

# **THE PORTAL**

**JOURNAL OF  
THE FRIENDS OF THE CROMFORD CANAL**



**Good News  
Issue!**



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**FRONT COVER:** The Truxor amphibious dredger working at Cromford Wharf. This machine is sucking up the silt from the canal bed and pumping it along an incredible pipe line into the field near Lawn Bridge. The towpath will remain open throughout this operation, which is well worth seeing. See pages 10 - 13

Photo: Hugh Potter

**BACK COVER:** Councillor Andrew Lewer, leader of Derbyshire County Council, accompanied by Patrick Morriss, chairman of the Friends of the Cromford Canal, at High Peak Junction having unveiled the Blue Plaque awarded to the Cromford Canal by DCC. See pages 25 - 29.

Photo: Editor

**Remember the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
followed by a film show and slides by Hugh Potter  
IRONVILLE CHURCH HALL MONDAY APRIL 15th 7.30 pm**

**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. 45

You may have been wondering what had happened to your *Portal* this time since it is now well past the press date which I published in the last issue. I have always been keen to get the mag out on time, but in this case I have put the deadline back about twelve days. I am pleased to say this was for the very good reason that I wanted to be able to include reports on all the various ongoing projects which have suddenly come to fruition in the last few weeks. It has in fact been an unprecedented period of good news for the Friends of the Cromford Canal.

### **Good News 1:**

English Heritage have granted Scheduled Ancient Monument status to a 210 metre section of Butterley Tunnel which forms the underground wharf known as the Wide Hole under Butterley works, plus the two access shafts from the works and the remains of the two original blast furnaces. This should protect the tunnel from damage by any developments on the Butterley site.

### **Good News 2:**

The long-awaited planning permission for the dredging of the canal from Cromford to Leawood Pump has now been granted and the job has started, albeit later than initially planned. See pages 10 - 13

### **Good News 3:**

Natural England has given consent for the trip boat operation to run from Cromford Wharf to Leawood, subject to conditions regarding type of boat and frequency of operation which are recognised and accepted by the FCC.

### **Good News 4:**

After great efforts in identifying the source of funding, researching the requirements, preparing and then modifying the application, the FCC bid for funding from the Rural Development Programme for England was successful in obtaining a grant towards the cost of the trip boat. See page 17.

### **Good News 5:**

For some years I have had my eye on narrow boat *Birdswood*, which is converted to carry passengers and had been operating at Froghall on the Caldon Canal, and I have always thought that this boat would be ideal for Cromford. I heard on the 'towpath telegraph' last year that the boat was for sale, and to cut a long story short, the FCC are now in the process of buying it. See page 16.

So, this has been a good time to be a member of the FCC, which makes a pleasant change from the years of frustrating yet essential behind the scenes effort.

**The press date for the Summer 2013 issue will be August 7th.**



# A CLOSE RUN THING

by Mike Kelley

The most frequent question we as a society are asked is, 'When will the trip-boat be returning to Cromford Wharf?' There is a folk memory of the last time such a boat ran during the late 1970's to the early 1980's. For several years we managed to run a horse drawn demonstration boat for two days a year as part of the World Heritage Discovery Days. We did this for a number of years until the canal silted up so badly, such trips became impossible.

Now thanks to tremendous support from Derbyshire County Council (DCC) and hours of hard work from your committee, we are striving to get the first public boat trips running again along the canal by this summer. To say it has been a close run thing is something of an understatement. We had three big problems to overcome: (1) The canal had silted up and so it was not possible to run a boat. (2) We needed to get permission from Natural England to run such a boat along a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (3) We needed to find at least £50K to purchase such a boat and run the operation. Each one of these being a big problem by itself.

(1) All of this had to be in place before any such boat could be operated. Derbyshire County Council, who own this stretch of the canal, found the sum of £300,000 to dredge the canal, which was a major achievement in today's economic climate. The dredging of the canal had to be carried out anyway, because as a man-made structure if it is not managed it will be lost and become a silted up ditch. The dredging was originally expected to be carried out in the winter, but due to several unforeseen delays it was not until March that a start was made. Nevertheless, thankfully dredging did start, which was something we thought would not happen only a short while ago.

(2) Natural England (NE) who oversee this sensitive site had to be satisfied any boat operation would have no adverse affect on this SSSI. There were many meetings discussing this which resulted in them finally approving the project, subject to certain restrictions, which we are happy to comply with.

(3) We knew of a suitable traditional narrow boat, built in the 1930's and fitted out to seat 53 people, but couldn't purchase it until we knew items 1 and 2 would be completed and that item 3 would be forthcoming. The total project cost:- (i) Purchase of the boat (ii) Refitting new electric power (iii) Repainting to Cromford livery (iv) Road transport; all totalled up to over £70K. Many hours of hard work went into obtaining a grant for £27,966 from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) for which DEFRA is the Managing Authority, and part funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. You would not believe the amount of paper work we had to put into obtaining that grant. What made this grant particularly difficult was we had to actually purchase the boat before the grant would be handed over. To cover this some members have very kindly offered us a bridging loan.

The 'Brian Blessed Boat Appeal' has so far managed to raise £16K, so the difference we still have to find ourselves. Also, we had underestimated the costs and time required for inspection visits from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and for the requirements of this body to train up volunteers who are prepared to act as Master/Skippers on the boat. To obtain these Boat Master Certificates alone will cost up to £5K. Then the licence from the MCA will cost around £5.5K, mainly in inspection, design checking and testing fees. None of which could be done until items 1, 2 and 3 were in place.

So as you see our fund raising must continue. If you know of anyone who would be willing to contribute towards or sponsor this project please let me know. We need donations no matter how small. After reading this I hope you will see and understand how this has been a close run thing. However, we will do it, we have come too far not to, and by this summer the northern stretch of the canal will be restored and operating as a canal; as our members wanted it to be.

**Book your place now.**



## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by Patrick Morriss



A bitter sweet few paragraphs this time around.

As I'm writing this we are in the grip of a most unseasonal spell of wintry weather and spring is very late this year. But in some cases it helps.

You wait for a bus for what seems like forever, only to see a plethora of buses coming towards one.

Where do I start? All the news is in this issue, I do not want to repeat it all. The dredging of the canal is underway on the Cromford to Leawood Pump section of the canal. Consent has been obtained from Natural England to operate a trip boat from Cromford to Leawood Pump. Nearly £30,000 has been obtained in grant funding from the Rural Development Programme for England to go towards the boat project. Terms have been agreed to purchase narrow boat *Birdswood* to operate on the Cromford to Leawood pump section of the canal. A Cromford Canal Blue Plaque unveiled by DCC leader Andrew Lewer and me. The possibility of something being done with Aqueduct Cottage is now contained in the DerwentSide project. The continuing working parties on all three sections of canal, southern at Jacksdale, central at Sawmills and northern in the Derwent Valley working with both Derbyshire County Council and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. The announcement of Scheduled Ancient Monument status for the Butterley Works and the tunnel beneath by English Heritage are all in this issue.

I cannot actually remember the date that I became Chair of the Friends of Cromford Canal. However at the time I set myself and the Friends a few aims. Amongst those aims were to establish a Cromford Canal Partnership, strive to obtain a feasibility study carried out on the whole length of the canal and get the trip boat returned to Cromford Wharf. These three items have been more or less delivered. It will now fall to others to continue the good work; I will be stepping down as Chair and as a Trustee at the end of our Annual General Meeting on the 15th April at Ironville Church Hall. I know AGMs are a bit dry, but we do like to see and hear from our members and a bit of feedback either positive or negative is always welcome!

I would like to take this opportunity to look back over the last few years and commend a few people and organisations. I may well miss a few out and if that is you I will apologise now, these are errors of omission and not of malice. I will not name names as I cannot possibly do justice to all the individuals involved.

The FCC could not have made the great strides forward that it has, under anyone's leadership, without the help and support of fellow Trustees, other committee members and our band of loyal volunteers. There never were enough and there are still not enough, so if you have a skill or a few hours to spare, please offer your services, we will try and use your efforts to the best possible outcome.

Over the last four years the Local Authorities concerned with the canal have become much more proactive and involved in the canal project in the full knowledge of





what canal-led regeneration can bring. Amber Valley Borough Council, Bolsover District Council, Derbyshire Dales District Council and above all Derbyshire County Council have all played an active part in the canal partnership and in other areas such as planning control and protecting the line of the canal. Above all I have to commend the involvement of Derbyshire County Council since 2009. Against the backdrop of very difficult economic circumstances, resources have been found to repair Leawood rail aqueduct in a manner that does not preclude future navigation. The replacement of the swing bridge at High Peak Junction, without which we would not have been able to run the trip boat to Leawood Pump and of course the dredging work, both at Whatstandwell and latterly between Leawood Pump and Cromford to enable the canal to continue in existence as a water course and so that the FCC might be able to provide the long awaited return of the trip boat. Special thanks to the two county councillors who have donated money from their Members Community Leadership Scheme funds. Last and by no means least the appointment of Susan White as Waterways Development Project Officer has been tremendously helpful to the FCC and I doubt if the trip boat project would have got to this stage without her input.

The FCC has always been active within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site since the first Discovery Days. WHS personnel and the FCC now work together on a number of projects all designed to complement each other, illustrating the Cromford Canal's status as the longest length of canal in a World Heritage Site in England. The WHS staff have been immensely helpful over the years.

Another great source of support has been local community groups. BASA in Sawmills and Bullbridge and JACHS in Ironville/Jacksdale have been invaluable in mobilising local volunteer support and helping both in supporting our aims and physically turning out to work, often in extreme conditions. Examples of such work can be seen at the Gauging Narrows at Sawmills and at The Portland Basin at Jacksdale. If only we had community groups like these along the whole length of canal!

Canal enthusiasts from all over the UK have turned out on Waterway Recovery Group working parties on various parts of the canal route. Their work supported by our own volunteers has been invaluable and I look forward to the time when the FCC can say thank you at the end of a working party by giving all the participants a trip along the canal in our own boat. Of course our own volunteers have been active on these big set pieces as well as our own working parties, all doing valuable work and raising the FCC profile.

Above all I would like to say thank you to you, the members and families of the FCC. Without being able to point at over 800 members and an ever growing organisation, little of this would have been possible. I would also like to say a special thank you to all those of you who supported me during the dark days of 2007/08 after my diagnosis and operation for bowel cancer and for the six months of chemotherapy that followed.

It only remains for me to quote that great, gloriously politically incorrect Irish comedian Dave Allen, "Thank you, goodnight and may your God go with you". Goodbye and keep up the good work!

*I was very sorry to hear about Pat's decision to stand down as chairman and trustee. It is a great shame that he has decided to do this at a time when things are now really starting to happen for the FCC.*

*However, I know that he has put in a great deal of time and effort, especially commendable during his quite serious health problems and also when he has been building up his antique shop business at Cromford Mill, and can understand the need to sometimes have different priorities. I'm sure I speak for all members when I wish Pat and Freda all the best for the future and I hope we will still see them at FCC events. Thank you Pat - Ed.*



## FCC NEWS UPDATE - so what *is* happening

from Mike Kelley



There has been so much happening with the Cromford Canal since the last edition of the *Portal*. This is an exciting time to be a member.

- **Saturday 5th January** - Our Sales Team had a stall at Heanor Church.
- **Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th January** - One of our regular Work Party weekends clearing away the overgrowth along the canal near Jacksdale.
- **Monday 14th January** - Our regular monthly committee meeting on a very cold night at the Horse & Jockey, Selston.
- **Saturday 19th & Sunday 20th January** - Again our Sales Team pitched their stall, this time at Morrison's Supermarket in Eastwood.
- **Monday 21st January** - Due to the amount of snow our monthly social evening and talk had to be cancelled.
- **Wednesday 23rd January** - A meeting with UK-Coal made little or no progress.
- **Thursday 24th January** - Steve Mulholland arranged for a Brainstorming session at the West Shed meeting room in the Midland (Steam) Railway Museum at Butterley. A fantastic day with many professional people discussing ways to progress the restoration of the Cromford Canal.
- **February 10th -15th - Good news week!** Plans we had been making for a long time came in a sudden rush this week, toward a foreseeable fruition. Planning permission for the dredging of the canal was granted and the grant we were seeking for the trip boat was granted with certain conditions. This along with Natural England allowing for a trip boat operation, subject to conditions we agreed to, it was a good week for the FCC.
- **Monday 11th February** - Our regular monthly committee meeting night at the Horse & Jockey, Selston.
- **Friday 15th February** - A work party at High Peak Junction had 12 people attending, working down to Gregory Tunnel.
- **Monday 18th February** - Our first monthly social evening of the year saw Chris Madge and Doug Flack give us a talk on the Derby Canal. The Derby Canal is one of our close neighbours on canal restoration, so it was interesting to see their plans and progress.
- **Monday 5th March** - At last after several delays the dredging of the canal started, the stretch being from Cromford Wharf to Leawood Pump.
- **Friday 8th March** - John Boucher, Mike Harrison and myself drove over to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency in Beverley, north of Hull, to find out the requirements and costs for Skippers or Masters to obtain a Boat Master's Certificate. This certificate is required for anyone who is in charge of a boat with more than 12 people on board, and we intend to carry up to 53 passengers. The costs came out to be much higher than we had been led to believe before. We will have to seek a grant to cover this extra cost. We also discussed the requirements for certificating the boat itself.



• **Saturday 9th & Sunday 10th March** - Another work party operated at Jacksdale this weekend. These work parties have made a great deal of progress on this section and we thank them for this. Well done.

• **Monday 11th March** - Our regular monthly committee meeting night at the Horse & Jockey, Selston.

• **Tuesday 12th March** - The Leader of Derbyshire County Council, Andrew Lewer, along with Pat Morriss, FCC Chairman unveiled a blue plaque at High Peak Junction to commemorate the waterway. This special plaque was put up after members of the public voted for the attraction to receive the honour. See pages 25 - 29.

• **Monday 19th March** - Over 300 attended a special talk we ran at the Hayes Conference Centre at Swanwick near Ripley. Gwilym Roberts CBE, former President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, delivered a popular and wonderful talk called "The Butterley Company 1790 – 2009". See picture below.



Editor

• **Wednesday 20th March** - A demonstration and discussion was put on along the canal towpath at Cromford by DCC and the dredging Company. This job was late starting; let us hope they can finish on time!

## 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.**

The following are scheduled between now and the Autumn

There is a bar and raffle available at all meetings. Admission is £2

- **April 15th - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** (free admission).
- **May 20th - THE FUTURE OF THE CROMFORD CANAL** - Matthew Rogers
- **June 17th - THE CHESTERFIELD CANAL** - Dr Geraint Coles
- **September 16th - FAME WITHIN 5 MILES OF ALFRETON** - Ray Sunderland
- **October 21st - BLACK DIAMONDS** - Wendy Freer
- **November 18th - ACROSS ALASKA IN WINTER** - Andrew Heading





# NEWS FROM THE NORTH

## Cromford Canal - Cromford to Ambergate

### Update - March 2013

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

#### **Dredging scheme Cromford Wharf to Leawood Pumphouse**

A planning application was approved on March 14th for maintenance dredging on the canal between Cromford Wharf and Leawood Pump. Ebsford Environmental have been awarded the contract. They are using a cutter suction dredging technique, pumping the extracted silt to a receptor site near Cromford, in the field on the offside of the canal above the rugby club. Ground work is being overseen by an archaeologist due to potential for interest within the Derwent Valley. Earth platforms have been prepared in the field onto which geotextile silt bags are sited. The silt is pumped from a Truxor amphibious craft along pipes back to the field trapping the silt in the bags but allowing the water to escape. A 2km pipeline with additional land based pumps is up and running, transporting the silt from the High Peak Junction end. It takes approximately 17 minutes for the silt to be carried from the furthest point of the dredging site along the pipe back to the receiver field. The silt material in the bag dewateres quickly enabling prompt restoration of the field through ploughing and reseeded with grass hopefully later this spring. This silt pumping technique means that the canal banks are not disturbed, this is important due to the wildlife they support, including water voles. The dredging is planned so that the two open and most ecologically sensitive areas, adjacent to Cromford Meadows and around High Peak Junction are dredged first, prior to the onset of spring.

The canal management plan highlights the need for significant tree felling and thinning along the canal to reduce shade and leaf fall. Tree felling is currently underway adjacent to the Pisani marble works but will be phased over 2 or 3 years. A 100m section of the far bank has been identified for a new 1m wide edge to be formed from geotextile, with silt to be pumped behind. This method will be monitored and managed to improve ecology as this stretch is currently of lesser wildlife interest.

*A site visit was recently kindly arranged by DCC and Ebsford Environmental so that this novel environmentally friendly dredging method could be explained to a group of FCC types. See Hugh Potter's report on pages 10 - 13. Ed.*

#### **Boat Service Update**

A draft licence has been drawn up which sets out the terms of an agreement that should allow the Friends of Cromford Canal to operate a boat service. The operation does require Natural England consent with the canal being an SSSI. A regime of ecological monitoring and review has also been developed.

#### **Channel clearance**

Volunteers from The Friends assisted with work party weekends including clearing vegetation from Gregory nip and tunnel.

#### **Tree works Crich Chase**

Bank side tree and scrub clearance has been carried out between Mould's Wharf and Chase Bridge following on from the joint work parties with DWT and BTCV. See picture on the opposite page.



### **Canal bank protection**

Work has continued to protect the canal edges and curb erosion to sections of eroded canal bank. Clay repairs have been undertaken at Cromford and near Whatstandwell.

### **Towpath improvements**

Work was completed in February to resurface the towpath from Gregory tunnel through to Whatstandwell. Along with previous works this now provides a surface suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs from Ambergate all the way through to Gregory tunnel, a distance of approximately 3 miles.

### **Simms Bridge Leak**

Unfortunately an on-going problem near Whatstandwell has meant that a short section of canal has had to be lowered until a repair scheme can be implemented. A temporary dam has been constructed to hold water at this lower level.

### **High Peak Junction**

The electrics at High Peak Junction Workshops are undergoing a complete rewire, to improve lighting and safety. We anticipate the Visitor Centre will be able to stay open as normal, ie weekends only until Easter and then daily.

Just a minute's walk south from High Peak Junction, the historic Lengthman's cabin (with twin doors) has had its door frames, wooden guttering and shutters refurbished.

**For further information please feel free to contact me at  
Middleton Top Visitor Centre on 01629 823204.**

Dave Tinkler has arranged a **Summer Work Party** with Derbyshire County Council

**Saturday 22nd & Sunday 23rd of June**

The task is Himalayan Balsam pulling at High Peak Junction and Whatstandwell.

Contact Dave on **01159 635113** or email **dtink@supernet.com**



# THE CROMFORD CANAL IS BEING DREDGED!

by Hugh Potter

Work on dredging the Cromford Canal between its Cromford terminus and Leawood Pump began in early March. Preparatory work started immediately after the granting of planning permission by Derbyshire County Council, with the intention of completing with the minimum disturbance of wildlife in a length of canal that is also an SSSI. For this reason the contract has been let to Leeds-based Ebsford Environmental using amphibious Truxor machines. These amphibious 'vehicles' can propel themselves on land or water using the same tracks, rather like a lightweight floating tank. A variety of devices can be fitted to enable them to cut or clear weed, and to dredge by stirring up the silt locally and pumping it to where required for disposal or re-use.



ABOVE: The amphibious dredger is simply driven from the field into the canal to start work.

BELOW: This shows the business end of the machine with an auger which stirs the silt and feeds it to a powerful hydraulically driven pump on the end of the operating arm.







Hugh Potter



Most of the silt will be pumped into special geo-textile bags (see above) from which the water drains naturally, drying out the silt which can then be disposed of more easily. These are sited in a sloping field adjacent to the canal between Cromford and Lawn Bridge, which has been reprofiled to give the bags stability. As the area is within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, an archaeologist had to be on site during this initial work to ensure that significant historic remains were not disturbed. Disappointingly, the Derbyshire Hoard was not discovered!

When the job is finished, the depth will be checked with a sonar device. In the meantime, regular checks are made by the less technical method of poking with a stick.



Hugh Potter



Nick Hartley of Ebsford Environmental and Rick Jillings of DCC showed Friends around the works in mid-March, when Nick explained that with the silt being pumped over a mile along the pipes, it was the 'longest' job they have ever done, and it takes the silt 17 minutes to travel from the dredger to the bags.

Hugh Potter



Nick Hartley, MD of Ebsford Environmental, explaining the process on the FCC site visit. It is interesting to note that the Truxor dredger is the first powered 'vessel' ever to come to Cromford Wharf.

The silt can be pumped almost any distance from the Truxor using a series of booster pumps every 300 yards. This makes for a very 'clean' job and is enabling the popular towpath to remain open throughout the work, and for the public to see the work at close quarters.

With the big pumps working, 25 bags per week can each be filled with 100 tons of wet silt. Some 60–70% of the water content drains away in a week, leaving around 50 tons of solids per bag. Some 100 bags will be needed to complete the contract which entails removing some 5000 cubic metres of silt.

After the dredging is finished and the bags have dried out, they will be cut open and the dry material spread over the field and ploughed in. The area will then be reseeded and by the summer the new grass will be established.

Hugh Potter



ABOVE: Water transport being used to distribute the sections of the mile-long pipeline ready for assembly.  
BELOW: One of the 'super silent' booster pumps.



Editor





Editor

Another part of this job is tree cutting work on the offside of the canal along a 100 metre section adjacent to the Pisani marble works, see above. This will improve the aquatic environment by letting in more light, and reduce the amount of dead leaves which have been blocking the water channel, but selected mature trees will be left untouched. In one section trees are also growing through the canal-side wall and damaging the stonework.

When the tree work is completed, a Nicospan geotextile lining will be erected on stakes in the canal along this 100 metre length a metre from the offside bank. This will be backfilled with silt when the dredger reaches this length where it will be recolonised by vegetation to eventually form a new canal edge.

The final picture below shows the second Truxor machine starting to work at the southern end of the site at the Wharf Shed. The two machines will now be working towards each other.



Hugh Potter



## TROUBLE IN T' TUNNEL

by Dave Ratner

After the decision had been taken to close the Butterley Tunnel in 1907, the Midland Railway were obliged to set about laying through the tunnel two pipes "not exceeding 12 inches in diameter" to ensure an adequate supply of water to the canal on the Eastern side of the tunnel. On the face of it a seemingly straightforward request. However, as is well known, the tunnel was in a parlous state and not just from the cave-in of 1900. (See previous articles: *Portal* 36 Pg 20 and *Portal* 38 Pg 24). Further mining beneath the tunnel was still taking place and its effects were more than a little noticeable.

In a letter from Fred J Grey, Midland Engineer's Office on June 20th 1907 to John Argyle, Northern Division Engineer, he compares dimensions taken in February 1901:

*The dimensions show no alteration up to 36 chains (from the eastern end). The heights from the water level to crown are as follows:*

*At 36 chs in Feb 1901, 7ft 5ins; In June 1907, 6ft 10 1/2 ins*

*At 38 chs in Feb 1901, 7ft 6ins; In June 1907, 6ft 4 1/2 ins*

*At 40 chs in Feb 1901, 6ft 5ins; In June 1907, 5ft 0 1/2 ins*

*At 42 chs in Feb 1901, 6ft 9ins; In June 1907, 5ft 2 1/2 ins*

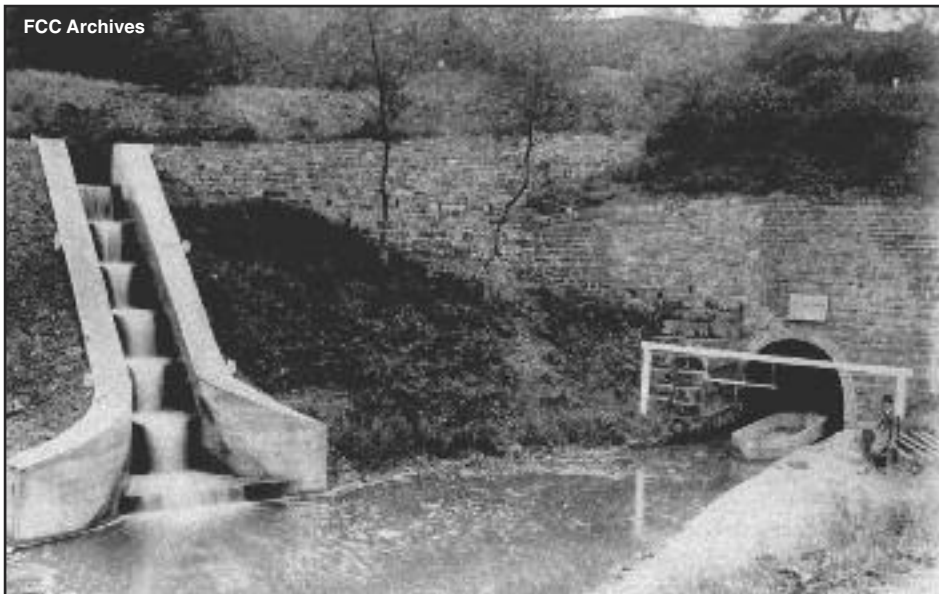
A drop of up to 18 inches! Then goes on to say:

*The piece of arch just before entering the open rock is in a very much worse state than when I was in about 10 days ago, and looks ready to fall at any time. The spelching (bulging) at the south haunch is very much worse and new spelching is starting on the north haunch.*

It would appear that work began almost immediately after the decision to make repairs to the tunnel, not to make it navigable, but to make it suitable to pass the pipes through and to that end it was decided to access the tunnel using shafts numbers two & four. It seems that a cradle was lowered down number two shaft so that it could be examined. It was noted that much of the brickwork had fallen away from the bottom of the shaft and that this would have to be repaired so that work on the tunnel could proceed. The work was not without its dangers.

To repair the shafts a form of staging called a 'Blow George' was constructed. This is staging which is moved up the shaft as work progresses. It transpires that on Feb 15th 1909, there was a potentially fatal incident:

*The original stage consists of 29ft planks carried by 3 bearers 7" x 2 1/2" laid flat. The work of raising this stage was in hand. To enable this to be done the planks had been drawn back to the centre bearer, the whole gang being present, some in the little punt east of the stage, some in the tunnel boat west of the stage, and two men viz Gration and Fearn actually on the stage moving the Blow George back, and it was the extra weight of the two men coming practically all on to the centre bearer as the planks were moved back which caused this to break through some knot holes near to the north abutment. The result was that everything went into the water. Gration informing me that he fell on his back to the bottom of the canal and he was some time before he could right himself, while Fearn managed to catch hold of the padlock hole and so support himself until helped out. The Blow George itself fell to the bottom of the canal and could not be removed until Monday.*



The eastern portal in 1909. The boat is probably the 'little punt' used for maintenance referred to above. Note also the height gauge suspended over the entrance, indicating that due to mining subsidence, the headroom in the tunnel was considerably less than at the portal. This problem had already caused the closure of the tunnel to through traffic at this time.

If the staging had fallen on Gration and pinned him to the bottom of the canal, it's doubtful he would have survived. The repairs to the tunnel were prolonged and costly and not without a little acrimony.

In 1913 Godfrey Wright of the Butterley Co. was of the opinion that the whole cost of repairs to the 'Wide Hole' section should be borne by the Railway Co. These repairs were to be quite extensive and involved the filling of redundant shafts with slag lumps and narrowing a part of the wide hole to provide support for this section. The idea of replacing just the brick lining was considered too dangerous. He pointed out that the Railway Co. had the men with experience (navvies) to do the job while the Butterley Co. did not.

The Railway argued that since the Butterley Co. had paid a proportion of the wide hole construction costs and the weak section was as a result of the shafts there, that they should be responsible for the costs of this section. Butterley eventually agreed to pay but problems seemed to occur at every end and turn.

Although Butterley wanted to fill up the redundant shafts, they also wanted to keep the drainage that they provided. The Railway Co. was concerned (even at this stage) that the canal would be too narrow and the corners too sharp should boats recommence to use the tunnel. Butterley suggested a retaining wall up to 12 inches above weir pond level to guide the boats should they ever pass that way again. At some point the solicitors got involved and despite learned searches of the records, failed to find the minute in the Canal Co's minute book, which tells Oakes & Co. (later the Butterley Co.) that they can make a wide hole but that the Canal Co. will only fund the cost of the original section.

It would appear that some settlement was reached by March 1914 and work on repairs began in earnest.



# THE TRIP BOAT IS COMING TO THE CROMFORD CANAL!



The headline above is one I have been looking forward to being able to write ever since I became editor of *The Portal*. It has always been one of the chief aims of the FCC to get a trip boat running again from Cromford Wharf. The problems we have had to face to get this far I must admit have at times been overwhelming. However, due to perseverance by your chairman and other committee members, we are getting there.

But to quote Winston Churchill - "This is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end, but it may be the end of the beginning". Much has yet to be done, not least is the fact that we have to comply with and finance the many requirements of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, as well as prepare the boat itself.

Mike Kelley will be in overall charge of this exciting project, but it all depends on the support of members. If you can offer any support, either financial, practical or administrative, now is the time to speak up and join in. In particular, if you have a **Boatmasters Certificate** and are willing to help either as a skipper or in the training of others, please get in touch with Mike. - details inside front cover. On the opposite page is some information regarding the RDPE grant which has helped to get this project started.

Editor





The European Agricultural Fund for Rural  
Development: Europe investing in Rural Areas



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

The Friends of the Cromford Canal are pleased to announce the award of a grant for £27,966.40.

**This project is supported by the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) for which Defra is the Managing Authority, part financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas.**

This sum has been awarded towards the purchase and refurbishment of a traditional narrow boat. When a suitable boat can be found it will be adapted to take passengers along the northern section of the Cromford Canal; from Cromford Wharf to High Peak Junction and back. It is the intention of the 'Friends' to not only take tourists, but to use it as an educational means for schools. In the late 1970's to early 80's a similar trip boat cruised this length and was popular with tourists.

Pat Morriss, Chair of the Friends of the Cromford Canal, said "This is splendid news! We have been able to convince not only Defra but the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development that the visitor potential of a canal trip boat operating from Cromford would make a viable contribution to the local economy. The Friends look forward to providing the boat during the summer of 2013, and to play its full role in attracting and retaining both existing and new visitors to the Cromford Cluster of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. I would like to acknowledge the unstinting help and co-operation the Friends received from Derbyshire County Council and the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Team to name but two. These are exciting times."

Our chairman Pat Morriss has recently received the following letter:

Well done! I have just heard that your application for funding for the trip boat has been successful, great news. People who have never compiled a funding application (or are the spouse of someone who has) have little idea of the work involved in pulling together the information required for these things or how hard it is to present a good case. I have had a large number of funding bids rejected over the years, many more than have been successful, so my congratulations are genuinely offered. I won't be the first, I'm sure, to say the hard work starts now but I am sure that buying, restoring and running your boat will be a great deal more enjoyable than negotiating the funding!

Susan White

Waterways Development Project Officer  
Derbyshire County Council





## NARROW BOAT *BIRDWOOD* - THE FIRST 75 YEARS

by the Editor

As you will have read elsewhere in this edition of *Portal*, the FCC have now purchased a boat to operate as a passenger trip boat from Cromford Wharf. This is an ex working narrow boat named *Birdwood* and I thought it would now be a good idea to look back at the history of this vessel and explain why it is particularly appropriate for use on the Cromford Canal.

The first part of the boat's history is closely connected with the history of the railways. Speaking as a narrow boat enthusiast, my knowledge of railway history is rather limited and certainly not in the same league as many who will be reading this, so please feel free to send in any corrections!

With the coming of the railways in the 1840's, many canals found it impossible to compete with the railways and decided to cut their losses and sell out to the railway company which was taking over their traffic. The Cromford Canal was one of these and the canal was purchased by the Manchester, Buxton, Matlock & Midlands Junction Railway Company in 1847. This was subsequently taken over by the Midland Railway Company and then in 1923 the Midland was grouped together with others to form the London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS).

This meant that in addition to the canals, the LMS found themselves the owners of a large number of boats which had belonged to the various canal companies which were now under their control. Many of these boats were wooden, but in 1928 the LMS decided to have some new riveted iron narrow boats built. These were 'day' boats ie. they were open boats with no cabin and were intended for use on the 22 railway interchange basins which were then very busy around the Birmingham Canal Navigations. The contract to build these boats was awarded to W.J. Yarwood and Sons who operated a shipyard on the River Weaver at Northwich in Cheshire. This company was unusual in that, in addition to sea going ships, it also built a large number of narrow boats. In spite of their humble work-a-day employment, Yarwoods boats were built with very attractive lines and a particularly fine shape, therefore not only 'swimming well' as the boatmen say, but were (and indeed still are) arguably the best looking narrow boats on the canal system.



*Dabchick* - a sister ship of *Birdwood* - being towed up the Erewash Canal en route to the dock at Langley Mill. The cabin had been removed prior to a complete restoration job, showing how these boats would have looked when first built.

Val Roberts



*Birdswood*, as originally built for the LMS, was named *Ross*, fleet number 5, an open boat delivered by Yarwoods as one of the later boats of this batch, on 22/11/1938, and gauged by the Birmingham Canal Navigations as No 2050 on 5/12/1938. See the gauging record below, supplied by Peter Harrison (no relation) via our archivist Hugh Potter.

LMS Register No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date when Gauged, Weighed, and Measured, 5 December 1938  
 B.C.N. Register, No. 2050 Station Tipton  
 Owner L.M.S. Ry. Address Walswood Lane  
 Boat Name Ross No. 5  
 Extreme Length 70.2 Extreme Width 7.12  
 Stowage 56.10 Stowage 6.11  
 Draught when Light 11.00 Draught when laden with 33 Tons 46.06  
 Articles on Board when Weighed 4 Barrels, Rudder, Mast, Deck

Tons	Dry Inches	Difference	Tons	Dry Inches	Difference	Tons	Dry Inches	Difference	ALTERATIONS	
									Calc.	DATE
Light	32.02/06		21	12.72		42				
1	34.96		22	11.74		43				
2	31.90		23	10.76		44				
3	30.84		24	9.78	.98	45				
4	29.78/02		25	8.80		46				
5	28.76		26	7.82		47				
6	27.74		27	6.84		48				
7	26.72		28	5.86	.98	49				
8	25.70/02		29	4.88		50				
9	24.68		30	3.90		51				
10	23.66		31	2.92		52				
11	22.64		32	1.94	.98	53				
12	21.62/00		33	96		54				
13	20.62		34			55				
14	19.62		35							
15	18.62		36							
16	17.62.98		37							
17	16.64		38							
18	15.66		39							
19	14.68		40							
20	13.70.98		41							

Documents such as this are fascinating. The figures in the table indicate the "dry Inches" (freeboard) as the boat is progressively loaded with test weights at the Tipton Gauging Dock. This was essential for each new boat so that tables could be produced for the toll keepers to use to determine the load and hence the all-important toll payable. The figures are the result of an average being calculated from four readings, one each side at both ends of the boat, for each ton increase in the test load. I would like to have been there when the load had reached 33 tons and the freeboard was just 0.96 inches! Not surprisingly, sinkings in the dock were not unknown!

The figures confirm the approximate rule of thumb which applies to all narrow boats that each ton of cargo increases the draught of the boat by one inch.



When the labour party came to power after World War Two, all transport, including both railways and canals, was nationalised. Therefore, in 1948 all of the LMS boats passed into the ownership of British Railways, who continued the short haul day boat traffic to and from the railway interchange basins in the Birmingham area until April 1st 1954. They then ceased all operations with canal boats. Their fleet of 67 boats was taken over by British Waterways, but the trade was gradually diminishing.

After this, 12 of the Yarwoods boats were converted to long distance carrying craft. That is to say they were fitted with living cabins and used in the British Waterways North West fleet to fill a shortage of butty boats, ie unpowered boats towed by a motor boat and worked as a pair with the boatman and his family living on board. It has been suggested that all this conversion work was done on the dry docks at Stone, but records

DATE	BOAT	STEERER	IN	OUT	GG
30-8 to	Swan-Ella.	J Talley.	8.40	9.10	#
30-8	Bradley Swan	J. U. Clegg	11.50	1-10	#
30-8	Minnow + Ulsuger	J Moore.	3.35	5.0	#.
31-8	Wren	Mc. Davies	8.35	9.45	#.
31-8	Cypella + Birdswood	W <sup>m</sup> Helon	1-25	2-40	#.
31-8	Joan.	W <sup>m</sup> Kelly	2.50	3.30	#.
31-8	Collingwood Jelicoe	D. Jenks	3.35	4.15	#
2-9	Otter + Raven	R. Barnett	8.5	9.20	#
2-9	Siting	J Yates	3.0	3.45	#
2-9	Skate + Albanyland	J. Dagle	3.40	4.45	#
3-9	Lindsay + Kiebyrowe	H. Johnson	8.0	9.5	#.
5-9	Mant + Bangor.	D. Beck	4.35	5.40	#
6-9	Rudol	J. Shaw	9.20	10.20	#
7-9	Clematis	J. Jones	8.0	9.15	#
7-9	Ayle + Crews	K. Nixon	12.30	2.10	#.
7-9	Collingwood Jelicoe	D. Jenks	4.15	5.30	#
10-9	Cygness + Ditton	J. Anderson	10.0	11.10	#.
13-9	Minnow + Ulsuger	J. Moore.	4.5	5.20	#.
14	Water Erica	W <sup>m</sup> Semmonds	10.0	10.40	#
14-9	Perch, Anson Koppel	Hallinghead J. Talley	4.30	5.45	#
14-9	Lindsay Kiebyrowe.	H. Johnson	4.35	5.50	#



are not conclusive and it is possible that this work on *Birdswood* could have been done at Saltley or Anderton. However, all this work was done between 1955 and 1957. BW then re-named these 12 boats after railway stations, one for each of the first 12 letters of the alphabet, and they have been known ever since as 'Station Boats'. All the station names are familiar apart from *Birdswood*, which doesn't seem to have a station to be named after. The most likely railway source for the name is Bird's Wood flyover; the name for the railway flyover close to Dutton in Cheshire where there is a signal box and the line from Runcorn crosses over the West Coast Main line to Scotland. Adjacent to the railway is Bird's Wood, close by the south end of Preston Brook Tunnel on the Trent and Mersey Canal. *Birdswood* was re-registered at Northwich No 50 on 3/10/1958 along with the rest of the fleet.

Station Boats were then used quite intensively in the North West, usually paired with ex Fellows, Morton and Clayton motor boats, and became very popular with the boatmen. One regular traffic in the 1950's and early 60's was coal from Sideway Colliery at Stoke on Trent to Middlewich. This involved passage of Harecastle Tunnel on the Trent and Mersey Canal. I have reproduced opposite a page from a notebook kept during this period by the tunnel keeper Mr Copeland which his son Gordon has kindly allowed me to copy sample pages from and gives a fascinating record of the various boats that passed.

Note that *Birdswood* passed from the Chatterley (southern) end with the motor boat *Apollo* on 31st August 1960. Coincidentally, some 11 years later, *Apollo* was also converted to a passenger trip boat. Also note that four more of the Station Boats - *Alsager*, *Crewe*, *Ditton* and *Kidsgrove* are recorded on this same page.

The pictures below and on the following page show *Birdswood* heavily loaded on the Bridgewater Canal at Stretford working behind the motor boat *Tench* (out of shot to the right) in 1963. The cargo is almost certainly aluminium ingots which had been loaded directly overside from a ship in Manchester Docks and is bound for Wolverhampton. The neglected appearance of the boat in the second picture indicates that this was the twilight period of long distance narrow boat carrying operations by British Waterways and indeed they abandoned all such traffic later the same year.

Harry Arnold/Waterway Images







Harry Arnold/Waterway Images



*Birdswood* was subsequently leased to Willow Wren who continued carrying for a few years, but was back with British Waterways at Northwich being used for maintenance duties in 1972. The boat was then sold into private ownership and was briefly based on the Coombe Hill Canal in Gloucestershire. Then in 1974, it was bought by Bill and Jackie Young who converted it to a horsedrawn trip boat and operated successfully from Froghall Wharf on the Caldon Canal. See picture below. After the horse died, the boat continued tripping for a while towed by the Young's tug *Helen*. Then in 1995, extensive steelwork to the hull was carried out by Roger Fuller at Stone. At the same time an engine and hydraulic drive unit were installed, although the traditional horseboat stern end was retained. Motorised trip boat operations then continued at Froghall until the end of 2010, see page 16. It is now up to the FCC to be the custodian of this fine historic vessel for the next phase in its varied life. It is quite sobering to wonder what the boat will be doing in the next 75 years.



Harry Arnold/Waterway Images





## A WELCOME CONTRIBUTION TO THE BOAT FUND



The photograph above shows the Derbyshire County Councillor for Wirksworth and also the Derbyshire Dales District Councillor for Masson, Garry Purdy (left) handing over a cheque for £1000 to Pat Morriss, Chair of the Friends of the Cromford Canal on what was yet another cold snowy day this winter.

The money came from Councillor Purdy's Derbyshire County Council Community Leadership Scheme. Derbyshire County Council operates the scheme to provide small grants to community, voluntary, youth and other local organisations. Its aim is to support worthwhile projects and initiatives that will benefit local communities. The members' Community Leadership Scheme allocates each of the 64 county councillors an annual fund of £4,000 which can be used to support projects in their ward.

Councillor Purdy is a great supporter of the FCC plans to once again provide a boat on the canal and thought that it was a very worthwhile candidate for some of his available funding.

The dredging of the canal, an essential pre-requisite to the boat operation, is underway now and this money will go towards refurbishing the boat so that in part it can be used for local school children for trips on the boat that fit with the National Curriculum.

Councillor Purdy steps down in May this year. Thank you sir.



# LEAWOOD PUMP OUTLET

by Ian Yates

The start of the new steaming season has soon arrived; it does not seem long since shutting down for the winter. Jobs already started have been finished and just need to have a final tidy up to be ready.

The work on the feedwater pump has been completed, it now has a new pin in the top bearing and grease nipples fitted in the oil holes. An eye will have to be kept on the pump as it is run in but that should not be a problem. The defective wood packing in the joint below the bottom valve on the beam engine has been removed and replaced with new, carefully cut to match the thickness and shape of the joint from spare cedar blocks. This has then been covered over with tape and the restraining strap replaced.

The boilers have had the firebars put back in and now just need filling with water ready for use. Whilst looking through the online archive at the National Railway Museum at York a reference to stationary boilers was noted several times in the Derby Works list. Referring to Peter Southworth's book on Leawood he gives the details of the order numbers and drawing numbers for the boilers. These numbers were checked and found in the list. Copies of the drawings have been obtained and confirm they are the correct ones with only minor differences, one is signed by S W Johnson 18th March 1898. We hope to get permission to copy one and have it professionally laminated so it can be put on display in the pumphouse. Problems have been occurring for a while with firebars rising during steaming due to expansion, these drawings now give the correct length for them, some of ours are half to one inch too long hence the problem.

Another incident not of our making could also give a problem during the year. An underground fire has closed Daw Mill Colliery for good and apparently production has been switched to Thoresby Colliery to cover the shortfall. Our coal merchant has been told there is no more coal from either colliery available, all going for power station use. With problems at Hadfield colliery due to a major slip on the spoil heap seriously adjusting the shape of the adjacent main railway line, the future of this pit could also be in the balance. Our merchant assures us he will get coal for us somehow.

We are always on the look out for volunteers to help look after and work on the engine and boilers. Whilst this is generally day to day maintenance and cleaning, sometimes more extensive and interesting works can come along. Whilst getting dirty is optional it is not always necessary. Should anyone be interested come and see us on a steaming day or we are generally there on a Monday night. An initial contact to Middleton Top on 01629 823204 should be made at other times and they will put us in touch. There are no joining fees, just provide your own safety boots and overalls.

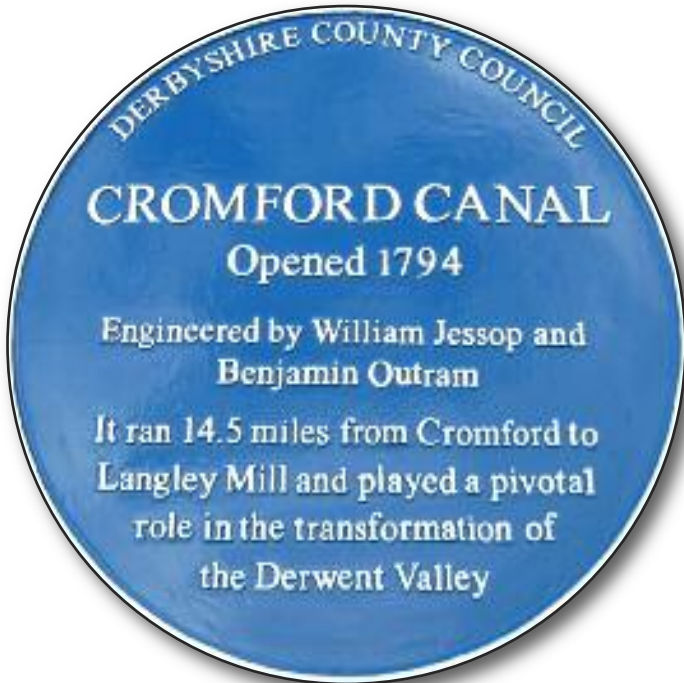
## STEAMING DATES 2013

**The engine will be in motion from noon to 5pm on each of the following days (except Discovery Weekend - 11am to 4pm).**

MONTH	SAT	SUN	MON	PERIOD
MAY		5th	6th	May Bank Holiday
JUNE	1st	2nd		First Weekend
JULY		7th		First Sunday
AUGUST	3rd	4th		First Weekend
		25th	26th	August Bank Holiday
OCTOBER	5th	6th		First Weekend
NOVEMBER	2nd	3rd		Discovery Weekend



## THE DERBYSHIRE BLUE PLAQUE SCHEME



Further to the article in Portal 44, the Derbyshire County Council Blue Plaque awarded to the Cromford Canal, shown above, has been produced and has now been installed on the existing plinth at High Peak Junction. On Tuesday 12th March there was a short unveiling ceremony carried out jointly by Andrew Lewer, the Leader of Derbyshire County Council, and Patrick Morriss, Chairman of the Friends of the Cromford Canal. In spite of the bitterly cold weather, there was a respectable turn out of members of the FCC and others to support this event.

It was very encouraging to hear such a positive attitude to the Canal from Councillor Lewer. He also reminded us of the history of the canal and its importance in developing the area, speaking as follows:

*It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the unveiling of this latest Derbyshire County Council blue plaque. We announced the scheme in 2009 to celebrate the county's cultural and historical heritage. The Derbyshire public voted for their favourites to get a plaque and today we recognise Cromford Canal.*

*I am delighted that we are joined today by representatives from the Friends of Cromford Canal, the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site - parts of the canal lie within the World Heritage Site. Also among our guests are the chairman of Derbyshire County Council, Councillor George Wharmby, and Councillor Garry Purdy of Derbyshire Dales District Council - welcome to you all.*

*Special thanks go to Patrick Morriss who nominated the Canal on behalf of the*



*Friends of Cromford Canal. I will speak briefly about the canal's historical journey from its heyday to its decline, as well as the latest exciting project currently underway to restore a stretch of the canal. I will then hand over to Patrick Morriss to say a few words and to join me in unveiling the plaque.*

*It is hard for us to imagine a time when goods were transported solely by horse and cart along dirt roads. Journeys were long, often treacherous and unreliable - not ideal for rural businesses wishing to market their goods in the prosperous towns and cities of the Midlands and beyond.*

*There had to be a faster way of transporting commodities in large quantities and canals were seen as an economical and reliable way of achieving this. The farms and businesses of this area of rural Derbyshire had seen how profitable the Erewash Canal had become and were keen to build their own canal to link into it.*

*So, work began on the Cromford Canal in the 1790s - the golden age of canal building. The new canal was to be engineered by William Jessop with Benjamin Outram - Jessop's partner in the nearby Butterley Ironworks.*

*The line ran for 14<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> miles and served several mines, quarries and lead works, as well as the ironworks at Butterley and Somercotes and Arkwright's cotton mills at Cromford. It had 3 aqueducts, 14 locks and 4 tunnels of which one, Butterley, was nearly two miles long.*

*Despite initial over-expenditure, the canal soon began to pay its way and by 1830 was paying shareholders dividends of almost 20%. In its heyday, the Cromford Canal was transporting substantial quantities of farm produce as well as coal, gritstone, limestone and iron from the local Butterley works. Coal was mainly carried down the Cromford Canal to the Erewash Canal and onto the Soar Navigation and then to Leicester. Limestone was shipped further south to the West Midlands and London and was used to build the new railways that were soon to put all canals in jeopardy.*

*Realising the threat from railway competition, in 1841 the Cromford Canal Company reduced its tolls to keep cargoes on the waterway. But reducing rates soon took its own toll - revenue went down by 25% in just two years and dividends were halved.*

*In 1847, the Cromford Canal Company was one of the first to conclude that it was pointless to try and fight the railways. The Erewash Valley Line was under construction and another line was planned to run from Cheadle to Ambergate. These, and competition from other railways already in existence in the area, were enough to see the company sell out to the Manchester, Buxton, Matlock & Midlands Junction Railway Company.*

*By 1870, tonnage had dropped to lower than half of what had been carried in the years just before the railway take-over. And by 1888, after 41 years of railway ownership, the tonnage carried on the canal had dropped to just 15% of its pre-railway level. Even this was mostly local traffic with very few boats travelling onto the adjoining canals. All long distance cargoes now went by train.*

*The ensuing years marked a steady decline in the fortunes of the Cromford Canal and in 1944, the whole of the canal, except for a half mile stretch at the southern end, was officially abandoned. The canal was soon weeded over and hidden by undergrowth.*

*Fortunately, the story doesn't end there. After years of neglect, restoration work began on the Leawood Pump and in 1974, Derbyshire County Council took over*





management of the stretch of canal between Cromford Wharf and Ambergate.

The canal then began a slow but sure revival. By 1977 the first 1.3 miles of canal between Cromford and Leawood were sufficiently restored to begin boat operation. A horse-drawn passenger boat began to operate on this stretch of the canal and passenger numbers grew steadily, peaking at 15,000 in 1982.

A major setback occurred in 1989 when storms and flash flooding caused substantial damage to embankments on the newly-opened section which then had to be closed and largely de-watered.

Work to restore the northern part of the section near Cromford began in 1996 - the towpath has been fully restored and turned into a popular linear country park - it is a haven for wildlife and a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. This section includes many of the best sites on the canal including Wigwell Aqueduct, Leawood Pumping Station, Cromford Basin and here at High Peak Junction.

And there is more good news. Work to dredge the 1.3 mile section of the canal from Cromford Wharf to Leawood Pumphouse started a few weeks ago. The council-funded project is due to complete in June, when it is hoped that historic narrow boats will once again take to the water here at Cromford Canal.

The canal may no longer be used for transporting coal and quarry stone, but we hope that the restoration of this scenic waterway will see the Cromford Canal once again contributing to the economic and environmental vitality of this historic area of Derbyshire.

Of course, a project of this magnitude cannot be accomplished in isolation. The Friends of the Cromford Canal held their first meeting in March 2002, and to tell you more about their work and vision for the future of the canal, it gives me great pleasure to hand you over to their Chairman, Patrick Morriss.....

Patrick then responded as follows:

*Thank you Councillor Lewer. It gives me great pleasure, matched with hope for the future, to see so many of you here on a morning such as this when the lure of indoors must be strong.*

*As you can see from the equipment and activity surrounding us the dredging contract has started. Using modern technology and techniques, disruption to the environment and to visitors during the next few weeks will be minimised. As soon as possible after the dredging has been completed, the FCC will be operating a trip boat from Cromford Wharf to Leawood Pumphouse. This has partly been made possible by a grant of nearly £30,000 from the Rural Development Programme for England for which Defra is the Managing Authority, part funded by the 'European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas' -*





*almost as much work to say it as it was to obtain it!*

*But for now we need to go back over 10 years to the first meeting of the FCC. Following on from the Millennium Funded canal restorations across the Pennines, like-minded people thought that restoring the Cromford Canal was a viable if long term proposition. An organisation was formed that now numbers over 800 members, ranging from local people to others living abroad, all with one ambition - to see the canal restored.*

*Progress was slow, but interest in this, the first group to seek the restoration of the complete canal, was boosted by the inscription of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site and at a stroke the Derwent Valley section of the Cromford Canal became the longest length of canal in a World Heritage Site in the UK. I can no longer say that now, as the Llangollen Canal in Wales is longer, so now I have to say the longest length of canal in a World Heritage Site in England!*

*From the beginning, one of our aims was to reinstate the trip boat that ran from Cromford to Leawood during the 1970's and 80's. Indeed, if the Friends had been able to collect a pound for every time we have been asked the question 'When is the boat coming back?' we probably could have funded the boat without a grant! We look forward to introducing a new generation to the delights of travelling through this beautiful scenery in a traditional narrow boat and adding to the attractions of the WHS at the same time.*

*Since 2009, progress has been much enhanced, towpath and access improvements have made much of the canal accessible to a wider range of people. Important and historic infrastructure has been replaced or renewed, the swing bridge here was completely renewed and the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Wigwell Aqueduct further down the canal has been conserved and restored, hopefully for future use. Playing our own part, the Friends hold regular working parties in conjunction with DCC and last summer over 2000 hours of volunteer time was spent upgrading the Derwentside weir with the unstinting help of the Waterway Recovery Group to help avoid overtopping problems in the future.*

*Of course none of this would have been possible had DCC and the original Cromford Canal Society not protected and restored the canal in the 1970's. Canals are man-made and without intervention will revert to little more than a damp ditch as they are not self-cleansing. So our thanks must go to the group of stalwarts who were first involved in restoring this section of canal.*

*However, on behalf of the Friends of the Cromford Canal and anyone interested in the wider Industrial Archaeology of Derbyshire, I must save the greatest accolade for Derbyshire County Council, without whose immense support none of this would have been possible. Our hope and indeed expectation is that this section of canal might act as an exemplar for what could be achieved along the rest of the canal line in the coming years with the restoration of one of the most famous and historic east-west routes in Derbyshire. Thank You.*

Following the unveiling, Derbyshire County Council had kindly provided coffee and cakes in the Riber Room at Cromford Mill. This gave all concerned an opportunity to discuss the restoration of the canal and particularly the dredging and the trip boat project (and the chance to thaw out!).



Editor



TOP: Patrick Morriss (left) and Councillor Andrew Lewer (right), having completed their speeches, are seen unveiling the Blue Plaque.

RIGHT: Examining the plaque, which is very attractive and some 18 inches in diameter.

BELOW: An assorted collection of members of the Friends of the Cromford Canal eager to see the plaque. Either that or huddling together for warmth!

DCC



DCC





## MATTHEW'S GOSPEL ON CANAL WALKS - No.2

by Matthew Rogers



This is the second in our new series of walks – I hope you got a chance to try the route around Holloway and Wakebridge described in the last issue.

*At this point I should apologise for any confusion which may have been caused by the inadvertent inclusion in last time's walk instructions of some quiz questions on page 26 of Portal 44. In fact these related to the treasure hunt which Matthew had previously arranged which he sent to me in error. You can't get the staff these days! - Ed.*

For this second walk we have moved south to look at some of the 'hidden' sections and an opportunity to combine this with a pie and a pint at 'The George Inn' or 'The Excavator'. If you have any particular favourites that you would like including in future issues please let me know.

This walk starts from 'The George Inn', Lower Hartshay where there is plenty of available parking on the road GR 380 514 and can be followed on OS 1:25,000 Explorer Maps 269 and 259. The route takes in about a 1.5 miles of the canal, views of the Amber Valley, Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, and Heage Windmill. There is some climbing and lots of stiles and when my wife and I trialled it there were some very muddy areas! Note: is not suitable for pushchairs.

Heage Windmill, built in 1797 was restored in 2002 and is a working mill. It is open 11.00-16.00 Weekends and Bank Holidays April to Oct.

More information on [www.heagewindmill.co.uk](http://www.heagewindmill.co.uk) / 01773 853579

### **The map opposite will help you follow the route described. Proceed as follows:**

- Take Bridle Lane opposite 'The George Inn' for 250m and take the signed public footpath left (by the grit bin) to join the line of the canal. After about 100m you will cross another stile and you need to cross the canal to continue on the opposite bank (canal now on left), past the playground.
- At Bridge Farm cross the first stile and then after 15m take stile on right before the buildings and bear left following the boundary. At the field boundary pass through the gap and turn immediately right and continue to a stile in the corner. Straight ahead to large oak tree, through wooden gate keeping hedge on right.
- On reaching 'Knoll Cottage' turn right along track for 30m and take stile on left crossing very small field, 2nd stile and through trees and continue uphill. Take stile in corner of field and continue straight ahead with the hedge on right. On reaching farm cross the stile and bear left staying on the track (farm buildings on your left) and continue on to the B6374.
- Cross straight over taking footpath opposite and after 40m through small gate keeping boundary on right and cross stile in corner of field. Bear slightly left across field keeping oak tree on your right. Pass through gap in the hedge and continue straight ahead aiming for the corner of the field. Pass through 2 gates continuing diagonally left across field to corner. Go through small gate to the left of the field gate and keep boundary on left







- In 200m take footpath on right after 'Barn Cottage' to emerge to views of Heage Windmill. At gate continue straight ahead across the field and cross the small tarmac road. This is the entrance into the Windmill if you wish to visit. Continue straight ahead keeping right with Crich Stand in the distance. After 50m go through the stone squeezer and keep ahead (ignoring path on left). After some trees the path opens out across the field. Ahead is a large stone - ideal spot for a cuppa!

- Keeping the boundary on your left, ignore the track bearing up to the right, and continue for about 70m to stone squeezer on your left. Cut the corner of the field, crossing the ditch on a couple of timber railway sleepers and up to stile in fence. Continue straight ahead past the green dome to a squeezer in the hedge-line and across corner next field to stile passing a large oak tree with a hollow base.

- Climbing slightly aim for gap in field corner, but take stile in gap on right. After 30m, just before 7 bar metal gate, take stile on left and head diagonally down across field joining a path form your left. Take stile in corner of field with buildings ahead and follow enclosed path emerging at 'Waterloo Farm' and 'Lockwood's'.

- Turn right on the access road and as it turns left down to the A610 continue ahead on the left path (to the top of the steps). You are now back on the original line of the canal, although it is envisaged that a small diversion will be required here. Follow the clear path between the houses with the A610 on your left. As the houses end continue ahead and after about 800m you will go through the short Buckland Hollow Tunnel to emerge by 'The Excavator' public house.

- Go through the car park and under the bridge into the rear car park. At the back cross the wooden stile and follow the wide track to the fishing pond. Take the path to the left of the pond, passing under the canal bridge and keep straight ahead with hedge on left. As the hedge finishes bear slightly right, crossing ditch and continue straight ahead just left of the pylon.

- Through wooden gate and along raised wooden path to footpath in front of a short row of houses. Note the old pipe bridge at the road. Turn left on Bridle Lane and retrace your steps back to the start.

## WORLD HERITAGE SITE WALKING FESTIVAL

by Hugh Potter

The first ever walking festival within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site is taking place between 25th May and 2nd June. Not surprisingly, a large number of the 59 walks include the Cromford Canal on at least part of their route, as follows:

Walk 2 on 25th May takes you from Belper to Cromford.

Walk 14 on 27th explores the Crich Mineral railways and the canal around Ambergate.

Walk 18 on 27th goes from Cromford to Leawood.

Walk 29 on 30th explores the Bullbridge area.

Walk 41 on 30th is a historical journey from Ambergate to Cromford.

Walk 43 on 31st looks at Florence Nightingale's connections to the canal.

Walk 47 on 31st follows the canal and Cromford & High Peak Railway.

Walk 51 on 1st June follows the journey of limestone from Crich to Butterley.

Walk 57 on 2nd is from Leawood to Whatstandwell.

Pick up a leaflet locally, or find out more from:  
**[www.derwentvalleymills.org](http://www.derwentvalleymills.org) or 01629 536831**



## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

from Yvonne Shattower



What an exciting time this is for the Members of the Friends of the Cromford Canal. Derbyshire County Council are dredging the canal at Cromford, (take a walk along the canal to see how it is being done), we have been successful in applying for a grant to buy a boat to run passenger trips on the Canal and we have identified a boat which would be ideal for our purpose. How wonderful it will be to see a passenger boat back on the canal, hopefully drawn by a horse at special events.

Whilst we are more than grateful for all the help that we have received from our Members so far, what we need now is YOUR support to make this all come about. Can you help us raise funds for this exciting project? Can you help with the work that will be necessary to get the boat as we want it? Have you got a friend or relative who would like to join us? There will be other articles in this magazine which will also be asking for help, but we really do need YOU to do what you can towards bringing the trip boat back to the Cromford Canal.

The programme of talks at Ironville was disrupted by the weather in January, when our speaker had to cancel the talk on the building of the 'Tornado', the first new steam locomotive to be built for many years, but we will of course, be inviting them back next year when we hope we will be snow free! If you have heard a really interesting speaker whose talk you think would appeal to our members, we would love to hear from you. Our talk given by Gwilym Roberts at The Hayes was a resounding success and it was amazing to see so many people there. We will be back at Ironville Church Hall on 15 April 2013 for our AGM when you will be able to hear a full update of our activities for the last year, and also see one of Hugh Potter's excellent slide shows. We hope to see many of you there.

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

Mr R Vane, Ripley  
Mr D Blackburn, Dronfield  
Mr & Mrs D Green, Swanwick

Mr B Waddingham, Derby  
Mr J Burt, Market Rasen  
Mr R Briggs, Alfreton

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THE CANAL SOCIETY  
**CROMFORD CANAL**  
Opened 1794  
Designed by William Jessop and  
built by Thomas Telford  
It was the first canal designed by  
Telford and built by Jessop  
with the assistance of  
the Duke of Devonshire