort this out and they kindly agreed to help; so the application will shortly be resubmitted.

• **Saturday 15th May** - Our Sales Team attended a book launch at Brinsley church.

• **Saturday 5th June** - Our busy Sales Team went to another event, this time at Jacksdale. It was for the 'Soldier Day' and commemorated the installation of the new war memorial there a year ago, after a big campaign to rebuild it after it was destroyed by lightning many years ago.

• **Saturday 19th & Sunday 20th June** - This was the weekend of the Cromford Festival. Our Sales Team went there again and pitched their gazebo on the grass at the canal wharf. All these sales events bring a steady income into our charity, and we all thank this team for all their hard work.

Please remember this year's	
FCC SPONSORED WALK	
THE SMOTHERFLY SUNDAY PLOD	
Sunday 26th September	
From Langley Mill to Pinxton	
Full details on the entry form enclosed with this issue	



BULLBRIDGE AND SAWMILLS AREA CIVIC SOCIETY (BASA)

We're a group of local residents who got together in spring 2009 because of our concern over the proposed redevelopment of the Stevenson's dye works site at Bullbridge. Naturally, other local worries, anxieties and issues immediately demanded attention too, and so BASA was born.

Our primary aim is to make the Bullbridge and Sawmills area a better place for everyone to live in. Bullbridge and Sawmills may not be the prettiest area, and life here certainly isn't improved by the traffic speeding along the A610 or taking a runner at Bullbridge Hill. We lack the seclusion of Fritchley and the charm of Crich. Nor have we evolved around a central focus like a green. But we have an undeniable industrial history.

We feel that the Cromford Canal is the key to re-developing and improving Bullbridge and Sawmills. Together with the FCC, we persuaded JG Land, the re-developers of the dye works site, to allow sufficient open space for the stretch of the canal through the site to be replaced along its old bed. (We also want to see the whole canal, including the Bullbridge aqueduct, restored).

Early in 2009 JG Land (or JG Ambergate LLP, the true owners) began to demolish the Stevenson's dye works buildings. By Easter the contractors ceased working, with cash owing to them, leaving the old dye works like a bomb site, with piles of rubble and part demolished buildings. Over the past year we have become increasingly anxious about the state of the site - and its future, including two old stone buildings, on either side of the canal bridge on Bullbridge Hill, both falling into a decayed state.



This picture shows part of the hamlet of stone houses clustered around the canal bridge on Bullbridge Hill, looking west, with the Canal Inn on the right. The two stone buildings on the left are those referred to above.

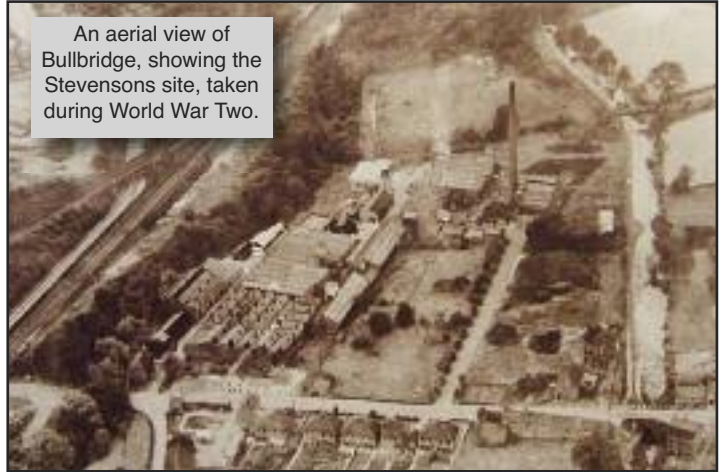
It was painted by the late Don Bednall. It is reproduced here with kind permission of his widow Amy, who was born, and has lived all her life, in Bullbridge and Sawmills. Don painted this view as he remembered Bullbridge in the 1950s.

Once last winter's snows had melted, and the dry spring set in, local residents became even more concerned about the site's safety. BASA contacted Environmental Health at Amber Valley Borough Council (AVBC) who responded at once, our immediate concern being the broken asbestos related materials still on the site. We worried that asbestos laden dust was blowing onto our homes. Additionally, thieves were breaking in daily helping themselves to anything, even the live copper cabling in the electricity sub-station. We were also concerned that local children would be tempted to explore the site



with its derelict buildings and numerous pits and holes - particularly the huge holding tank that Stevenson's had created by widening and deepening the canal by Hagg Tunnel portal.

Currently, following legal advice, AVBC have passed the problem to their Building Control section and a second Notice to make the site safe has been served on JG Ambergate LLP, under the Building Act 1984. This Notice will expire by mid July. At the time of writing nothing has been heard from either JG Ambergate LLP or JG Land & Estates, and neither have responded to AVBC's earlier Notice.



An aerial view of Bullbridge, showing the Stevensons site, taken during World War Two.

Meanwhile, AVBC has been doing its best to repair and maintain, at taxpayers' expense, the lengthy perimeter fence around the dye works site in a sufficiently secure state to keep children out. This is an unending task since much of the perimeter is in woodland where thieves continue to break through.

The BASA sub group concerned with the future redevelopment of Stevenson's welcomes anyone interested in the redevelopment of the Bullbridge/Sawmills area, and includes FCC members Hugh Potter, Pat Morriss and George Jones. BASA is particularly interested in George's suggested plan for a future marina at Ambergate (on the Transco/National Grid site) taking the Cromford Canal towards Bullbridge. On 25th June the BASA sub group met Nigel Mills, our new Amber Valley MP, to discuss ways he can help to move the Stevenson's problems forward. George showed Nigel his extended, overall, plan linking the Cromford Canal at Ambergate, via his proposed marina, and into a redevelopment of the Stevenson's site. This caused much interest and discussion. George's plan links the Bullbridge area into the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site (it would not, of course, become a part of the World Heritage Site) taking particular note of sustainable transport routes, including a new railway station. It would also take road traffic, from the redevelopment, away from having to access onto/from Bullbridge Hill. Nigel was very interested in George's suggestions and he will be arranging a meeting with Derek Stafford, assistant director of Planning and Redevelopment at AVBC, and the BASA sub group.

BASA is still a very small - but enthusiastic - group of people. But we have a vision that future redevelopment of the Bullbridge Stevenson's site will be more than just another housing estate with a space left for the canal to be put back at some time. We want a wider view taking in George Jones's marina plan and a new Bullbridge aqueduct. Such a vision would surely attract investment and employment. So please, if you have any suggestions, or if you'd like to join us, do get in touch with us. You can contact us, and keep up to date with all our latest news, via our website www.bullandsaw.co.uk

Freda Raphael, BASA Chairperson
freda@historicalsearch.co.uk



BASA AND THE NARROWINGS AT SAWMILLS

Last winter the Friends of the Cromford Canal work party, together with the Waterways Recovery Group and The Bullbridge and Sawmills Area Civic Society spent two weekends working on the Sawmills stretch of the Cromford Canal. Lockwoods (who own this length of the canal) supported these days with toilets, skips and, on the first weekend, a shredder. *See pages 17 to 20 in Portal 32 - Ed.* Wishing to build on this work, BASA members, residents and friends then spent most weekends and some days in the week, until nesting time, concentrating on working on the Narrowings.

This exercise developed into much more than clearing shrub, chopping down trees and having the odd, rather good, bonfires. We found that more people walk the footpath along the Sawmills stretch than we had realised and that many of these people were interested in what we were doing and either wanted information about the canal or had memories to share. We had so much interest that we started to take FCC pamphlets along to give to people.

While our first consideration is to halt the spread of the weed trees, clear the rubbish and start to pave the way for the restoration of the canal, we feel that the activity has yielded “added value” in that it has given us the opportunity to engage with local people. We believe that most local people have been heartened by the interest taken in their canal. Old people who remember the canal in water are reminded of when they were young and the tricks they got up to. They remember the people at the gauging house on the narrows and when the house was pulled down after a new bungalow was built.

One of the BASA “Campaigns” is to support the preservation of local heritage. To help our research we have asked local people to bring along their photos, press cuttings and the like to our meetings. We have visited those residents who are unable to attend and recorded their stories and testimonies. What a rich seam that has turned out to be! (Though some of the stories will never be printed, as they are so shocking and libellous!) [*I think you should try me with some of these! - Ed.*] We are particularly keen to collect memories of the Sawmills stretch, but so far have not found that elusive photograph of the narrows in water. While gathering the photos and memories we have had much help, encouragement and freely-given expertise from Hugh Potter. Many thanks Hugh!

We believe it is important to engage with the young people of the area and involve them in the project. We certainly don't want to discourage these future workers, who will actually see the whole canal in water. This does present some health and safety issues when working on the clearing. We have overcome this as best we can by not having unaccompanied children when we are using tools. The parents take responsibility and, as a bonus, they too are engaging with the work. When we finalise our charitable status we will be applying for grants to purchase protective clothing for the young volunteers. We will also be presenting Commendations to the young people in recognition of their community work.

My husband, David, and I offer Day and Respite Care to adults for Derbyshire Social Services. The men we work with have been very keen to work alongside us and the Narrowings have become their project too. The opportunity to do “proper” work alongside other guys and as members of a team is particularly valued. The highlight of the year for a couple of these guys was meeting Brian Blessed, who was very encouraging and understanding. We have also been approached by a scoutmaster and by a worker who supports teenage non-school-attenders to see if there is any way they can become involved. So far we have been cautious about involving anyone else, but clearly there is an untapped source of workers out here. (It has also been suggested that probationers could be involved).



We are also aware that clearing the canal of invasive trees and shrubs is essential work towards the restoration, but that it will also reduce the wildlife sites. We intend to work towards offsetting the clearing of trees by putting up bird and bat boxes and insect hotels and sowing wildflower seeds. We hope to have a bird and bat box making day for the young people of the area (and those not so young!) this autumn. These boxes will be installed with the help of the young people. We will also be sowing tree seeds in pots with the younger members.

Before and After.

The picture on the right shows the gauging narrows at Sawmills in late 2009 when work had just started on tree clearance, whilst below we see the end result of concerted efforts by the enthusiastic volunteers of BASA, taken in Feb 2010. Hopefully next year will see the final clearance and restoration of the stonework.



We have tried to capture the views of the community whenever we can, using our frequent discussions with people who come to see what we are doing, or who come across us whilst we're out working. The vast majority want to see the Sawmills stretch of the canal in water and in traffic. They have no interest in it being another “pond” as at Bullbridge. *This is exactly the view of the FCC, and very pleasing to hear - Ed.*

We have done very little to the Narrowings over the summer, but will be starting clearing again after nesting time. We await instruction and information from the Friends about conservation of the stonework, and the information sign.

Gill Hirst
Secretary, Bullbridge and Sawmills Area Civic Society



NEWS FROM THE NORTH

Cromford Canal - Cromford to Ambergate

from Rick Jillings - Assistant Area Manager
Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service

The widening and surfacing work on a mile long section of the Cromford Canal towpath between Ambergate and Chase Bridge near Whatstandwell, described in the last Portal, has now been completed by Allroads, Derbyshire County Council's highway team. The graded ramp at Chase Road to allow wheelchair and pushchair access to the towpath is also now in use. The work had to be done with care, the canal being a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Local Nature Reserve. The canal verges were not disturbed as they support a wide range of important wildlife including wild flowers, insects such as damsel flies and hover flies and a population of water voles.

The work on High Peak Junction swing bridge to replace rotten timberwork, for which scheduled monument consent has been sought from English Heritage, should take place later this year.

The video which will tell the story of Leawood Pump, also mentioned last time, has now been filmed. This is currently being edited, and it will be on show at High Peak Junction Visitor Centre later in the summer.

A section of the Cromford Canal around Whatstandwell has been excavated to benefit the ecology and water flow. Prior to this work the canal was blocked by several silt bars. These stopped water flowing through the canal resulting in poor water quality and potential for the canal to overtop during heavy rain.

Land and Water Services, a company specialising in waterway management, were appointed as contractors and have excavated a channel 874 metres long, 4 metres wide and a metre deep. The method of work was drawn up following ecological advice and was approved by Natural England. The work left an undisturbed area on each bank (approximately 2m wide) ensuring water vole burrows were not disturbed and that a reed fringe remains providing both food and shelter. *See pages 14 to 16 for a further report and pictures of this project - Ed.* Following on from tree clearance, woodland flowers including bluebells and the canal vegetation are flourishing. Monitoring shows early signs that the canal and water voles are already benefiting from the work. The silt that has been removed is currently drying and will shortly be ploughed into fields next to the canal to create wild flower meadows. A scheme to excavate a further 326m of canal is planned for this autumn on the section of canal around Whatstandwell Station. During the work a sewage pipe in the canal at the Whatstandwell sewage treatment works was found to be only 700mm below the current water level. This gives too little water depth for boat access and means a rethink in how the silt will be transported to the disposal point.

As a man made structure, the Cromford Canal requires ongoing management. The County Council's team of Rangers and Wardens monitor the Canal and investigate any subsidence in the towpath. This can be the result of water leaking from the canal. An investigation of subsidence between High Peak Junction and Cromford Wharf identified a leak flowing onto the railway at a substantial distance from where the towpath had sunk. This leak has been repaired. However investigation and excavations are required on a section of the canal opposite the High Peak Junction Visitor Centre a mile south of Cromford. The towpath between Cromford Wharf and High Peak Junction will be closed to the public from 5th July until the works are completed and the towpath is safe. This should take approximately a week. See pictures on opposite page.

For further information contact Middleton Top Visitor Centre 01629 823204



ABOVE: The site of the leak approx 50m north of the swingbridge at High Peak Junction. This leak has been successfully repaired and the towpath re-instated. BELOW: The second leak opposite High Peak Junction Workshops. This is rather worrying as canal water is leaking through the embankment and stone retaining wall and running on to the adjacent railway. A trench has been excavated in the towpath and is in the process of being filled with clay. This is being 'puddled' to make it watertight. This is a method which was pioneered by James Brindley and has been used on canals since the earliest times, although nowadays a mini digger is used rather a gang of navvies with hobnail boots.





BOATS RETURN TO CROMFORD CANAL

by Hugh Potter

Working boats returned to the Cromford Canal for the first time in over 60 years when dredging took place around Whatstandwell between mid-March and mid-April. Land & Water Services undertook dredging work for Derbyshire County Council to clear a length of the badly silted canal, which had not been dredged for over 30 years, and then only partially cleared from the bank. A full ecological study won the approval of Natural England for this essential work to deepen the channel to improve water flow. Rick Jillings described the background to the work in the last edition of Portal. His report on pages 12-13 brings us up to date

A short length to the north of Whatstandwell road bridge was cleared by land-based excavator, with the dredgings being taken away by road. The centre of operations then moved half a mile south to the site for disposal of the dredgings where a tug was launched to be joined by two hopper barges craned in at Whatstandwell and pulled to the site by tractor from the towpath.

Dredging began here and worked back towards Whatstandwell Bridge, only to be stopped by a pipe to the sewage works (just south of the station) which had been capped with concrete just over 2ft below the surface. The excavator, which was mounted on a turret running on under water tracks, was unable to cross this so dredging of this 350-yard length immediately south of the bridge must await Phase 2. DCC hopes to be able to do this in the autumn – consents and budget permitting.

In all, over 950 yards have been dredged, and now that the summer vegetation has grown up along the banks, only the depth of water shows that any activity took place.

The following pictures give some idea of the work involved.



The dredger is mounted on tracks similar to a normal excavator. The central turret is high enough to keep the cab clear of the water while the machine 'wades' in the canal. Silt is quickly loaded into the waiting hopper brought there by the tug.

Hugh Potter



Photos: Editor

ABOVE: When the hopper is full, the tug is manoeuvred into place and attached. It will then push the hopper to the unloading site.

BELOW: The tug with the loaded hopper, being able to immediately utilise the deep, newly dredged length of canal en route to unload. Note the sign, which warns all the passing boats of a possible delay! Land and Water Services are more used to operating on canals which have boats passing every few minutes.





Hugh Potter

ABOVE: The silt from the hopper is unloaded on to the bank where it is distributed up the hillside into several previously dug settling lagoons. This process inevitably makes a considerable mess at the time, but when the silt has dried, it will be levelled and ploughed into the field. This silt is very fertile material and will eventually produce a wild flower meadow.

Editor



BELOW: The tug, which has the rather picturesque name 'The Grunt', is seen going astern, pulling the empty hopper back to the dredger.



FORTHCOMING MEMBERS' SOCIAL MEETINGS

The following are the members' meetings which have been arranged for 2010
All held on the **Third Monday of the Month at Ironville Church Hall at 7.30pm**

- **Sept 20th** - Adrian Farmer. 'Belper Boating Association and River Gardens.' How the water management round the mills at Belper led to the creation of the unique gardens and boating association.
- **Oct 18th** - Our Vice Chairman Mike Kelley. 'The Hidden Events of 1066.' Taking the audience through events from Christmas day 1065 to Christmas day 1066.
- **Nov 15th** - Barry Joyce. 'Rock House.' Richard Arkwright's house.
- **Dec 6th** - Christmas Social

All of the above meetings will also be attended by the FCC sales stall, which has an ever increasing variety of goods for sale. Do come along and enjoy the meetings, support the FCC stall and save on postage at the same time.

The sales team will also be attending a number of other events throughout the year. Details of those arranged so far are as follows:

- **July 17th & 18th** - Chesterfield Canal Festival. This is a large outdoor event at Worksop Rugby Club adjacent to part of the restored section of the Chesterfield Canal.
- **July 22nd** - Tesco store at Heanor.
- **July 31st & August 1st** - Cromford Steam Rally. A popular annual event with many interesting stalls as well as all types of road vehicles at Brackenfield.
- **August 28th-30th (Bank Holiday)** - One of the Leawood Pump Steaming Weekends. FCC stall at Cromford Wharf.
- **September 12th** - Brinsley Headstocks. An interesting outdoor event.
- **September 16th** - Tesco store at Alfreton
- **September 26th** - Smotherfly Sunday Plod. An FCC sponsored walk from Langley Mill to Pinxton. The stall will meet the walkers at the end of the walk outside the Boat Inn.
- **October 2nd & 3rd** - Another Leawood Pump Steaming Weekend, with the stall at Cromford Wharf.
- **October 30th & 31st** - World Heritage Weekend at Cromford Wharf. One of our most important events of the year. The stall will be in the Gothic Warehouse.

**Eric and Beryl would particularly like to thank members
for the tombola prizes that have been donated.**

The next tombola will be at Pinxton Wharf after the sponsored walk.

LEAWOOD PUMP STEAMING WEEKENDS 2010

The engine will be in motion from noon to 5.00pm on each of the following days.

MONTH	SAT	SUN	MON	PERIOD
AUGUST	7th	8th		First Weekend
		29th	30th	Bank Holiday
OCTOBER	2nd	3rd		First Weekend
	30th	31st		Discovery Weekend



BRIAN BLESSED

By Mike Kelley

We were delighted when a local councillor, Juliette Blake, kindly donated to us the sum of £3,343.48p to be spent in her Ward. This money is given to councillors by Derbyshire County Council, to be spent on worthy causes within their Wards. Councillor Blake decided ours was a worthy cause, for which we thank her.

The money will go towards work on the canal in Councillor Blake's Ward at Sawmills; namely, the costs of leasing part of the canal there from a local land owner, and repairs to the historic 'narrows', which were used to measure the draft of boats and then charge them according to the weight carried. Also some of the money will go toward the installation of two 'Interpretation' (information) Boards to explain to the public the historical significance of this area.



I approached our President, Brian Blessed, to see if he would receive this money from Councillor Blake on our behalf. Like the trouper he is he immediately said he would. So on Monday 12th April 2010 Brian Blessed came to Sawmills Village Hall. (For those of you who do not know the area, Sawmills is a small linear village on the busy A610, between Ripley and Ambergate).

BASA (Bullbridge and Sawmills Area Civic Society) also called their members out so the hall was full for Brian's arrival. (BASA have been working closely with the FCC throughout last winter, to improve the canal at Sawmills - see also pages10-11)

I half expected a short thank you from Brian, a photo shot and that would be it. How wrong I was. Brian's enthusiasm for the canal was so evident, he set about encouraging us all with a banter of jokes and stories which had the audience in raptures. It was truly a delightful experience. Brian, you are a wonderful President; thank you.



Due to his amazing stream of stories, it was some time before we could accompany Brian to look at the historic 'narrows' where so much work had been performed recently, by the FCC and BASA. On arriving there, he made a point of greeting all the local people who had turned out to meet him, as well as taking a real interest in all the work carried out on the canal. All-in-all it was a very good day.

Hugh Potter



Meeting and greeting on the towpath at Sawmills

Mike Kelley





WATERWAY RECOVERY GROUP

by George Rogers

In the spring issue of *The Portal*, many of you will have read about the 40th anniversary celebrations of the Waterway Recovery Group – or more commonly WRG (read “werg”). Some of you may even have been inspired to pick up the phone and book on one of the summer canal camps to participate yourself. Well, if you didn’t, let me persuade you....

I first participated in a canal camp last year, spending two weeks working on the Hereford & Gloucester canal near Hereford. We were building a slipway from an area of parkland into a stretch of canal, in order to provide access for trailboats. From there, my involvement has escalated – and this summer will find me on 6 individual camps.

So what would you get up to on a camp? A typical day on camp would probably see you up in time for breakfast around 8, after which you’ll sort the kit out for the day on site. Then you pile into the vans and head off to the worksite. Normally you would expect to arrive around 9 and probably pack up by 5, with plenty of breaks for brew and biscuits!! Then, in the evenings there is generally the opportunity to engage in some alternative entertainment – the pub quiz, bowling, local canal trips and the cinema are regular features. However, the leader will always be understanding if you just want a quiet night at the accommodation!

What about the work? Well first and foremost, don’t necessarily expect to see a canal. Just as many features on the Cromford don’t currently sit anywhere near water, so is true for many of the camps. In actual fact, camps with a canal are rare – though there is usually a ‘wet ditch’ to add to the health and safety plan. Work obviously varies depending on the site, for example this year there are many camps working on the rebuilding of locks around the Cotswolds, or alternatively wall building and at the bonfire bash and Christmas – scrub bashing.

Importantly, everyone is catered for. Ultimately, you are paying to be there – so you aren’t going to be treated like a paid labourer (though expect other campers to be disgruntled if you sit around all day). You can often be receiving training in excavator or dumper driving, along with a myriad of small tools and skills. All of this could translate into restoring the Cromford in future years!!!

Who else will be there? Each camp has a leadership team consisting of a leader, assistant and in most cases a cook. They will be responsible for the health and safety of all the volunteers on site and the cook will feed you well. Aside from that there are normally 15-20 volunteers to a camp, ranging from 18 to 70, so you will always find a like-minded soul to talk to.

What does it cost? A week long camp this year costs £56, for which you get all your food, accommodation (typically a village hall which you make more comfortable by bringing blow up mattresses) and equipment. The only thing you really should bring yourself is a pair of steel-toe-capped boots, everything else can be provided.

Hopefully that inspires you! More information can be found on the Waterway Recovery Group website at www.wrg.org.uk, or you can navigate from the links on the Friends website. Alternatively you can email me, see the webmasters link on the inside of the front cover.

And finally, if a week long camp isn’t your thing there are several regional groups that hold regular weekend meets at canals around the country – our ‘local’ group is WRG NW, see the links on the website.



WRG AND THE CROMFORD CANAL

Reading George Rogers' article on the Waterway Recovery Group reminded me of the days working at Langley Mill in the early 1970s. Volunteers of the Erewash Canal Preservation and Development Association, led by work party organiser Michael Golds, were determined to restore the derelict Langley Bridge Lock. Although this lock is in fact the last on the Cromford Canal, its restoration was seen as essential to encourage boats to venture up to the top end of the Erewash Canal, then under a very real threat of closure.

This project has been described many times over the years, but for me, one weekend in particular was very significant. This was the visit by London WRG in 1972.

The canal under the main road bridge at the tail of Langley Bridge Lock was full almost to water level with silt and rubbish. We had been using a large excavator to clear the lock chamber and infilled canal above, but under the bridge was inaccessible. Clearing this was essential to the progress of the job.

When London WRG visited, they brought their Smalley excavator. This was used to very good effect to clear the channel under the bridge. This entailed removing the cab from the Smalley and lowering it into the lock tail with the large machine. A stank had been constructed below the bridge and the bridge hole was fairly quickly cleared. This had been a part of the job which had been causing us much concern, and it was the success of this operation which convinced me that we were in fact going to see the lock restored.

The rest, as they say, is history. Without the restoration at Langley Mill, the Erewash Canal would have been closed. This would have meant no connection for the Cromford Canal to the waterway system and the FCC would probably never have been thought about. Since then, WRG have saved many canals and their progress continues today. Help is always welcome on Dave Tinkler's FCC work parties, some of which will be supported by WRG later in the year.

Editor



The Smalley excavator belonging to London WRG being lowered into the lock tail at Langley Mill.

Michael Golds



THE CROMFORD AND HIGH PEAK RAILWAY

- as seen from the 'other' end.

Many members will be familiar with 'our' end of the CHPR which joined the Cromford Canal at the transhipment shed at High Peak Junction. This is the start of a railway which should really have been a canal, to connect the Cromford with the Peak Forest Canal at Whaley Bridge and give a through route to Manchester. The mountainous terrain would have meant a large number of locks, there being a rise of nearly 1000 feet between High Peak Junction and the summit. An even greater problem, however, would have been water supply, due to the porous nature of the limestone rock of the area. This would have made a canal impractical and the solution was one of the country's earliest railways, with a length of 33 miles and a series of steep inclines worked by stationary steam engines. The motive power on the (relatively) level stretches between the inclines was originally provided by horses, but steam locomotives were introduced at an early stage.

During our recent boating trip, Val and I journeyed up to the Peak Forest Canal and moored at the terminus at Whaley Bridge for several days. We therefore took the opportunity to explore what remains of the CHPR in this pleasant town in the north west of Derbyshire.

Whaley Bridge is entered by boat from the north, and the canal ends in a basin alongside the former A6 road, the same road which is near the canal at Cromford. A short arm of the canal led into the transhipment warehouse, which served the same purpose as that at High Peak Junction, but is larger, with a railway track either side of the central entrance for boats.



Whaley Bridge Wharf, showing the north end of the warehouse with the canal leading into the centre.



The more original-looking south end of the warehouse showing the railway entrances either side of the boat dock.



There were various sidings here before the single track line crossed over the River Goyt then almost immediately started up the Whaley Bridge Incline. This is now a pleasant walk which climbs up out of the town. The incline had been originally worked by a stationary steam engine hauling on an endless wire rope in the same way as the others.



The bridge over the River Goyt, with the rails still intact.

However, the foundations of the engine suffered from subsidence after quite a short time. Because the incline is shorter and less steep than the others on the line it was decided that the wagons could be hauled up the slope with a horse gin. Amazingly, this arrangement remained in use until this section of the line was closed in 1952.



The incline has now been turned into a pleasant walking route leading up out of Whaley Bridge.

The site of the gin at the

top of the incline is still apparent today and is provided with a seat on which one can rest after walking up the slope while enjoying the fine view over the town. At the top, the line



The site of the horse gin at the top of the incline, where the track turns sharply to the right.

turned to the right to continue towards Cromford. The CHPR was a fascinating and unique railway, which survived as somewhat of an anachronism into the 1960's.

Much of the track is now converted into a walking and cycle route through the fine Derbyshire scenery and is well worth a visit.

Words and photos by the Editor



PERCY'S COTTAGE

Committee members of the FCC were disappointed to learn that English Heritage has declined to list the canalside cottage at Mold's Wharf, near Ambergate. Affectionately known locally as "Percy's Cottage" after the late Percy Wilson who lived there for many years, the cottage became vacant after his death in late 2008. A stone over the door lintel is dated 1776, suggesting that the cottage pre-dates the canal. Certainly there are no windows facing the canal.

English Heritage's reasons to not list the cottage are:

- Extremely modest in character and significantly altered;
- No evidence of canal or railway use;
- No 18th century vernacular characteristics;
- Wharf is a 'featureless area' with no defining boundary.

The cottage is owned by LB Plastics who have installed new uPVC windows, but as yet do not appear to have done any work to the stone slate roof, which was known to be leaking.

With some careful restoration, 'Percy's' cottage could make a very pleasant home in the Derwent Valley. In this wintry scene, the canal is to the right, with the towpath immediately adjacent to the building. Part of the stone lintel over the back door with the date 1776 is shown inset. The lower picture shows the proximity of the railway with its substantial stone retaining wall to the front of the cottage.



Words and pictures by Hugh Potter



FOOT FALL COUNTERS

For applications for grants from Government, the National Lottery etc. it is useful to have information on the number of people who visit or use the area, in our particular case the towing path, that is currently used by the public. For many years British Waterways have used a commercially built Foot Fall Counter at a cost of between £700 and £1300 depending on the sophistication of the recorded output. For several years BW have had a counter on the Ironville Locks by Lock 4. Basically, this looks just like a black steel gate post set in the side of the towing path.

British Waterways suggested that the data from a counter on the Cromford Canal, probably in the Cromford or Whatstandwell areas, could be very useful in supporting information for grants as there were no similar counters in that area.

I approached a number of organisations for possible support with a mixed response of future funding, but then Stephen Hardy of BW offered me a redundant counter unit from their stock at Newark. After study of similar counter posts at Ironville and on the Grantham Canal I decided to make two posts similar to those used by BW to house the counter unit. For this I was grateful to receive £200 from the Derwent Valley Trust to pay for the steel and fabrication by Waterway Recovery Group (East Midlands). The work was carried out by members of the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association working party in its Langley Mill workshop.

The posts are about 4 feet high made of 6 inch square box section steel. The original BW design has about two feet buried in the ground but I have built a web of reinforcing steel to be set in concrete with three bolts to bolt down the post. If necessary the post can be removed on a temporary or permanent basis without causing an obstruction in the towing path. My photo shows, from the left, the counter unit, a finished post where the passage of people is recorded through the little white slot, and a finished post ready for painting. Since then BW have stopped using the counter at Ironville and have donated it to the FCC to continue taking readings. So thanks again to BW.

John Baylis,
Waterway Recovery Group,
East Midlands





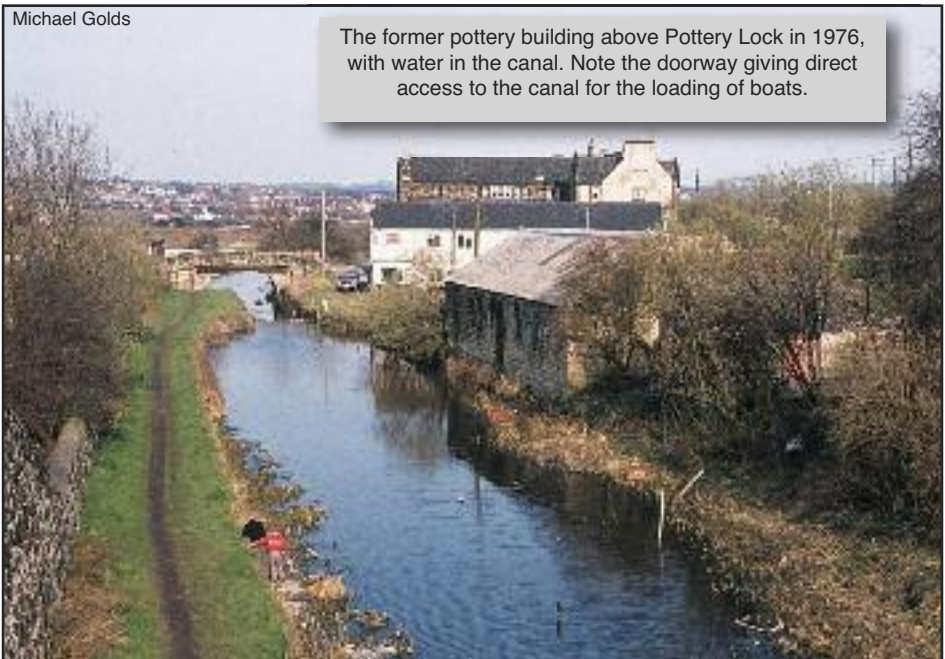
CODNOR PARK POTTERY

Following the publication of the early 20th century picture of work on the canal above Pottery Lock and showing Codnor Park Pottery in Portal 31, I have now been given more information regarding this building. The following article has been kindly supplied by Linda Salt from the archives of Denby Pottery Ltd.

The pottery at Codnor Park was built in 1820, by the Butterley Iron Company, the owners of the iron works of Butterley and Codnor Park. At that time the Butterley works were under the management of the late Mr. William Jessop, son of one of the partners, and afterwards senior partner of the firm. Some years before this time the company had constructed a large cast iron bridge for the Nabob of Oude, and on its despatch a brother of Mr William Jessop accompanied it to India to superintend its erection, taking with him several workmen, among whom was an engine-fitter named William Burton. For some cause or other the bridge was not erected by the Nabob, and after remaining several years in India, the parties returned to England. On their return, William Burton was induced to commence the pottery, and having engaged a skilled workman from the Brampton Potteries, near Chesterfield, commenced operations in 1821. The pottery was situated near the Codnor Park Ironworks, from which it took its name, and pretty close to the Butterley Canal, and was successfully carried on for several years. Sir Richard Phillips in his "Tour" in 1828, thus notes the pottery:- "Over near Codnor Castle I viewed a rough and ill-built manufactory, where they turn and bake those opaque bottles used for ginger beer, soda water, liquid blacking etc. About 50 women and children finish 100 gross per day and they sell the half pints at 15d. and 16d. per doz., and all pints at 2s. and quarts at 3s.6d. They are made of the clay of the vicinity, and the agent for selling them is Kemp, in Milk Street, London. They are harder and less liable to burst than glass bottles."

Michael Golds

The former pottery building above Pottery Lock in 1976, with water in the canal. Note the doorway giving direct access to the canal for the loading of boats.



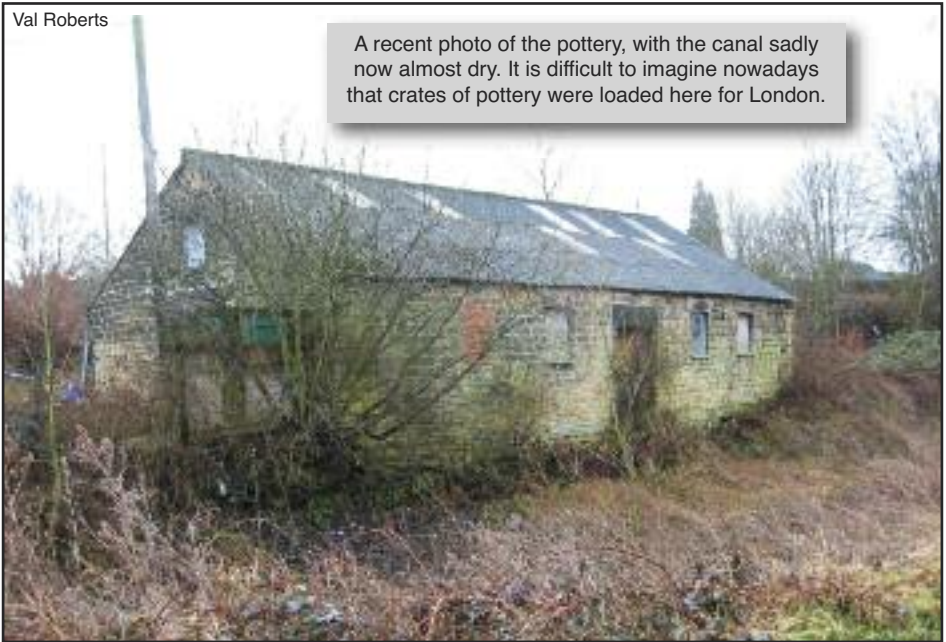


In 1832, Mr. Burton having got into pecuniary difficulties, the works were closed. After remaining unworked for many months, it was, in 1833, taken by Mr. Joseph Bourne, of the Denby Pottery.

The Codnor Park Works, which gave employment to about sixty persons, were carried on by Mr. Bourne until 1861, when they were finally closed, and the workmen, plant etc. were transferred to the Denby Works, where additional workrooms had been erected for their accommodation. The clay was of a similar kind to that used at Denby, but owing to a larger impregnation of iron the ware produced therefrom was not equal in appearance to that made at Denby, though the bottles were highly vitreous, and had an extensive sale. This clay was obtained at Cupet Green, in the immediate neighbourhood, and the coal from Birchwood Colliery. (The hard coal is the only kind adapted for burning in the salt glazed kilns.) London was the chief market, the crates being forwarded by canal.

Val Roberts

A recent photo of the pottery, with the canal sadly now almost dry. It is difficult to imagine nowadays that crates of pottery were loaded here for London.



The goods produced at Codnor Park were the usual class of household vessels, and stoneware bottles of various kinds, and of sizes up to six gallons; and pans, bowls, jugs, pitchers and other articles. Besides these, however, a remarkably fine, compact, light and delicate buff-coloured terra cotta was produced. In this were made butter-coolers, vases of various kinds, flower baskets and pots, ewers, spill cases and numberless other articles. Many of these were of excellent design, and beautifully decorated with foliage and other ornaments in relief. Puzzle jugs etc. were also made of this material and surface painted with a peculiar mottled effect. The mark during Mr. Burton's time was his name and "Codnor Park" or simply the name "Wm. Burton," impressed on the clay. The manufacture of ordinary household earthenware was discontinued when Mr. Bourne took to the concern, his operations being confined to the manufacture of bottles. For some of this information I am indebted to Mr. Humphrey Goodwin, who was connected with the works from their opening in 1821 until their close.



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

from Yvonne Shattower



What a wonderful summer we have had so far – that is ‘wonderful’ as long as you don’t mind heat and football! For myself I much prefer a little less sun and a lot less football! Let us hope that the lack of rain doesn’t bring water shortage problems for those of you who are out boating for the summer.

It is good to have our Editor and Val back with us after their extended break. They seem to have enjoyed themselves despite Val having a spell of illness whilst away. Beryl and Eric have been more than competent Sales Team deputies in their absence, and have been to several successful events locally. One which sadly proved a disappointment was the Cromford weekend. We do so well there at the World Heritage Site Discovery Days in October we expected an equally good flow of customers, but it was not to be. There will be a list of other events to be attended by our Sales Team printed elsewhere in this magazine; if you are in the area do go along and introduce yourselves. You will be made most welcome. We will not be attending the IWA National Festival this year as it is being held on the Thames. The logistics of manning a stand that far away are just not viable.

We have been very pleased with the audience numbers at our monthly talks at Ironville Church Hall. It is good to see so many Members, and we have had quite a few visitors, several of whom have become Members at the meetings. We will not be having meetings in July and August, but will start again on 20 September 2010, with a talk by Adrian Farmer on the Belper Boating Association and the River Gardens. Your Programmes Secretaries have been busy over the last few weeks, and we have nearly finalised the programme for 2011, more about this in the next *Portal*.

At the AGM, a new Webmaster, George Rogers, was elected, as Giles Metcalf will be leaving the area in the near future. George has brought a new look to the web site, so do visit it if you have internet access.

We give a warm welcome to the following new members who have joined us since the last edition of *The Portal*

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Mr & Mrs A H Ormond, Matlock | Mr & Mrs J Richardson, Alfreton |
| Mr B Henson, Belper | Mr J Bailey, Ripley |
| Mr J B Cartland, Alfreton | Mr & Mrs P Young, Aberdeen |
| Mr & Mrs Butt, Alfreton | Mr J J Anthony, Matlock |
| Mr & Mrs W Harwood, Alfreton | Mr P J Webb, Nottingham |
| Mr S Walker, Alfreton | Mr D Fell, Leicester |
| Mr P Harris, Derby | Mr & Mrs B J Dick, Chesterfield |
| Mr G Horton, Nottingham | Mrs G Meakin, Belper. |
| Mr & Mrs M Greenham, Matlock (Life Members) | |
| Mrs F James, Belper (Life Member) | |

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