

THE PORTAL

Issue 63 - Winter 2017

Price £1.00 - Free to Members



Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608

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Front Cover

Birdswood is professionally and efficiently lifted onto the 'peninsular' at Cromford Wharf by Walkers of Tuxford. *Photo: Sean Dodds*

Back Cover

Before being lifted out, *Birdswood's* floor (large steel plates!) had to be unscrewed and lifted (centre) for the MCA inspection, after which the hull base had to be painted before the floor was replaced and cleaned. *Photos: Hugh Potter and Mike Kelley*

The aims and objectives of the Friends of the Cromford Canal



The restoration, reconstruction, preservation and maintenance of the Cromford Canal, its associated buildings, towing path, structures and craft and the conservation of its natural character as a navigable inland waterway system for the benefit of the public.

EDITORIAL

by Hugh Potter

A Busy Few Weeks



It's been a busy few weeks leading up to the publication of this issue of *Portal*, with Discovery Days (page 20) followed immediately by getting *Birdswood* out of the water

on 1st November for her biennial Maritime & Coastguard Agency inspection. I'm glad to say that both went well. Discovery Days were graced with pleasantly unseasonal weather (ie it wasn't cold and wet with a howling wind), and on 6th November the MCA gave *Birdswood* a clean bill of health for her out-of-water survey (she still has to pass her in-water examination later this month, so do please wish her well).

As the boat lift occurred right on the copy date for *Portal*, there was no time for an article, but you will see photographs of the dramatic event on the covers. The boat is due to be craned back in on 20th November, so if you are reading this before then, do come along to watch – from the car park side of the wharf please. If this issue has arrived too late then we'll be reporting on it in the next *Portal* along with how the final MCA inspection went.

In addition to this regular 36-page *Portal*, there are a further eight pages that have taxed the brains of both myself and my wonderful layout designer CJ. These are included with this mailing and refer to the EGM and next year's AGM. Both are important documents in the life of the charity that is the FCC, so please do read them.

The Value of Birdswood

There are some who are curious as to why we appear to be concentrating all our efforts

at the Cromford end, with the very public face of *Birdswood*, and yet are putting most 'restoration' effort into the Langley Mill end. Well, any extension at Langley Mill will be immediately accessible to boats from the main system and in view of the economic benefits to be gained from restoration at the southern end, there are likely to be far more grants available. It would be wonderful to be thinking about extending navigation south of Leawood at the same time, but there are major engineering and environmental issues and insufficient manpower (ie volunteers) to take this on at the moment (unless you are offering . . .). In the meantime, the money raised by the 40-plus volunteers who keep *Birdswood* running is available to finance land purchase, planning permission and restoration further south. Put simply: no *Birdswood*, no major restoration anywhere on the canal (unless one of you has won the lottery . . . if so, please get in touch!).

Pots & Pix

Switching hats, as Archivist, I would like to invite you to the 13th annual Pots & Pix Exhibition at Ambergate (details on page 34) on either Saturday 25th or Sunday 26th November. There will be a chance to see a reshewing of the new 'Then & Now' slide presentation featuring the canal within the World Heritage Site, along with other items from the extensive Archive Collection, and the FCC sales stall will be there too.

If you don't make it to that, may I take the opportunity now to wish you all the very best for the festive season, and I look forward to seeing you out and about on the canal in the New Year.

Copy Date for Spring Portal is 23rd February.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by John Baylis BEM

FCC's Chairman keeps you up to date



In the previous two issues of *Portal* I discussed the problems with the last Annual General Meeting and made some suggestions for the future.

The trustees have improved the cash holding and banking facilities and the compilation of the accounts; with these improvements we intend to keep with having the AGM in April. However, in order to accurately follow the Charitable Incorporated Organisation constitution and allow the whole membership to vote for trustees and the accounts we need to start in this *Portal* with a notice of the AGM, a request for trustee nominations, and the minutes of the last AGM. Then in the Spring 2018 *Portal* we will enclose the accounts, the auditors' report for 2017 and the list of nominations for trustees to be elected; a voting form will be included for members not attending the AGM to send proxy or postal votes.

The opportunity for all members to vote at the last AGM was welcomed by many members and was agreed to be more democratic. When we prepared the constitution for the CIO using the Charity Commission draft we left out the details of the postal voting section as we had not needed to use it previously and, unless we organised *Portal* to fit in with the CIO programme, it could cost over £500 in postage and printing. In view of the postponement of last year's AGM and the need to notify all members, the trustees have decided that we should now include the detailed requirements of postal voting in the CIO constitution.

The addition of Clauses to the

Constitution is covered in Clause 28 and the trustees felt that Sub-clause 1(b) was the most appropriate; this states that changes to the constitution may be made "by a resolution passed by a 75% majority of votes cast at a general meeting of the members of the CIO". Sent to you with this *Portal* is a Notice of the Extraordinary General Meeting, the resolution in full and proxy form for voting. If this resolution is adopted, the revised constitution will be sent to the Charity Commission for its approval, in time for postal voting at the AGM.

Birdswood is proving to be good for tourism in Derbyshire, being listed as the Number One attraction in Cromford, and has been awarded a Certificate of Excellence by TripAdvisor. My congratulations to Vix and the crew of *Birdswood*. During November *Birdswood* will be craned out for the Maritime & Coastguard Agency biennial survey ready for Santa Specials in December. Whilst *Birdswood* is out of the water the canal level can be lowered and Beighton Contractors will be installing the new canal feeder control in the Arkwright Mills' yard.

Finally, my thanks and best wishes to all volunteers and members of the Friends of the Cromford Canal for Christmas and the New Year.



Birdswood about to be craned out on 1st November.

BIRDSWOOD & CROMFORD SHOP

by Vix Wilding

An update from the boat operations and shop manager



More income and more volunteers at Cromford

It seems such a long time since I was writing about *Birdswood* in the last issue. Over the last three months, operations have carried on as normal and passenger loadings have been increasing. The income is set to meet our targets and even exceed them. *Birdswood* was lifted out on 1st November for a full hull inspection to take place on 6th November. Subject to this certification, the volunteers will be working together to get her bottom repainted and put her back into the water on the 20th. *Birdswood* is having a roof repaint as well. Keep your fingers crossed this all goes to plan and that I'm left with enough time to get her cleaned before the Santa Specials!

Volunteer Recruitment

Rob Sutherland, our temporary, part-time volunteer recruitment officer, has completed his 9-month position and has made fantastic progress with developing our team of volunteers. Every year we lose some people due to personal circumstances and we are usually able to keep a balance of new members so as not to struggle.

This year, due to Rob's efforts, we have increased the number of regular volunteers on the boat and in the shop. He was also successful in obtaining contact details for five work party helpers and three engineers.

With the very obvious benefits of having additional help I asked the trustees to consider employing Rob for longer. Thankfully they agreed to continue his employment for

a further 12 weeks and have suggested that he obtains grant funding to fund himself for a further year. The next few months will be focused on finding professionally skilled volunteers to assist with the retail, grant funding and event coordinating. A grant has been identified and the application has been submitted.



Pauline Eversden.

One of our success stories is Pauline Eversden, formerly McAllen. She joined the boat crew nearly two years ago and was soon performing additional tasks to assist with the administration. Pauline joined the Boat Committee and has increased her knowledge behind the scenes and has made further steps to involve herself in the core management of *Birdswood*. At present she has become the Financial Coordinator for the business finances relating to *Birdswood*. The trustees have also asked her to attend the main FCC committee meetings.

I work alongside Pauline every week and she continues to increase her work load and is an asset to the charity. She discusses

management issues with me and has read through grant applications. I am now able to take annual leave with the knowledge that the day to day tasks are in Pauline's capable hands. This is important to me and my family and it is a great relief to finally be able to relax. No task is too great or too small for Pauline. She has given me a new lease of life in the role and encourages me to develop the business further. If we had a volunteer of the year award, I would vote for Pauline.

Event Coordinator

Do you know anyone who may be interested in helping coordinate two events held at

Cromford Wharf during the year? They are themed events and I do have contacts already but occasionally these are unavailable. The beginning of June is usually a 'Once Upon a Time' theme where I've previously broadly based our event on literacy in general. Then at the beginning of August there is the Scarecrow Festival which is linked to farming. If you or anyone you know could help with one or more of these events please get in touch. Fresh ideas are welcomed - or you may have a suitable stall that could attend? There is no charge, but donations and raffle prizes are always welcomed.

BUTTERLEY TUNNEL: A CURIOUS EXPERIENCE by Hugh Potter

Vix Wilding discovered this wonderful tale on www.irishwaterwayshistory.com

Joseph Tatlow was a director, later manager, of the Midland Great Western Railway of Ireland and the Dublin & Kingstown Railway and wrote of his experiences in *Fifty Years of Railway Life in England, Scotland and Ireland*, published in 1920. But his railway career started in Derby.

Born in 1851, he started work in the Midland Railway office at Derby in 1867 but after 18 months he had a prolonged illness during which time he lived with an uncle in Pye Bridge. So it was in 1869 that he "had a curious experience". In his own words . . .

I was then under eighteen, growing fast, and when convalescing the country life and country air did me lasting good. Though a colliery district the valley is not devoid of rural beauty; to me it was pleasant and attractive and I wandered about at will.

One day I had a curious experience. In my walk I came across the Cromford Canal where it enters a tunnel that burrows beneath coal mines. At the entrance to the tunnel a canal barge lay. The bargees asked would I like to go through with them? "How long is it?"

said I, and "how long will it take?" "Not long," said bargee, "come on!" "Right!" said I.

The tunnel just fitted the barge, scarcely an inch to spare; the roof was so low that a man lying on his back on a plank placed athwart the vessel, with his feet against the roof, propelled the boat along. This was the only means of transit and our progress was slow and dreary. It was a journey of Cimmerian darkness; along a stream fit for Charon's boat. About halfway a halt was made for dinner, but I had none. Although I was cold and hungry the bargees' hospitality did not include a share of their bread and cheese but they gave me a drink of their beer.

The tunnel is two miles long, and was drippingly wet. Several hours passed before we emerged, not into sunshine but into the open, under a clouded sky and heavy rain which had succeeded a bright forenoon. I was nearly five miles from my uncle's house, lightly clad, hungry and tired. To my friends ever since I have not failed to recommend the passage of the Butterley tunnel as a desirable pleasure excursion.

STRATEGIC RESTORATION COMMITTEE

by George Rogers

Links with other organisations and restoration principles



It has been an interesting couple of months for the Strategic Restoration Committee, with three areas of development that will be important in shaping the strategy in the upcoming months and years.

Chesterfield Canal Engineering Committee

To start, some months ago, I read in *Cuckoo* (the Chesterfield Canal Trust magazine) of the formation of the Chesterfield's 'Engineering Committee'. Much of their remit appeared to be very similar to the work of the SRC, and as such I thought there would be lessons that could be learned by both sides if we occasionally linked up to exchange ideas. Many of the organisations and personnel in external agencies that we deal with are the same as those that Chesterfield deal with, and so linking the groups will give us the opportunity to present a common voice and a consistent message.

Additionally, we can learn from the experiences of dealing with the organisations and be confident that they too are being consistent across the canal restoration schemes. Whilst it is recognised that the projects are separate entities and we don't suddenly intend to ask any members to volunteer their time elsewhere, there is the potential for sharing resources at a higher level that may make options feasible to both organisations that wouldn't otherwise be available.

I have therefore had initial conversations with Chesterfield, and they are very enthusiastic about linking up in this way.

They've started copying me in to various communications about the next stages of their own projects, and it is amazing how much similarity there is. The only downside at the moment is that both groups have set their meetings for the same day of the month!

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

Secondly, John Barker and I had a very interesting meeting with a representative from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Members who have followed the progress of the Cromford Canal for a number of years will be aware that the discussions between ourselves and DWT have been rather limited and the relationship has been strained between what most have perceived as the conflicting goals of the two organisations. One of my highest priorities when I took on running the SRC was to build a working relationship with DWT so that we could understand how to progress.

I want to be realistic here. DWT are clearly not going to give us *carte blanche* to reinstate the canal with no regards to their interests in the ecology of the countryside in which it runs. Indeed, that would be irresponsible of them and against the interest of themselves and their members. However, they are open to restoration, if it can be shown to be beneficial to the environment – and they are prepared to help us to understand what the impacts are and what we can do to mitigate the negative impacts whilst promoting more positive impacts. This is a big challenge, but I think we are moving towards a greater understanding of the challenge and how to approach it.

What the meeting also brought home to us was the importance of the FCC, and particularly the SRC, expanding its skill base in assessing, understanding and designing for environmental considerations. At the

moment, the SRC's expertise is fundamentally of an engineering bias and so we tend to consider engineering obstacles rather than environmental ones – whereas we need to be considering both in order to come to balanced judgements. If anyone has any experience in this field and is interested in getting involved, it would be brilliant to hear from you (my contact details are at the beginning of this issue).

Restoration Principles

Finally, we started a discussion at an SRC meeting centred around defining the 'Restoration Principles' that underpin our approach to restoration. This is something I have been working towards for several months, and it is interesting to note that it was asked for by DWT.

The point of the Restoration Principles is to set out the standard approach that we will follow when making decisions about the restoration: what the route will be, what would constitute valid reasons for deviating from the original route, what economic considerations will be taken into account etc. Progressing this to a final set of principles will focus the work

of the SRC and ensure that all organisations that we interact with understand what our principles are and, for the project overall and the individual elements, how we have used those principles in developing the schemes we aim to deliver.

The scope is very broad and we are currently drafting a first text to put before the trustees in the near future. Once the draft is approved by the trustees we will then be releasing it to the members for you to have your say – it is, after all, your project too.

As ever, I finish with a general plea for anyone with an interest in getting involved to get in touch. Last issue I specifically advertised for a geotechnical engineer and a record gatherer – I'm glad to say I had a volunteer come forward for the latter role but I am still looking for a geotechnical engineer (and many other roles besides). Please don't be shy, and please don't feel that by getting in touch you are committing yourself – we will talk about how you could be involved and if you decide not to pursue it then there will be no hard feelings!



Adults only
Christmas Boat Trip

Departure from Cromford Wharf (DE4 3RO)
3-4pm on Tuesday 19th December

Includes food & a drink
 Carols onboard sung by a local singer (feel free to join in!)
 Return back to the Wharf to a serenade of Handbell Ringers (indoors if the weather's bad)

Booking Advisable
 07552 055 455
 sales@birdswood.org
 www.birdswood.org


Only £8 Each

The main sponsor of the Friends of the Cromford Canal is the Friends of the Cromford Canal. CAMC BELIEF Foundation Collection



VOLUNTEER CREW
 NEEDED FOR HISTORIC NARROW BOAT

BIRDWOOD



Birdswood is a 1938 built ex-buttoy now owned and operated by Friends of the Cromford Canal

Our enthusiastic and friendly team of volunteers help to run public services on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Weekends plus private charters.

All profits go towards our long term campaign to restore the beautiful and historic Cromford Canal.

If you can spare at least one day a month give Vix a call

07552 055 455
 No experience needed - full training given

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

by Yvonne Shattower

An Update on People and Events



Some of us are just recovering from another busy weekend at the Cromford Discovery Days; it is hard work, but rewarding to meet existing members and join up new ones.

I would like to give an important reminder to our members who pay their subscription by standing order. During 2018, we will be closing our Bank Account with HSBC. As a result, any existing standing orders for this bank will not be valid; consequently your subscription will not reach us, and your membership could lapse. Some of you have already completed a new mandate for our CAF account, but there are many members who have not. If you have not yet returned the form sent to you earlier

this year, please do so now so that your membership will continue to be covered. Many of the HSBC standing orders were for previous membership amounts, so please note that the subscription is now £14 for a couple and £9 for single membership. As always, if you have any queries please contact me at the contact details at the front of the *Portal*.

Recently we had a very interesting talk by Helen Monk at our monthly meeting at Ironville Church Hall. Her subject was *RMS Titanic*, and she described the circumstances of the disaster and how 'one thing led to another' in the sinking of this magnificent vessel. Our list of talks for the early months of 2018 is on page 34 of this *Portal*; why not come along and hear one of them? Admission is only £2, there is a small bar and a raffle as well as tea and coffee in the interval, and it gives you an opportunity to hear about the latest Friends' news and meet some of the committee. The numbers attending these talks have dwindled over the last few months, which is disappointing, so please come along and make the efforts of your committee worth their while.

Much as I like Christmas in December rather than October, the shops are getting full of Christmas items. Don't forget that we have our own attractive Christmas cards for sale at the shop in Cromford (and at the monthly meetings – another reason to come along) as well as books and other items ideal for presents. Are you debating over what to get for the person who has everything? How about a subscription to the Friends of the Cromford Canal? They will get four copies of *Portal* so your present will last the whole year.

Our membership continues to grow, and we give a warm welcome to the following new members who have joined us since the last edition of *The Portal*:

Mr R Gilbert, Derby
Mr C John, Melrose
Mr N D Neale, Matlock
Mr S Thackery, Nottingham
Mr D Hancock, Lichfield
Mr C Howes, Chatteris
Mr K Simpson, Ilkeston
Mr & Mrs Federolf, Ripley
Ms S Magee, Belper
Mr & Mrs C C Walls, Nottingham
Mr A Bolton, Matlock
Mr & Mrs Brockway, Ripley
Mr P R Rodgers, Matlock.

Best wishes for Christmas and 2018.

WILLIAM SMITH AND THE CROMFORD CANAL

by Grenville Smith

The ‘Father of English Geology’ visited our canal in 1794 and met Benjamin Outram



William Smith.

Credit: Oxford University Museum of Natural History

William Smith (1769–1839) is often referred to as the Father of English Geology due to his pioneering work on stratification and geological mapping. His achievements were brought to the attention of the present generation with the publication in 2001 of the very readable book *The Map That Changed The World* by Simon Winchester.

Smith travelled extensively on professional engagements throughout his life, by some estimates as much as 10,000 miles per year, no mean feat considering this was all done by chaise (a two or four wheeled carriage) or on foot, with some journeys being made by steam packet and the emerging railway network in later years.

Smith’s earliest recorded visit to our region was in 1794 and is detailed in a biography written by his nephew John Phillips published in 1844. While working as

the engineer for the Somerset Coal Canal he embarked upon “a tour of inquiry and observation regarding the construction, management, and trade of other navigations” during which he “met with Benjamin Outram the engineer of the Cromford Canal who took us into the tunnel at Butterley Park, then making: not a stone of the great ironworks since established was then laid.” This date seems to be at variance with the currently accepted early history of Butterley.

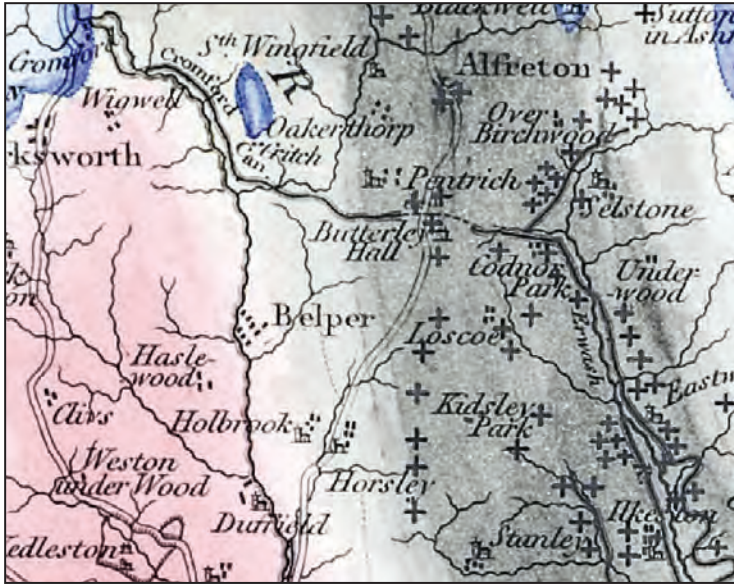
Other ‘famous names’ he also met or collaborated with in those early years were John Farey, author of the 1811–17 volumes *General View of the Agriculture and Minerals of Derbyshire*, and John Rennie, whose designs for several London bridges were constructed by Edward Banks and included the use of Derbyshire stone, almost certainly from Whatstandwell.

The First Geological Map

In 1815 Smith published the first geological map of Britain, measuring 6ft by 9ft. This excerpt shows the Cromford and Erewash canals; the colours depict areas of limestone and coal measures and the crosses indicate coal mines.

In 1821, he undertook a survey that “passed across the coalfield of Nottingham and Derby by the Butterley iron works to the limestone hill of Critch thence by the dale of Matlock and the cliffs of Hathersage and Bamford Edge to Peniston”.

Perhaps the best documented visit of William Smith to Derbyshire occurred in the autumn of 1838, on one of his last professional engagements before his death the following year. Following a disastrous fire, the architect Charles Barry had been



The Cromford and Erewash canals as portrayed on Smith's map of 1815.

Credit: Oxford University Museum of Natural History

appointed to design and rebuild a new Palace of Westminster complex and in order to select the best building stone for this project, he was accompanied for three months on a gruelling nationwide inspection tour of quarries and buildings by Smith, Henry de la Beche, a geologist from the Ordnance Survey, and Charles H. Smith, a master mason and expert on building stone.

Once this inspection tour was publicised in the press, many letters were sent from industrialists and landowners offering supplies of stone from their own estates. One example of this is a letter to William Smith on 6th September 1838 from Thomas Brailsford, a gentleman and JP from Lincolnshire who wrote:

“I see by the London papers that Mr Barry the Architect and Mr de la Beche are visiting the North to inspect the several quarries and select a stone for the Houses of Parliament, and that they intend to avail themselves of your information in forwarding their pursuit. I am induced to trouble you with this letter to point out a quarry belonging to Mr Heathcote at Stancliffe Hall, Darley Dale, near Matlock, in the event of Mr Barry not having hitherto had

his attention called to it. It is in the beautiful stratum of White Gritstone which belongs to the Millstone Grit of which Chatsworth and Buxton are built, and is perhaps the best sample that can be found in the Kingdom of that particular vein, being superior to the quarry from which the stone was taken to build the above places. It works remarkably free, is spangled with silvery mica, and is without a spot or tinge from Iron or any other colouring matter; blocks of any dimensions may be raised and it is distant I believe from the Cromford Canal (which communicates with the Trent) about six or seven miles.

“I should wish to refer Mr Barry to the Railway station house, and a free Grammar school lately erected at Birmingham as specimens of the stone.

“I have to apologize for thus troubling you, but Mr Barry will of course wish to see all the quarries, and select the best and cheapest stone.”

What Brailsford did not state was that his very recently deceased wife was a direct relative of the Heathcote family who owned and ran the Stancliffe estate at that time. Stancliffe Hall has had various uses in recent

years, but the stone is still in demand and some extraction takes place on an infrequent campaign basis, most recently in July this year. For the Birmingham station project in 1837, Stancliffe quarry was represented by Jesse Rutherford, a quarryman and stone merchant from Wingerworth. As reported in the Derby Mercury on 22nd February, a special wagon, capable of carrying 25 tons, was provided by the contractors to transport the stone from Darley Dale to the Cromford Canal wharf. The station building can still be seen when travelling to or from Birmingham New Street from the north.

William Smith's journal for this stone selection tour does not provide much detail but does describe the relentless travel schedule that the four men followed during those three months. The journal entries for the visits made in Derbyshire are:

Saturday 15th September 18

Saw different kinds of Grit Freestones used in Sheffield, and the Millstone Grit rocks on Derbyshire Moors in high cliffs and examined Freestone of Chatsworth hall; that of Lin top quarry in the wood and the state of the stone in Haddon Old Hall and to Bakewell.

Sunday 16th September

At Bakewell. [Although this entry might indicate a day of rest, that wasn't the case. It would have been spent inspecting buildings or quarries locally. The men worked or travelled seven days a week during the tour.]

Monday 17th September

From Bakewell to Darley Dale Freestone quarries, examined stone therein & nature of the rocks. Through Matlock and Cromford and at Hotstandall [Whatstandwell] Bridge examined those quarries and saw others of the same kind of stone at several places on the line of the Cromford Canal, all of Millstone Grit. Examined stone of Belper Church & numerous buildings all of the fine grained stone from Hungry Hill quarry 1½ miles east, went to that quarry & thence to Duffield bank quarries and to Derby.

Tuesday 18th September

In Derby examining stone in the Churches & several Public buildings & to the great quarries of coarse stone at Little Eaton and thence to Morley Moor quarries of fine grained stone used in new Bank of Derby.

Wednesday 19th September

From Derby through Alfreton to Hardwick Hall. Examined stone thereof and that of the large quarries east and west sides of Mansfield. To Southwell and examined stone of the Collegiate Church, remarkably good, quarried in the vicinity of Bolsover which quarries we had not visited, went on to Newark late.

Remarkably, some of these events still resonate today. The physical state of the Palace of Westminster continues to make headlines and the decision on whether to move MPs and Peers out of their respective houses while refurbishment takes place is one that was also wrestled with 180 years ago. Curzon Street Station in Birmingham is now expected to get a new lease of life as offices and a visitor centre as part of the HS2 development in the city.



Curzon Street Station, Birmingham, was built with stone carried on the Cromford Canal.

Credit: Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

MANAGING A PROJECT

by Mike Kelley

Managing Birdswood involves a huge amount of organisation

During my working life, managing projects was part of my job. As Training Manager for Middle Eastern and African oilfields I was tasked with setting up, equipping and staffing several training centres in order for the local workforce to be able to run, operate and maintain their oilfields. When I retired, I thought: that's it, no more projects to disturb my sleep at night. How wrong I was.

the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) – each one almost a project in its own right! After obtaining a grant from DEFRA I was also responsible for making sure we met their criteria.

We have now carried more than 25,000 passengers, TripAdvisor has awarded us its Certificate of Excellence this year and the public reviews have been so good that we



Mike Kelley, in signature bowler hat, at the official launch of Birdswood with FCC Patron Julian Richards

When 'project' *Birdswood* came along I became Project Manager for it. Initially I was also Operations Manager but then Vix Wilding came along she took over the operations side from me; and what a wonderful job she has done. What's the difference? Well 'operations' looks after the daily bookings, crew rotas, stocks, advertising innovations, new volunteer recruits, financial takings etc. 'Project' looks after, initially, the funding, then seeking a raft of permissions to be obtained from Derbyshire County Council (who own the canal), Derbyshire Dales District Council, Natural England, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and

are now Number 1 out of 9 attractions in the Cromford area.

Birdswood's success is undoubted, but it comes at a price. Thousands of hours are spent by many volunteers to keep her running, also maintenance of both boat and canal is expensive, but the running of *Birdswood* raises the profile of the canal, along with the aims of the Friends to restore this canal, to a degree that nothing else could.

The standards set by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency are rigorous and have to be met in order for them to issue the boat's licence. For example just look at this agenda,

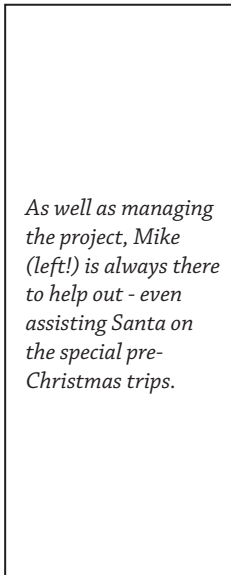


FCC regularly takes part in the annual Scarecrow Festival organised by Cromford Mills. A Project Manager has to be willing to dress for the job.

we have to strip out all tables and seats in the boat; (ii) All the heavy steel deck plates have to be lifted up; (iii) The hull inside and out has to be scraped; (iv) The boat has to be craned out of the water; (v) MCA come to inspect her; (vi) The hull inside and out has to be painted; (vii) She is then craned back into the water; (viii) All base plates, seats and tables need to be fastened back in place; (ix) MCA return to inspect her. Then if all is well we are ready for the Santa Specials.

Yes, managing a project is demanding and at times stressful, but the rewards can be very satisfying. Satisfying, because not only are we raising the profile of the FCC, money is coming in towards that aim. Some of the income from *Birdswood* will go towards the proposed purchase of the land to extend the canal at Langley Mill and the future rebuilding of the canal there. Some have been heard to say 'We could obtain funding from grants without having to have the expenses of *Birdswood*'. Maybe, but I doubt it. And without *Birdswood* the profile of the FCC would not be where it is today; namely very high in the public image from the thousands who see this boat in operation.

all of which is to take place throughout November: (i) Straight after the annual celebration of Discovery Days Festival (an event we have taken part in for 15 years now)



As well as managing the project, Mike (left!) is always there to help out - even assisting Santa on the special pre-Christmas trips.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR PRESIDENT

by Mike Kelley

Brian Blessed is to receive an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Derby

All of the 25,000-plus passengers who have had the pleasure of a cruise on *Birdswood* will have heard our President, the actor Brian Blessed, making the required recorded safety announcement advising passengers of safety procedures.

Brian has been our President for more than nine years now, therefore the FCC were delighted to learn that he is to receive an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Derby at its annual awards ceremony in Buxton. The award recognises Brian's work to promote

conservation in the region, including the Monsal Trail in the Derbyshire Peak District. He will receive his award alongside the University's graduating students at the Awards Ceremony in the Devonshire Dome on 11th November.

Brian has visited us twice, once to take part in a sponsored walk and once to receive a cheque for the FCC at Sawmills Village Hall, where he went on to deliver a wonderful and delightfully entertaining evening for us. One day we hope to get him to come along for a trip on *Birdswood*.



Brian Blessed talks to local residents at Sawmills in 2010.

ILKESTON WATER FESTIVAL

by Mike Harrison

A successful weekend on the Erewash Canal



The Inland Waterways Association has been holding a major waterway festival most years since 1950 when the first took place at Market Harborough. These events were held at sites all over the waterway system and steadily increased in size until they became a major undertaking. The FCC sales stand has attended on several occasions and on the whole they were very worthwhile both in raising much-needed funds and spreading the word (but don't mention the mud bath at St Ives in 2007!). We won the prize for the best non-commercial sales stall at Burton on Trent in 2009 and Red Hill in 2011.

Eventually, however, the expense of staging the event became unsustainable and this situation came to a head in 2013 when the festival at Watford was a financial disaster for the IWA.

This called for a rethink, and since 2014 smaller IWA events have been organised. This year, over the August bank holiday weekend, what is now known as the IWA Festival of Water was held on Gallows Inn Playing Fields adjacent to the Erewash Canal at Ilkeston.

This turned out to be a successful and very pleasant event for all concerned. The weather was ideal, over 100 boats attended and the FCC again put on a good display. These smaller events are free for the public to enter and good crowds attended on all three days. There was also the traditional evening entertainment for boat crews, campers and stallholders. The IWA did not charge canal societies for their stalls and also divided the proceeds of the festival raffle between the FCC and our friends at the neighbouring stalls of the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association and the Derby & Sandiacre Canal Society.

It is worth remembering that, in common with many other canals, the fact that the Erewash Canal is still navigable through Ilkeston up to the Cromford Canal at Langley Mill is entirely due to the efforts of volunteers. Also, without the support of the IWA in the early years, this great volunteer movement would never have got going on the scale that it has and there would be very few navigable canals in Britain today.

TUNNEL MUSINGS - 4

by David Ratner

The problems continue at Butterley Tunnel in 1916



The distortion between the right and left hand sides of the inlet culvert from Butterley Reservoir could have been caused by the fall described by Inspector Winson.

In the previous article (*Portal 55*) we read that the repairs to Butterley Tunnel in the vicinity of the Wide Hole had been completed despite setbacks both physical and legal. But the tunnel wasn't done with Midland Railway yet. The previous tunnel inspection had been done by Inspector Winson on the 19th July 1916.

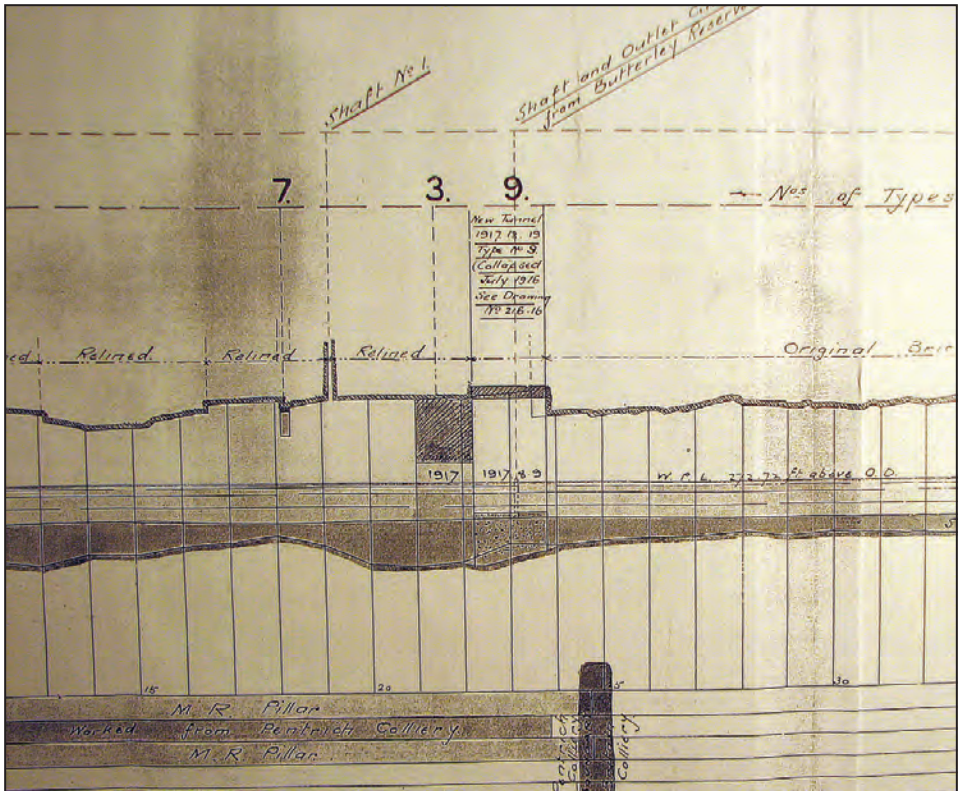
On 26th July 1916, Inspector Winson reports "I beg to inform you that on making my weekly inspection, I found a block had occurred at 22 chains 30ft [from the] west end, the north wall having given way and also the arch up to the centre; the debris is composed of bricks and bind. On going in from the east end we found the collapse extended to 23 chains 13ft 6in; the portion which is collapsed comprises about 50ft in length. There was no sign of any movement of this place on the 19th. The position of the Butterley Reservoir outlet culvert is at 23 chains 10ft, so it is just overlapped by the collapse. I mention this because of the necessity of keeping up the supply of water to the east end of the canal and the Pinxton portion."

H.J. Johnson (Superintendent) adds in his report that material had fallen out up to and above roof level and that the roof on the western side of the collapse had dropped about 1ft 6in. Above ground, Butterley were obliged to stop their shunting engines working over the weak place until further notice. The colliery records showed no working nearer than 22 chains (about ¼ mile).

At the surface, the collapse makes itself known. Inspector Winson reports "I noticed a further crack on our land near our No1 shaft, this is about 2ft away from the Butterley Co's Land Sale sidings and extends for about 20ft and also another small one near the one pointed out to you on Wednesday. I think it ought to be pointed out to Mr J. Wright as their heavy engines are occasionally working over this length." Mr. Godfrey Wright tells Johnson that "He had had the connection leading into the Land Sale siding fastened open, to prevent their engines working over this weak place."

The blockage had other implications. Inspector Winson is instructed to let water into the canal from Butterley Reservoir and does so on the afternoon of 5th August 1916. On the evening of the 6th he went to the east end of the tunnel to discover that from there to the penstock of Codnor Park Reservoir was completely covered in sewage, the colour of the water was blue/black and the stench was awful! He thought the sewage was from the Swanwick Sewage Farm and was caused by the draw-down from the Butterley valve. The MR thought it would be a good idea to get the Alfreton UDC surveyor and show him what a serious state of affairs has been brought about from turning sewage into Butterley Reservoir.

On 10th August 1916 a different name appears in the Midland Railway Engineer's



A longitudinal section of the tunnel dated 20th November 1919 showing the 1916 collapse that included the reservoir inlet and apparently showing a new tunnel having been constructed in 1917-19.

Office. A Mr H. Powell Miles informs James Briggs Esq that he's made arrangements for the repair of the tunnel:

"Stanks to be placed on either side of the collapse and the water pumped out, and I am trying to arrange with the Butterley Company for the use of one of their electrical centrifugal pumps, that company also supplying the power. The tunnel between No1 shaft and the collapse to be temporarily timbered up and also short distance between the western face of the tunnel and the shaft No1 where the old brickwork of the tunnel is apparently weak. The lower reaches on the eastern side of the tunnel are being filled up with water run from the Butterley reservoir as it has been

found possible to do this, and the Codnor Park reservoir is also being filled up from the Butterley reservoir in the same manner."

Sadly, at this point the available correspondence on this collapse peters out, but it would seem that MR are trying to find someone else to blame (Butterley?) as they ask to see mining reports which tell them that no coal workings had approach nearer than 22 chains.

Dave's previous articles about Butterley Tunnel were published in Portal 55, 47 and 45, all of which can be downloaded from the FCC website.

DISCOVERY DAYS

by Hugh Potter

Cromford Wharf came to life at the end of October



Queueing for the last public trip of the season on Birdswood. You can still book for Santa Specials in December though.

For over 10 years, FCC has been supporting the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site's Discovery Days. These began as a single day of events in 2005 and have gradually grown

so that this year they were spread over two weeks, with the highlight (for us at least) being two days of activities at and around Cromford Wharf on the last weekend in October.



Val Roberts and Mike Harrison have manned the FCC sales stand since the first Discovery Days. They are trying to retire, and just need someone to take over (trad costume not essential!). Volunteers please step forward.



The happy smiling team (it must be nearly all over . . .). Sukie, Gwen and Adrian, the World Heritage Site team who co-ordinate the events, and our own Meg and Jan who volunteer each year to steward the event at Cromford, offering brochures, information and advice to visitors over the weekend.

The exhibition inside the Gothic Warehouse featured top 'Rose & Castle' painter Jes Inglis, who comes all the way from Oswestry to support the weekend, along with his wife Lin who demonstrates peg weaving. Artist Peter Rodgers displayed a variety of his canal scenes, both originals and prints, whilst the FCC raised funds through its sales stand and tombola, and the archivist showed a slide presentation based on his new talk 'Then & Now on the Cromford Canal' that he gave in the Gothic Warehouse on the

previous Thursday.

Outside, in the very pleasant late October weather, the Manifold Valley Bygones Group displayed their stationary engines, a host of miniature traction engines chuffed about offering rides whilst the Nottingham Model Boat Club entertained with their sometimes accurate and sometimes bizarre range of boats and Peter Keating, as always, provided the musical soundtrack on his street organ.

A great weekend created by a great team of volunteers.



This chap was dead pleased to get a ride (well it was nearly Halloween) – he said he'd paid Charon but we had to tell him it was the Cromford not the Styx.

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

by Rick Jillings

Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service's Assistant Area Manager reports on the Cromford to Ambergate section

During autumn and winter there are fewer visitors to the canal and it is a less sensitive time for wildlife. This is the time that most of the practical canal management takes place. It looks like being a busy winter.

FCC Volunteer work parties – Thank you

The FCC volunteer team are doing a fantastic job protecting the canal banks from erosion using materials including coir rolls purchased with grant funding from DerwentWISE.

Winter tree work

To protect the canal structure we need to remove trees and woody growth from the canal bed. Unfortunately nature has taken hold and self-set trees are appearing in Gregory wide hole near Leashaw and at Calladine wide hole, Ambergate. Tree clearance will be from the land where possible but some willow and alders are established in the water channel and will need a boat to get to them. A winch will also be needed to remove roots to stop them from re-growing. Some work will be done by contractors but much will be done by the Countryside team. Do contact the team if you would like to help with this work; we would welcome volunteers.

Water level management

Water levels on Cromford Canal have always required involved management, from the Cromford Canal Act through to pumping water into the canal and the construction of Leaward Pump in 1849. The *Birdswood* team will know how quickly water levels can drop if rain doesn't fall or if leaks open up. The other side is how quickly water levels rise due to the steep surrounding hills and the quick flowing catchment of the Bonsall Brook. To help stabilise water levels a number of projects are



The new water control sluice for the canal feeder at Cromford Mills being trial assembled in the joiners works in Somercotes. It should have been installed at Cromford by the time you read this, and will hopefully restrict flows into the canal in times of flood and make water level management much easier. Looking on are Peteris, a Latvian carpenter who made the frame (left), and Bob Mitchell who supervised the work. Photo: John Boucher

about to take place. A water control paddle has been designed by FCC's John Boucher to help regulate the inflow to the canal from Cromford Mills. This will provide a regular inflow, reducing a yo-yo effect in trying to pre-empt water flow by operating paddles. When water levels are high there is a problem with water exceeding the capacity of the Derwent Aqueduct, causing water to leak down through the arch below. We are currently considering a



*The partly deconstructed CHPR pulley wheel about to be taken for restoration as Birdswood passes through the adjacent swing bridge.
Photo: Rick Jillings*

plan to lower the aqueduct water level slightly to avoid this leak occurring. This will involve stop planks being fitted to the north side of the aqueduct, just south of Leawood Pump.

Wheel Pit Conservation

The Cromford & High Peak was one of the world's first long distance railways. The wheel pit adjacent to High Peak Junction workshops served the engine house at Sheep Pasture Top, enabling wagons to be raised and lowered on this historic railway incline. Ian Baxter, a specialist blacksmith, has begun work to conserve the wheel pit. The wheel has been lifted and taken to Ian's workshops in West Yorkshire, along with the wheel tensioning gear. The cast outer rim of the wheel had to be unbolted for transport to reduce the width of the load. The metalwork will all be prepared and repainted before being brought back to site. While the wheel is off site replacement timber beams will be sourced and the wheel pit masonry will be repointed. The pit will be given a thorough clean. The railway sleepers will also be replaced. A grant from Natural England will enable the conservation of this important heritage, with top up funding from DCC. The High Peak Trail is currently diverted onto the narrow path at the back and canal side of the workshops building. DCC apologises for inconvenience during these works.

The Wharf Shed at High Peak Junction

Derbyshire County Council has operated the Wharf Shed as a residential centre since the 1980s. In recent years the Derbyshire Outdoor Education Service has provided camping accommodation on site at the nearby Lea Green Learning & Development Centre, reducing the need for groups to stay at the Wharf Shed. The Wharf Shed is adjacent to the Cromford Canal, the High Peak Trail and High Peak Junction workshops, all operated by Derbyshire County Council's countryside team. Consequently a decision has been taken to transfer the management of the building from the Children Services Department across to the Countryside Service in the Economy Transport & Communities Department. A brief has been drawn up to appoint a consultant to explore the best future use of the building. Options include residential use but targeting smaller groups, perhaps catering, or an artist studio. The building is a scheduled monument and as such there are restrictions on any future development; any change of use would require planning consent. It could be several months until the building's future is decided.

Get in Touch

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

TIMBER!

by Hugh Potter & Steve Leaver

DCC quickly came to the rescue after a tree fell across the canal

One item that Rick Jillings omitted from his “News from the North” report (page 22) was the rapid response by his team to a large tree that fell across the canal on 24th October, the evening before a regular *Birdswood* operating day.



Birdswood approaches the fallen tree on the morning trip, after DCC had already cleared the branches from the towpath. Photo: Ian Hooker

Skipper Steve Leaver reported on 25th October:

“The tree that came down across the canal last night was just at the southern end of the garden centre. It had rotted through at the base.

“DCC cleared the canopy off the towpath during the morning, so we could only run a slow trip up to the trunk and back (with a stop for photos). All the passengers were happy, as they also got a free drink.

“After a slow trip to the tree in the afternoon, we arrived just as DCC were trying to remove it. They had dropped it into the water, so we helped nudge it to the side with the boat. They had chopped and moved the whole tree by the time we came back.”



Birdswood approaching the fallen tree on the afternoon trip, by which time the remaining trunk was floating in the canal. Photo: Val Leaver

FCC's thanks go to the DCC team for their prompt response, which allowed *Birdswood* to operate an almost normal service.



Birdswood carefully nudges the remains of the tree trunk out of the main channel. Photo: Mark Brailsford

HERITAGE RECOGNITION

by Hugh Potter

The Cromford Canal goes up in the (historic) world

In the latest publication on canals by Historic England, the Cromford Canal scores 4 for historic importance (on a scale of 0 to 5, with very few on the top grade of 5 and all of those for much longer waterways). Interestingly, this compares with the former British Waterways grading for our canal as 'Low' (their lowest grade). In all, over 20 listed structures and scheduled monuments are listed for our canal.

The main document is a fascinating appraisal



The official reopening of the High Peak, or Railway, Aqueduct following major repair work in 2011. Historic England names this 'Tunnel Aqueduct', no doubt after the adjacent Leawood railway tunnel seen in the background, although this is not a name used locally.



Waterway Recovery Group at work in 2015 on Lock 4 – one of several on the Ironville flight that are listed by Historic England.

You can find details and download copies here:

<http://research.historicengland.org.uk/Report.aspx?i=15602>

One curiosity is that it refers to the High Peak Aqueduct as 'Tunnel Aqueduct'; has anyone heard it called that before? Presumably the name relates to the adjacent Leawood (railway) tunnel.

of different aspects of canal architecture. The appendix itemises every canalside listed building and scheduled monument in Britain. If you want some bedtime reading, this should keep you happy for hours!

WORK PARTIES

by John Guyler

Progress on coir rolls, lock fencing and undergrowth clearance



Birdswood towing the punt loaded with coir rolls to the work site.

Photo: John Guyler

Throughout the summer and early autumn the FCC work parties at Cromford and High Peak Junction have been concentrating on fitting the coir rolls. The focus initially was finding the best methods of getting the various component materials to the site, wherever it may have been on the Lawn Bridge to High Peak Junction section. The main components were the clay, donated by D. Collins earthworks,

and the coir rolls – both being very heavy to transport down the towpath.

The clay was tipped in two locations, with one load at the rugby ground, with permission of the farmer, and the other at the Wharf Shed opposite Leawood Pump. This did help from a logistics point of view on the twenty or thirty barrow loads that we wheeled from Leawood. In the end Derbyshire County Council came

Planting up the coir rolls after installation, with Birdswood approaching in the distance.



to the rescue and brought the rest of the clay and some of their top soil to sites using the small tractor and trailer.

The coir rolls were initially wheeled down two at a time on the trolley which, whilst it worked, was slow and heavy work. Then we used *Birdswood*, on a non-working day, to transport nineteen rolls, as reported in the last *Portal*. When the nineteen were nearly used up we had to get some more supplies up to site, *Birdswood* wasn't available so we loaded the work boat and punted the whole load up past the garden centre section (well Roger Goodliffe did). When we needed more, we loaded the work boat again, but this time the crew of *Birdswood* were approached and towed the supply up to just beyond the railway narrows for us. The empty work boat was then towed back by *Birdswood*, albeit slowly, because there was a problem with the water level.

In the second week of October the last three rolls were locked into position and back-filled.

Altogether the actual volunteer time on supply of materials, fitting and back-filling has taken 418 hours, with 70 hours recorded travel time. Administration for the grant, planning, the grant application and the final end of project report submitted at the end of September was 87 hours. This gave a final total of 575 volunteer hours for phase 1 of the DerwentWISE project.

A grant for a second phase from DerwentWISE has been achieved and will be used to put another fifty coir rolls in place, either doubling up on existing placements to increase height or moving further along and repairing positions in poor condition.

Thanks go to the whole team for their efforts and enthusiasm on a very

heavy and difficult project and to the crews of *Birdswood* for putting up with us constantly asking for assistance. Also thanks to DCC for their help and Dave Savage at DerwentWISE for keeping me in line.

Down the Line

At Ironville, the main project has been fitting a fence along the edge of Lock 4, where the community garden is located. As a matter of safety Canal & River Trust requested a fence to be fitted along the edge. The planned work was for 50 yards of fence with 26 fence posts supporting it. After three work parties and 100 volunteer hours the majority of the fence is in place. All materials were supplied by CRT and work was overseen by Gareth Carter of CRT. The worst part was digging the post holes out; most of the time we had to smash our way through rubble and large pieces of stone with a bar and sledge hammer, used with precision by Chris Martin. The final phase of the fence will be later in the winter when the undergrowth has died back; we did delay some of the work because of pumpkins on the line of the fence!

Other work at Ironville has concentrated on clearance of undergrowth and saplings on the line of the Pinxton Arm. At the last work party before this report, around 80 yards from the Pinxton Arm Bridge have been cleared.

The individuals involved are too numerous to name, but everyone has been brilliant and it is a great team to work with. Thanks a lot everyone.

Installing safety fencing around the garden at Lock 4.



THE LOCK-KEEPER'S GARDEN

by Andy Cadman

A local project has brought colour back to the canal at Ironville

At Lock 4 (Smith's Lock) in Ironville local volunteers are hard at work recreating the kind of garden that might be found near to a typical lock-keeper's cottage along the canal. The garden is currently being managed as part of the Ironville Tuesday Volunteer Group.

The garden, now in its second season, provides an opportunity to highlight the local heritage, educate young people and enhance the local environment. Much of produce from the garden was given to the OAP Community Centre; some was used in the local Community Kitchen and the rest by other local community members, proving the garden to be an innovative use of the space. The pumpkins were carved by a local art group.

It is reasonable to imagine that the canal boat crews that regularly plied up and down the canal would have got to know the lock-keeper and his family quite well. Obviously boat people would need to get these sorts of things from somewhere. Their fresh food, flowers to brighten up the boat, and herbs for medication were thus readily available as the boat would take several minutes to pass through the lock. *[No doubt in exchange for buckets of coal – Ed]*

In the future it is hoped to develop the garden into a heritage feature representing a typical lock-keeper's garden circa 1850. Research will be carried out to find out more about the typical crops grown and gardening methods of the period and replicate our findings at Lock 4.

FCC volunteers have recently installed fencing around the garden to help keep people working on the garden safe.



Work on the garden involves volunteers of all ages. Photo: Andy Cadman

The lock-keeper may have typically grown the following plants:

- Traditional varieties of various vegetables
- Culinary herbs
- Cottage garden flowers
- Medicinal herbs (there was no NHS in those days)



Volunteers work on the garden every Tuesday. Photo: Andy Cadman

CHANGING TIMES AT AQUEDUCT COTTAGE

by Hugh Potter

Two photographs from very different eras



This wonderful photograph of a delightfully ivy-covered Aqueduct Cottage was sent in by Glynn Waite, although sadly we do not know the name of the beautifully dressed young lady standing on the swing bridge.



Time took its toll on the cottage and as most members will know (as fully reported in Portal 61), recent tree-felling has revealed its ruins once again, and there are hopes to restore it as an information centre. In the meantime, four artists were commissioned to 'paint the windows' which they have done with great ingenuity. Here, the four artists are seen on the bridge (l to r): Abigail Sawyer, Ruth Gray, Mandy-Jayne Ahlfors and Joanna McPherson. Oh, and if you are worried about the newly fallen branch on the cottage, this did no damage and was soon cleared.

Photo: Jack Haystead

CANALS AT WAR

by Hugh Potter

Canals played a wartime role 100 years ago

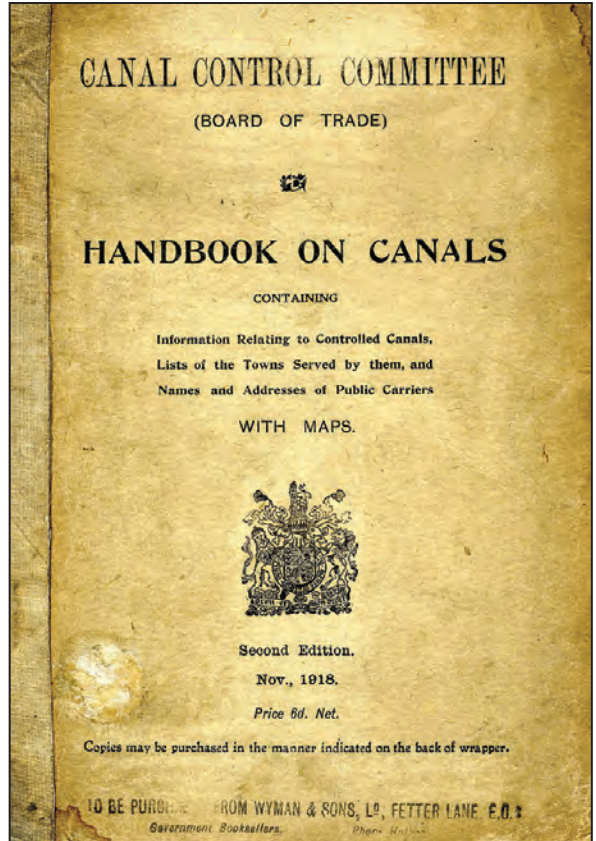
During the First World War, the Government took over control of the canals in an attempt to improve transport of heavy goods, as road vehicles were insufficient to cope with the increased demand and railways were likewise overstretched. The railway-owned canals (such as the Cromford, which at that time belonged to the Midland Railway) had been placed under the control of the Railway Executive Committee in 1914, then in 1917 the Board of Trade set up a Canal Control Committee to oversee those owned by private companies.

It issued a Handbook listing towns served by both groups of canals, along with the names and addresses of carriers, to enable businesses to make the relevant contacts. A copy of the November 1918 edition of this handbook was kindly lent to me by Jim Dunn of Hereford.

Both Cromford and Ripley are listed as being served by the Cromford Canal, but of course neither would be accessible from the main canal system owing to the closure of Butterley Tunnel in 1900. Carriers are listed as: R. Furley & Co of Gainsborough; Fellows, Morton & Clayton of Birmingham; and Trent Navigation Co of Nottingham.

The canal's agents are listed as F. Webber at Cromford, Miss Hewitt at Bullbridge, and S. Eaton at Langley Mill. We have come

across Miss Hewitt before as toll collector at Sawmills/Bullbridge (recorded on 'Down Your Way' as Miss Howitt – see *Portal* 35), but has anyone come across the other two agents before?

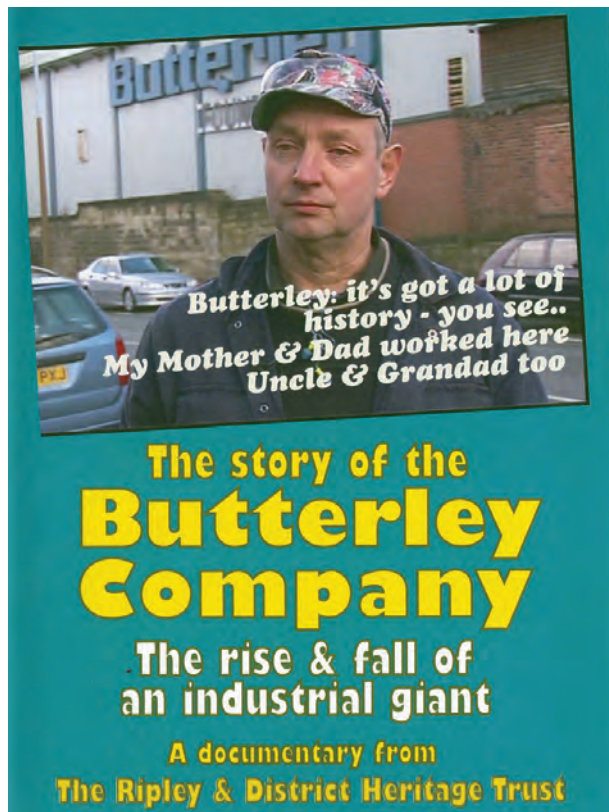


The title page of the second edition of the Canal Control Committee's handbook, published in November 1918.

THE BUTTERLEY STORY

by Hugh Potter

Thanks to HLF funding, a new DVD about the iconic Butterley Company is now available



The early history of the Butterley Company and the Cromford Canal are inextricably intertwined. Structures such as the Barlow Shed at St Pancras station and the Falkirk Wheel have spread its fame worldwide, and it still is very close to the heart of many people living in and around the Ripley area.

This professionally produced hour-long video traces the history of the company from its beginnings with the canal engineers

Benjamin Outram and William Jessop, along with financiers Francis Beresford and John Wright, whose family was to be involved for five generations through to the sad demise of the company in 2009.

Archive images and film combine with interviews with the last of the Wright family to be involved and the company's last employees to weave a fascinating story of great success followed by sad decline.

Other successes include ironwork for Telford's Menai Straits bridge, Brunel's *SS Great Britain*, and steam engines and bridges around the world. They allowed the Wright family to build for themselves a mansion second only to Chatsworth in splendour, although sadly now demolished.

The pitiful decline of the company began with nationalisation of the coal industry – a major part of the Butterley Co's activities –

followed poor management decisions, and a host of inappropriate takeovers, mergers and asset stripping, and is told in a no-holds-barred manner of surprising frankness.

Produced by the Ripley & District Heritage Trust, this is a very watchable DVD and one which I wholeheartedly recommend. The cost is a minimal £5, plus £1 p&p if bought by post from FCC at Weighbridge Office, Gothic Warehouse, Mill Road, Cromford DE4 3RQ.

Christmas Canal Trips

Santa Specials on board historic narrowboat Birdswood in December

Saturdays 2nd, 9th, 16th & 23rd
Sundays 3rd, 10th & 17th + Thursday 21st

12 noon & 2pm each day from Cromford Wharf, Mill Lane, Cromford, DE4 3RQ

A Cromford Canal
cruise with real
Christmas Cheer!

Plenty of delicious
seasonal refreshments
for everyone!

A visit to
Santa's cabin
and a special gift
for every child!

Christmas decorations,
tunes and carols!



Adult/Child 5-11 yrs £10 each, Under-5s £7 each
SAVE 15%! with a Festive Foursome - £34 for 4 people

ADVANCE BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Call 07552 055 455 or email victoria@birdswood.org

More details at www.birdswood.org

WINTER EVENTS

Social meetings take place on the third Monday of most months at 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall, Casson Street, Ironville NG16 5NN. Admission is £2 (except AGM) and there is a bar, raffle, tea and coffee. All are welcome to attend.

Monday 20th November

Lidar surveys in the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site

A pertinent presentation including the Cromford Canal by Steve Malone of DerwentWISE. 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall; all welcome

Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th November

Pots & Pix Exhibition at Ambergate

An invitation from FCC's Archivist to see some of the archives along with displays and a slide show of historic images of the canal. This runs alongside a Christmas exhibition of Liz Tatam's hand-made stoneware pottery at their canalside house at Bankfield, Chase Road, Ambergate, Belper DE56 2HA. There will also be an FCC sales stall where you can purchase all your canal related cards and presents. You can combine a visit with a walk along the canal! Complimentary refreshments are offered from 11 am to 5pm and more details are available at www.canalsidepotters.co.uk.

2nd, 3rd, 9th, 10th, 16th, 17th, 21st and 23rd December

Christmas Canal Trips

A chance for children to meet Santa on *Birdswood*. Adult/Child (5-11) £10 each; under-5s £7 each. Advance booking essential by calling 07552 055455 or visit www.birdswood.org. Departures at noon and 2pm from Cromford Wharf.

Tuesday 19th December

A special Adults Only Christmas Boat Trip

No, don't worry, it's not what you might think! . . . It's a relaxing cruise with carols, food, drink and a serenade of handbell ringers. Departs 3pm from Cromford Wharf.

Monday 15th January 2018

Derby and Sandiacre Canal update

A talk by Chris Madge, 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall; all welcome

Monday 19th February

Bennerley Viaduct

A talk by Tina Cordon, 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall; all welcome

Sunday 11th March

A special Mother's day Boat Trip

2pm departure from Cromford Wharf. Normal fares apply to most but Mothers travel for free.

Monday 19th March

Roses and Castles

A talk by Suzzie Litton-Wood, 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall; all welcome

Monday 16th April

AGM

With a restoration update from George Rogers, 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall; all welcome

FESTIVE WORD SEARCH

by Vix Wilding

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

It has been suggested that *The 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 season: 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!

BETHLEHEM
EVERGREEN
GIVING
SANTA

CELEBRATIONS
FAMILY
ICICLES
STABLE

CHRISTMAS
GIFTS
REINDEER
YULE

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

