

# **THE PORTAL**

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



**NUMBER 52**



**NEW YEAR 2015**

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**FRONT COVER:** Santa in *Birdswood's* cabin, which made an ideal 'grotto'. The range was lit, making the cabin nice and cosy and, as with the rest of the boat, was suitably decorated for the occasion. This included some festive quilted covers on the cabin seats kindly loaned for the occasion by Pat Jacklin, who has offered to make some more and donate them to the boat for next year. Thank you very much Pat. Photo: Nic Barfield

**BACK COVER:** One of the vital items of equipment now carried on *Birdswood* is a plastic shovel. This is seen here being brought into use by Chris Jacklin just before Chelsea sets off on another trip with *Birdswood* at the Discovery Days Event in November. What must the average canal towpath have been like when dozens of horsedrawn boats passed by every day? Photo: Hugh Potter

## The aims and objectives of the Friends of the Cromford Canal

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



## EDITORIAL

from Mike Harrison



Welcome to The Portal No. 52

Again we are at the start of another new year, and it promises to be a very interesting one on the Cromford Canal. The big success of our trip boat *Birdswood* in 2014 has been very pleasing to all of us, and we look forward to the new passenger carrying season. I have to admit that I was worried at one stage whether I had done the right thing in mentioning *Birdswood* to the FCC committee in 2012 when I first learnt that the boat was for sale, and there is no doubt that there have been, and indeed still are, many problems to be overcome, but I now think that it was the right decision. The profit from the boat will all be used, together with that from the FCC sales department and any other income from grants or sponsorship etc to work towards achieving the main FCC goal which is to restore the canal to navigation.

More volunteers will always be needed for all aspects of the FCC activities, and I urge you all to consider coming forward. Nic Barfield has written on this subject on pages 22-23 to suggest ideas about how **you** can help.

Talking about volunteering, our webmaster George Rogers has recently achieved international recognition! George is the 149th winner of the new Points of Light Award which has been developed in partnership with the hugely successful Points of Light programme in the USA. Over 5,000 US Points of Light have been awarded and both President George H.W. Bush and President Barack Obama have publicly supported the partnership with Points of Light UK which honours shining examples of volunteering across the country. Over the past five years, George has volunteered on over forty week-long Waterway Recovery Group Canal Camps, as a volunteer, assistant, cook and leader. He has also helped plan major canal restoration work on several projects from the Cromford Canal to the Swansea Canal. Prime Minister, David Cameron said "Through his work, George is helping to safeguard the heritage and culture of Britain's canals for future generations, which is of great importance. He truly deserves this Points of Light award."

Finally, I must mention the very pleasing increase in work party activity, including the adoption by the FCC of two lengths of the canal. John Barker has really brought this on in recent weeks and is doing a great job. See pages 19,20 and 21.

**Stop Press** - Members will remember that the last *Portal* included a book of tickets for the Inland Waterways Association Waterways Restoration Raffle. Helped by our members selling the tickets and our treasurer Bob Bullock and his wife and son who stamped the FCC name on all of them, the FCC sold more tickets than any other canal society! This has resulted in us receiving a cheque for £1200 from the IWA. Also, John Dyson, one of John Barker's work party volunteers, has won 10th prize. Well done all!

**The press date for the Spring 2015 issue will be April 17th.**



## ACTING CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by John Baylis BEM



First of all I would like to wish all our members and readers a belated Happy New Year. Secondly, I want to welcome Vix Wilding who has become our first part time employee as Boat Operations manager. Living in the Cromford area she will be very well placed to keep a close eye on *Birdswood*. When the Friends received the Rural Development Programme for England grant of nearly £27,000 from Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) towards the purchase of *Birdswood*, one of its requirements was that operation of the boat would generate employment in the area. This post is the first part of meeting Defra's aims with the RDPE and we hope that Vix and the volunteers will continue with the successful operation of the trip boat. In setting up this post we are grateful for the help from Community Accounting Plus which will be covering such items as Pay Roll, National Insurance etc. for the Friends of the Cromford Canal.

In previous issues of *Portal* I have reported that the Trustees were trying to change the charity into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation rather than going down the old road of becoming a Limited Company. The CIO Constitution for submission is based on the Charity Commission draft and is available on our Website or in written form from the Executive Secretary. I hope that everyone attending the AGM will have read the draft and raised any questions with me or the Trustees before the meeting. We were hoping to make the change without changing our banking arrangements; but our current bank has now decided that we would need to set up new accounts and new membership payment arrangements.

We have been asked by members at recent annual general meetings why the FCC isn't getting much interest on its accounts. The Trustees decided that if we must change accounts, let us also change to a bank which pays interest. To that end we are looking at setting up a new account with the Charities Aid Foundation. In that case we can set up a CAF deposit account with the transfer of some of the present balance, and then apply to the Charity Commission for the change to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. When this is completed we can hopefully start revising the membership payments later in 2015.

We have held Special General Meetings, at the members meeting in October and November, which agreed that we could apply to the Charity Commission to change the number of members which constitute a quorum at General Meetings from 10% of the membership to 5% of the membership; this change has now been approved by the Charity Commission. The Minutes of these meetings are on the Web Site or are available from myself in print form.

We have received several generous donations towards equipment for working parties and *Birdswood*; in addition to thanking the donors I must also thank Matt Rogers and John Barker for finalising the arrangements. As a Director of Waterway Recovery Group, in addition to my responsibilities on the Cromford Canal, I must also congratulate George Rogers on his award from the Prime Minister for work on several major canal projects. Well done George.

**Please don't forget the AGM on April 20th.**



# WELCOME ON BOARD VIX!



*Many FCC members will have already met Vix Wilding, who has ably taken charge of the running of Birdswood during 2014 following Mike Kelley sadly having to step back from his commitment to the FCC due to his wife's disability.*

*It has always been a requirement of the grant which was received from DEFRA towards the purchase of Birdswood that the FCC would take on either one full time or two part time employees to run the operation with the considerable support of volunteers. When the time came that the boat trips were sufficiently established to appoint our first paid*



employee, Mike Kelley, with the full support of the FCC committee, felt that Vix was the person for this important job. I am therefore very pleased to say that Vix has enthusiastically accepted and I have asked her to write the following piece to introduce herself - Ed.

## MY FCC JOURNEY...SO FAR!

by Vix Wilding

I was indirectly introduced to the FCC when my children were invited on a Christmas trip on *Birdswood* in December 2013. They came home rambling about songs and Santa and then later we saw the photo in the paper! I must admit, I was unaware that *Birdswood* was a public trip boat, more an attraction for invited persons only.

Having moved to Cromford with my husband Chris and four children earlier on that year, I was looking for something to occupy my time whilst the children attended the local schools. As a family we have always volunteered in our local communities and believe that 'life is what you make of it'. The good old social media site Facebook made me aware of a meeting for potential volunteer crew members. Just one day a month it said.....I'd been a full time stay at home mum for 16 years at this point and having enjoyed every minute of it I felt that the layers on my hips needed shifting...☺

So off I went on February 2nd, not even sure I would like a narrow boat.....Oh, little did I know! I met some lovely people and listened to some interesting tales and stories, so when Mike Kelley approached me, asking if I would like to join the group I dutifully signed on the dotted line. I'm not one to shirk from a little hard work and soon got stuck in with simple maintenance and cleaning tasks. I increasingly found myself wanting to know and understand more about the charity I was working for. Many questions were asked and I'm sure my name was cursed some evenings as people checked their email boxes only to see my name blinking back at them, AGAIN. By the end of March the public trips had commenced and Cromford Wharf felt like an old friend.

I was able to take on more and more responsibilities and the committee came to know and understand me. One of the most challenging tasks was the crew rota. Trying to balance 35 very different people and a trip schedule had me baffled many a time. As the season developed so did I and my role expanded. By the peak of the summer I was liaising with Committee Members, Trustees, the Public, other Team Members and some Partners within the canal structure. I had been asked to join the Boat Committee where a few of the volunteers sat and discussed the next move for *Birdswood*. The Public trips were running fairly smoothly and it was decided to expand on our service. Halloween came and the boat was decorated throughout and people came dressed for the occasion. We had red 'blood' cakes and drank a witch's brew whilst listening to spooky music. We all had fun attempting a pass the parcel, where each child received a glow stick to keep. We even treated everyone to chocolate eyeballs.

Off the success of this the Boat Committee planned our Santa Specials along the same basis. We had the pleasure of Santa and his elf helper. David and Gill Hirst made a jolly team and brought plenty of Christmas spirit with them. This rounded off our first season very nicely and with that I was happy.

With the boat taking a well-earned rest and the rest of the team enjoying their own Christmas festivities, I moved house and started on the future planning for 2015 - my first season as Operations Manager.

I do hope you will all pop to Cromford Wharf to make yourself known to me. Without your continued support I would not be in the most amazing job ever. xxx



# SANTA VISITS THE CROMFORD

by Nic Barfield



Nic Barfield

The end of *Birdswood's* successful first season was marked by a busy programme of Christmas cruises, which took place on the three Sundays running up to the holiday break. The Santa Specials attracted over three hundred customers who enjoyed one-hour trips on the festively bedecked boat with at-seat service of seasonal refreshments. We even got everyone singing along to carols and Christmas songs!

Naturally the big draw was The Man in Red who sat snugly in scarlet splendour in the back cabin, with a gift for every child in his sack. The carefully selected presents were illustrated story books from the 'Muddy Waters' series, and many children were clamouring to have the stories read to them even before their trips had finished.

When the special event programme was at the planning stage, we cautiously estimated that it might attract two hundred people. Before starting to advertise the Santa Specials in October, we set ticket prices at a level that we hoped was both affordable and competitive with similar local attractions such as preservation railways. By the end of November it was clear that bookings were even healthier than projected, and we were glad we had decided to run three trips each day. This proved to be a fairly hectic schedule for the crew but a very efficient one that allowed us to meet demand 50 per cent higher than anticipated.

The logistics of the operation were interesting. It was the *Birdswood* team's first real experience of mass catering within a tight time window, and we learned useful lessons about serving food and drink quickly and smoothly to a full boat. Surprisingly large quantities of cake, mince pies, stollen, biscuits and chocolate were consumed, together



with hot drinks and apfel glühwein - a type of German mulled apple drink. Several passengers remarked favourably on the generous feast, saying it was excellent value and offered lots of variety.

Overall customer feedback was most gratifying, and it looks as if we'll be seeing some of this Christmas's customers again in December 2015. Perhaps the most encouraging comment was that the trip "exceeded all expectations". There were smiling faces all round, with the crews enjoying the trips as much as our passengers despite all the hard graft. And besides spreading lots of seasonal goodwill, the FCC finished the year with a very useful boost to its finances from ticket sales along with over £200 in donations from happy customers.

Many thanks to everyone involved, from FCC members who booked trips with their children or grandchildren or who simply spread the word, to the *Birdswood* team who decorated the boat, steered it, sold tickets, crewed, served refreshments and led the singing. And special thanks to David Hirst and his Chief Elf, Gill, for... (well, let's not spoil Santa's secret!)

Here's hoping we'll bring even more joy to the world in 2015!

## THE BIRDSWOOD HALLOWEEN EXPERIENCE

by the Editor

As Vix mentions in her report on pages 4 and 5, another of the special events on *Birdswood* last year was the Halloween party. Vix and her team put a lot of effort into dressing up both the boat and themselves suitably for the occasion. See the rather frightening pictures below. The whole thing was another great success.







## BIRDSWOOD REVIEW

from Mike Kelley



It was a big decision, which carried with it a large work load. Now though we can look back and say we did the right thing. It required a full scale assault on our energies and finances, but it paid off. From mid March to the end of November 2014 our trip boat *Birdswood* ran from between three and six days per week, each week. Then in December, we ran the Santa Specials each Sunday. In total we carried 5,152 passengers in this our first full year of operation.

This could not have been done without the dedication shown from our helpers and committees. Without these lovely people there would be no trip boat on the Cromford Canal. People have given their time freely; firstly to restore the boat to a standard acceptable to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA); then the training of the boat masters and crew; followed by the regular running of these very popular trips.

Some days the rain just poured down, getting the crew wet and the master at the tiller very wet; whilst carrying only three or four passengers. Other days were sheer magic, with dappled sunlight filtering through the trees and a full boat load.

We still have our problems, and let's face it no project is ever without its problems. The water is still rather shallow, especially at the southern winding hole near the Pump House; we still need more crew, so a few do not carry all the load. Why not volunteer even just for one day a month? Then there is the restrictive demands of the MCA, which in themselves are very expensive. They make no allowance for charities and charge us the full rates, as they would for cross-channel ferries and the like. (Don't laugh!) We are discussing things with them at the moment, for soon we have to lift the boat out so their inspectors can get underneath, which is all well and good for heavy ferries grinding into concrete loading bays, but not for a canal boat with little or no underwater obstructions other than pond weed and mud! Also we have no dry dock, so to inspect her bottom (not you madam), we have to hire an expensive crane to lift her out and relaunch afterwards.

However, we do now have our first part-time 'employed' person, Vix Wilding, and she has been a great asset to us throughout the year. As you may know I have had to cut back on my own involvement with the boat and FCC due to my wife's serious illness, as she now needs 24 hour care; so Vix came along at the right time and has run things exceedingly well. Thank you Vix.

So if you would like to celebrate a birthday, wedding, retirement or anniversary why not book *Birdswood*? Or if you are a member of a group, then book your group to take an outing for the day on *Birdswood*. Keep cruising.

*I would like to add my thanks to Mike for all the work he has done for the FCC, particularly in helping to get the Birdswood project up and running, and I am sure I speak for all the FCC committee and Birdswood crew in sending his wife Val our best wishes at this difficult time - Ed.*



# A WORD FOR OUR SPONSORS

by John Guyler, Sponsorship & Grants Officer

It is with great pride and gratitude that the FCC is able to announce that three generous sponsors have given valuable assistance to our projects.

We had realised for some time that our work parties along the Cromford Canal were not readily identifiable as FCC volunteers and that we lacked all-weather gear for them. **AMBER VALLEY ROTARY CLUB** were approached and they generously raised a considerable sum to purchase 14 'hi-viz' yellow work vests and eight pairs of 'railway orange' waterproof over-trousers. These were a very useful gift to the FCC which we received in January. The vests have the FCC logo and the AVRC logo on the back, with the word VOLUNTEER displayed prominently. AVRC also bought us four vests for *Birdswood* crew volunteers; these are 'paramedic green' (which is close to *Birdswood* crew colours) with the same logos and CREW printed on. All items were supplied and printed by Fitzmark Promotions of Hilltop, Eastwood.

An official handover of the new work wear is scheduled for late January, so photos and a write-up will appear in the next edition of *The Portal*. However we're hoping the sponsorship story will be covered in the local press. If you see it, please email scans of press cuttings to FCC archivist Hugh Potter, or post them on the Friends of the Cromford Canal page on Facebook. To my mind the word 'volunteer' is important because it emphasises the nature of the make-up of the all the different groups within the FCC. Now we can demonstrate to everyone - whether passengers on the boat or walkers on the towpath - that we are a group of individuals who do these jobs because we like to do them. If you would like to try on one of the new outfits, either on one of our work parties or crewing on *Birdswood*, just contact work party organiser John Barker or Vix Wilding, our new Boat Operations Manager.

**THE DEB GROUP** at Denby have donated three large anti-bacterial fluid dispensing kits for use on *Birdswood*. These comprise wall fittings and hand fluid dispensers, and will be fitted in the boat's toilet, galley and cabin for both crew and passengers' use.

*Birdswood's* upcoming 2015 trip season will feature a wider-reaching schools programme, which is being developed by ex-teachers Marie Keane, Pat Mangwana and Jane Molloy. To assist them in the production of learning materials aimed at primary school children, the **ERNEST H BAILEY FUND** has donated £75. Their successful application to this long-running charity, which is administered by Derbyshire Dales District Council and helps to fund local educational and community projects, means that FCC does not have to bear the full cost of marketing and resourcing the schools programme.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the Trustees of the Ernest H Bailey Fund, the DEB Group and the Amber Valley Rotary Club for their very generous support. Their contributions are just the first fruits of our sponsorship drive, and I hope to be able to announce further success stories in future editions of *The Portal*.

*I would like to add my thanks not only to our sponsors, but also to John Guyler for his very successful work in obtaining these generous donations. This is the kind of thing which can make a great deal of difference to charitable organisations like the FCC and John has done very well in the short time that he has been making approaches to possible sponsors. Well done John, we look forward to your continuing success! - Ed.*



# NEWS FROM THE NORTH

## Cromford Canal - Cromford to Ambergate Update - Autumn 2014

from Patrick Mountain - Countryside Ranger  
Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service

Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service is responsible for the management and maintenance of the Cromford to Ambergate section of the canal. This season on the canal has been particularly busy with a multitude of activities and works been undertaken.

### **Volunteer Work Parties**

The Friends' regular practical work parties are continuing to take place fortnightly on Tuesdays. The main tasks have included vegetation clearance; clay bag filling for bank repairs as well as channel maintenance and silt trap management. If you feel that you could offer assistance maintaining and improving the canal please contact the Countryside Service or John Barker, the FCC work party organiser. DCC appreciates the volunteer efforts of FCC and Waterways Recovery Group and has been able to support the residential work parties by providing the Wharf Shed residential centre near High Peak Junction as a base without a charge. There is a volunteer event on March 31st 11am till 4 pm. on the lawn adjacent to the picnic area at Cromford wharf. The WRG volunteers worked to repair a leak in September near Whatstandwell and reconstructed the Leawood spillway in November. FCC and the Amber Valley Conservation Volunteers from the Parkwood Day Centre continued with the on-going job to rebuild sections of the canal bank that have been eroded by dogs entering and leaving the canal.

### **Tree Felling**

Under a Forestry Commission felling licence and Conservation Area consents tree management to the south of Leashaw Farm and near Thurlowbooth Farm, Whatstandwell has been undertaken with removal of a proportion of the overhanging and/or dangerous trees to allow more light onto the water to improve its biodiversity. The fallen timber is either stacked into habitat piles for invertebrates, amphibian, reptile & small mammal shelter or utilised for domestic heating thereby reducing use of fossil fuels.

### **Leak Repairs**

An attempt was made to seal a major leak half way between Cromford Wharf and High Peak Junction. Water appears to be leaking from the canal over a long section through the stone walling. A deep trench was dug in the towpath parallel with the coping; this trench was then back filled with puddle clay. Unfortunately this has had limited effect when levels are high but when canal levels are low the flow reduces.

A significant leak at the Whatstandwell tunnel was sealed as well as another at Robin Hood. Further leaks at Cromford Meadows, Sims bridge, Derwentside and the two aqueducts are being monitored weekly and solutions tried. Watch this space for the next episode of leak repairs.

### **High Peak Junction Workshops**

High Peak Junction workshops are amongst the oldest railway workshops in the world and the visitor centre is open every weekend & bank holiday through the autumn and winter. If you have never experienced the excellent audio tour that is available at the visitor centre, then I can thoroughly recommend that you do as it really brings the history and heritage of the site alive.



## Towpath Improvements

The section of towpath from Cromford Wharf to Lawn Bridge (opposite Cromford Meadows Rugby Club) and the section from High Peak Junction Swing Bridge past Leawood Pump towards Aqueduct Cottage was resurfaced in November. Although there was an official closure notice in place, we were able to allow public access on the completed sections wherever it was possible and safe for most of the closure period.

During the work to resurface the towpath at Cromford Wharf, a leak became apparent above the picnic area. A 3m section of canal wharf needed rebuilding and some stones needed retrieving from the canal bed. The walling work was under water so to affect a speedy and high quality repair it was necessary to significantly lower the canal level for 24hrs. The leak repair was completed, stones retrieved and historic wharf rebuilt and canal level restored in time for the arrival of Santa for his trip on *Birdswood*. See photo below.



## Wildlife on the Canal

Dabchicks and tufted ducks seemed to have a successful season last year with a good number of young birds making it through the winter. The swans that bred on the canal for the second season managed to raise two cygnets to being fully fledged but then rejected them. One cygnet disappeared and the other was taken to a rescue centre. Water voles have not been showing well through the autumn/winter so any reports of sightings would be welcome. Minks have not been reported on the canal but we remain vigilant.

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



## DISCOVERY DAYS 2014

A report by our Archivist Hugh Potter, who again acted as co-ordinator of the FCC's part in this annual event.

The Cromford Canal between Cromford and Ambergate is the longest length of canal in England to be designated as part of a World Heritage Site (WHS). The Derwent Valley WHS stretches from Matlock Bath to Derby, in recognition of the part played by water power in the development of the factory system, pioneered by Richard Arkwright, who for many years also acted as chairman at the Cromford Canal Company committee meetings.

Each year at the end of the autumn half-term, a celebration of the WHS is held in the form of Discovery Days in which FCC plays a major role in organising events based around Cromford Wharf. This year gave us the driest, sunniest weekend we had ever had on the first weekend of November, and the crowds turned out in force to support us.

Waterway Images



An assorted group of folk who all helped to make this event another FCC success. L-R: Mike Kelley, *Birdswood* Master on the day; David Coleman, High Sheriff of Derbyshire; Corrine and Lance Rose of Arraslea Shires, operators of the boat horse Chelsea whose first full season pulling *Birdswood* has been a big success; Hugh Potter, FCC Archivist and Discovery Days co-ordinator who did a great job in marshalling the troops; Mike Harrison, Editor of this magazine and general dogsbody; and the FCC Sales Team of Val Roberts and Eric and Beryl Singleton.

As well as the FCC sales stand and tombola in the Gothic Warehouse, there was a historical slide show which proved as popular as ever, watercolour paintings by Wallace Spence, and Jes and Lin Inglis were demonstrating traditional 'Rose & Castle' painting and peg loom weaving.



Outside, the Wild Over Waterways marquee attracted the younger generation to try their hand at various activities such as lace plate painting and bridge building. Around the site a number of miniature traction engines entertained the public and offered rides, whilst on the water the Nottingham Model Boat Club put on their usual excellent display with a variety of craft both traditional and more unusual (both Henry the Hoover and the floating Dalek proved a delight for children of all ages!).



Hugh Potter

ABOVE: A young visitor tries his hand at bridge building in the IWA Wild Over Waterways marquee. BELOW: The unseasonably fine weather brought out droves of visitors walking the towpath.



Hugh Potter



Hugh Potter



Lewood pump was also in steam, which together with the displays put on by Derbyshire Countryside Service at High Peak Junction Workshops, see above, attracted people to walk down the towpath, or even better to take a ride down there on *Birdswood*, pulled for this special occasion by Chelsea from our friends at Arraslea Shires. At the end of the first trip on the Saturday, the High Sheriff of Derbyshire, David Coleman, made a special presentation to Lance and Corrine of Arraslea Shires, as shown below.

Over £1,100 was raised, including *Birdswood* trips, over the weekend thanks to something over 640 volunteer hours put in by the stalwart team of volunteers who make this event such a success every year, to whom the FCC offers a huge vote of thanks.

Editor





# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Notice is hereby given that the  
Thirteenth Annual General Meeting  
of the Friends of the Cromford Canal will be held on  
Monday, April 20th. 2015  
at the Church Hall, Ironville, commencing at 7.30pm.**

## AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Twelfth Annual General Meeting held on Monday, April 28th. 2014.
3. Matters arising.
4. Report of the Chairman.
5. Report of the Treasurer and presentation of the accounts for 2014.
6. Adoption of the accounts.
7. Election of Trustees. See Note 1 below
8. Approval of application to change to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. See Note 2 below
9. Reports by Officers
10. Any other business.

Minutes of the twelfth AGM are reproduced on pages 16 - 18.

Please bring this *Portal* to the meeting as further copies will not be available.

The accounts for the year ending December 31st. 2014 will be available at the meeting.

Note 1. The Friends of the Cromford Canal is managed by up to eleven Trustees assisted by a number of other members with about 12 meetings a year. The Trustees are responsible to the Charity Commission for the organisation of the Friends and reports are sent to the Commission each year. The Trustees are elected for a three year term of office, this year John Baylis, Robert Bullock and Eric Singleton retire by rotation and are willing to stand for a further term. Ian Hooker was co-opted as a Trustee during the year and now seeks election for a full term. Nominations for these persons and any further nominations for election as Trustees must be submitted in writing before April 6th to:

**John Baylis, 215 Clipstone Avenue West, Forest Town, Mansfield, Notts. NG19 0HJ  
Tel. 01623 621208**

The nomination must be signed by the proposer, the seconder and the nominee who must all be FCC members.

Note 2. This is to approve the submission to the Charity Commission for changing the Friends of the Cromford Canal to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

The draft constitution is available on the FCC Web site or in written form from the Executive Secretary.

**Thanks to Matt Rogers of the FCC Engineering Team, after the official business, Nottingham Trent University Engineering Students will be presenting the two projects they have completed around Codnor Park Reservoir and Ironville. It will be interesting to hear their ideas to overcome the difficulties of restoring a navigable canal in this area.**

John Baylis BEM





## Minutes of the Twelfth Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Cromford Canal (FCC)

held at 7.30pm on Monday, April 28th 2014, at the Church Hall, Ironville.

### Present

Committee: Matthew Rogers(Chairman), John Barker, John Baylis, Judy Berry, Bob Bullock, Mike Kelley, Yvonne Shattower, Chris Jacklin, Eric Singleton (Trustees), John Boucher (Honorary Consulting Engineer), George Rogers, Hugh Potter, Beryl Singleton and Howard Smith. There were 47 other Members and 11 visitors.

### 1. Apologies for absence

Mike Harrison, Val Roberts, The Rev Steve Parish, George Rogers (committee members), Nic Barfield, Allan Hickling, Sue Johnson, Val Kelley, Brian Naylor, Sheila Smith, Celia and Peter Straw,

### 2. Minutes of the previous AGM

The minutes of the Eleventh Annual General Meeting held on April 15th 2013 had been circulated. Their adoption was proposed by John Barker, seconded by Jo Williams and carried unanimously.

### 3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

### 4. Report of the Chairman

Matthew Rogers advised members that over the past year the FCC had focussed largely on *Birdswood* from preparation and renovation to her launch on the 27th July and the official opening on 3rd November by Juilan Richards, the FCC's patron. The boat had raised tremendous interest and the FCC had welcomed a number of new members who had joined as Boat Masters or Crew. Matthew Rogers thanked everyone who helped make a success of *Birdswood* and, at the end of the meeting, was pleased to announce the 1,000th passenger. A special vote of thanks was made to Mike Kelley for his role as Project Manager.

The Cromford Canal Partnership continued to meet quarterly and is represented by Derbyshire County Council (DCC), Amber Valley Borough Council, Bolsover District Council, Erewash Canal Preservation and Development Association, Canal & River Trust, Inland Waterways Association, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT), Natural England and the FCC. Through Susan White, the Derbyshire Waterways Officer, a Strategy Document had been drawn up for the DCC owned stretches of the canal to, hopefully, attract future funding. Her contract originally ran for two years but had been extended to April 2015.

The FCC had worked with DWT on an Interpretation Project between Cromford Wharf and High Peak Junction. A number of 'QR' (Quick Response) codes lead visitors to an audio file giving information about the history of the canal, the natural environment and wildlife.

The FCC is represented on the Codnor Park to Jacksdale bridge replacement project to ensure future canal restoration is not compromised but also to contribute to the design.

Nottingham Trent University (NTU) final year civil engineering students had carried out a study of the Bullbridge to Sawmills section to take a holistic view of restoration. At the end of the AGM Paul Beetham, lecturer at NTU, presented a number of the students' studies.

The Waterway Recovery Group had again worked along sections of the canal in 2013 primarily at Sawmills where tree clearance, continuing work on the narrows and footpath restoration had been undertaken.

The FCC had undertaken further dredging work around High Peak Junction clearing reeds and rocks to permit the passage of *Birdswood* through to the winding hole. Collins Earthworks had assisted, providing free hire of an excavator and telehandler to clear part of the winding hole whilst Belper Sub-Aqua club had carried out localised dives to remove large rocks.



Working alongside the DCC, the FCC work parties had carried out a lot of tree and shrub clearance along the DCC owned section and had cleared a number of silt traps to support the trip boat operation.

Matthew Rogers provided a summary of changes in the way the FCC is administered by giving an overview of the various committees in operation including the FCC (general administration), boat, engineering and then small groups set up for special events and sales.

Matthew Rogers offered his thanks to everyone for their continued help and support.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

The end of year balance was £21,817.19, the income for the year being £75,957.13 and the total expenditure £99,567.96. The trip boat *Birdswood* had accounted for £76,382.55 of the expenditure.

In response to questions from the floor, Bob Bullock explained that Community Accounting Plus was to be approached to determine ways in which the *Birdswood* accounts could be recorded separately showing not only income and expenditure but projected depreciation of the boat. Matthew Rogers also explained that the Boat Committee was required to account for all its boat related income and expenditure.

Bob Bullock thanked all volunteers who had spent many, many hours preparing and getting *Birdswood* onto the water and the volunteers who were now crewing her.

Bob Bullock also thanked David Fox for auditing the accounts.

## **6. Adoption of the Accounts**

The adoption of the accounts was proposed by Matthew Rogers, seconded by Pat Morriss and carried unanimously.

## **7. Election of Trustees**

Two Trustees had retired and were nominated for election and two Trustees had retired for personal reasons. There were three nominees: Chris Jacklin, Yvonne Shattower and Pat Morriss. There was a request from a member that each should be voted for separately and not en bloc. Chris Jacklin had been proposed by Matthew Rogers, seconded by John Barker, this was carried unanimously. Yvonne Shattower had been proposed by John Baylis, seconded by Bob Bullock, this was carried unanimously. Pat Morriss had been proposed by Steve Johnson, seconded by Judy Berry, this was carried by a majority of forty five to one with five abstentions.

## **8. Charitable Incorporated Organisation**

John Baylis advised members that, traditionally, a charitable organisation such as the FCC would become a company limited by guarantee following a major purchase such as *Birdswood*. Alternatively, it could remain an unincorporated organisation but this would provide no liability cover. The Charities Act 2012 has provided an alternative, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO); this option is favoured by the FCC Trustees. Although this might mean the FCC has to change its charity number, it is believed it can retain its current name and banking arrangements. John Baylis advised that in order to become a CIO the FCC constitution will need to be altered; however, the standard Charity Commission CIO constitution is being used as a basis. There were several questions from the floor regarding email, postal and proxy voting and numbers required for a quorum. John Baylis assured the meeting that it would require an Extraordinary General Meeting for the FCC to become a CIO and that members should carefully read the draft constitution when circulated. In order that it could be written into the draft constitution, limited liability in the event of the termination or winding up of the FCC was voted upon. After some discussion a limited liability of £5 per member was unanimously agreed.

## **9. Reports by Officers a) Membership Report**

Yvonne Shattower reported another increase in the membership from 882 in 2012 year to 924 in 2013. This included 150 Life Members, an increase of 18. The FCC also has 2 Corporate Business Members and 6 Corporate Charity Members.



During the year member number 1500 was enrolled. Over the last ten years many members had not renewed their membership and during the last year some *Portal* magazines had been returned by Royal Mail marked 'gone away'. Yvonne repeated her plea for members to advise her of any change in contact details including email addresses.

Most of the problems experienced with the standing order payments when the subscription price was increased had been resolved, but there were still some members who had not yet increased their payments and these were being followed up. Yvonne thanked all those members who deliver the *Portal* on behalf of the FCC and thanked Joan Greaves who so ably provides the tea and coffee during the FCC social meetings.

#### **b) Archive Report**

Hugh Potter reported that it been another busy year for the Archives with many new documents, photographs and magazines being loaned or donated some of which had appeared in the *Portal*. More would be shown at the Gothic Warehouse for Celebrating Cromford Weekend (21st - 22nd June), the Scarecrow Weekend (2nd - 3rd August) and the World Heritage Site Discovery Days on 1st - 2nd November and at the Pots and Pix weekend at Ambergate.

Hugh had assisted with the audio interpretation project and with the DerwentWISE project providing background information to Aqueduct Cottage at Leawood with a view to planning for its future. The Butterley Gangroad project proved that the Cromford Canal has another 'first' - the world's first railway tunnel as confirmed by the Guinness Book of Records.

Hugh reported that the boat permit list currently stood at over 32,000 due entirely to work by June Crump who Hugh Potter thanked.

Hugh had been given long-awaited access to an attic full of material rescued from British Waterways offices etc and had photographed 1,400 documents relating to work on the canal in the mid 20th century. Hugh asked for volunteer transcribers.

An old model narrow boat had been donated to the FCC which Chris Jacklin had taken for refurbishment.

#### **c) Webmaster Report**

George Rogers reported the website had been routinely updated and now had a *Birdswood* section. He had received three offers of help to undertake the routine updates - from Hugh Potter, Nic Barfield and Neil Carnby. During the year the possibility had been looked into of the *Portal* being distributed electronically to those members who wished to receive it that way. George Rogers is a member of the Waterway Recovery Group and took the opportunity to thank the group and work party volunteers for their work on the Cromford Canal and its towpath.

#### **d) Sales report**

Eric Singleton reported on a better year than might have been expected. The sales team attended the IWA Festival in 2013 as well as the Crich Festival and the Chesterfield Canal Trust Festival. This year there would be a new event, a garden party in Shardlow hosted by one of our members. Eric thanked everyone for their support and the sales team was, in turn, thanked by Matthew Rogers.

Jack Brown MBE thanked all officers for their work during the year. This was applauded by all.

### **10. Any Other Business**

A number of issues were raised from the floor regarding the restoration of Butterley Tunnel, the Butterley works and the restoration of Newlands Inn. Members were assured that Steve Parish, who monitors local authority planning, was aware of all the current issues. Bob Bullock requested members contact Steve Parish or Matthew Rogers should other issues arise.

The meeting closed at 20.45 hours



# WORK PARTY REPORT

by John Barker - Photos by John Guyler

Derbyshire County Councillor Steve Marshall Clarke has allocated a grant of £200 to the FCC towards the costs associated with equipment to assist with the work at Ironville from the Members Community Leadership Fund. This cheque has now been received and has been spent on loppers and bow saws which are now in use. The adoption of the length of canal from Codnor Park Reservoir to Lock 4 was completed on the 5th November 2014. The work to clear the undergrowth has now started and I am pleased to say that Lock 4 is just about clear. We have had a lot of support from the people of Ironville and surrounding villages and with our own work parties we must have clocked up some 400 hours.

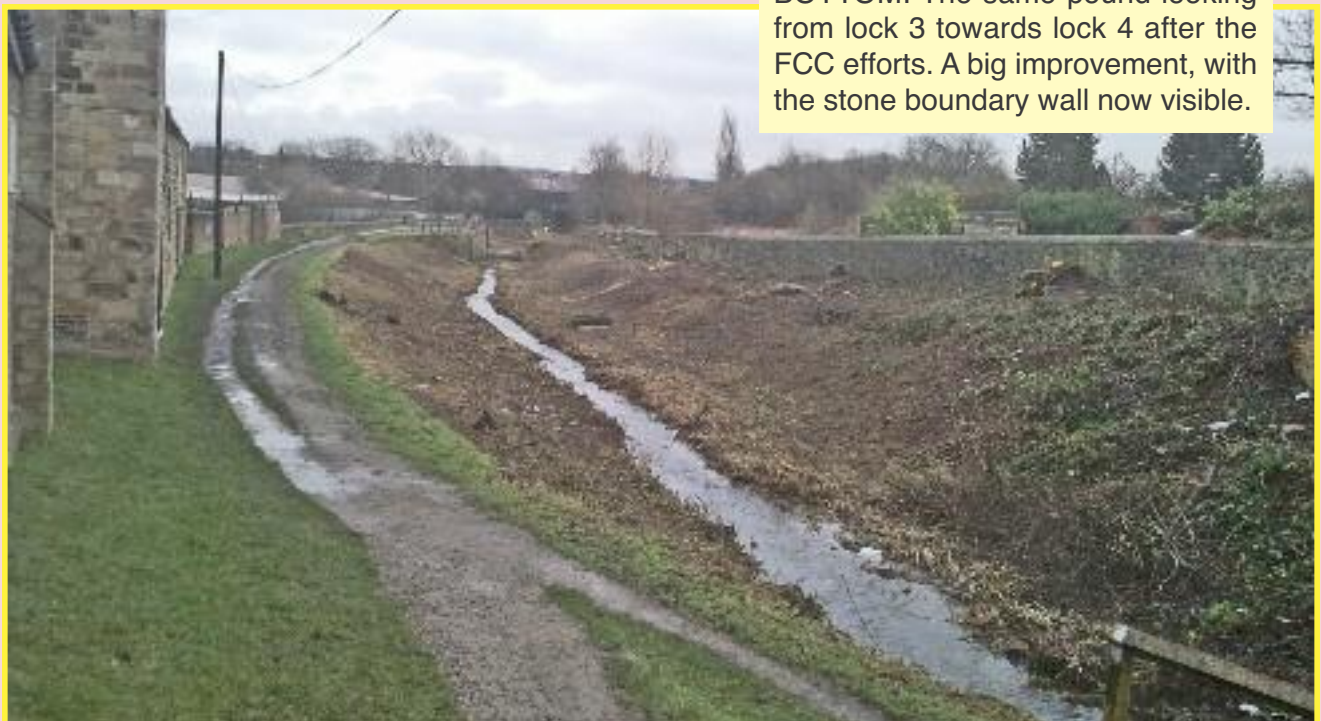
With the success at Ironville, Canal & River Trust have asked us to adopt another stretch at Lower Hartshay which is from the A610 to Hartshay Hill. This piece of canal is about 290 metres long and the adoption took place on the 20th December 2014.

These adoptions are most important to the FCC to move the restoration forward. We now also have work parties at Cromford which is our commitment to DCC for the continued success of *Birdswood*.

Our work parties are now at full stretch and we would welcome new members.



TOP: Looking up the pound between locks 4 and 3, severely overgrown, especially on the offside.



BOTTOM: The same pound looking from lock 3 towards lock 4 after the FCC efforts. A big improvement, with the stone boundary wall now visible.



*As many members will be aware, the majority of the inland waterways of England and Wales, following nationalisation in 1948, were until recently under the ownership of British Waterways. This organisation has now fundamentally changed from being a nationalised industry to a charity - the Canal & River Trust (CRT). The object of this change was to try to give the waterway system a better future by providing a better system of funding, but it also means that the CRT now rely much more on volunteers.*

*One of the schemes which CRT have introduced is to encourage local Canal Societies to adopt and look after short lengths of canal in their area. As mentioned briefly in the last issue of The Portal, the FCC, led by Work Party Organiser John Barker, have now become involved in this scheme. The following CRT press release gives more details:*

13 November 2014

## **FRIENDS OF CROMFORD CANAL ADOPT WATERWAY**

The Friends of Cromford Canal group have joined the Canal & River Trust's 'adopt a canal' initiative and are hoping to bring the canal back to its former glory – and are calling on the local community to back their quest.

The group, which originally formed in 2002, have adopted the section between Codnor Park Reservoir and the Railway Bridge (bridge 9) which includes three locks, three bridges and the towpath.

Whilst the Trust still owns part of the canal, the whole of the Cromford Canal, except for a half-mile stretch at the southern end, was officially abandoned in 1944. Following this, most of the southern section of the canal was filled in through to the Butterley Tunnel and was mostly left untouched. It slowly but surely became weeded over and hidden by undergrowth.

Communities across England & Wales are invited to adopt mile-long lengths of canal or river and help transform some of the Trust's 2,000 miles of waterways. Over 70 groups have now joined the scheme in a bid to improve canals and rivers up and down the country and the Friends of Cromford Canal are inviting others in the local community to join their long term aim of seeing the canal fully back in water.

John Barker, group leader, said: "We're a small yet dedicated group but we have big ambitions. We'd love more people





to join us from the local community and help us restore this amazing canal back to its glory days. We're starting with small things like litter picking, getting rid of dog mess and cutting back overgrown vegetation from the towpath to make it more enjoyable for people to visit.

"We're hoping to get more people interested in visiting and supporting their local canal which brings so many benefits to people. It's a relaxing place to visit and the history and ecology it offers are fascinating, so it's sad to see it abandoned. I think it would be incredible to say that we played a small part in restoring this canal but we can't do it alone."

At a hands-on level the Trust will work with the group to understand what needs to be done, whether it's to record and improve wildlife habitats, maintain towpaths, help fundraise, run educational events or help combat anti-social behaviour.

Wayne Ball, volunteer co-ordinator for the Canal & River Trust said: "The canals have had an incredible history over the last 200 years and this growing support is invaluable to us. We hope it will encourage others to get involved. Over 500 miles of

Wayne Ball (left) of CRT presenting the certificate shown on the previous page to John Barker with John Boucher looking on at Lock 4 on the section of the Ironville Locks now adopted by the FCC.



waterway were lost in the last century so it's down to our generation to make sure this doesn't happen again. I can't stress enough how important local communities are to the canals' future – it is this support that will help us improve the canals and put them back at the heart of the community. Our time and money is spent on major priority repairs and keeping the waterways in good condition including the £45 million we're spending across 2,000 miles between November and March as part of our winter maintenance programme. The work of our volunteer groups brings those added benefits which we're not able to do but are equally as vital."

Those interested in joining in should contact group leader John Barker on 01773 760358 or email [j.barker5@sky.com](mailto:j.barker5@sky.com). Full details about Waterway Adoptions can be found at [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer).

**STOP PRESS:** Since this article was written, the FCC, under our energetic Work Party Organiser John Barker, have also adopted another 290m length of the canal at Lower Hartshay, from Ripley Road Bridge No 32 to the A610 embankment. See page 19.



# CAN YOU HELP US? VOLUNTEERS ARE THE KEY TO THE FCC'S SUCCESS AND EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY.

by Nic Barfield

Without FCC's dedicated volunteers - a group of people passionate about canals, boats, heritage and doing what they enjoy - you wouldn't be reading this. There would be no *Portal*, no *Birdswood*, no social events, no talks, no-one to help maintain the Cromford Canal; and no-one to spread the word about our ambitious campaign to restore and re-open this beautiful historic waterway.

Fact is, fewer than one in ten of FCC's 800-plus paid-up members are active volunteers. Naturally, we're grateful to everyone who pays their sub or donates to FCC; and we appreciate fully that some people can't volunteer for all sorts of reasons. However, FCC urgently needs more 'hands on' help in order to continue moving towards achieving our aims.

People of all ages and backgrounds are welcome to join our friendly, enthusiastic team. In particular, we'd like to reach out to younger people who might be able to continue FCC's work far into the future. The 'old guard' have done a great job founding FCC, promoting and pursuing its objectives, and getting *Birdswood* into the water and running as a fledgling business. But many volunteers are over sixty-five, as are most trustees and committee members, so FCC needs to look ahead - perhaps as far as twenty years into the future - to ensure effective 'succession planning'.

If you can help, that's great: just email one of the people listed at the end of this article. If you can't, perhaps you know someone who might like to step up and give it a go? A younger family member, a neighbour or a work colleague? Someone who needs some focus and direction in their lives or who'd like to learn new skills? Just planting the seed of an idea in someone else's head is as useful as rolling up your own sleeves and getting stuck in.

**AT CROMFORD WHARF ON TUESDAY 31st MARCH**, we'll be holding a recruitment event aimed primarily at attracting new crew members for *Birdswood* so we can run more trips during the 2015 cruising season. As well as *Birdswood* crew, there will be FCC volunteers on hand to talk about how you or your friends and family members can help, and to explain the many benefits of volunteering.

Apart from having fun, meeting new people and making new friends, taking an active part in FCC activities by volunteering is a great way to:

- Gain new experience and skills, or share your skills and expertise with others.
- Build your confidence working with the public and in a team.
- For young people or those who have been out of work, volunteering can help open doors to a brighter future. Employers value work experience highly, and we'd be pleased to give anyone a job reference once they've been with us for a while.
- Get some healthy outdoor exercise.
- Learn more about our rich wildlife, industrial, transport and social heritage.

Whether you're considering giving a few hours of your time or know someone who might be interested in joining us, there are many jobs that need doing. There's almost certainly a role to suit your interests, aptitudes and skills. Here are some vital roles that need filling:



### **Crew member.**

This year we'll be running several hundred trips - three a day sometimes - with frequent charters, Horse Days and special events on top of our busy public timetable. Provided you're able to commit to ONE FULL DAY EACH MONTH between April and October, we'll train you in all aspects of crewing. As well as boat handling and looking after passengers' safety, you'll learn customer relations and retail skills, too: selling tickets, serving refreshments, telling passengers about the canal.

### **Towpath walker and swing bridge operator.**

Our towpath walkers operate the swing bridge at High Peak Junction and also provide vital safety cover on Horse Days. They're on-shore ambassadors, too, telling walkers about FCC activities, answering questions about the canal, and handing out promotional material.

### **Boat maintenance and housekeeping**

Like any 75-year-old lady, *Birdswood* needs looking after. There are regular jobs that need doing, plus annual maintenance like painting and mechanical/electrical work. We're also implementing phased upgrading of the seating and other comfort aspects of the boat. If you have practical skills in any of these areas, there are opportunities for you.

### **Assist with schools trips**

We want to share our passion for our canal and boat by providing educational experiences for school children, youth groups and young people with special needs. Our education volunteers are supported by three dedicated members who are all ex-teachers, and who are working to deliver a top quality schools programme for 2015 and beyond.

### **Help with admin, PR, marketing and sales**

Over 5,000 people travelled on *Birdswood* in 2014. 2015 will bring even more customers if we can spread the word about the trip boat, using leaflets, posters, our website, social media platforms, PR opportunities and press stories. We need people who can distribute promo flyers and posters; maintain relationships with their local radio station, newspapers, schools, community groups etc; contribute ideas for fund-raising, sponsorship, special attractions and PR events; and work with our growing number of local heritage partners.

### **Join our 'towpath task force'**

We work alongside partners such as DCC's Countryside Services and the Canal and River Trust, running regular work parties along the length of the Cromford Canal. If you're up for a bit of healthy outdoor work, you could join us to help keep the waterway open, control bankside vegetation and preserve the cherished amenity value of the canal.

### **Help promote FCC activities**

If you're outgoing and keen to spread the word about the FCC's wider campaign to preserve and eventually re-open the Cromford Canal, we need you. Your role might be giving talks, leading walks, manning sales and information stands, writing features for local media or recording our achievements on camera. Whatever you do, you'll be adding to the public's understanding and appreciation of the Cromford Canal.

**You** really can make a difference, so please don't be backward in coming forward to help us out. If you'd like more details about any of the jobs or want to know more about our March recruitment event, please email any of the following: Vix Wilding (Boat Ops Manager) [boat@cromfordcanal.org.uk](mailto:boat@cromfordcanal.org.uk) ; John Barker (Work Party Organiser) [j.barker5@sky.com](mailto:j.barker5@sky.com) ; Nic Barfield (Marketing, Publicity, PR) [nic.barfield@w3z.co.uk](mailto:nic.barfield@w3z.co.uk)

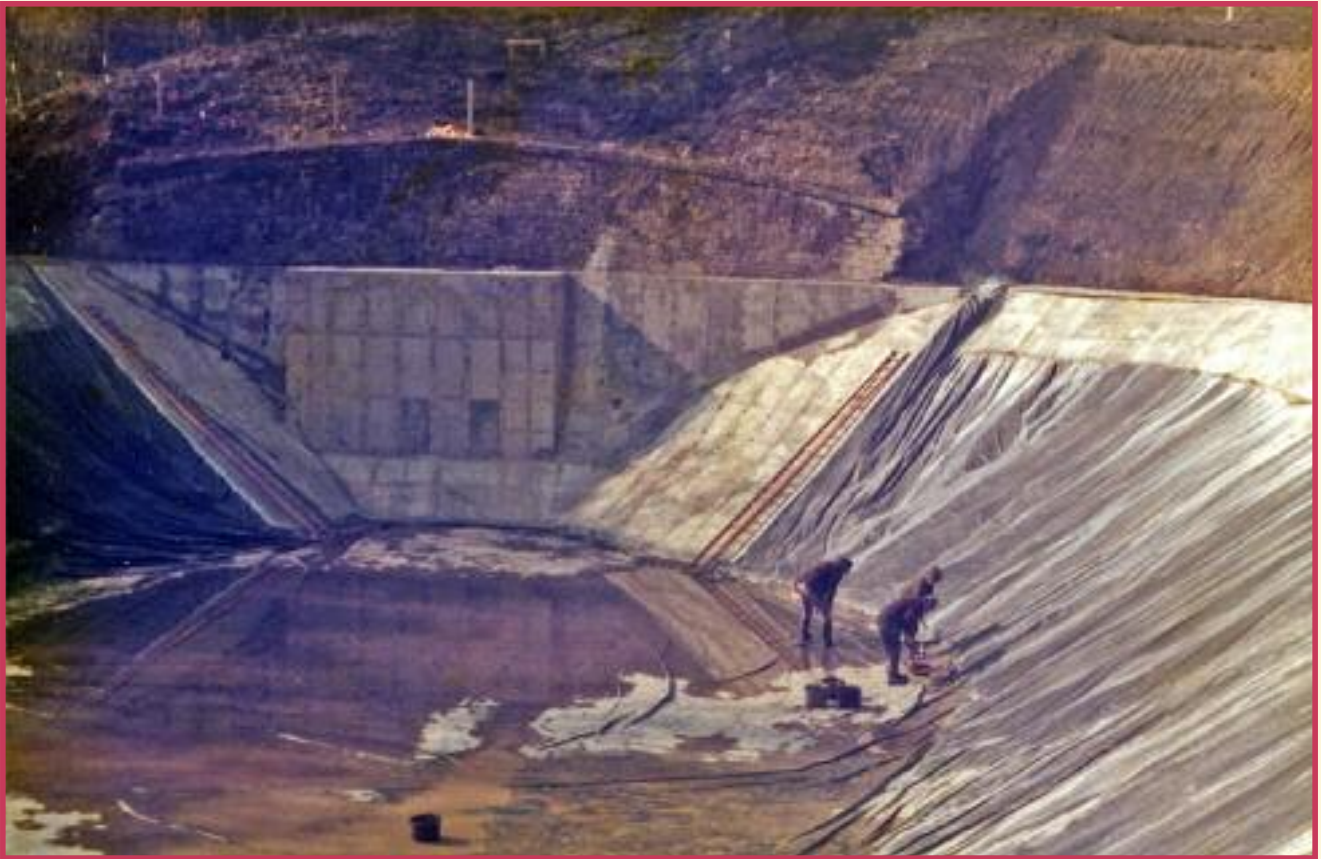
**Or simply call the Boat Line on 07552 055 455**



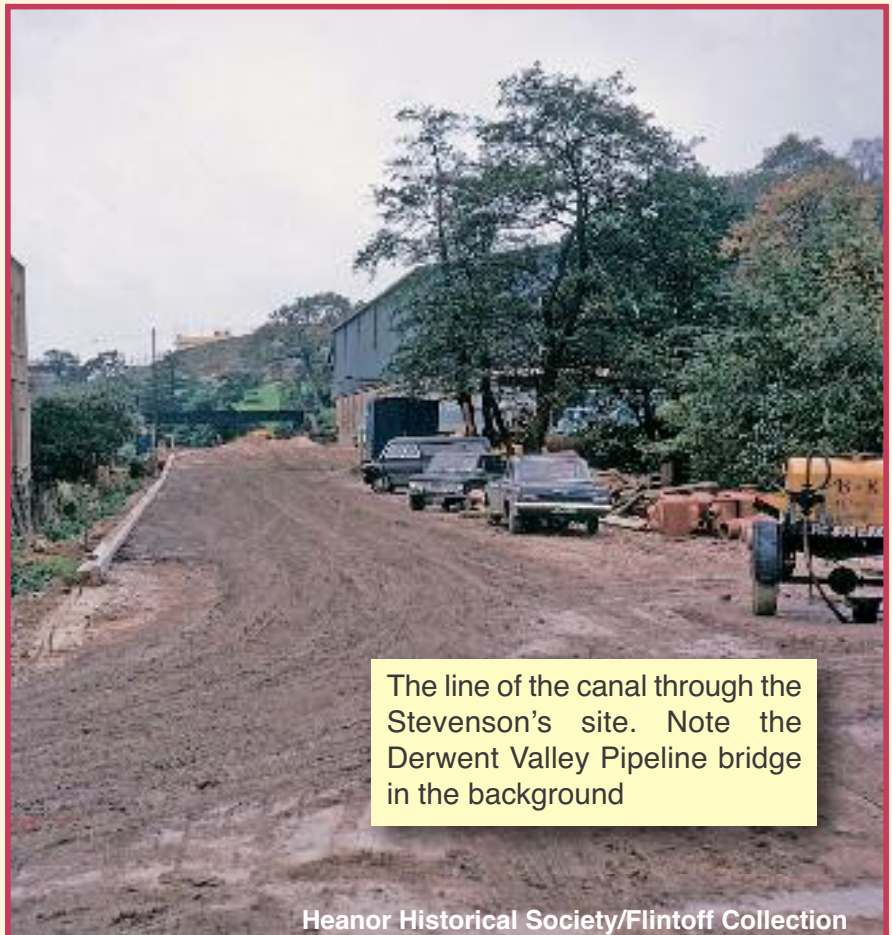


# STEVENSON'S SITE

by Hugh Potter

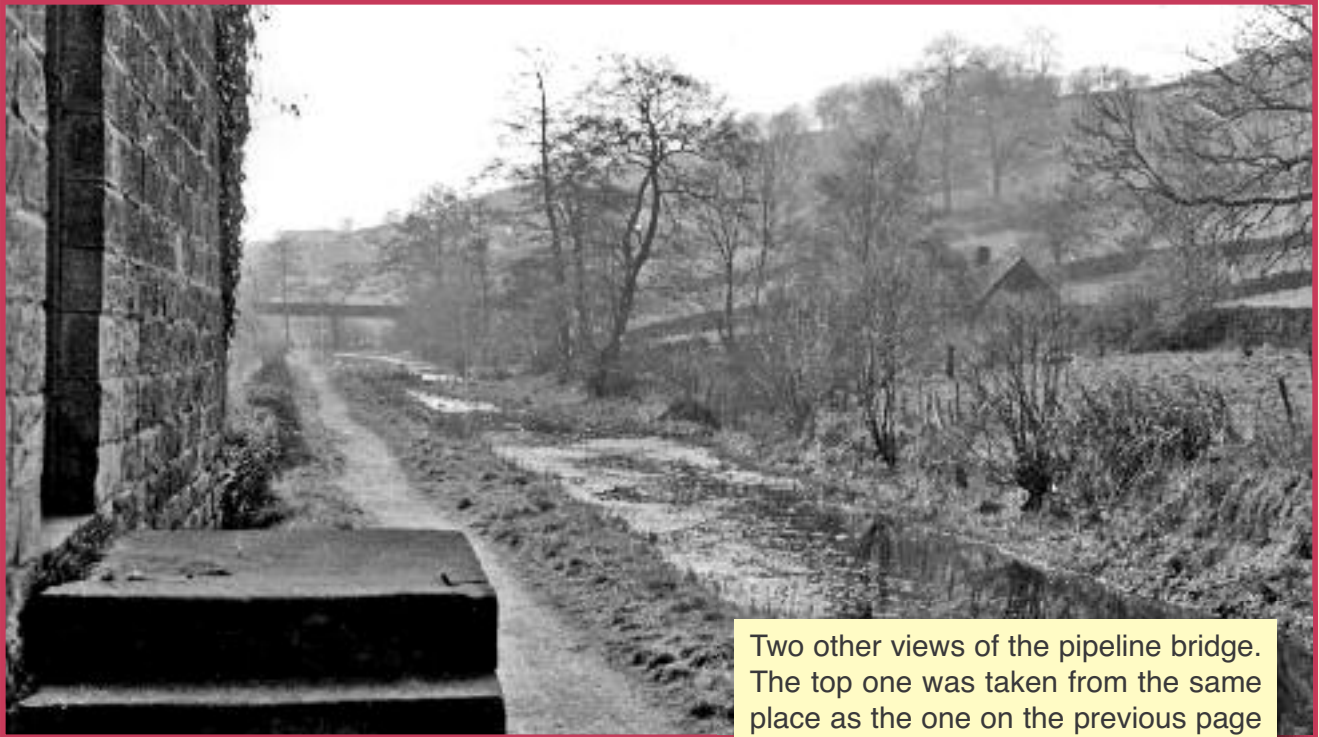


Back in the 1960s the length of the Cromford Canal from the north-eastern portal of Hag Tunnel to the road bridge on Bullbridge Hill (Bridge 19) was sold by British Waterways to Stevenson's Dye Works, who infilled most of it and expanded their work site across it. They put a large concrete slab across the tunnel portal, see the picture above, immediately adjacent to which they created a large reservoir which destroyed the canal bed for around 50 yards, but the rest of the line was used for a road, seen on the right under construction, thus reserving its route.



The line of the canal through the Stevenson's site. Note the Derwent Valley Pipeline bridge in the background

Heanor Historical Society/Flintoff Collection



Two other views of the pipeline bridge. The top one was taken from the same place as the one on the previous page in the early 1960s, before the dye works came. The lower picture was taken shortly after the works closed and some demolition is just starting.



Hugh Potter

Following the closure of the works in 2009, outline planning permission was granted for a housing development which has been reported in *Portal*, and issue 34 gave a summary of the history of the site. Demolition of the factory buildings began, but the developers then went into receivership and the contractors left the site half-demolished. This appears to have been partly due to bad timing - the developers purchased the site just before prices slumped; but also they had not done their research properly. What they did not realise is that a large area of the site cannot be used for housing, thus reducing its value further; much of the land alongside the River Amber has to be kept as a flood plain; the line of the Derwent Valley Aqueduct pipeline cannot be built upon; and most importantly for us, the route of the canal is protected in the local plan from anything which could prejudice future restoration.



Only in 2014 did the receivers recommence clearance and decontamination of what turned out to be a heavily polluted site. This was completed by the end of November, leaving it ready to sell on to a developer. Whilst anything would have looked better than the half-demolished factory, it has to be said that the site, although bleak, now looks almost attractive with views down to a small weir and bridge on the Amber which could not be seen before.

Derbyshire County Council carried out regular archaeological digs to locate the line of the canal, which showed that in most places (except for the reservoir), the puddle-clay lining was still in situ apart from on the 'downhill' side of the channel. FCC looks forward to receiving a copy of the completed archaeological report.

The recently repainted pipeline bridge that once crossed the canal stands out bizarrely with its new height barriers on a route that leads to nowhere. See above. How much better it would look with water back underneath!

Once completed, the site should make a very appealing place to live, and would be even more attractive if the line of the canal were actually excavated and filled with water - something which would be relatively inexpensive if done before houses are built and would increase the property values, surely an advantage for any developer. In addition, several watercourses cross the line of the canal and its reopening would provide a 'reservoir' for any floodwater on the steep site and could link with the already watered section to the east of Bullbridge Hill.

In the interim, Bullbridge & Sawmills Association is keen to get the footpath that once followed the line of the canal reinstated to, and even through, Hag Tunnel. This would avoid the steep hilly and muddy detour which includes a flight of 94 steps. It is known that the tunnel is in good order internally, and it would surely be possible to negotiate a route with National Grid through the former Transco/gas works site at the other end, thus linking back to the terminus of the Derbyshire County Council owned length from Ambergate to Cromford and reinstating a level disabled-friendly footpath between Bullbridge and the rest of the canal towpath.

We await with interest the detailed planning application when submitted, and to discover what uses the two remaining historic buildings on the site might be used for.



# SITUATIONS VACANT

## 1. Publicity Officer

Our vice chairman John Barker has been doing the important job of publicity officer for some time, but has now also taken on the vital role of Work Party Organiser. Over the last few weeks, the work party volunteers, encouraged by John, have increased in number and are now making good progress at several locations along the canal. This however means that the Organisers job is now more time consuming. Therefore we are looking for another person to take on the equally important job of publicity officer. Keeping both the membership and the general public informed of our activities is just as important as the work itself. We are looking for a 'media savvy' person to take on all aspects of ensuring that the FCC is always in the public eye. This would include getting FCC activities mentioned in the local press and radio and social media as well as producing and distributing posters etc.

## 2. Social Secretary

A vacancy on the FCC Committee is also coming at the AGM for the position of Social Secretary. The work involves finding up to 9 speakers per year, although most of the social evenings are already sorted for 2015. A list of potential future speakers is also available. Speakers need to be contacted, booked and fees and equipment needs determined well in advance and then speakers contacted prior to the day to confirm. It is also necessary to book and arrange payment for Ironville Church Hall.

The job includes acting as 'master of ceremonies', making the speaker welcome at the meeting and ensuring that any equipment which has been requested by the speaker is there on the night. Also the proposed length of the talk and the timing of any interval should be discussed with the speaker and announced to the audience when the speaker is introduced. A cheque if appropriate needs to be made available for payment through the treasurer. Attendance at Committee meetings is welcome but not mandatory and it would be helpful to the committee if a regular report can be prepared. This is particularly useful if there are any problems or decisions regarding choice of speaker. Taking on this role would help the FCC greatly and would give a better insight into the workings of the FCC for someone wanting to be a bit more involved.

## 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 summer break.

There will be no meetings in July or August, but they will then be restarting  
Tea/coffee, a bar and raffle available at all meetings. Admission is £2.

- **February 16th** - DERBYSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST IN THE DERWENT VALLEY - Dr Jo Smith, DWT Chief Executive.
- **March 16th** - STANTON - GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN. Stephen Flinders gives us a lively and well illustrated talk on the history of Stanton Ironworks.
- **April 20th** - **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** (free admission). See page 15.
- **May 18th** - THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MIDLAND RAILWAY - BUTTERLEY - Stuart Smith.
- **June 15th** - THE DERBYSHIRE OIL STRIKE OF 1919. Cliff Lea talks about Britain's first successful deep oil well.



## WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

by the Editor

The picture below shows FCC former chairman Pat Morriss and archivist Hugh Potter poking about in the Cromford Canal. This is on the privately owned length of the canal between Bridge 32 and Lower Hartshay village. The owner had contacted the FCC very concerned because the water level in the canal had increased with the heavy rainfall in November to the extent that it was overflowing the towpath. This sort of thing can be serious and can wash the bank away and lead to a breach if it is allowed to continue.

Therefore Hugh Potter, Vix Wilding and I, together with Pat Morriss, who lived nearby until recently, went to investigate. Pat was familiar with this problem and was able to direct us to the site of a former flood paddle, shown below. The square gaps in the concrete wall where the timber frame for the flood paddle gear had been can be clearly seen. Unfortunately, in these enlightened times, the complete paddle gear and frame has



Editor

been removed and the original overflow weir blocked up. The idea of this, now that the water level is not maintained for navigation, was to allow the water to run away into the adjacent brook all the time through a pipe which has been fitted at a low level, to remove the need for the paddle being raised in times of heavy rain.

This is all very well in theory, but the canal nowadays is so full of weed and fallen branches etc. that the pipe had become blocked. Pat knew where to find the pipe and he



and Hugh were soon able to rake the weed out as shown and the water began to flow out once more, much to the delight of the owner.

The picture below was taken the next day from across the other side of the canal and shows that the water level has fallen considerably. Note the exposed pipe.



Whilst on this length of the canal, we walked along towards Lower Hartshay to check the state of the canal and again noticed the buried remains of a riveted iron narrow boat which has been there many years. It is slowly disappearing as the channel becomes grassed over, see below. What a great project it would be to excavate this interesting relic from the canal's working days.





## HOW I BECAME A *BIRDWOOD* VOLUNTEER MASTER

by Wayne Scarle



When I heard a rumour that the Friends of the Cromford Canal had bought a traditional narrow boat which they intended to use at Cromford to carry passengers to Leawood Pump House and back, I sat and thought to myself “I could help out with that” as I had nearly 25 years of boating experience under my belt.

On the 4th of November 2012 I went to a meeting in the Gothic Warehouse at Cromford Wharf where I met some other enthusiasts who wanted to help out. The meeting only lasted about an hour in which time I volunteered my services as maintenance crew and horse walker, but declined to be a Boatmaster.

On the cool sunny morning of 7th April 2013 I got on my bike and cycled the 15 miles from Jacksdale to Trent Lock to meet up with Mike Kelley to help take *Birdwood* back to Langley Mill which took 5½ hours, including the 14 locks.

Langley Mill Boat Rally was an experience! We opened *Birdwood* to the public for tea and biscuits, and I think we raised £360 in a weekend in donations. This is where I got my wife Wendy and daughter involved serving tea and coffee. A week later we started the renovation work, which in itself was a large task to undertake but we all chipped in and got the job done. In just two months, on 27th July, *Birdwood* was transported by road from Langley Mill to Cromford Wharf and craned into the canal.

By the time September 2013 came around we had four qualified Boatmasters and the trips for the public began, with great success I might add. Unbeknown to me, shortly afterwards I was volunteered to be trained as a Boatmaster. When I was approached by Mike Kelley I had to think for a while as I did not know what was expected of me, but I took on the challenge and thought “Boy oh boy: what have I let myself in for?”

So it began with a First Aid course, then the Fire Safety course followed by the Water Safety course - I’m pleased to say I passed all three. Then came the mountain of paperwork from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the medical from my doctor. I spent the next four months revising and then came The Test on 5th June 2014 along with Anne Haile and Dan Harrison. The day went well with the MCA Examiner and the support we had from Ian Hooker. I’m pleased to say we all passed.

My first public trip will be hard to forget. I felt sick down to the bottom of my stomach. I kept thinking to myself “Remember your training and get on with it. First of all, check that *Birdwood* is moored safely, unlock the cabin and do all the pre-trip procedures, then take the boat around to the Wharf, moor up, get all the safety equipment on the roof and wait for the public to turn up.”

I sat down in the back cabin to fill in the Log Book, and a quick glance at my watch told me it was 10.46. “Not long now” I thought nervously. Then Wendy appeared with the passenger count - a full load. The next 5 minutes flew by and before I knew it we were under way with Lawn Bridge getting larger by the minute. I choose a line to go through the bridge, turn the revs down to 800 RPM, correct the tiller and we are through. By this time



I'm feeling very confident and negotiate the corners with ease, with the song "Ghost of the Navigator" running through my head. I check my revs again - 975 RPM and no bow wave. Just around the corner is High Peak Junction, so it's time to get on the two-way radio to make sure the swing bridge was open. "Yes" is the answer, so a quick blast on the Klaxon to confirm the return message, then reduce the revs to 700 through the bridge, then power up to the next corner before slowing down to pass *The Duchess* and approach the winding hole. Now for the hard part: getting the bow to nudge the cutout in the bank which is only 4ft wide and 68ft in front of me: not an easy task, as other Masters will confirm.

So with minimum revs I start my turn, at 15ft to go I select reverse gear to slow down and stop the boat just where I want it successfully. With the bow firmly on the bank, it's now back into forward gear, 800 revs and tiller hard to the left and wind round until we're facing back towards High Peak Junction. Reverse around fifty feet to get a nice straight line, into forward again and the return journey to Cromford begins.

Upon arrival back at Cromford Wharf, there's another wind and a slow reverse to do before we moor up again. With no more nervous stomach I go to help the passengers disembark and the feedback is amazing. "You've got a smile larger than a Cheshire cat". On that note, I'd like to thank my crew for their help on that first trip, and the other Masters who gave up their time to help me get my master's certificate. Thanks, guys!

## **A PERSONAL THANK YOU TO ALL BOAT VOLUNTEERS**

by Dave Ratner - Boat Committee Chairman

Not only has the arrival of *Birdswood* meant a new and vital presence on the Cromford Canal and an enormous draw for visitors, it also heralds a re-awakening of interest amongst a wider public. The canal has always been a draw for those who enjoy the great outdoors, walkers, bikers, runners and canoeists, with the beauty of the Derwent Valley thrown in for free.

This last year has witnessed a heightened interest with the addition of our trip boat *Birdswood*. Comments received such as "It really looks in keeping" and "I didn't realise it was a REAL canal!" only serve to confirm what we, of course already knew, that our trip boat is an integral and essential part of the canal experience. It has also raised the profile of the FCC. More people are aware of the dedicated work being put in to restore 'our' canal and to return it to its former magnificence.

Of course, it was not all plain sailing, no venture of this kind is ever without its risks and pit-falls, but if our first full year of operation is anything to go by, we mostly got it right. The ability of the crews to remain cheerful through adversity, low water, obstacles (including creatures!) in the water, miserable weather et al, never fails to amaze me. Any errors or omissions only served to make us strive to do better and give us a benchmark from which to raise our aspirations and in achieving that, you should be justly proud of yourselves.

Over the winter months, some of you will be on volunteer work parties on the canal and on *Birdswood* as she goes through her winter checks and sprucing ready for the new season. Others will be going through the mass of data collected this last year and working on a plan of action to ensure bigger success in 2015.

I will make no attempt to single anyone out for special praise, as every minute given by anyone in any capacity has contributed to this success and is welcomed with gratitude. The new masters and any new volunteers we raise should serve to make life easier for all crews.

**I want to thank each and every one of you for your dedication**





## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

A good way to help the FCC is to recruit new members. Just to remind you, the membership rates are shown below. Also, anyone who is a UK taxpayer can use Gift Aid to increase the value of their subscription by 28 pence in the pound. Application forms are on the FCC website or contact Yvonne.

Individual: £7.00 Life: £110.00

Couples: £10.00 Life: £165.00

Corporate Business: £35.00

Corporate Charity: £17.00



from  
Yvonne Shattower

As always at this time of year, we wonder what the year will bring us. We have *Birdswood* doing well at Cromford, progress being made with various engineering studies along the line of the canal and John Barker is doing wonders with his Work Parties and 'adopting' parts of the canal. We have appointed our first paid employee, Vix Wilding, as part of the conditions of the DEFRA Grant which helped us buy *Birdswood*. However, as you will read elsewhere in the magazine, we need more help if we are to grow and reach out to the people in the areas along the line of the canal. We need a Publicity Officer who can keep all strands of the media up to date with our activities and plans. We need a Social Secretary to arrange entertaining and informative talks for us at Ironville, and make sure they are advertised. Could YOU help with either of these roles? Perhaps you don't feel that you could take on the whole of the job, but perhaps two of you could 'job share'? Do let us know if you can help in any way or if you want more information about any of the posts advertised.

Many of you are kind enough to pay your subscription by Standing Order, which saves a lot of time sending out renewals and reminders. However, some 80 Members are still paying at the old rate of £6 and £9. This means that we are losing £80 a year, which is £160 over two years. This would buy four new and more comfortable seats for *Birdswood*, or go towards new windows to keep the rain out, or buy some tools for John's Work Party. I know it is only one pound per person, but you can see how the figures add up. If there is a standing order form in with this magazine, you will be paying at the old rate, so please do complete it and forward it to your bank so that we can be £80 better off next year. Apart from what the Friends are losing in money, you are getting the same service as the other members for £1 less. Please do ACT NOW!

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

Mr & Mrs H Huntington, Belper

Ms K Western, Belper

Mr & Mrs L Rose, Belper

Mr J Harwick, Nottingham

Mrs B Faulconbridge, Nottingham

Mrs J Greaves, Ripley

Mr & Mrs J Nelhams, Barnet (Life Members)

Mr P Parsons, Matlock

Mr M Wilshire, Nottingham

Mr & Mrs A Richardson, Coventry

Mr P Rudeck, Warwick (Life Member)

Mr R Poore, Grantham

Mr T Harris, Nottingham

Mr N Ward, Derby

We also welcome Mr & Mrs G Sims, who have renewed as Life Members



# LEAWOOD PUMP OUTLET

by Ian Yates

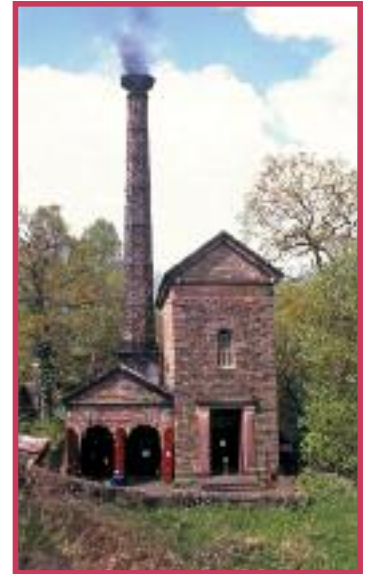
Another year has passed and the engine has been put to bed for the winter. The year went well after an initial problem with the feed water pipe at Easter. The packing around the pump was replaced with the new and has worked well, the coating on the new material removing some of the old graphite. This resulted in some black sludgy water which soon cleared. Visitor numbers were good and so were the donations helping us break even over the year despite paying for a repair to the washout plugs on boiler 43.

The next major job is to replace the wooden seating blocks on the inlet valve. This is a job that the group has not done before and the old blocks are now probably letting more water back to the river than into the canal. This is not going to be an easy job as the valve is below the floor level behind a heavy door weighing about 2.5 tonnes. The valve top then has to be removed and taken out all in a confined space, no headroom and no mechanical help. With this in mind the decision has been taken to shut down after the June steaming and carry out the work during June, July and August, hopefully up and running again before the August Bank Holiday. If all goes well an earlier steaming in August may be possible but breathing space is needed just in case. Hopefully the weather will be better and warmer meaning access to the pumphouse is not prevented by ice and snow. It is intended to open the pumphouse as a static exhibit and let people see the works in progress from above. The block supplier has promised the blocks as soon as sizes can be confirmed.

As the works are complete at Leawood for the present the group has moved to the other engine at Middleton Top. Whilst this is run by wardens employed by DCC, the group are still responsible for keeping up the maintenance and any repairs necessary. Whilst not in steam, things do still have to work and the leather on the lift pump to the condenser tanks has worn out. This has been taken out and some new material sourced. This engine is 1000 ft above sea level and whilst access is good it gets very cold, there has been snow up there already (in December!) and the wind howls round a bit. Tentative enquiries and arrangements are being made to see if the engine could be operated on steam again as a one off special using steam from a remote boiler as it did in its last days, then utilizing an old locomotive boiler on an underframe. This could not be done now but there is an offer from another source albeit not a railway locomotive. The hole is still in the wall and the reducing valve in place for the old steam feed. This is still very much work in progress and unforeseen problems may be found which prevent this but basically everything is there and should work if there are not too many leaks. It's a case of watch this space, no enquiries yet please.

The boat *Duchess* is not forgotten and if the weather keeps clear and birds keep off, the boat should be back in use this season. All the wood is delivered and time is the only factor in holding up progress. Some weekend daytime work will have to be arranged to carry this work out.

***[Due to lack of space, I must hold the full list of steaming dates over until next time. The first in 2015 is at Easter - April 5th and 6th. Ed.]***



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