

THE PORTAL

Derbyshire
Excellence
in the **Community**
Awards 2010



Awarded to

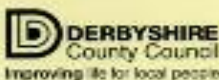
Friends of Cromford Canal

Councillor Robin Baldry

Chairman Derbyshire County Council

Mick Hodgson

Chief Executive



THE JOURNAL OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CROMFORD CANAL

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AUTUMN 2010



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FRONT COVER: The certificate, which together with an engraved glass plaque, was presented to our chairman Pat Morriss at a ceremony at the Dome at Buxton. This award was given to the Friends of the Cromford Canal by Derbyshire County Council as an 'Excellence in the Community Award' and reflects all the hard work put in by members over the years.

BACK COVER: Two smartly dressed gentlemen, Messrs. Kelley and Morriss, sharing a proud moment at Buxton and posing for the camera whilst holding the Excellence in the Community Award and Certificate. Mike Kelley had nominated Pat Morriss to receive this award on behalf of the FCC. This must prove that we are at least making some progress in our efforts to be recognised as a serious organisation who are determined to see the Cromford Canal restored.

Photos supplied by Mike Kelley

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.35

Well, it is the Autumn issue again and with this I will have completed my third year as editor. Twelve months ago we were all concerned that the Smotherfly project appeared to be getting nowhere due to one expensive delay after another. It is now nearly two years since the long sought planning permission for this scheme was first granted, and I have to say that not much has changed. However, the latest news is that Derbyshire County Council have agreed to approach UK Coal (the land owners) on this matter to try to use their powers to move the situation forward.

Another project which has been held up by bureaucracy has been the interpretation boards at Sawmills. These are being produced by the FCC to explain to visitors the history and function of both the gauging narrows and Bullbridge Aqueduct. They are being financed by a grant organised by local councillor Juliette Blake. However the powers that be announced that planning permission was required. Unbelievably, this took six months to obtain. Frustrating to say the least.

Another cause for serious concern is the deteriorating state of the canal from Cromford to Leawood. As you will read elsewhere, the silting of this section has now been allowed to become so bad that there is insufficient depth of water to run the horsedrawn boat. This situation is not helped by the fact that water is leaking from the canal in several places. This is a major disappointment since the horseboat is normally one of the main attractions at the forthcoming Discovery Days Weekend at Cromford.

But there is more positive news on other fronts. You will have noticed from the covers of this issue that the FCC has recently been granted an award. This has been presented by Derbyshire County Council and is an Excellence in the Community Award which is given to people or groups who have made a major contribution to the county of Derbyshire. We are grateful to Mike Kelley who nominated the FCC for this, which has given us all a much needed boost to morale. **Well done everybody.** See also opposite.

Another success was the annual sponsored walk, the Smotherfly Sunday Plod, which this year went from Langley Mill and Codnor Park to Pinxton. See pages 11-13. This was organised by our publicity officer John Barker, who is now really making some impression in this important job. A major boost to the event, negotiated by John, was the support given by Asda, who are about to open a new store in Langley Mill. This could be the start of a beneficial relationship with this company, who will be wanting to make a good impression in Langley Mill and help to give the town some much needed improvements. Regeneration is the buzz word and the canal in Langley Mill, already an oasis of green in this formally intensely industrial district, could well benefit from this.

Please note the press date for the New Year issue will be JANUARY 10TH 2011



EXCELLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY AWARD

On Tuesday 12th October, I accompanied our Chairman, Pat Morriss to the Dome in Buxton. We had been invited by Derbyshire County Council to attend an award ceremony for people and groups, whose work is considered to be a major contribution to the county of Derbyshire. This honour is called, 'Excellence in the Community Award' and reflects all the hard work which so many of our members give, both willingly and freely.

The setting under the great Devonshire Dome was truly impressive. After a pleasant buffet and entertainment from 'A Touch of Class String Quartet', Councillor Robin Baldry handed out to all nominees, a framed certificate and a curved glass plaque, each of which was engraved with the name of the recipient(s).

Before Pat went up to receive this award, a citation was read out, which stated:

'Friends of the Cromford Canal work tirelessly to restore and preserve the waterway and increase tourism. There are over 800 members of the Friends, which was nominated by Mike Kelley. The group works with Derbyshire County Council, World Heritage Site, Developers, canal site owners and canal societies. They host monthly public social evenings when visiting speakers come from all over to address open audiences.'

So well done all, this is an acknowledgement of all the hard work so many have put in to the aims and objectives of the 'Friends'.

Mike Kelley



**Pat and Mike enjoying a proud moment
at the Dome at Buxton**



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by Patrick Morriss



Looking back on activity through the summer and looking forward to what is likely to happen over the coming weeks, there is always a distinct seasonality to FCC activities. Some of this is self imposed. Personally I am always busier on other things including the day job during the longer days, but just trying to get people together during the holiday season can be a headache.

Lots of things happening and lots of things likely to happen in the near future. Firstly, on Tuesday evening 12th October, it gave me great pleasure to accept one of Derbyshire County Council's Excellence in the Community Awards on behalf of all of us. Make no mistake, this was a group award for all our efforts and is covered elsewhere in this edition of the *Portal*.

Secondly, this morning (14th October) I attended a meeting with other potential partners – The Arkwright Society and the Leawood Engine Group, plus other stakeholders – Derbyshire County Council, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England, to explore ways that a trip boat might be reinstated at Cromford. This is far and away the most talked about issue when I am out and about and the canal crops up in conversation. There will be lots of work to do before we can even get near having a boat on the water, grants to be applied for, business plans written, permissions obtained etc. This of course has a bearing on two further items. The Arkwright Society are pushing ahead to spend a considerable sum of money on converting building 17 at Cromford Mills into a Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site gateway and visitor centre. This is likely to attract 150,000 visitors a year and the idea of a trip boat experience would bolster visitor numbers even more. Remember, when the last canal trip boat ran there was no World Heritage site and little in the way of a mill experience. This building is due to open in 2012, what better way to help celebrate the 10th birthday of the FCC than to have the trip boat back in operation at Cromford? Also Derbyshire County Council and others have considerably enhanced their contributions to the World Heritage Site and need to see more activity on the back of this. In these austere times this investment is commendable.

I know there is much comment regarding the merits of canals forming a cruising ring and those that terminate at a destination such as the Cromford. Some of this is detrimental to destination canals. One thing I do know is that one of the most popular canals in the country - the Llangollen Canal - is a destination canal and that does not seem to suffer from not being part of a cruising ring. A thriving and popular World Heritage site would be a fitting terminus to a restored Cromford Canal, after all the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage site is the only World Heritage site in the East Midlands and the Cromford Canal is the longest length of canal in a World Heritage Site in England.

Just to remind you the World Heritage site Discovery Days are at Cromford on



30th/31st of October this year. No boat due to silting and water level issues but lots more to see and do and not just canal related.

As an aside, the original John Gray, the ex Cromford Canal Society trip boat from Cromford is up for sale at the moment, the Trustees will have to look long and hard at the issue of returning this boat to its proper home, perhaps as part of the initiative mentioned above. It is currently electrically powered but still retains its original features, so if it could be fitted with a folding propeller, there's a chance it could be a hybrid boat able to operate without a horse on quiet days and without the dreaded diesel engine that would cause ecological problems.

Elsewhere, Derbyshire County Council, at a very senior level are seeking a meeting with UK Coal to try and get UK Coal to be a little more generous concerning our plans for Smotherfly. The new Amber Valley MP Nigel Mills is also involved with this campaign and I thank them all for their efforts. What UK Coal are offering the Ashby Canal compared to what they are offering at Smotherfly does seem to make UK Coal's offer to the Cromford look just a little parsimonious.

Finally it looks like British Waterways will become some sort of charity body along the lines of the National Trust and making greater use of volunteers by 2012. Seems to be a lot happening in 2012, perhaps being a Friend of the Cromford Canal will mean being in the right place at the right time for once!

The following is a summary of the meetings etc. attended by Pat Morriss as Chairman of the FCC since the last issue of *The Portal*:

14th July	DVMWHS Technical Panel Meeting
22nd July	Interviewing for new Derwent Valley Mills Board members
6th August	Meeting with new Amber Valley MP Nigel Mills
25th August	Meeting with the Arkwright Society
1st September	Interviewing for new Derwent Valley Mills Board members
8th September	DVMWHS Technical Panel Meeting
27th September	DVMWHS Partnership Meeting
8th October	DVMWHS Interpretation Panels unveiling
14th October	Meeting with all stakeholders concerning trip boat at Cromford

Through our publicity officer John Barker, the FCC sales department has been given 12 months free hire of a 9 litre certified fire extinguisher by Mr Wesley Heap to use in compliance with the required risk assessments at outdoor events. We gratefully acknowledge this generous gesture and urge any members who need to hire or purchase fire fighting equipment to contact Mr Heap's company:

O. Heap and Son (Derby) Ltd.
Chandos Pole Street
Derby DE22 3BA
Tel. 01332 366721
www.oheap.co.uk



FCC NEWS UPDATE - so what *is* happening

from Mike Kelley



- **Smotherfly** - In an effort to move forward an unfortunate stagnation with this project our Chairman has enlisted the help of a local MP and senior members of the County Council. UK-Coal are the owners of this site and they appear to be needing the help of the Council for future projects they have, so hopefully an agreement can soon be found.

- **Sawmills Planning** - The planning application for two interpretation [information] boards to be placed at Sawmills, near Ambergate, has been submitted and notices to that affect placed at the sites.

- **Monday 12th July** - Our monthly full committee meeting held at the Poet and Castle Inn at Codnor.

- **Saturday 17th & Sunday 18th July** - We had our sales stand at the Chesterfield Canal Festival, held by the side of the canal at Worksop Rugby Club. The Chesterfield Canal Society had put in a lot of work organising this show, which was very well run. A fun weekend for all.

- **Thursday 22nd July** - A charity collection at the Tesco store in Heanor raised £131.89. If you feel you would like to help at such events please contact any of the committee shown at the front of this magazine.

- **Saturday 31st July & Sunday 1st August** - Our sales team attended the ever popular Cromford Steam Rally. This is a wonderful event and draws in much interest.

- **Monday 9th August** - Our monthly full committee meeting held at the Poet and Castle Inn at Codnor.

- **Bank Holiday, Sunday 29th August** - Our sales team tried to put up their stall at Cromford Wharf, but due to the fierce winds and inclement weather, this had to be abandoned; but many thanks for trying Eric and Beryl.

- **Saturday 12th September** - Our sales team went to a carnival at Brinsley headstocks (The old coalmine head) and raised £97 for us.

- **Monday 13th September** - Our monthly full committee meeting held at the Poet and Castle Inn at Codnor.

- **Thursday 16th September** - An attempt was made for an agreed charity collection at the Tesco Store in Alfreton, but due to management restrictions or a change of policy at the store, it had to be abandoned. Eric and Beryl wish to apologise to any members who were expecting the sales stall to be there, although it was they who were inconvenienced and had a wasted journey.

- **Monday 20th September** - After a two month summer break our new season of talks by visiting speakers commenced with the Coordinator of the World Heritage Site, Adrian Farmer, giving us an entertaining talk on the history of Belper River Gardens.

- **Sunday 26th September** - Our sponsored walk, called 'Smotherfly Sunday Plod', took place with 74 walkers, trekking from Langley Mill Canal Basin to Pinxton Wharf. For



the first time, John Barker our publicity officer took the lead in organising this. Well done John, and thank you. Also our thanks go to Nick Lowe for opening up the Boat Inn at Pinxton, which is currently undergoing refurbishment. All money is not in yet, but it looks like we will raise over £1,000. See pages 12-13. If you feel you could help marshal such future events please let us know.

- **Thursday 7th October** - I gave a talk about the canal to the Alfreton & District Heritage Trust. A disappointing turnout, but they kindly donated £25 to the FCC.

- **Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th October** - Dave Tinkler ran the first work-party weekend of the new season. Eleven came along to work on the canal near Jacksdale. How about spending a day doing this? You will enjoy it I'm sure. See Dave's report on page 27.

- **Saturday 9th October** - Our sales team went to an event at Langley Mill called 'Wheels of Time', where they raised £54.13p for us.

- **Monday 11th October** - Our monthly full committee meeting held at the Poet and Castle Inn at Codnor.

- **Tuesday 12th October** - Our Chairman Pat Morriss and I were invited to Buxton by Derbyshire County Council, where Pat received an 'Excellence in the Community Award', for the work of the FCC. See cover pictures and page 3.

FORTHCOMING MEMBERS' SOCIAL MEETINGS

The Friends of the Cromford Canal welcome everyone to their Social Meetings, held on the **Third Monday of the Month at Ironville Church Hall at 7.30pm.**

There is a bar and raffle available at all meetings. Admission is £1.50.

The programme for the remainder of 2010 is as follows:

- **Monday November 15th** - Barry Joyce will tell us the story of 'Rock House', the Cromford home of Richard Arkwright.

- **Monday December 6th** - The 'Red Lion Band' will again play for our Christmas Folk Evening and Social Dance. Do come along and support them. You don't have to get up and dance if you don't want to, but it's more fun if you do! Bring a small plate of seasonal nibbles to share for the interval.

Following into the first part of the New Year we have the following talks booked:

- **Monday 17 January** - John Clark will tell us what happened 'After the Gold Rush' - A bicycle journey through American History.

- **Monday 21 February** - Howard Sprenger, an FCC Member, will talk about his book 'Rails to Ripley', describing the steam railways that served the town.

The full programme of meetings for 2011 will be published in the next issue.

FINAL LEAWOOD PUMP STEAMING WEEKEND 2010

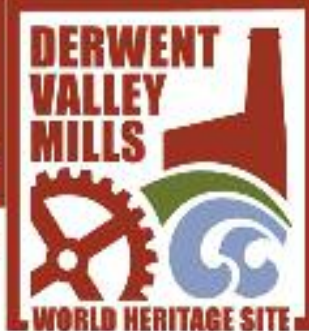
Remember that the **Discovery Weekend of October 30th/31st** will be the last chance this year to see the Leawood Pump in steam. This fine machine will be in motion from noon to 5.00pm each day. This well-known feature of the Cromford Canal is maintained and operated by volunteers and any offers of support will be welcomed.



World Heritage Site **DISCOVERY DAYS**

Friday 22nd to Sunday 31st October

Special events for the closing weekend of
Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st October



Cromford Canal events

Both days 10am to 4pm

- Rope-making, traditional narrowboat-painting demonstrations, street organ, exhibition and Friends of Cromford Canal sales stand at Cromford Wharf.
- Forge lit at High Peak Junction Workshops, free entry.
- Leawood Pumphouse in steam. Victorian steam-powered beam engine in action.

Saturday only

11am The Great Shakespearean Workout 2010 in the Mill Yard, Cromford Mill. The beat of Shakespeare's verse provides the pulse for a series of fun exercises inspired by aerobics, kung fu, tai chi and yoga.

7pm A Celebration of Alison Uttley: talk on the Cromford author by Denis Judd followed by readings from Joyce varty and songs from Pete Castle in the Gothic Warehouse, Cromford Wharf. £5 entry (cons £3)

Sunday only

10am to 4pm Water Vole Spotting along the Canal with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's water vole volunteer.

10am to 4.30pm Hike in to Your Heritage from High Peak Junction. A walk to Wirksworth for a train ride to Idridgehay, then walk back. £7 for train ride.

There are over 100 events taking place between October 22 and 31 during World Heritage Site Discovery Days Festival Week. To find out more visit www.derwentvalleymills.org or book on 08456 058 058 .



World Heritage Site **DISCOVERY DAYS**



World Heritage Site **DISCOVERY DAYS**

Friday 22nd to Sunday 31st October

Weekday events will help you to learn more about your World Heritage Site



Discover the Derwent Valley

Monday 25 to Friday 29 October

Time Trail, Local and Family History Workshops and more at Belper Library. 10am to 4pm – just drop in for a town trail, trace your ancestors or have a house history session. Belper History, on display. Special activities each day.

Tuesday 26 October

Have a go at creating a flower-pot 10am to 3pm at Fleet Arts, Belper. Cost per child for day: waged £6.75; low/unwaged £3.90 plus firing cost (optional). Book on 01773 820484. Workshops for 7-14 years old. Try throwing a flower pot.

Heage Windmill's Restoration 7pm to 8.30pm in the Gothic Warehouse, Cromford Wharf. Free talk by Brian Naylor, one of Heage Windmill volunteers.

Wednesday 27 October

Book Pushers 6pm to 7pm in Duffield Library. Free. A spooky session with local ghost stories and extracts read from the Book Pushers' favourite ghost stories.

Thursday 28 October

Belper and Morley Park Railway walk 2pm to 4pm from Openwoodgate Crossroads. Free. A walk of 4 miles, along the route of this mysterious railway.

Cromford Canal in Nightingale Country 7pm in the Gothic Warehouse, Cromford. Free talk by Patrick Morriss on the canal's links to the Nightingales.

Friday 29 October

Willersley Castle Talk 7pm at Willersley Castle. Free entry. Pre-booking recommended. Barry Joyce reveals the latest research on this impressive building.

There are over 100 events taking place between October 22 and 31 during World Heritage Site Discovery Days Festival Week. To find out more visit www.derwentvalleymills.org or ring 08456 058 058.

World Heritage Site **DISCOVERY DAYS**



DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE DISCOVERY DAYS

As will be seen from the posters reproduced on the previous pages, this is a major event in the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site. It is also an important occasion for the Friends of the Cromford Canal. This year, however, we have had a disappointment in that it will not be possible to run the very popular horsedrawn boat from Cromford Wharf. This is because of a lack of dredging and weed clearance which has meant that the condition of the canal has now deteriorated to such an extent that the depth of water is insufficient for navigation. Let us hope that this situation will be rectified in the not too distant future.

However, a whole range of other events are taking place this weekend based at the Gothic Warehouse at Cromford Wharf, including rope making, traditional street organ, historical photograph displays, modern watercolour painting, waterway wildlife, and the Friends of the Cromford Canal sales stand with a wide range of books, clothing and Christmas cards.

In addition to this, the FCC have arranged for two of the UK's best traditional Rose & Castle painters to be demonstrating at Cromford on 30th & 31st October. Jes Inglis and Keith Hampson are both accredited 'Journeymen' in the prestigious Waterways Craft Guild. They will be bringing their paints and brushes along to Cromford to demonstrate just how this traditional art is done. There will also be on display both modern and 'old masters' painted work and information on other traditional canal crafts.

**The Gothic Warehouse on Cromford Wharf will be open 10am to 4pm
on Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st October. Admission is free.**

Further details of all events from www.derwentvalleymills.org/discovery-days.



Jes Inglis



Keith Hampson



ASDA IS COMING TO LANGLEY MILL

Anyone driving through Langley Mill in the last three months will have noticed that the area at the bottom of Cromford Road has been in a state of chaos. There has been much demolition to make room for a roundabout giving access to a new Asda store. In one way, it is sad to see these old buildings disappear, and there is no doubt that some local businesses will be adversely affected. On the other hand, it is also true that this area was in need of improvements. I suppose *regeneration* is one of the modern buzz words and Asda have already committed £200,000 towards this in Langley Mill. When the lock and first length of the Cromford Canal in Langley Mill was restored it provided an oasis of green in what has become a rather depressing area. Hopefully the Asda development will also help to rejuvenate their part of Langley Mill in a similar way.

In early September, our publicity officer John Barker contacted Richard Jackson, the manager of the new Langley Mill Asda. I am pleased to say that he received a very favourable response and we look forward to establishing a good relationship with the company. This was started off on Sept 13th when Mr Jackson and some of his team visited the canal at Langley Mill. He agreed to support the FCC Sponsored Walk on September 26th from Langley Mill to Pinxton by providing refreshments and also sending a team of walkers as well as giving financial support. See John's report on the following pages.



Left: FCC Publicity Officer John Barker with Asda Manager Richard Jackson (centre) and some of his staff at the side of Langley Bridge Lock.

Below: The Asda team are joined by some other FCC types as John Barker gives details of the Sponsored Walk which Asda have generously offered to support.

Photos editor





THE SMOTHERFLY SUNDAY PLOD

by John Barker

This year's Sponsored Walk was held on Sunday 26th September to help raise money for the Smotherfly project and funds for the Cromford Canal. We had 74 walkers who turned out on a very cold September morning. It was January when I asked Mike Kelley if plans had been made for another walk and Mike's reply was if you would like to arrange one I will give you my full support so that's when it became down to me to get things moving.

The amount of time and energy I have put into this walk is amazing, hundreds of emails have been sent out to walking groups and we were included in The Amber Valley and Erewash Walking Festival 2010 guide.

We decided to have a much shorter walk this time from Langley Mill to Pinxton, some 6.5 miles, and for the less able walkers, a 2.5 mile walk from Codnor Park to Pinxton. The car parking at Langley Mill was successful and the signing in went very smoothly, thanks to our volunteers

I had a very big problem how to follow Mike. Who was going to start the walk? Mike had our Patron Julian Richards, and then our President Brian Blessed, but my thoughts were different. I wanted a person or company to donate money for our charity.

Asda are building a 24hour supermarket in Langley Mill, so I contacted Asda in June and after many phone calls finally got approval to speak to the new store manager Mr Richard Jackson. He was immediately very helpful and jumped at the chance of starting the walk. Not only that, Asda have made a donation of £400 and the Asda team came to the walk bringing bottles of water and apples for

Photos: Mike Kelley



the walkers at both Langley Mill and Codnor Park. They also met the walkers at Pinxton with quality carrier bags, more water and apples and a drinks container for all.

Having decided to end the walk at the Boat Inn at Pinxton Wharf, I was assisted in the arrangements by Mike Kelley, who knows the landlord Nick. In a similar way to last year, Nick was very encouraging. He set up a barbecue outside the pub and provided very welcome refreshments, including a vegetarian option. All went very well and Nick sold out of all his hotdogs and beef burgers, in spite of a slight delay whilst a new gas bottle was obtained. Toilet facilities were also available.

The stalwart sales team of Eric and Beryl Singleton were in full swing and in view of threatening rain had the stall and tombola inside, with successful results.



When leaving Langley Mill, one must divert along Stoney Lane. On this occasion, people were wondering if they were in fact in the canal.



We also had a new first aider this year who walked with the group, which was better and saved on the expense. None of the walkers needed medical help, so I think he spent quite a bit of his time chatting up the ladies!

Unfortunately some of the local idiots had taken down the direction signs around Smotherfly, which resulted in a number of walkers becoming totally lost. But all was well eventually and they were directed to the pub.



Landlord Nick welcomes all with his barbecue at the Boat Inn at Pinxton

In conclusion I would like to thank my wife Jackie for putting up with my moods over the past six months whilst I was trying to organise this event and also all the volunteer helpers who turned out on the day, without whom this event could not have taken place. It turned out to be a successful and memorable event. Now what about next year?



DOWN YOUR WAY

Our Archivist Hugh Potter goes “Down Your Way” in Sawmills and discovers how boats were gauged

Thanks to our friends in Bullbridge and Sawmills Association (BASA), a recording of a programme in the Down Your Way series broadcast on Radio 4 (or was it the Home Service in those days?) has come to light. Of all the places in Britain that might have been featured, this programme visited Sawmills, and I had the pleasure of listening to it and transcribing the interviews.

The date of the broadcast is not known but must have been not all that long after the demolition of the aqueduct over the A610 at Bullbridge in 1968. The canal played a large part in people’s memories, particularly the activities at the ‘Gauge House’. This was the house beside the narrow gauging stop that has recently been cleared of trees by BASA members as mentioned in the last issue of *The Portal*.

FCC Archives/Richard Davies Collection



The only known photo of the Gauge House, taken in 1964, long after boats had ceased to pass.

The recently cleared narrows where boats stopped to be gauged. The Gauge House stood behind the wall on the right.

Hugh Potter





The first interviewee, Mrs Kathleen Else, was born in Sawmills and was brought up alongside the canal. Her father lived with his aunt, Miss Howitt, who ran the Gauge House. Kathleen loved to watch the boats and could tell when they were coming by watching the water. When it started moving she knew there would be a boat coming very soon and they would go out to gauge the depth of the boat in the water. She recalled: "They had these measuring sticks marked in feet and inches – white sticks with black lettering on. From the depth of the boat in the water they could calculate the weight of coal in the boat (it was always coal) and work out the toll, which was added to the account which was sent off every month."

The boatmen were very friendly and always put off coal, so her aunt never had to buy any. She recalled that there were no women on the boats, and that there was one man who lived alone on one of the boats, implying that the others did not live aboard. The boats were going "from Butterley to Cromford" and would have been loaded at Hartshay wharf just west of Butterley Tunnel to where coal from Pentrich Colliery was brought in railway trucks. She also recalled: "In the winter the canal used to freeze over, and when it was very thick we used to have moonlight skating parties on it – it was real fun. We were never allowed to have a ride on the boats – we'd have got so black! There was quite good fishing on the canal. They used to have fishing matches. Men came from Sheffield at weekends and had quite big matches along the canal. They had to get tickets to fish and they sold them at the Gauge House. It's dried up now, it's just a rubbish dump."

Another resident, Jos Bayard, recalled: "Miss Howitt measured with a kind of ruler how far down the boat was in the water. Then she went into the little office and gave them a bit of paper with the weight on it and how much they had to pay for it. There were two Wheatcroft boats from Cromford that Keys worked, and when these two boats were loaded there were about 70 tons on. Then there was another boat from Cromford – Dawes – with two men on and then there was an old iron boat from Bullbridge with a man named Elijah Bradley. He worked one boat from pits to Cromford."



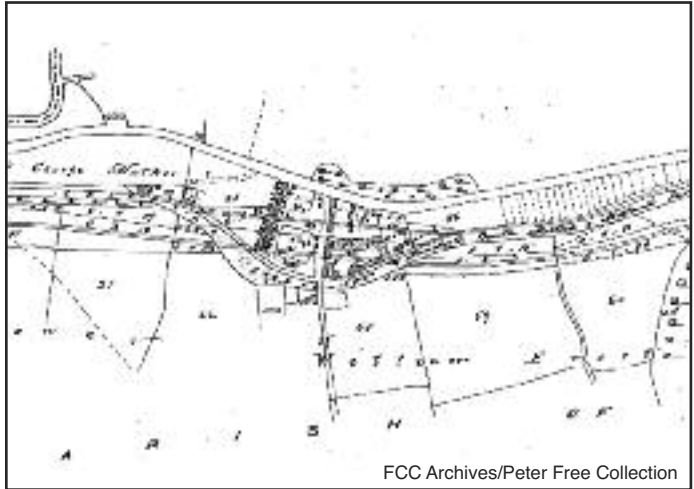
Val Roberts

An example of a gauging rod as described by Mrs. Kathleen Else. This is now kept in the Toll House at Langley Mill by the Erewash Canal Preservation and Development Association



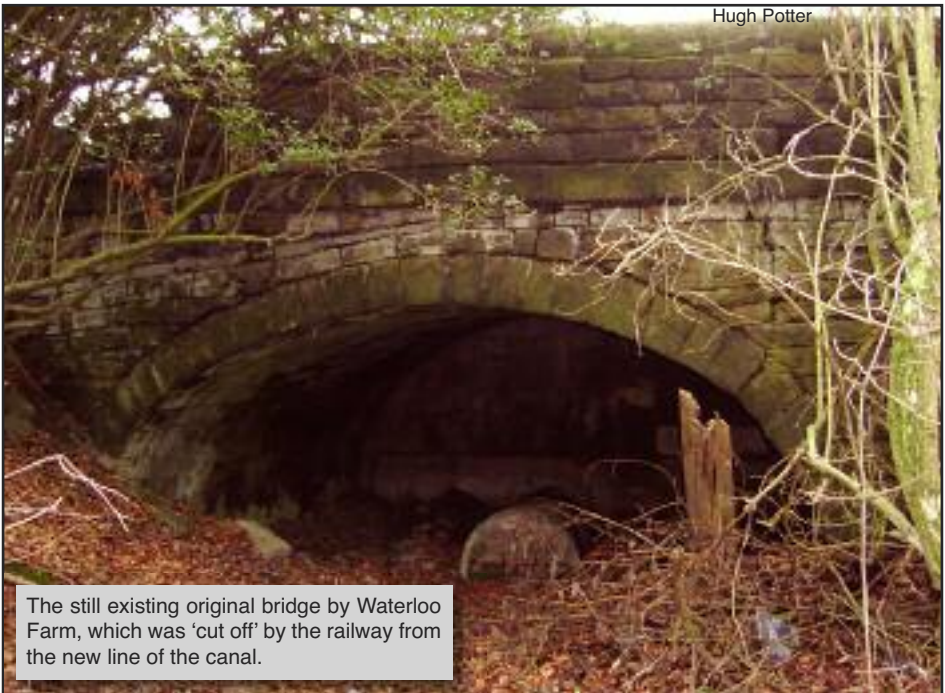
“After Miss Howitt’s the canal used to go horseshoe shaped to the brickyard – BBB – Bull Bridge Brick. There was a limestone wharf too. Limestone came from a quarry at Middleton down the railway at High Peak and into the boat to here where they dressed it. That’s how Sawmills got its name. When they wanted to make a new railway from Ambergate to Butterley, they took this here old canal and straightened it out and its what we call the New Cut. It’s from the boathouse to the part where Mrs Bowden lives and what’s holding the bank up is dressed stone; therefore we know it’s the new canal.”

The 1876 plan showing the route of the railway across the curve of the original canal as it followed the slight contour of the valley. The railway was to be on the same level as the canal, which would have necessitated two lifting bridges, hence the construction of the ‘New Cut’ recalled by Jos Bayard, and the extant 4-arch bridge by what is now Lockwoods.



FCC Archives/Peter Free Collection

Hugh Potter

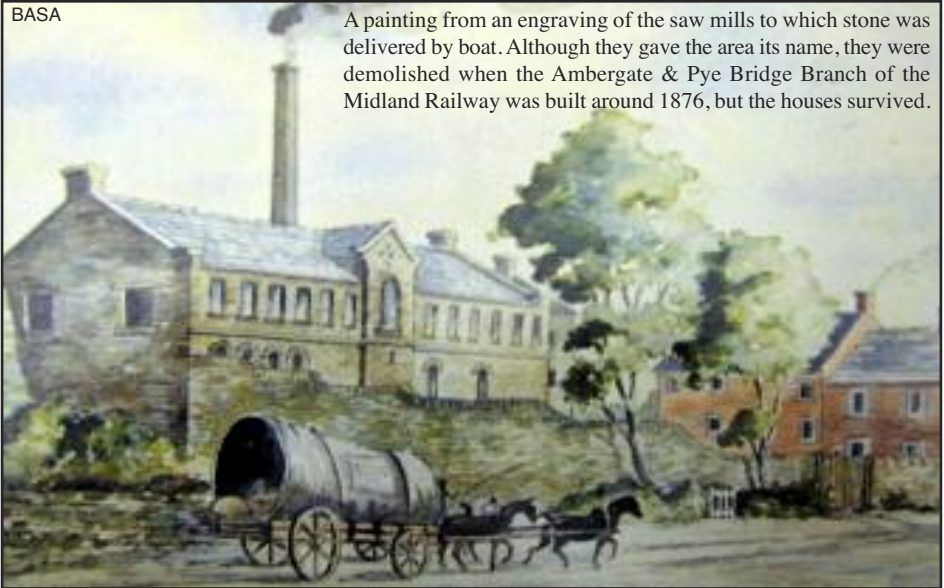


The still existing original bridge by Waterloo Farm, which was ‘cut off’ by the railway from the new line of the canal.

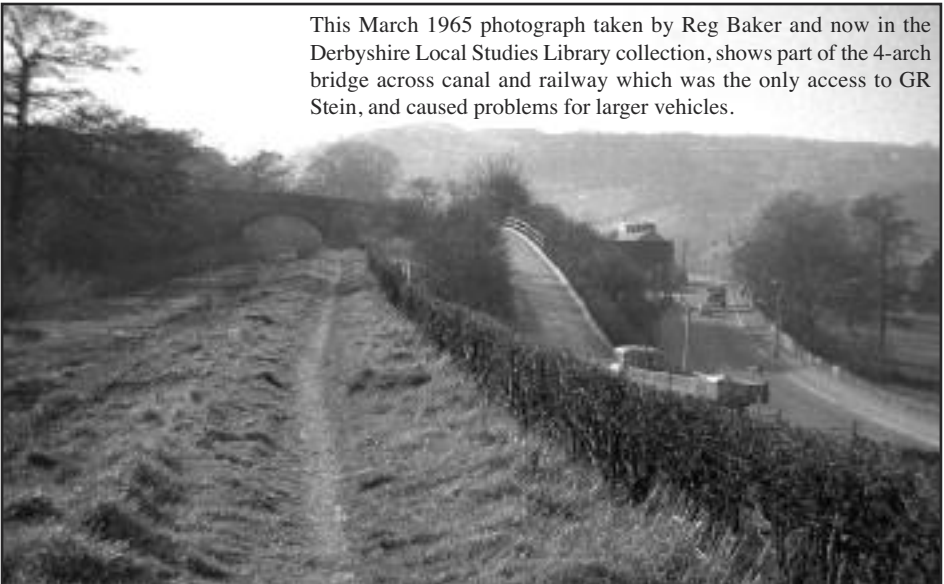


Ernest Thompson's interview gives the closest we are likely to get for the date of the broadcast. He was manager at G.R. Stein Refractories (where Lockwoods now is) which made special refractory bricks for steel works, foundries, power stations etc. He recalled coal once coming by canal to the works, but they used 50/50 railway/road transport for their products until the railway closed down. He spoke of the narrow bridge coming over the canal into the works: "We've had some very difficult times there bringing in those long wheelbase lorries; hence the reason for the new road that we are making into the works."

BASA



A painting from an engraving of the saw mills to which stone was delivered by boat. Although they gave the area its name, they were demolished when the Ambergate & Pye Bridge Branch of the Midland Railway was built around 1876, but the houses survived.



This March 1965 photograph taken by Reg Baker and now in the Derbyshire Local Studies Library collection, shows part of the 4-arch bridge across canal and railway which was the only access to GR Stein, and caused problems for larger vehicles.



A photograph by Len Waller of the construction of the approach road at Lockwoods, unfortunately not dated.



The photograph below by Miss P.N. Harris shows the still relatively new road in 1986 with grass and trees established, a faded GR Stein Refractories Ltd sign, and a lorry on the road over the troublesome bridge that is now used only as a footpath. This bridge was put in to cross the new railway and the canal following the diversion of the latter.



So if any Friends can recall when that new road into Lockwoods was built, we can date the recording pretty accurately. There is another clue; in the introduction, it is said that a programme broadcast “a couple of months ago” was about Fritchley and Bullbridge. Does anyone remember that?



WEED ON BUTTERLEY RESERVOIR

by the Editor

Many members will have noticed that the growth of weed on Butterley reservoir has been particularly bad this summer. The algae and Canadian Pondweed was covering a large proportion of the surface, particularly at the northern end. Removal of this was considered a matter of some urgency. The aim is for a healthy ecosystem that provides food and shelter for the fish population, and allows anglers and other visitors to enjoy the site. The reservoir still belongs to British Waterways and their Waterway Supervisor Simon Gent put out a call on www.waterscape.com for volunteers to help with this job, saying "The clearance of weed is very important to the life of the reservoir and we're calling for green-fingered nature lovers to help us. The local fishing club are doing a lot of work but they really need as much additional help as possible. Whilst it may appear to be hard, dirty work it will be a great opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors, meet some new people and hopefully it will be a very rewarding experience. Everyone is welcome!"

The weed cutting boat was brought by road from the Grantham Canal and unfortunately suffered a series of breakdowns. It was, however, quite effective in spite of this and was used by BW staff to cut off the weed, load it into the boat via a chain elevator and then transfer it to heaps on the bank. The volunteers were then kept busy, firstly sorting the weed and returning any wildlife to the water and then loading the material into wheelbarrows and moving it to a tipping area some distance away. This activity is illustrated in the following pictures received via Peter Stone and taken by Ian Wakefield, one of the volunteers who visited from the Grantham Canal Society.



Although rather unreliable, the weed cutting boat is very effective. The vessel is seen above with the cutter bar and elevator lowered into the working position. As the boat moves along, the weed is cut off well below the surface of the water and lifted up into the boat to be carried to the bank. This boat is more normally employed on the restricted channel of a canal, whereas there was plenty of room for this activity on the wide expanse of Butterley Reservoir and indeed plenty of weed to keep the boat busy.



ABOVE: The boat manoeuvres to the side of the reservoir and is then able to unload the weed via the onboard elevator.

BELOW: Then the real work begins. Volunteers from the Grantham Canal Society are seen here sorting through the weed for signs of wildlife and then loading it into wheelbarrows to move it to the tipping area. As can be imagined, this is heavy and dirty work, but when dried out somewhat, the weed makes good garden compost.





SNAKES IN THE GRASS (and the Canal)

A request on the FCC Yahoo Group for items for *Portal* produced this unexpected result concerning snakes in the canal.

It started off with this interesting snippet from David Hardie:

Two weeks ago I observed two moorhens, giving chase to a snake, about two feet long, on the canal near Whatstandwell. He was doing his best to swim away, but when he stopped they had a peck at him. I assume they were protecting a baby moorhen swimming along behind. Eventually there were a number of people gathered to watch the spectacle. I don't know my snakes well enough to identify it; not an adder I think. Grass snake maybe?

Hugh Potter replied:

Almost certainly a grass snake. They love the water - and baby moorhens!

Another snake sighting was reported by Malcolm Scott Hill:

I observed and subsequently identified a young grass snake recently crossing the path approaching Ironville. From the road going down from Old Riddings joining the canal route, it went over the path to where the horses are in the field to the left. This is the first snake that I have seen in this area, although I recall some years ago seeing an adult grass snake swimming in the canal at Cromford.

And then another from Derrick Hale:

Earlier this year, I watched a grass snake swimming along the canal, under the swing bridge and on upstream past the workshops at the foot of Sheep Pasture incline. The snake crossed the canal from the towpath side upon seeing some walkers approaching but swam into the Jaws of Death - after swimming only a few feet along the other side a pike took it. The pike and the snake were about the same length but the pike had no problem dealing with this awkward food item - the strike on the surface, one more swirl and there was no trace of the snake. I would imagine that, where the two species are found together this may not be an unusual event (one wonders about specialised feeding!) but to be able to witness it must be a once in a lifetime event.

These reports reminded me of when we had a snake about four feet long in the dry dock at Langley Mill. I would think it was almost certainly a grass snake, although I too know very little about snakes. It was swimming about as the dock was being emptied and eventually disappeared down the drain! - Ed.

Freda Raphael also points out that these sightings help to illustrate how important it is for conservation of a diverse wildlife to have the whole of the Cromford Canal restored and back in water.



A grass snake seen unusually on a hard surface.
They are happier in water or long grass.



OUR CANAL ON SHOW

By Hugh Potter

The Cromford Canal featured strongly at the Braunston Historic Boat Show in June in at least three paintings by Hilton artist David Wright. David has just been accepted into the prestigious Guild of Waterways Artists, which holds its annual exhibition at the Show.



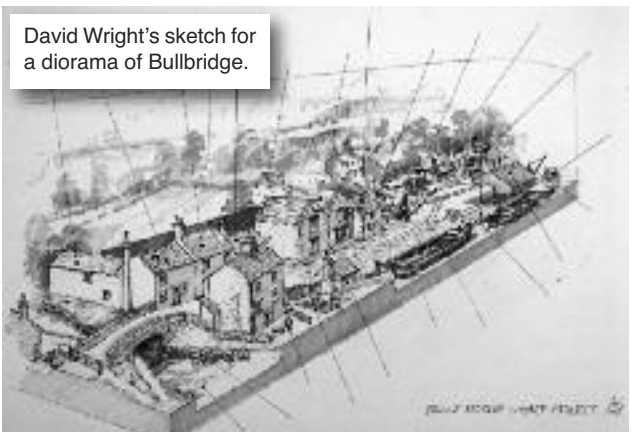
David also makes scale buildings and scenes, mainly for model railways, but is keen to extend his range to structures of the Cromford Canal. He has already planned a small diorama of Bullbridge, based on a mixture of actual buildings and conjecture.

He is always keen to get maximum accuracy in his pictures and to that end phoned me to ask what colours the boats on our canal were painted. I had to tell him that we did not actually know but the consensus is that they had a predominantly black cabinside. Do any members know any different?

He would like to make a scale model of Aqueduct Cottage at Leewood, and wonders if anyone has ever measured up the structure.

You can see more of his work at

www.dovedalemodels.co.uk





A WRGIE SUMMER

by George Rogers

In the last edition of *Portal*, I wrote an article about the canal camps that make up the Waterway Recovery Group's (WRG) summer restoration programme, hoping to inspire some of you into participating in this national movement. Well, although here in Cambridge we seem to be enjoying the last of the summer sun, the WRG summer is over – so it's time to reflect and let you know how it went.

This year the programme consisted of 16 camps spread over a 10 week period, and alternating between camps meant I saw the work on 6 of the 7 sites worked on – all of which will have relevance when serious physical restoration starts on the Cromford Canal in years to come.

One of the first work parties at the start of the Cromford Canal at Langley Mill. The group is partly made up of visitors from Sheffield IWA, later part of WRG East Midlands. Worryingly, this is long before George was born! - Ed.



Michael Golds

At the beginning of the summer, WRG returned to one of its staple projects from the beginning, the Montgomery Canal (more commonly 'the Mont'). Work here followed on from last year, restoring the stone wall at Crickheath Wharf. In a much similar fashion as will eventually be required at the narrows in Sawmills, this had been completely removed and a concrete base poured before the wall was reinstated using traditional materials – even down to the same quarry being used for the stone as was used 200 years ago! The wall is now nearly finished, and the Bonfire Bash in November should see it complete.

Following this, Kit 'A' moved to our neighbours at Chesterfield, commencing the building of the block wall around the area of Staveley town basin. In an alternately very dry and very wet week, hundreds of blocks were laid to progress the wall close to water level. The local society has now finished it, and so next year WRG will (hopefully) be commencing construction on the adjoining lock – though there is always Renishaw to return to if something goes wrong!

Running alongside the Mont camps and Chesterfield, Kit 'B' was at Gough's Orchard Lock on the Cotswolds. In four weeks, the remaining work required was brought to an end, and in the quaint, somewhat innocent words of one of the locals, all that remains is to 'put the doors on'. Currently the aim is to see water in this within the next two years.



In contrast to the normal working hours, this camp saw many late evenings (and several early mornings) as the last camp strived to finish – the last day four of us worked about 13 hrs on site. Don't let it put you off though – some had gone by tea-time!

Eisey lock followed, a first assist for me, where we were continuing the reconstruction of one of the lock walls. In a week, our team put in over 2700 bricks, several coping stones and moved tonnes of materials. Looking at the access issues for some of our Cromford projects, we'll need some more practice at this!

Then on to the Mon & Brec (fully the Monmouthshire, Brecon & Abergavenny Canal) for a different style of camp. The aims for WRG here were largely investigative – uncovering lock and pound walls, building inspection ramps and clearing bywashes, all in aid of establishing what work will be required. One particularly enjoyable day for me was spent wading up and down a stream, trying to ascertain the location of the source and its route, to see whether it could be diverted as an extra water source. It couldn't, but the day was good fun nonetheless!

Rounding off my summer was a week on the Basingstoke Canal, rebuilding the wing walls on the entrance to lock 17. From my walk past the Ironville Locks as part of the sponsored walk, this is something the FCC will definitely need to do in the future – and I have learnt some valuable lessons on how to do it (and some on how not to do it – but that would take up too much space).



Skilled volunteers building a new top gate for Langley Bridge Lock. Both of these gentlemen are now sadly deceased, but WRG today is stronger than ever.

Michael Golds

The summer culminated in WRG's 40th birthday party and then the annual camp setting up the IWA National Festival at Beale Park. Not one for me this year, but I'll be there next summer when the National comes to Burton upon Trent at the end of July – so I'll see you all there.

Obviously, there are still events with WRG this year – 2 camps in October, the Bonfire Bash and numerous weekend digs. The year rounds out with the Christmas camp, scrub bashing on the Manchester, Bolton & Bury – the leader assures me the scrub is of particular quality, not that I will see much of it as I am cooking for the week.

Remember, everything we as volunteers put into WRG will get put back 100 times over when we start to restore the Cromford Canal. So come on, get involved – and give something back. For more information visit www.wrg.org.uk, or follow the links from the FCC website. Alternatively ring Jenny Black at IWA head office, on 01494 783453



WEBSITE MATTERS

from George Rogers



Much has happened since I last put pen to paper for *Portal*, though much will be reported by other committee members, so here I'll stick to a brief round up of changes you will see on the website, together with my future plans:

1. Most importantly, the various FCC calendars have been updated. These are found on the website 'diary', the yahoo group 'calendar' and the Facebook group 'Events' page. These have got all the relevant details for the social evenings until December 2011, work party dates until March 2011, and the location of the Sales stand. They also include externally organised events which the Friends will be attending. For those following us on the Facebook group, expect regular invitations and reminders!!

2. I have revised, again, the contacts page. However, people still feel they have to contact 'Fred', the anonymous committee member used to demonstrate the system to the visitor. Before you flick to the inside cover to find 'Fred', I should note he is entirely fictional (though features on many inter-committee emails....) and that any email to him comes to me. I shall try to sort a better way for the new site next year.

New site? Yes, next year we will be changing the webhost to get a better service, and this will give the opportunity to develop the site technically. As part of this I will be redesigning much of the website to make it more professional and user-friendly. In the run up to this, I am still looking for ideas for changes you would like to see, so keep sending them in, or adding them to the Facebook discussion groups. Furthermore, I shall be looking for several volunteers (both web-literate and non) to act as beta testers for the new site in March. Let me know if you are interested. [*How does one test a beta?* - Ed.]

One request has been for a Q&A section. This is popular amongst the committee – but it will require questions, so send them in also. All correspondence by email or post please, see the inside cover.

Finally, I recently started receiving statistics from our current host – startling to see that at times we are getting nearly 125 unique visitors a day – and as only one of them is me it is good to see the large numbers following us! Keep it up.

www.cromfordcanal.org.uk



WORK PARTY REPORT

from Dave Tinkler



Another season of work parties has begun. Our first one was on the Saturday/Sunday 9/10th October on the canal near Jacksdale. We were working on the stretch between the old entrance to Portland Basin and the dam across the canal. We had our chainsaw expert to cut down the larger trees which we then cut up and burned on the bonfire. Some of the larger logs were taken away by the local public who in return also helped us. If you would like some logs for your fire, then do come along and help and take home some of the fruits of your labour.

There is a lot of work for us to tackle, which means that the work at this venue will be on going. There are many willows which are overgrowing the canal which need to be cut down and burned. Forthcoming work parties on this site will be as follows:

- Saturday/Sunday 20/21st November.**
- Saturday/Sunday 11/12th December.**
- Saturday/Sunday 8/9th January.**
- Saturday/Sunday 12/13th February.**
- Saturday/Sunday 26/27th March.**

If you could help us then please do come along. We meet at 10.00am at the Jacksdale Community Hall car park. If you need directions then please let me know.

We will also be working with Derbyshire County Council on the top section of the Canal. The dates are:

- Saturday/Sunday 27/28th November at Cromford Wharf.**
- Saturday/Sunday 22/23rd January at High Peak Junction.**
- Saturday/Sunday 19/20th March at High Peak Junction.**

Because we are limited to the total number of volunteers we can have with DCC, on these work parties I need a list of all who will attend. Therefore could you please let me know if you will attend any of these dates and I will put your name on the list.

The work that we do is essential to prevent the Cromford Canal deteriorating any further and to bring it back to its original condition. I hope to see you all soon.

Dave





MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

from Yvonne Shattower



Well, the summer is definitely over, and I have noticed the boats coming up the Erewash Canal to their winter moorings at Langley Mill. People keep talking about 'Christmas arrangements'; cards and other items are already in the shops - and I have only just come back from my summer holiday!

It was a shame we could not have a stand at the Inland Waterways Festival this year, but it really was a question of logistics and cash to get people to staff it so far away. Next year the Festival will be at the end of July at Burton – where it was held a few years ago - so hopefully we will be able to have a presence there.

Unfortunately I have noticed a slowing down in the numbers of new members we are getting. I appreciate that times are difficult for everyone, but please do encourage your friends and family to join us, we need as many members as we can get to impress the people that matter when it comes to funding.

Adrian Farmer started our season of Members Meetings with a talk on the Belper Boating Association. Unfortunately we had to go in the smaller hall at Ironville as the main hall had been double booked (not our fault!), but I understand that all went well. Elsewhere in this magazine you will find details of the remaining programme for this year, and also the first two talks for 2011. Come along and support the Red Lion Band, they are great players and we have a lot of fun. You might even see sights you would never expect to see! Looking ahead to 2011, we will have a full programme of talks listed in the next *Portal*, and we also plan to have a sheet detailing the talks to distribute to pubs, libraries and public places to bring our activities to a wider audience. If you think you could take some for distribution please contact me.

Can I again make a plea for Members to return their yellow form when they renew their Membership, especially if using the standing order form. It makes it so much easier for me to ensure that I get the right Member. Thank You.

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

Mr & Mrs E S Carter, Belper
Mr G Rogers, Matlock
Slater Electrical Services, Langley Mill (Corporate Member)
Mrs T Ker- Reid and Mr D Gilbert, Knebworth (Life Members)
J B Transport, Ironville (Corporate Member)
Mr P Ward, Belper
Mr I P Walker, Croydon
Mr & Mrs H Daykin, Alfreton (Life Members)
Mr & Mrs M B Evans, Langley Mill

Friends of the Cromford Canal
introduce a new
Christmas Card for 2010



Featuring
Poyser's Bridge No 16

Greeting inside all cards is:
With best wishes for
Christmas
and the New Year

All cards are in full colour which
may be viewed
on the website:
www.cromfordcanal.org.uk

This new card together with alternative packs from previous years will be available on the sales stand in the Gothic Warehouse at the Derwent Valley Mills Discovery Days on **30th and 31st October 2010**

Save on the postage by buying them there, when the whole range of FCC goods will also be displayed for sale. You may get some ideas for Christmas presents too!



No. 2 Bullbridge Aqueduct
with steam train passing below
taken from an oil painting
by Harley Crossley

No. 3 Leewood Pumping Station
& Wigwell Aqueduct
from a photograph by Hugh Potter



Packs of 10 cards and envelopes £3.00 plus 75p per pack p&p

Owing to popular demand packs of mixed cards are also available at the same price
Please forward cheque with order to the sales address. Cheques made payable to FCC

