

# THE PORTAL

Issue 61 - Summer 2017

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Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608

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## Front Cover

Celebrating FCC’s 15 years (l to r): Howard and Sheila Smith, Hugh Potter, Mike Kelley, Ian Hooker, Vix Wilding and Marie Keane.

*Photo: Nic Barfield*

## Back Cover

In the beginning was *The Portal* (2002); then came the first horse boat trial (2005); our sales stand won the best in show at Redhill Festival (2009); we launched *Birdswood* (2013); and now we are 15!

## 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

by Hugh Potter

## Portal's Editor welcomes you to the new look magazine



You may notice certain differences in this edition of *The Portal*. That is because, after producing over three dozen excellent copies of our magazine, Mike Harrison has decided to step down as Editor. Mike has done a tremendous job over the last nine years, never once letting us down, and always producing an excellent magazine that is both topical and directly relevant to our canal – and that is quite a challenge.

In my former life as Editor of *Waterways World* and *NarrowBoat* magazines I have seen many society journals and I have always thought that FCC's *Portal* was up there with the best. Having been roped in to be the new Editor (as if I did not have enough other roles to fill!), I hope that I shall be able to keep it that way until someone else volunteers to take over (roll right up . . .).

However, although Mike compiled the whole magazine single-handedly, it is a measure of the work involved that I am going to be assisted in

the layout by my good friend who prefers to be known simply as 'CJ'. CJ has great ideas for layout, and I hope you will like the new look, as well as the content.

I have to thank all the contributors to this issue for getting their copy in on time (long may that continue) which has enabled me to fill the issue without having to resort to any of my 'Archive' features. If you begin to see lots of those appearing, it means that I am short of other copy!

So if you have any news, stories, letters, articles, photographs related to our canal please do send them to me. Remember it is your magazine and can only be as good as the material that is sent in.

**Copy Date for the next issue is 31st July**



*Some of Mike Harrison's favourite covers from his time as Editor.*

# CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by John Baylis BEM

## FCC's Chairman keeps you up to date

### The Charity and the AGM

First of all my apologies for having to change the date of the Annual General Meeting at such short notice; the change to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation was not as straightforward as we had hoped. The arranging of the AGM needs some changes and I will go through the procedure and would welcome any comments.

Since the formation of the Friends we have tried to hold the AGM at minimum cost by incorporating the printed notices and minutes from the previous year in *Portal*; and to some extent we have programmed *Portal* press dates accordingly. With many of our members only being contactable by post, to send the notices out to all members by a separate post could easily cost in excess of £600 with printing and postage.

The old unincorporated charity constitution was far less precise than the CIO constitution, and in the early days, when the audit was just an examination by a non-connected person, we could simply turn up at the AGM with copies of the accounts and a list of nominee trustees. In most years we had fewer nominees than vacancies and there was no problem. Under the new constitution we are required to inform the members of the nominee trustees and give members sight of the accounts up to 21 days before the AGM.

The members were notified in the previous *Portal* of the number of trustee

vacancies, that nominations were required before 3rd April, and that they would be listed on the website. The accounts were intended to be

similar and posted at 14 days before the AGM. Getting the accounts on time has always been a bit fraught but when the examination of the accounts was by a retired accountant he/she could be pushed; but now it is a professional examination at their busy period we have to take our place in the queue. That along with collecting records of all the hundreds of receipts and payments proved impossible this year.

In future years we are either going to have to change the dates of the financial year, if we want to keep with an April AGM, or move the date of the AGM. We have always gone for April as the attendance at members' meetings tends to drop off as the light nights come, and it being the AGM also puts people off attending. We have had to go for May this year because as a new CIO we have to have the first AGM within 18 months of the inauguration which was on 30th November 2015; consequently the AGM must be before 29th May 2017.

In subsequent years the requirement is for the AGM to be within 15 months of the previous so we could move the AGM to September or October over two years; but it would be difficult to get a quorum at a meeting in June, July or August. That



is unless we depend much more on the proxy or postal votes to achieve a quorum. The quorum is currently set at 5% of the membership as we were in danger of the AGMs becoming inquorate; this was because the membership rose to approaching 1,000 and less than 100 attended the AGM.

The alternative is to move the year end to September or October and keep with the AGM in April. That would give us an extra two or three months to complete the accounts and hopefully this would be a less busy period for the examiners or auditors. There would be no problem in having a short financial year of 10 months to bring the year end forward. However, to keep to the constitution requirements to notify the membership at various stages, either option may well involve an additional annual bill of six or seven hundred pounds. I am sure that we need to sort this out before next year and I would welcome the views of trustees in other organisations.

The CIO format is relatively new as it was only introduced by the Charity Commission in 2012. Its format between an unincorporated charity and a registered company allows ownership of land and property by the CIO and not just by individual members on behalf of the charity. From our experience the Charity Commission may have to be more lenient in imposing fixed times and regulations in order that new CIOs will be formed and be able to function lawfully.

### **Recent Retirements**

There have been three retirements in the past two months from local organisations that have been supportive of the Friends of the Cromford Canal.

Mark Suggitt has retired as director of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. Mark's last project at DVMWHS was to acquire a £1.5m Heritage Lottery Grant

in the Great Places Scheme; Mark's place will be taken by Adam Lathbury as Head of Conservation, Heritage & Design for Derbyshire County Council, based at Shand House.

Sarah McLeod is leaving the Arkwright Society after 15 years and is moving to Wentworth Woodhouse, near Rotherham, reputed to be the grandest country house in England. Since the Friends started operating *Birdswood* at Cromford the support and co-operation from the Arkwright Society has been invaluable and has made Cromford Wharf the ideal base of operations.

Finally, Councillor Irene Ratcliffe is due for re-election in May and may be leaving the chairmanship of the DCC Cromford Canal Partnership. During her 4-year tenure of office she has been very supportive of the Friends' work on all parts of the canal. Her final act was to offer her grant of £362 from the DCC Members Community Leadership Scheme. We hope that this will go towards a closed-circuit TV examination of a blocked drain-off culvert on the canal at Cromford. The paddle to the culvert needs repair but we need to check the culvert before removing the old paddle for repair.

### **Congratulations and Thanks**

Finally I would like to congratulate the operations team and crews of *Birdswood* for achieving its targets of passenger numbers and income promised in the last business plan; to thank all the working party members for their support of *Birdswood* and other projects on the canal such as Ironville, Pinxton and Hartshay; and not to forget all those who work in the background on planning, fund-raising and managing the affairs of the Friends of the Cromford Canal. I think that 2016 has been a successful year and I hope that we will continue in 2017 and onwards.

# MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

by Yvonne Shattower

## FCC's Membership Secretary keeps you up to date



For the last ten years, I have known just how my report would appear in *Portal*, thanks to our Editor, Mike Harrison. Now Mike has handed the reins over to Hugh Potter, I have no idea what to expect, but I know it will be good! Thank you, Mike, for all the good reads you have given us.

I would like to thank all of you who have returned the standing order forms for our new bank account. Hopefully all will go well with the new payments. I have had to return one or two of the forms as the payment amount was incorrect, so if you have yet to send me your form, I would remind you that the membership fees are now £14 for a couple and £9 single. If anyone feels that they should have received a form but have not yet done so, please let me know and I will put one in the post for you. (Contact details on page 2) Members who have yet to renew for the first time will get an opportunity to pay by standing order when they receive a renewal notice.

We still seem to be lacking members at our monthly meetings at Ironville. Where have you all gone to? Is the fact that we can no longer offer you a beer putting you off? Or are the subjects of the talks not interesting you? We did have a larger audience at our last talk which was about Stanton Ironworks, but mostly it was visitors rather than members. We do aim to give you an update on what is going on in the Friends, and there are always some committee members there who will try

and answer any questions, so do come along on Monday 15th May when John Lower will be talking about a very special new boat on the Chesterfield Canal: a newly built replica of the unique 'cuckoo' boat, constructed by wholly traditional means supervised by the last boatbuilder on the canal. It will be most interesting to learn about this and how they run their modern passenger boats compared with *Birdswood*. All talks are at the Ironville Church Hall, and entrance is only £2. Full details of future talks are on page 32.



*The talk on 15th May will describe the building of this boat.*

Now that the warmer weather is here (hopefully!) I know that some of you will be out boating on many different parts of our amazing canal system, and others will be walking, fishing or just enjoying our waterways. I wish you all a happy summer.

### **New members since the last issue**

*Mr & Mrs A Bishop, Matlock  
Mr M J Varney, Derby  
Mr I Cross, Derby  
Mr N R E McPherson, Matlock  
Mr M King, Nottingham  
Mr A Coxhead, Dronfield  
Mr D Bettison, Alfreton  
Mrs A Easdown, Belper  
Mr P Frost & Miss J Bower, Alfreton  
Mr C Stamford-Burrows, Nottingham*

# BIRDWOOD WORK PARTIES

by Vix Wilding

## FCC's Boat Operations Manager looks at how volunteer crew take a 'break' off season



Over the closed season you would imagine that the Birdswood volunteers could sit back and bask in the knowledge of the thousands of pounds they have accrued towards restoration of the Cromford Canal.

But for some this is not the case . . . Those who can, continue their commitment to the FCC and give their time in different roles.

Every year the reeds have to be pulled back so as not to choke the channel, and branches need to be trimmed to prevent

them brushing against passengers. This is a slow manual process, but necessary. We work under strict guidelines set by Derbyshire Countryside Services and work from *Birdswood* to achieve the desired results. This creates a very dirty boat and just when we think we can rest it's time to scrub and polish *Birdswood* till she gleams again. This year we had a full day cleaning her with nine people working extremely hard just 3 days before the first public trip of the season!

A huge thanks as always to the many volunteers who continue to assist me in developing Birdswood and its income stream for FCC.

We do have some moments and



*It's not all boating for Birdswood volunteers . . . the channel has to be kept clear of overhanging trees, then the branches carried away for disposal – Birdswood and the 'tin boat' are convenient for this. Tree work was assisted by DCC's Patrick Mountain, before he transferred from Countryside Services to Rights of Way.*

*Photo: Editor*



*... and reeds need to be pulled. This is done from the bank on the towpath side, but on the offside has to be done from Birdswood and the 'tin boat'.*

*Photo: Vix Wilding*

some laughs along the way and I like to believe that we would rally round and be there for each other should the need arise. If you are interested in becoming a part of this team please see the advert on page 32.

I currently need additional help in the shop on Thursdays and Saturdays – anyone free to give some time?

### **Forthcoming Events**

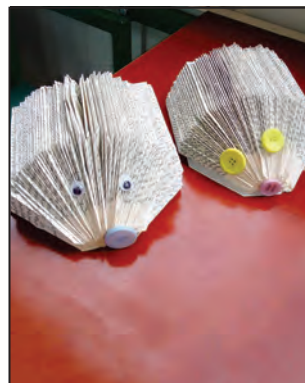
Behind the scenes the events for the coming year are planned and the leaflets and advertising organised. This requires many hours of planning on my part, but to be able to deliver the events for the public gives me great joy.

Don't miss out on our Literacy event on 27th–28th May at Cromford Wharf. There will be activities, storytelling, poetry recitals, Derbyshire Libraries, Usbourne books and the delightful Alycraft Books Folds.

We have planned various events, along with a new concept linked to the arts. Our first workshop will be in May with the artist Eric Gaskell who creates pictures from lino cutting and printing. This has sold out already and the next one is confirmed for 11th September. Places are limited to eight so if you think you might be interested please register your interest with me at [sales@birdswood.org](mailto:sales@birdswood.org) before we advertise to the public.

Later on in the year there will be other art-related workshops, so keep an eye on the website for full details.

Our first family event this year was Book Folded Hedgehogs on 10th April. This was well attended and everyone achieved their goal. In attendance to raise funds was 'Twiggars Hogspital' which is a Langley Mill based hedgehog sanctuary. The owner brought live hogs along to meet and explained about their needs as infants and in the wild. There is a raffle on Birdswood to help raise additional funds to extend the living quarters for the rescued animals.



*Completed hedgehogs*

*Photo: Vix Wilding*



# RESTORATION STRATEGY

by George Rogers

## Chairman of FCC's Strategic Restoration Committee looks at progress north from Langley Mill and at how the IWA are helping restoration



In my last report, I wrote how 2017 promised to be a very exciting year, as we get set to extend the canal north from the basin at Langley Mill. The project

received a (not unexpected) setback when Amber Valley Borough Council, the planning authority for the section concerned, informed us that phase 1 of the works could not be carried out under permitted development rights and we would need full planning permission. Phase 1 was planned to be the initial extension of the canal on the level, with phase 2 being the construction of the locks, for which we always expected to apply for planning permission.

As we now need planning permission for both phases, the SRC has decided to extend the planning application a bit further to incorporate the passage under the A610 and the section of canal up to Stoney Lane. This is quite a bit more work, and involves a cross-boundary application to both Amber Valley and Broxtowe councils, but gaining permission for this would give the FCC a meaningful section of canal to restore for the next few years.

We're now working to finalise the scheme we want to present to planning and to produce the other information that will be needed alongside the technical drawings. We are particularly indebted to Susan White (DCC's Waterways Officer) who is carrying out the various ecological

surveys required and John Boucher (FCC's Honorary Engineer) who is developing the technical detail.

We also had a very useful meeting with the Environment Agency, as both the current scheme and the wider project have many interfaces with EA waters and require various permissions from them to enable us to do work. They were generally very helpful but, as always, have given us even more things to think about.

I noted in my last report that the Economic Development Study report had been delayed. We have now had a draft report and several of us are working through it to fact check it and provide feedback prior to the final report being issued. At nearly 180 pages, it is a time-consuming job but the initial feedback is positive and it will certainly give us something else to work with when trying to talk to councils, funding agencies and other stakeholders.

### **Waterway Restoration Workshop**

On 1st April, John Baylis and I attended the annual Inland Waterways Association/ Canal & River Trust Waterway Restoration Workshop in Wolverhampton. This is an excellent opportunity to hear from other organisations and network with fellow restoration volunteers. This year the theme for the workshop was 'Fit for Purpose'.

The day started with an address from Richard Parry, Chief Executive of CRT, and then moved on to a presentation from Johnathan Smith (IWA National Treasurer) about the IWA's new Restoration Hub. This is being set up to provide support and

coordination to canal restoration around the country and promises to be very useful. This was followed by the award of the Tony Harrison legacy, which brought excellent news for the FCC, as you will read elsewhere (page 17 – Ed).

The day swiftly moved on to a presentation by a representative from the Severn Valley Railway on experiences in building a sustainable volunteer workforce. This was a very interesting presentation and definitely gives the whole of the canal restoration movement some food for thought. The key messages were the importance of regular two-way communication with volunteers and the sense of belonging – both by building communities of volunteers and by giving volunteers a clear development path towards a new skill or role.

Following this, we broke out into smaller groups where we had chosen from a selection of seminars. John and I had both chosen (accidentally) to attend the session on working with policy makers – in particular the Environment Agency and Natural England. This was another interesting session that gave us more things to think about, as well as introducing us to some other experts in canal restoration whose advice we may need to call on in the future. Other seminars were going on in communications, funding and maintenance planning; all would have been very useful and thankfully we get to see all the presentations afterwards.

In the final session before lunch, we had a very interesting presentation from the new Chief Executive of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust on restructuring an organisation. It was a very direct and challenging presentation that definitely caused great debate over lunch. Whilst some of his ideas were perhaps not relevant to our own situation at Cromford, many were and it will be interesting to

review these alongside our own structure in the coming months. The key message that hit everyone was the question: “Are we a club of restoration enthusiasts, or are we an organisation set up to deliver major projects?”. The inference is that most restoration societies are probably the former, but to be truly successful they need to be the latter.

Following lunch, the day moved on to a presentation from Mike Palmer (WRG Chairman) on building a health and safety culture within an organisation. This was then followed by Alicen Stenner (IWA’s marketing manager) presenting on the importance of marketing and communication. This was a fascinating insight into something that we don’t really consider enough – particularly on the ideas of brand and the consistency of that brand across all communication and marketing platforms.

The penultimate session was a second break out session, where I went off to hear from one of CRT’s heritage advisers on working with heritage buildings. Whilst this is something I’ve done a lot of with Waterway Recovery Group, it isn’t something I’ve ever been particularly involved in the planning of and so this was a useful session. The day concluded with a quick summary from Les Etheridge (IWA Chairman).

Overall the day was once again very useful. I always come away from any of these events feeling equally inspired and daunted – inspired with lots of new ideas and information that we can use to improve the FCC, and daunted about the idea of doing it! What it does highlight most of all is that we can only progress if everyone buys into the same vision and pulls together for the good of the whole.



# IRONVILLE TOWPATH UPGRADE

by John Barker

John Barker is the FCC's Work Party Organiser



*Plenty of supervision setting up the shuttering.*

*Photo: Editor*

On 7th–9th April, Waterway Recovery Group North West were busy once again at Ironville, finishing off the last 75-yard stretch of towpath to the Midland Railway Bridge 9. They mostly arrived on Friday night and finished on Sunday afternoon, assisted by the FCC work party. The

total hours worked was over 230 plus traveling and our sincere thanks go out to all who helped with this operation. In addition, Fabian Martin one of the FCC work party, passed his training as an excavator driver; we hope we will need him at Langley Mill soon!



*The old surface was removed with a mini-digger.*

*Photo: Ulrich Signer*



*Laying the hardcore on the Terram liner.*

*Photo: Editor*



*Raking and rolling.  
Photo: Ulrich Signer*



*Work approaches the railway bridge.  
Photo: Ulrich Signer*



*The view of work from across Lock 4.  
Photo: Pete Clark*

# CROMFORD WATER CONTROL

by John Baylis

## The re-installation of a water control gate in the canal feeder at Cromford Mills will greatly help both Birdswood and DCC

The upper five miles of the Cromford Canal were given with a dowry by British Waterways to Derbyshire County Council in about 1973. Shortly after DCC became the owners, the Cromford Canal Society took over the operation of the heritage Leewood steam-operated beam pump, and also dredged the canal. When the channel had been cleared, CCS then operated a horse-drawn passenger boat as well as controlling the water supply and levels on the canal. In early 1989 following a heavy storm, the amount of water entering the canal caused an overtopping between Leewood and Gregory Tunnel and since then this part of the canal has been retained at a lower water level.

The DCC section of the canal was declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1986 and is managed by the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust on behalf of Natural England. In 1994 CCS ceased operation; Leewood Pump and maintenance of the canal then fell to DCC Countryside Services. The need to keep sufficient water levels for the SSSI yet prevent bank overflow in times of heavy rain involves DCC in out-of-hours overtime to adjust sluices. This often results in much reduced water levels to allow for potential flooding.

From 2002 several studies by Scott Wilson for DCC commented adversely on the inadequate and variable water levels towards Ambergate and possible

remedial works to reduce the need for DCC overtime. The study's main recommendation was improved side weirs as used by British Waterways; Derwentside Weir was built by the Waterway Recovery Group in 2012 and Simms Bridge Weir by DCC in 2016. Although giving emergency automatic run off on the lower section from Leewood, it did little to control the water level on the slightly higher section between Cromford and Leewood.

The FCC and other organisations persuaded DCC to form the Cromford Canal Partnership on a similar basis to the Chesterfield Canal Partnership with local authorities and other organisations. One of the first decisions was to engage Atkins to do a Scoping Study on the whole canal prior to a fuller study; Atkins decided that it had already acquired sufficient data to make recommendations on management of the different sections.

DCC then engaged contractors to dredge the section from Cromford to Leewood using a novel pumped system with a view to meeting the FCC request for the re-introduction of a passenger boat on this section of the canal. In 2013 FCC purchased the heritage passenger narrowboat *Birdswood* from the Caldon Canal and after fitting batteries and electric motor, to meet DCC's and Natural England's requirements, launched the boat at Cromford. It was soon discovered that the dredging was hardly adequate

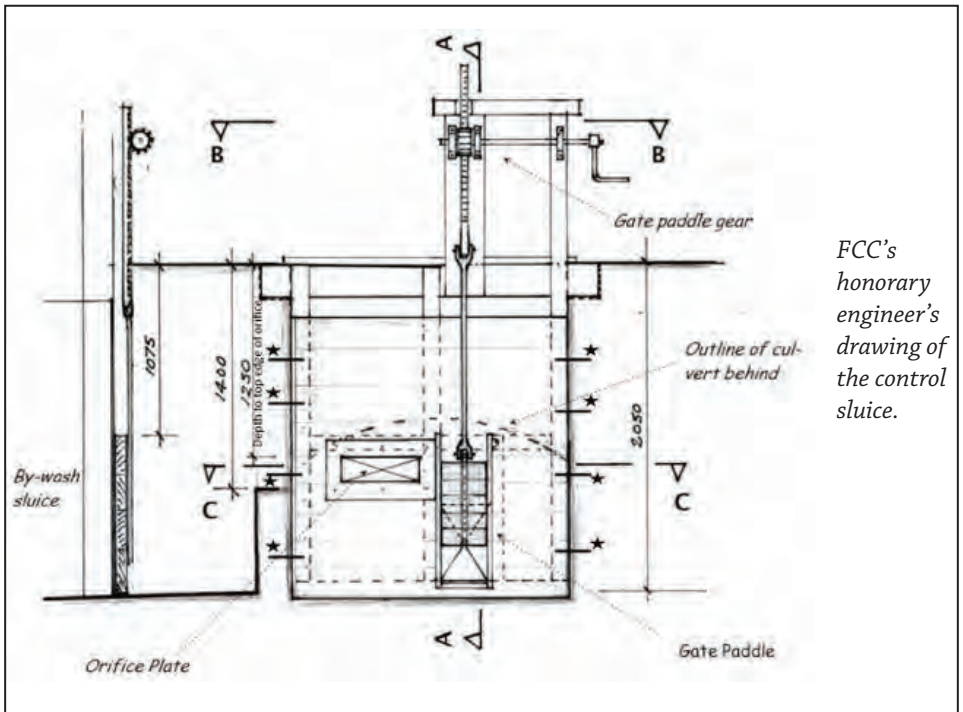
and that it was essential to keep the water level as high as possible. This is helped about one weekend per month when other volunteers operate Leawood Pump, lifting water from the River Derwent. Although navigation over the  $1\frac{1}{3}$  miles is possible, winding at Leawood can be difficult, and the loss of more than 2in of water level makes navigation and winding difficult, particularly with a full passenger load. Consequently maintaining a constant water level is essential.

### Water Supply

The main water supply to this part of the canal is from the Bonsall Brook, a tributary to the River Derwent. Feed is limited in normal times by the overflow from the Horseshoe weir situated within Cromford Mills, but in times of heavy

rain the excess water runs directly to the canal. I was well aware of methods of water control to and from waterways and questioned the purpose of two slots in the sides of the stone culvert to the canal and the lack of a control paddle at Cromford Mills. I discussed this with other FCC trustees who requested that FCC engineers carry out an in-depth study.

The feeder is within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, and is part of a Grade I listed building complex, but Historic England, the Environment Agency and the local planning authority all accept that a new barrier gate and control gear can be constructed at the mouth of the feeder to a traditional design using oak timber, consistent with practice when the canal was constructed, and visibly reflecting the design of an existing



*FCC's  
honorary  
engineer's  
drawing of  
the control  
sluice.*

adjacent sluice. Archive plans and letters from the Midland Railway Company (1909) and the British Transport Commission (1960s) indicate that such a barrier was originally installed when the feeder was constructed, and was still in place in the 1960s. The feeder control will limit the unacceptable flows of water into the canal in storm conditions, but allow a steady controlled flow for efficient operation.

The project will result in improved reliability in *Birdswood's* operation due to the provision of steady water levels in the shallow canal. *Birdswood* is a major attraction in the World Heritage Site, and

to monitor and manually control water levels, and will be of great benefit to FCC in the operation of *Birdswood*. As part of the licence agreement between FCC and DCC permitting the operation of *Birdswood* on the Cromford–Leawood section of the canal, FCC sets aside a proportion of the operating profit towards the maintenance of that section.

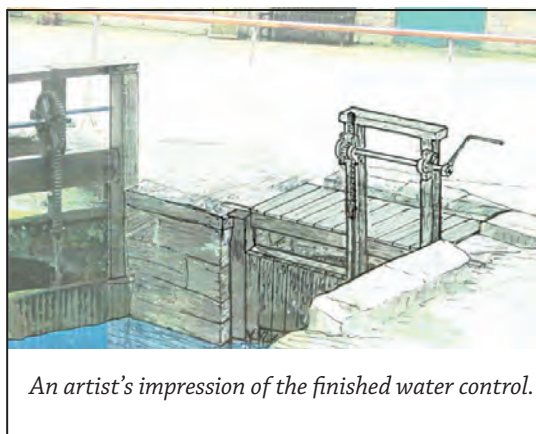
### Design

Studies were made of the daily water requirement, allowing for leakage and other losses, and the capacity of the existing overflow weirs on the navigable section of canal, to establish a minimum requirement for normal operation to be calculated, and a maximum flow that can be safely handled.

With normal or high flow in the brook, incoming water will build up to a constant head, above which excess water will overflow a side weir into the existing by-wash channel to the River Derwent. Canal feed water will pass the new barrier through a carefully sized orifice. As the orifice is at a known depth below the maximum water level, the flow will

be constant at a rate calculated to meet navigation demands. The new structure will be constructed utilising the existing grooves in the masonry side walls at the feeder entrance. It will not require regular operation, but a small paddle will be incorporated to provide manual operation for maintenance purposes or in emergency.

Control of the water level will avoid having to cancel planned trips with *Birdswood*. Even more than the financial loss, cancellation of advertised trips is a publicity disaster and affects the overall success of the venture, as feedback



*An artist's impression of the finished water control.*

makes a major contribution to the number of visitors to the area; the project will remove risk of canal bank overtopping; and the boat operation helps maintain a clear channel with benefits to the quality of water. With a more constant water supply at Cromford it should be possible to give a more stable supply to the SSSI section below the stop planks at Leawood Aqueduct, and improve the ecology of this area.

By restricting the flow of flood water into the canal, the sluice will remove the need for overnight attendance by DCC



*The FCC team clearing the weir pit in Cromford Mills. The culvert to the canal is to the right (the groove in the far stonework can be seen) and the overflow to the river is top left.*

*Photo: Editor*

received confirms.

Overall, the estimated joint cost savings resulting from the project indicate that the project will have paid for itself within four years.

In addition, the opportunity will be taken to restore the line of a short section

of gritstone wall missing from the edge of the mill basin, by installing matching copings up to the level of the copings surrounding the remainder of the mill basin. At ground level there will be oak floor-boarding behind the gate, covering a small section of the existing pit at the entrance to the culvert, which will incorporate access for maintenance and operation of the sluice.

FCC has now received the offer of a £15,000 grant from the Tony Harrison bequest to the Inland Waterways Association, which should cover a substantial proportion of the estimated cost. We are still awaiting the full conditions attached to the grant, but are ready to proceed with appointing a contractor and completing the work this year.

I would like to add that this grant is of special interest to me as I worked with Tony for over 20 years on the IWA's Navigation and Restoration committees where Tony's experience as a hydrologist and engineer was invaluable.

## GRANT FOR BANKS

by John Barker

A grant has been awarded to the Friends of the Cromford Canal from DerwentWISE Landscape Partnership to improve sections of the towpath edge where erosion is evident. The grant application is to repair and restore the canal bank from Lawn Bridge to Gregory Tunnel at points damaged by dogs scrambling out of the canal and natural erosion over 225 years since the canal was built.

It is intended to fit 3m lengths of natural dry coir rolls, 300mm in diameter, with long U-shaped ground staples, as recommended by Derbyshire County Council, and back-filling with puddling

clay or hessian sacks filled with clay.

It is considered that 150m of coir rolls would be required to repair and restore identified sections of canal bank. The total project cost of this grant is £3,453.60 and our Community Grant costs to FCC is £345.36. This work will be carried out in early June 2017 as we have a deadline of September 2017.

I would like to thank John Guyler and Les Warren from Waterside Care for helping with this grant, and DerwentWISE who are supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Fund and DCC.



# FAIRY TALE COTTAGE

by Ron Common

## Ron Common, Cultural Heritage volunteer for the DerwentWISE team of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, looks at the future of the canal's best loved building

You will be familiar with the humble cottage nestled in the crook of the Cromford Canal and the Leawood branch, a short walk from High Peak Junction. For many years, regular walkers along this stretch of the canal will have witnessed its gradual decline and may well have concluded, as the roof collapsed, the stonework crumbled and the surrounding woodland vegetation spread to reclaim the remains, that it was only a matter of time before this prettiest of cottages was finally lost.



*Once almost lost to view . . .*

*Photo: Author*

Well, if you go down to the (Lea) woods today, you are sure of a big surprise, because in recent months something of a transformation has occurred that has brought this charming little cottage back from the brink of disaster. The encroaching vegetation has been cleared, the stonework stabilised, and the cottage is once again standing resplendent – a loved ruin poised to make an exciting come-back, and with good reason . . .



*. . . the cottage is now revealed once again.*

*Photo: Author*

### History

Aqueduct Cottage is a Grade II listed building that has an interesting place in the story of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage site, in particular the industrial development at Lea Bridge.

It was built in 1802 as a lengthman's and lock-keeper's cottage by the industrialist, and one time partner of Richard Arkwright, Peter Nightingale. Its construction, along with the canal lock at the entrance of the Leawood Arm, was agreed as a part of a settlement to resolve a dispute over the water supply to the developing industries at Lea Bridge and Lea Wharf – the lead smelting works, hat factory and the John Smedley hosiery mills.

The original cottage was half the size you see today, but in the mid-1800s a second cottage was added (the join is visible in the stonework), and sometime

later (date unknown) the two cottages were merged into a single dwelling.

Florence Nightingale was known to have been friends with the occupants during the time she lived at Lea Hurst in Holloway, and visited several times.

Following the end of the canal's use for commercial transport, the cottage continued to be used to house workers for local businesses and the deeds show that it had various commercial owners during its 170 years as a canal-side dwelling.

The last known occupant was a Mr Bowmer who lived at the cottage until early 1970, the total lack of services no doubt being a factor in his departure.



*Mr Bowmer, the last resident at the cottage, heads off to fetch drinking water from springs at High Peak Junction.*

*Photo: FCC Archives*

After this, the cottage was “adopted” as a walkers’ shelter for a period of time and was maintained by volunteers of the Wayfarer’s walking group (the name “Wayfarers” can still be seen painted above the door). Sadly, however, the cottage was vandalised and thereafter ceased to be used. Inevitably, after decades of neglect, the cottage became derelict.

The road to recovery started back in 2012, when a Trust, established by the residents of Lea, Dethick and Holloway to acquire ownership of Lea Wood, generously gifted the estate, including Aqueduct Cottage, to the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) to ensure the wood remained accessible to the public and to maintain it in perpetuity. The ancient and beautiful Lea Wood became one of DWT’s designated Nature Reserves and a management programme was established. The question over what to do with the derelict cottage presented DWT with a unique challenge that needed special attention.

Luckily, in September 2013, the 5-year, Heritage Lottery funded, DerwentWISE landscape partnership scheme came along, and this provided the opportunity for DWT, via DerwentWISE, to commission a study of the development options.

Mansel Architects, Belper, were awarded the contract and their report provided a fascinating insight into the historical connections of the cottage.



*A classic view of the cottage when inhabited.*

*Photo: FCC Archives*

They also undertook a consultation with the DerwentWISE partners (including FCC), plus members of the public, on a wide selection of restoration opportunities. Their final report listed 12 potential options for DWT to consider and recommended feasibility testing against a DWT business model to determine the most economically viable approach.

DWT energy was then taken up with a relocation to Middleton, but in August 2016, the DerwentWISE team provided the project a fresh focus. An up-to-date structural survey was obtained from Chris Pike Associates, Telford, and I had the privilege of being recruited onto the DerwentWISE team as a Cultural Heritage volunteer, to lead the development of a business case for the cottage's restoration.

A feasibility study into the Mansel report options was completed in October 2016 which recommended the cottage be restored into a dual-purpose building with interpretation/information on the ground floor, plus a multi-purpose activity room on the first floor.

This will enable DWT to establish a new and exciting, environment-focused, visitor attraction positioned as “gateway” to the beautiful Lea Wood Nature Reserve and the wider Derwent Valley. In addition, it will provide a unique and versatile space for DWT and community activities to help fund the upkeep of the cottage, thereby securing its long term future.

### Restoration Specification

Following consultation with The National Trust, Historic England, Derbyshire County Council and other local restoration experts, a building specification has been developed that is based on using traditional methods and materials, as

far as possible, in order to undertake a sympathetic “light touch” restoration.

The external appearance will be the same as the original cottage, characterised by stone slates on the roof and lime-mortared stone walls.

### Current Status

The Chris Pike Associates structural survey highlighted urgent actions required to safeguard and stabilise the building. Many of you will have witnessed this work being undertaken in recent months and the result is nothing short of dramatic. Last summer, the cottage was hardly visible due to the trees and other vegetation that had engulfed the building.



*From being lost in the undergrowth (and overgrowth!) . . .*

*Photo: Author*



*. . . the cottage is revealed once again.*

*Photo: Author*

These have now been completely cleared and the cottage structure and its out-buildings are now, once again, in full view from the towpath for all to see.

One of the working groups also managed to recover several stones from the cottage that had mysteriously found their way into the canal bed, that only became visible when the sink hole drained this stretch of the canal last December!

The masonry stabilisation work was completed by local restoration specialist, Andrew Churchman Ltd, and involved repairing holes, propping fragile walls and openings, and boarding the front door and windows to secure the building.

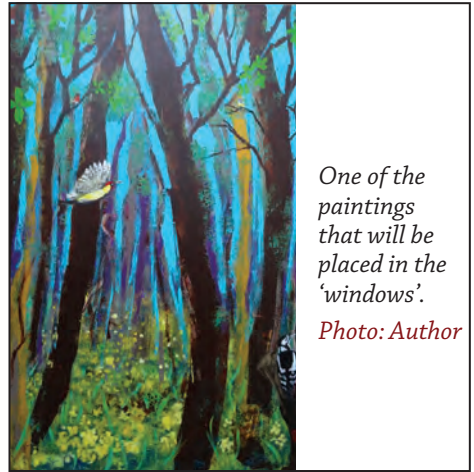


*Work underway on the cottage.*

*Photo: Ian Scrimshaw*

The result is that the much-loved Aqueduct Cottage has finally turned a corner.

One of the most heart-warming aspects of this project is the affection that local people have for the cottage. Every time our working party was on site, passers-by would stop and enquire, or share fond memories of the place. Our Facebook page, 'Friends of Aqueduct Cottage', already has over 160 members after only a few months (including many FCC members), and interest in the cottage's future continues to grow.



*One of the paintings that will be placed in the 'windows'.*

*Photo: Author*

A good example of this affection was when 4 local artists kindly volunteered to create a series of paintings to cover the somewhat plain window boards. Based on the theme "Window into Wildlife" the 6 artworks will provide a hint of the biodiversity of the Lea Wood Nature Reserve beyond, whilst also providing a unique and colourful display until the restoration work can commence.

Developing local collaborations is a key objective of DWT's DerwentWISE scheme and an example is the work being undertaken with the University of Derby and their students. We are currently developing a series of photographic and research projects to help with promotional content, cataloguing and interpretation material for the cottage. The students bring a fabulous energy, creativity and perspective to the project and we hope to have some news about the work they will be doing by the summer.

In order to improve the visibility of the cottage, we are also working on a plan to open up the view from Leawood Pump House across the river to the cottage. Subject to agreement with the



*The splendid view of Leewood Pump House from the south before tree growth blocked it. There are plans to open up this vista again.*

*Photo: FCC Archives*

land-owners, DerwentWISE and DCC are discussing the possibility of removing a corridor of trees that have seeded along the north side of the aqueduct. This would create a stunning view of the river and the wonderful aqueduct structure from both directions.

Talking of bridges, it's fair to say that a lot of water still has to pass under the bridge before we see a fully restored cottage. What can be confirmed, however, is that there is a clear vision, and DWT are looking forward to restoring the cottage for a use fitting with the 21st Century.

Hence, for the first time in almost 50 years, there is now good reason to be optimistic that this lovely building will not only be saved, but once restored, will punch above its weight among the many delightful attractions in the Lower Derwent Valley.

There is no doubt that Aqueduct Cottage, and its idyllic setting, possesses a magical charm that stirs something in the heart among all who come across it. It's difficult to put into words, but Alison Uttley's beautiful description in her celebrated book *Our Village* (published by Scarthin Books of Cromford) comes close:

"We passed the canal cottage, a Hans Anderson dwelling, whose little walls were reflected in the water, whose garden ran parallel to the canal. A small swing-bridge crossed the canal at this point, where the waters divided, part of the stream going to the lead wharf in the village. The cottage was the dividing place between work and play, between fairy tale and reality, and we were bound for fairy tale".

# VOLUNTARY VALUE

by John Guyler

## It's surprising how the volunteer hours add up – and how much they are worth financially

The Friends of the Cromford Canal is a charity, and charities are only as good as the volunteers who give their time freely. For the past year I have been keeping a record of work-party volunteer hours and approximate travelling times.

The volunteer hours are an invaluable record when applying for grants or discussing commitment of the FCC to potential donors or indeed to the membership.

Also I contacted all the FCC officers and invited them individually to submit their volunteer hours and travel time, if they so wished, all information remaining confidential. Through the year the average response has been about 40% of those I contacted at the beginning of the year.

I also recorded the input in voluntary time by the Birdwood business (our fare paying passenger trip boat at Cromford Wharf), the restoration committee meetings, and producing and distributing the flyers for the very successful public meeting at Ironville Church Hall. There was also a number of hours decorating the new office at Langley Mill, generously offered to FCC by QTS Ltd.

We had, and still intend having in 2017, work parties at Cromford, High Peak Junction, Whatstandwell, and Pinxton Wharf, working under the direction of Derbyshire County Council. Ironville, and Lower Hartshay had a large number of hours recorded, under the direction of the Canal & River Trust.

The Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Discovery weekend had 130 recorded

volunteer hours.

My thanks go to all those who put up with my constant requests for seemingly trivial information; I hope that a few more will get on board this year.

### WRG Work

In addition, we had two phases of replacing the towpath between locks 3 and 5 at Ironville. This was done by Waterway Recovery Group, who had volunteers from the North West, the Midlands, the South East and one lady from Dundee, albeit she was travelling back from a work-party in Portsmouth! The total work hours that I managed to collate for the two phases was 684, but these are not included in my FCC volunteer hours report.

### FCC Volunteer Hours 2016

Operation	Hours
FCC Officers	2,352
Birdwood Masters	921.5
Birdwood Crew	5,016
Weighbridge Shop at Cromford	618
Work Parties etc	1877
Total volunteer hours	10,784.5
Travelling time	1,480
Grand Total	12,264.5

### The Totals

If you multiply the total by £7.50 per hour (living wage) that makes an impressive **£91,983.75**.

**That's how much the volunteers are worth to the FCC**

# NEWS FROM THE NORTH

by Rick Jillings

## Rick Jillings, Assistant Area Manager, Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service, reports on the Cromford to Ambergate section

### 50 years since CHPR closure

Back on 30th April 1967, the last train ran on the Cromford & High Peak Railway. This was part of the rationalisation of the national railway network undertaken by Dr Beeching. High Peak Junction was the headquarters of the CHPR, the railway linking the Peak Forest Canal at Whaley Bridge to the Cromford Canal. When it was completed in 1831, it was the longest railway in the world. At High Peak Junction we believe we have the oldest surviving railway workshop buildings in the world but would welcome anyone to provide evidence of older workshops.

To commemorate the railway we have already held several events in April, but there is still one event in May that FCC members might like to attend:

*Friday 12th May 7pm–8.45pm.  
Cromford & High Peak Railway Slide  
Talk*

Fifty years after the closure of this historic and unique railway, this talk will delight you with the locos, tracks, inclines and stories of the workers. You'll also be brought up to date with the route and its use as the High Peak Trail. Join Andy Pollock and Rick Jillings for this not to be missed evening at Derbyshire Eco Centre, Porter Lane, Middleton by Wirksworth DE4 4LS. Cost: £3 Location: OS ref SK 285 554. Information 01629 533298 and booking: 01629 533038.

### Spring on the Canal

Spring has seen the return of the nesting swans George and Mildred to the canal near the station at Whatstandwell, and many more waterfowl are starting to nest. Listen out for the mewing call of the buzzards on sunny days; look for their rounded wings which they often hold in a shallow V when soaring. It is great to see the blossom of blackthorn and the leaves appearing on canal side trees.



*George and Mildred settle into their new home at Whatstandwell, very close to where they have nested for the last few years.*

*Photo: Editor*



*Time soon heals and nature takes over. The 'sink holes' that caused the canal to drain south of Leawood seem to have been successfully repaired.*

*Photo Top: DCC*

*Photo Bottom: Editor*



### **Water Levels**

We are pleased that the puddle clay leak repair work between the Derwent and railway aqueducts appears to have worked and canal levels are back to normal.

### **Volunteer work parties – Thank you**

The fortnightly team of FCC volunteers has been busy through the winter managing vegetation, trees, and clearing the water channel and silt traps. Thanks also to the *Birdswood* volunteers for maintaining the section of canal from Cromford to High Peak Junction.

### **New Interpretation boards**

Hopefully very soon the aging notice and interpretation boards will be replaced at Cromford and High Peak Junction. This has been a project jointly undertaken by FCC, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, DerwentWISE and DCC.

### **Tree work**

Over the winter a lot of time has been spent cutting back regrowth from tree stumps on the far bank of the canal between Crich Chase and Ambergate. Work has also been carried out by the DCC tree team at Calladine's winding hole, Ambergate, to remove fallen and overhanging willows.

### **Countryside Service on the canal**

Following a restructure in the Countryside Service, Patrick Mountain has moved to a post in the DCC Rights of Way team. Rick Jillings is responsible for the canal management with Mark Brailsford, John Thompson and Sean Kent as the field team who manage the Canal and High Peak Trail sites

### **Get in Touch**

You can contact DCC County Council Countryside Service at Middleton Top Visitor Centre on 01629 533298.



# WALKING THE WALK

by Jeff Biddle

## Jeff and Alison, regular canal walkers from Warwickshire, follow the FCC Walker's Guide

*Friday 3rd March. Langley Mill to Ambergate.*

### **"Just walking in the rain"**

My wife and I had booked in to the Greyhound Hotel in Cromford: recently refurbished and very acceptable. We had driven up from Warwickshire on the Thursday evening so that Alison could deliver me to Langley Mill on the Friday morning. Having walked a dozen or so canals, I had planned the weekend in reasonable detail. The one thing you cannot control very well is the weather. Friday 3rd March was wet.

But I had suitable clothing and would enjoy it come what may. And I was furnished with copies of the relevant pages of *A Walker's Guide* to the Cromford Canal by Michael Harrison and Valerie Roberts. This had been mailed to me by the most cheerful and helpful Victoria (whom by chance we would meet the following day).

Starting point found, I was adjacent to Lock 14. Aware that the initial stretch of the canal walk would be a whole 50 yards (before Langley Mill Boat Yard stops you getting into a stride) I had the welcome distraction of a working boat being craned off a low loader near the lock, for future use by Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association. Many of its members were there to witness the arrival and were pleased to share their plans. I understand the vessel needs considerable restoration, before

it can begin assisting with restoration! [Details of recent work in this area were covered in "Onwards and Upwards" in Portal 60; some of this is accessible by public footpath – Ed]



*Former Canal & River Trust work boat Pentland being launched at Langley Mill for use by ECPDA.*

*Photo: ECPDA*

The scene is very different when re-joining the canal off Stoney Lane. I was now to learn that a 'flash' is a flooded patch of ground of varying width and depth: today's conditions would ensure they were at their widest and deepest. Thirty minutes into the walk and I was wishing I had been wearing wellingtons. I was more than ankle deep in muddy water for long stretches. I feared the walk would turn into a yomp with trench foot. However, despite soaking socks and boots my feet did not become uncomfortable the whole day.

Without the Guide, sticking to the route of the Cromford would have been really testing. As it was I made an error after crossing the footbridge over the River Erewash, straying left of the intended line. I knew that several unmentioned ponds and a railway underbridge meant I must be off course. Back to the footbridge to study my soggy notes more closely. As related, these open fields would provide no clues as to the route of the once doughty canal. I walked the course of the Thames & Severn Canal in 2008 which had similar challenges. The contrast to a regular towpath however, with the occasional canal-connected landmark, is still compelling.



*Plenty of water both in the canal and on the towpath at the site of the dam placed across the canal by the Butterley Co to ensure sufficient water supply for their forges when they used to operate close to the canal here below Lock 7.*

*Photo: Author*

Solitude prevailed all the way to Ironville where a man was walking three dogs. By now, the canal had become properly recognisable. I wanted to consider the notes about features such as Pottery Lock and the deepening of the waterway a little further ahead, but by now I could not separate any of the pages

(I hope you are feeling sorry for me. If you are reading this in flaming June I won't get much sympathy!) The bridge signifying the Pinxton Arm, due to its elevated position, would leave me perplexed until I could read the book again. In the car park, day-trippers were eating sandwiches in their cars. You may deduce this was a rainy day.

I knew that Codnor Park to Ambergate was five or six miles. The canal for now at least took on impressive dimensions, helped by the Butterley Park Reservoir feeder which made a noteworthy photo. The details guiding the walker over Butterley Tunnel were crucial; it would be awful to have not seen the important ventilation shafts. (When will they be called into service once again?)



*A good flow of water coming from the Butterley Park feeder at the eastern portal of the tunnel.*

*Photo: Author*

Having walked the Union and Forth & Clyde canals in Scotland (2003), the references to Butterley and the Falkirk Wheel were poignant. Hammersmith Station looked ghostly on this grey day, but I've no doubt there is a band of supporters determined to return this stretch of railway to its former glory, as dedicated as the

heroes who make up the FCC [*Indeed yes, Midland Railway Butterley are hard at work on this line – Ed*]. Butterley Tunnel is indicative of the challenges facing the canal restoration; it is impossible to imagine the celebrations if [*when! – Ed*] it ever reopens.

The text promised the first sighting of a boat at Hartshay – well the iron skeleton of a former narrow boat, long since abandoned in another truncated stretch. This section was very enjoyable, helped by the improving weather. I splashed on through fields, which led to lengths of canal in water, then replaced by allotments, abandoned cars and industrial development. The site of the gauging narrows must be inspirational to the restoration plan.



*The old narrow boat at Hartshay, unusually 'in water' again!*

*Photo: Author*

I found I had a 30 minute wait at Ambergate Station until a train back to Cromford. Several other waiting passengers would have witnessed me splashing around like a 6-year old in the large puddles to loosen some mud from my boots and trousers. Before too long I would be at the hotel: a full hot bath, then various ales.

**Saturday 4th March. Ambergate to Cromford.**

### **“Good Day Sunshine”**

On a beautiful morning, Alison and I took the train to Ambergate, to walk the 5 miles back to Cromford. It looked too complicated to examine the route between Bull Bridge and Ambergate and I think it was Poyser’s Bridge where we joined the canal. In contrast to the wet weekday the day before, this bright Saturday made the path busy with walkers and wildlife. Best to come amongst a variety of water birds was a pair of tufted ducks, barely a few feet away from us. The woods and scenery were worth coming for. Homesford Tea Room and High Peak Junction were both worth visiting.

Along this stretch there are lots of historic buildings, bridges etc which make for an interesting journal: I always make a small album with notes and pictures of the canals I’ve walked. Our date did not coincide with Leawood Pumping Station in steam so maybe a reason to come back one day. Certainly there was more than enough water in the racing River Derwent to have topped up the canal.

On duty in the FCC shop in the Gothic Warehouse at Cromford was the lady who had posted the guide book a week earlier, a lovely coincidence. “Why don’t you write some notes about your walk for our magazine?” she said . . .

*Copies of A Walker’s Guide to the Cromford Canal are available from the shop or by post from FCC, Weighbridge Office, Gothic Warehouse, Mill Road, Cromford DE4 3RQ (£4.50 + £1 p&xp).*

# A DOUBLE 15TH

by Mike Kelley

## Happy 15th Anniversary FCC and DVMWHS

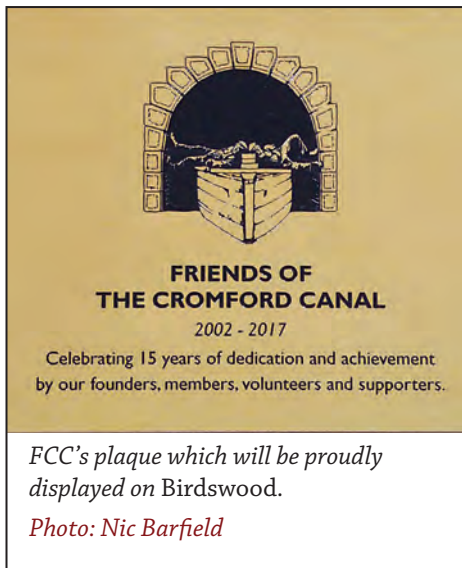


*Howard, Sheila and Mike holding their plaques.*

*Photo: Nic Barfield*

the restoration of this canal, by inviting founders members of the Friends to have a little party at Cromford Wharf.

It is good to have such milestones, if only to look back to see how far we have come. Here's to the next fifteen . . .



*FCC's plaque which will be proudly displayed on Birdswood.*

*Photo: Nic Barfield*

The Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site and the Friends of the Cromford Canal both celebrated their fifteenth year in March 2017. More than 1,000 people visited a special commemoration of the World Heritage Site's anniversary at Strutt's Centre in Belper, which included the FCC display stand along with forty other local organisations.

A group of stalwart *Birdswood* crew did their bit to say thank you to the FCC for 15 years of hard work devoted to

### **The Editor adds:**

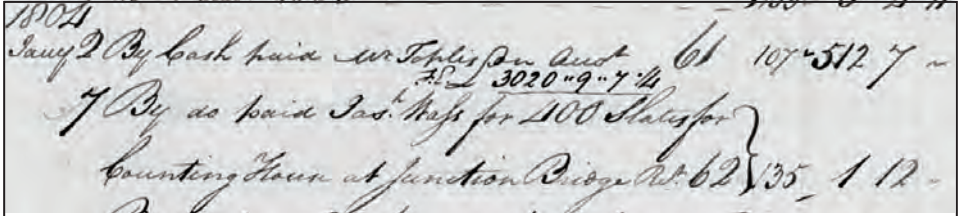
And Mike is too modest to mention that plaques were presented to himself and his late wife Val, and also to Howard and Sheila Smith, to be placed on *Birdswood* in recognition of their founding of the FCC and the work they have done subsequently.

The wording on Mike and Val's is particularly significant: it reads "In honour of Mike & Val Kelley without whom we would not be here".

# RAISING THE ROOF

by Grenville Smith

Grenville Smith is a member of the DerwentWISE quarry heritage group



The entry in the Cash Book for 7th January 1804 that led to this article.

The Cromford Canal Company's (CCCo) cash book 1802–1819\* (National Archives, RAIL 819/4) provides a detailed insight into the materials and services purchased to maintain and improve the infrastructure of the canal in the early years of operation. While reviewing this document for records of stone supply and masonry services, one entry for 7th January 1804 stood out as being different: “By Cash paid Joseph Wass for 400 Slates for Counting House at Junction Bridge, £1 12s”.

These were not slates as we would know them today but ‘stone slates’, a highly-localised solution to roofing

material that flourished briefly in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Virtually all the building stone extracted from the Lower Derwent Valley consists of ‘Ashover Grit’ that was deposited around 314 million years ago, when the area was a large, stable river delta. When those conditions began to change, in certain areas the very top level of that formation became thinly bedded or ‘fissile’ and, when carefully extracted and split, could be used as roofing material. One such area was south-east Riber around Bilberry Knoll, Coumbs Wood and Meadow Wood.

In that area, there are three enclosures called Far, Near and Square Slate Close and perhaps the name Hearthstone may also be related. Slate was advertised for sale from White Tor Quarry in 1788.

Joseph Wass was well known to the CCCo. In 1802 he leased land from Peter Nightingale that included the area covering the Lea Arm of the canal, including the responsibility to complete its construction. The company paid Wass £100 in five instalments towards this



This stile post on Hearthstone Lane shows the raw ‘stone slate’ material that was available in the area to the south-east of Riber.

Photo: G. Smith



*A postcard from the early 20th century showing the stone slates still in place on the "Counting House" at the junction with the Pinxtan Arm, and close inspection shows where some broken ones have been patched with later Welsh slate, with a noticeable difference in thickness. Note the uneven sizes, arranged on the roof with the longest at the eaves and gradually reducing in length to the ridge, typical of this building style, as is a steeper than usual pitch to bear the weight.*

*Photo: FCC Archives*

venture and these payments are also shown in the cash book.

The Nightingale lease included the operation of three stone quarries at Lea Wood, Crabtree Knowle and also Coumbs Wood, where the slates almost certainly came from. The topmost material at a quarry site, known as 'overburden', must be removed to commence the stone 'getting' process and so it was beneficial if some of that material could be sold. A key characteristic of stone slates is their weight and the resultant difficulty of transport. It is relevant that the CCCo could transport the material on the canal to Junction Bridge at Ironville, effectively at no additional cost, as this material would not have been transported so far over land. The price paid by the company equates to 8s per hundred slates.

The coming of the canal spelt the end for stone slates due to the lightness, durability and low cost of Welsh slate that could now be transported economically. Joseph Wass' most notable building stone supply contract was for the new Derby Infirmary built between 1804 and 1808, for which he was paid £1,630. Various working difficulties meant that by 1810, all three of his quarries "could not be wrought to profit" and the lease on them was relinquished. He did, however, continue to operate the stone saw mill he built at Lea Bridge.

*\*The CCCo cash book 1802-1819 has now been transcribed by a team of FCC volunteers and the results compiled into a database for the FCC Archives. It is hoped that it will reveal other stories in the future - Ed.*

# FUTURE EVENTS

## Monday 15th May

*Chesterfield Canal and the Dawn Rose*  
An illustrated talk by John Lower  
7.30 at Ironville Church Hall

## Monday 22nd May

*Rescheduled FCC AGM*  
Followed by an engineering update by  
George Rogers  
7.30 at Ironville Church Hall

## Friday 26th May

*Cream Tea Cruise on Birdswood (see below)*  
Departs Cromford Wharf 1pm. Details  
from [birdswood.org](http://birdswood.org) or 07552 055455

## Monday 19th June

*Mr Brunton's Engine and the Fritchley  
Tramroad*  
A talk by Dieter Hopkin  
7.30 at Ironville Church Hall

## 26th–28th August

*IWA Festival of Water*  
The annual Festival of Water is coming  
to Ilkeston over the bank holiday when  
over 100 boats will be moored along  
the Erewash Canal. The FCC sales stand  
will be there so do drop in and say hello.  
Admission is free.

## Monday 18th September

*Pits in the Ashfield and Erewash area*  
A talk by David Amos  
7.30 at Ironville Church Hall

*Events at Ironville Church Hall (Casson  
Street, NG16 5NN) take place at  
7.30pm, with a raffle and tea/coffee and  
biscuits available in the interval. Entry to  
all except the AGM is £2.*

## 26th May Cream Tea Cruise on Narrowboat *Birdswood*

A two hour cruise departing from Cromford  
Wharf at 1pm with sandwiches and scones  
from Wheatcroft Café

**£12 each and booking is essential**



[www.birdswood.org](http://www.birdswood.org)  
07552 055 455  
[sales@birdswood.org](mailto:sales@birdswood.org)

## Volunteers Required for Narrowboat *Birdswood*

If you can spare at least one day a month  
and enjoy meeting new people please get in  
touch using the contact details below

**There are a variety of roles to fill**



[www.birdswood.org](http://www.birdswood.org)  
07552 055 455  
[recruitment@birdswood.org](mailto:recruitment@birdswood.org)

# LEAWOOD JOTTINGS

by Ian Yates

Another year has passed and we have already started the 2017 season. Due to Easter being late this year we got a bit disorientated and did not realise that the boiler tickets had run out. They run for about 13 months and in the previous year the tests were carried out in March so they would be needed in April this year. After a quick scramble around to contact with the boiler inspector, an inspection was arranged and after this was passed a steam test was carried out on 13th April which we again passed successfully. We now have the boilers for another year.

Some minor repairs were carried out to the boilers, namely the fitting of a proper blowdown valve to Boiler 43. It had only got a basic gate valve, not the quarter turn blowdown valve that is usual. We had acquired one some time ago, refurbished it and it has now been fitted and passed all the tests. We are also working on fitting the missing boiler bands; these have been made and painted but need a second coat. Painting is difficult at Leawood due to the damp atmosphere so this will be completed over the summer.

The engine is generally in good order but at the end of last year the bearings on the flap valve to the hot well outlet had failed. These are made of wood and had fallen apart. Two new wooden bearings were manufactured and after a bit of tweaking have been fitted in place and are ready for use. We are acutely aware that 'our' boat the *Duchess* needs some attention and it is our intention to sort this out as early in the year as we can.

Time passes quickly and with having to clean out and get coal delivered between steamings we soon run out of time. This is evident at the Easter and May Bank Holiday this year as we only have one working night (we work Mondays) between the two so luckily having two boilers we can run one then the other, allowing us to get coal in as well.

At Middleton Top, one of the condenser water tanks has sprung a leak and after a visit we have decided to line it with a pond liner. This tank was not original, being installed to allow for condenser water to run round after the cooling pond was filled in, but it still needs looking at. Again this will be done as soon as time permits.

Hopefully this year will be another good one and we look forward to seeing as many visitors as possible.

## Leawood Steaming and Horse Days

Members will know that every day Leawood Pump is in steam (noon to 5pm), *Birdswood* is pulled by her trusty horse Chelsea, offering one-way or return trips, with the chance to see the pump working whilst the boat turns round. Why not make a day of it?

### This year's dates are as follows:

3rd & 4th June  
2nd July  
5th & 6th August  
27th & 28th August  
16th & 17th September  
7th & 8th October  
28th & 29th October



# THE PORTLAND PROJECT

by Andy Moon

## A transformation has taken place near Portland Basin



*The entrance to Portland Basin, once almost invisible beneath tree growth, has been transformed. The two large mounds of earth are destined to become wildlife islands.*

*Photo: Martyn Taylor-Cockayne*

A team of local volunteers has been doing a superb job clearing the canal at the formerly overgrown entrance to Portland Basin, where the canal widened out to allow boats to enter and leave the basin. Work began in January but stopped on 24th March due to the breeding season. Work will resume there at the end of September.

Teams of volunteers worked at least three days a week, and part of the success may have been due to them being provided with bacon or sausage cobs for their efforts!

The purpose of the work was to get water to the lower section as this was stagnant; all the water was flowing down the sluice into the Erewash rather than along the final length of canal to the old railway bridge.

As a result of the work, water voles are now regularly seen where they have never been seen before, as well as much other wildlife – a stunning and rewarding result for all the hard work. If you have not visited there recently, you will be amazed at the improvement.



*Water voles now frequent the area.*

*Photo: Jim Henderson*

Progress of the work and wonderful photographs of the local wildlife can be seen on the 'Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Res' Facebook page.

# WORDSEARCH

by Vix Wilding

## Can you find all of the words in the lists below?

It has been suggested that Portal is far too serious and should include more light-hearted 'fun' features. So, Vix has compiled this word search based on and around the canal: no prizes, just to offer you a challenge. Please let the

Editor know what you think: do you like features like this; would you like to see more; do you have any other suggestions; and, importantly, would you be willing to compile something?

Have fun!

W L G A E L S A R R A M W W  
A O C V L E E H D Y Z H J F  
C K L R W S G R E T A P O D  
W L W O T W D C G R R X W R  
D A N O F M I W F L E X H O  
O O O T A K R K F T E V E F  
O C O I G C B M M N T P A M  
W H X S A I H O G A N F T O  
S E W Q G H G D O W U V C R  
D L J W K C I J X S L V R C  
R S P Q L B E G T R O L O L  
I E A N E A W S U X V B F V  
B A X Z Y D W I X B Z A T C  
X S M S B T L Y X I S X S J

Arraslea  
Birdswood  
Chelsea  
Coal  
Coots  
Cromford

Dabchick  
Swan  
Volunteer  
Weighbridge  
Wharf  
Wheatcrofts

