

THE PORTAL

Issue 64 - Spring 2018

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Friends of the Cromford Canal

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Front Cover: On pages 32–33, Mike Harrison recalls the 5-yearly anniversary rallies held by Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association at Langley Mill, and one in particular. On this issue's cover we see the 2013 re-enactment of the 1973 reopening ceremony. Over Spring Bank Holiday 26th–28th May this year, ECPDA celebrate their 50th anniversary as well as the 45th anniversary of the reopening of the bottom lock on the Cromford Canal, and you will be able to see this scene recreated once again.

Friends of Cromford Canal

Annual FCC Membership rates – Single £9; Couple £14

Life Membership rates – Single £125; Couple £180

Overseas/group Membership – please contact the Membership Secretary – details inside front cover.

Your membership includes one copy of each of the four editions of *The Portal* annually.

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

Welcome to the Spring issue of Portal

Spring is in the Air

Well, I hope it will be by the time you read this! Much has been done on *Birdswood* this winter to ensure that she is fit and ready for the new season (see page 10). And you will be able to find out just how much she has raised towards the maintenance and future restoration of the Cromford Canal at the all-important AGM on 16th April. I think you will be surprised!

Please don't think the AGM is one of the less interesting meetings that we hold – far from it! It gives you the chance to meet the committee and ask any burning questions you may have, as well as voting for trustees.

After the official business, George Rogers will give a summary of how he sees the progress we have made over the past year and what we hope to achieve in the next year. Between the two there is a chance to meet the trustees, officers and other members over a sociable cuppa or pint. I hope to see you there.

And a sure sign that spring is on the way is that our two resident swans, named George and Mildred in a competition a few years ago, have been spotted seeking a nest site in their favourite spot on the towpath around Whatstandwell station footbridge. We hope they will be luckier in raising a brood this year than they were last.

Apologies

Our apologies for the delay in dispatch of some of the copies of the last issue of *Portal*. We hope that all copies of this current issue are received promptly. In future if you would like to have *Portal* emailed to you as a pdf, we can do this very easily. All you have to do is send an email requesting this to the webmaster (address on



page 2). You will still get your copy through the post but if you happen to be away and in email contact, you can still read it! That email address will not be used for any other purpose.

Of course if you would like to save the FCC money, and assist restoration funds, you can request an email copy only.

Most of your modest subscription goes towards the cost of printing and postage of *Portal*, so you can see what a difference it would make. But if, like me, you are old-fashioned and like to have something in your hands to read, then feel free to have the best of both worlds – it's your choice!

And as a reminder, you can download all previous copies of *Portal* from the FCC website's News pages.

I look forward to meeting you out and about on the canal this spring!

Copy date for the next Portal is 29th May



Location, location, location. George and Mildred return to their regular nesting ground at Whatstandwell to decide on the site for this year's nest. They certainly appreciate the clear-water channel and could not survive if the reeds were not regularly cleared (see page 14).



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by John Baylis BEM

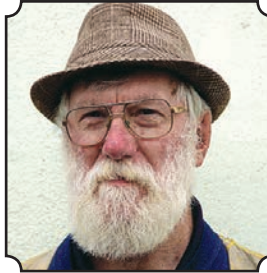
FCC's Chairman keeps you up to date

Langley Mill

In 1975 the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association started work in Ironville to try to convince British Waterways that it would be better to restore Ironville Locks to navigation rather than eliminate the locks to create a new flood overflow. The top three pounds were partially dredged and the rubbish and weed removed to give very pleasant water areas. Jack Brown helped greatly with his free loan of lorries and equipment and I drove the ECPDA JCB excavator or a tipper truck. British Waterways weren't the only objectors to restoration; Derbyshire County Council, the National Rivers Authority and the National Coal Board all found reasons why restoration to navigation was a non-starter.

As the years passed, the NRA river works didn't materialise, the A610 Langley Mill bypass was built, the NCB did less opencast coal extraction than promised, and in 1995 the Binnie study funded by the Groundwork Trust and the Inland Waterways Association showed restoration to navigation and improvement of Ironville and Jacksdale was still possible; but despite our best effort an adequate money package could not be assembled. The top part of the Ironville Locks had been lost but there were still problems with coal opencasting and the land areas which the NCB had purchased for future use.

Over the past 20 years, and more particularly since the formation of the Friends of the Cromford Canal, the NCB and its privatised successors have been the major problem to progress. They have been extremely difficult to get to meetings, made promises they didn't



keep and finally sold off land without telling the FCC or local authorities and residents. This was particularly galling as the FCC has spent nearly £40,000 on studies and getting planning permission for a new canal channel across the Smotherfly site and UK Coal had reneged on its promises to do the work as part of its site restoration as agreed with DCC.

Land Purchases

Then at the end of November we heard that the Smotherfly site and the Forge site at Ironville were both up for sale at an auction in Chelmsford. If Smotherfly was not getting much interest, it might have been a cheap buy for the FCC; but on taking professional advice we were told that as trustees we should not risk the charity without being able to get adequate advice on ownership and other legal problems. I am very pleased to report that Smotherfly was purchased by a local farmer who would like to see the FCC complete the planned work. Unfortunately that will require a large grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund or similar; but we can now have meaningful talks with the owner.

The Forge site was not critical to the canal restoration and so the FCC did not wish to pursue a purchase, but is very encouraged and supportive of the purchase by a local group who intend to manage it as a nature reserve (page 11). They have held two meetings in Ironville which have been well attended and the FCC is talking to them about joint ventures to improve the environment of the canal and adjacent areas. The Forge site is on the offside or west bank of the Cromford Canal to

the south of the Erewash Valley railway line. Our engineers have recently met Derbyshire Wildlife Trust who own the canal still in water downstream of the railway bridge and Lock 5.

When the proposed opencast coal extraction at Langley Mill was abandoned, FCC were offered a strip of land to improve the turning into the A610 by-pass bridge which was built for the Moorgreen railway line. Along with the land there is also the Right of Way from Cromford Road; this could be essential for the restoration and maintenance of this section of the Cromford Canal. Our engineers are currently collecting data for the planning application and negotiating on the flood plain with the

Environment Agency and with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust on the route in Broxtowe. This is necessary because of the lapse of the planning application for opencasting.

AGM

The improved method of financial accounting has proved very beneficial and the final accounts and papers for the Annual General Meeting are enclosed with this *Portal*. The Extraordinary General Meeting on 15th January approved the addition to the Constitution and I hope that the support we had from members by proxy and postal votes last year will continue.

New Members

Our membership continues to grow, the current total being 974, and we give a warm welcome to the following new members who have joined us since the last edition of *The Portal*:

Mr A Oakley, Matlock

Mr R Walsh, Matlock

Mr J Mosse, Glasgow

Mr N Leverton, Heanor

Mr R Whysall, Nottingham

Mr & Mrs D Hunter, Chesterfield

Mr A Cadman, Nottingham

Mr D Readle, Belper

Mr P Brown, Belper

Mrs W Hollis & Mr D Hewson, Nottingham

Archivist's Snippets

Caught in the Act

In a letter to Stevenson Dyers [at Bullbridge] on 16.3.1932, Mr McCallum, Estate Manager at Derby for the Midland Railway, said: "My canal inspector informs me that your work people are in the habit during their dinner hour of getting on to the aqueduct towpath and swinging the swing bridge adjacent to the lime works. This is causing damage to the masonry and had already started a leak which will probably [be] a tiresome matter to repair. There is no doubt as to the culprits as the inspector in addition to getting reports from his workmen caught two young ladies quite recently in the act and warned them not to repeat the practice. I need not point out to you the danger of leaks in this ancient structure, and shall be much obliged if you will issue stringent instructions that this larking must cease.

Company Men Warrant More Paperwork

In a letter of 19.5.1932, Midland Railway's Mr McCallum wrote, apparently 'out of the blue': "Please note that in future in cases of known suicides in canals and reservoirs you need only send one report instead of the usual three or four carbons. Should, however, the victim be a company's servant existing procedure remains."



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

by Yvonne Shattower

An Update on People and Events

This has been a very busy couple of weeks for me, as FCC has to cope with the implications of the new General Data Protection Regulation. This will come into effect on 26th May, and will affect the way we handle, store and use the personal information we hold on you, our members.

You will shortly receive a form for completion and return to an Officer of the FCC, and it is very important that you do this. Without it we will not be able to send you any information on our activities other than *Portal* and such things as membership renewal information. Although currently we seldom need to contact you, it may be that at some time in the future we will want to pass on information that is not directly to do with membership; we will not be able to do this without your express permission, especially with regard to contact by email.

Your membership information is kept on a database on a laptop protected by a password. A copy of the database is passed to the Executive Secretary for back up purposes, but no other trustee or committee member has access to your personal information. Under the terms of the new act, the completed membership forms, laptop and any copies of the database will have to be kept in a locked cabinet or safe. Several of the trustees most closely involved with this will be taking further advice over the next few days to make sure that we are well up to speed on this important development. I cannot emphasise strongly enough how important it is that you send the form back to me, either by post or email, so that we can continue to keep our information up to date and contact you when necessary. You will see that it is necessary for both



members to sign in the case of two people at the same address.

We had a very enthusiastic talk by Chris Madge of the Derby & Sandiacre Canal Society at Ironville in January, but we were again disappointed by the low turnout of members. We try to advertise these talks as widely as possible, but we are

becoming very concerned at the numbers attending. Could you display a poster in your local shop or community centre – or even on your gatepost? Our next meeting will be the Annual General Meeting on 16th April, when you will be able to hear about our work over the last year, and there will be a very exciting presentation by George Rogers on the plans for the physical restoration of part of the canal. (Yes, we are actually going to start digging!) More importantly, you will be able to vote for four trustees who will work to take these exciting developments forward, so it is very important that we have a good turnout of members there.

We continue to attract new members, but renewals are always a problem. Why not pay your membership subscription by bank standing order, and save yourself the inconvenience of having to send a cheque each year? You would also save the FCC money as we would not have to send you a renewal form. It would be appreciated if you would inform me if you do not intend to renew your membership so that I do not send out unnecessary reminders.

We hope to see as many of you as possible at the AGM; like all our members' meetings it will be held at Ironville Church Hall and commence at 7.30pm, with refreshments available during the evening.



STRATEGIC RESTORATION UPDATE

by George Rogers

A summary of what's been going on 'behind the scenes'

Regular readers will know that the work of the Strategic Restoration Committee is currently divided into two main strands – preparing a planning application for the next stage of the canal at Langley Mill (extending from the current basin as far as the crossing of Stoney Lane), and building the overall strategic infrastructure and plan to facilitate the rest of the canal restoration. In this report I'll touch on both points along with a few other miscellaneous items occupying our time.



Langley Mill

As you'll read elsewhere in this issue (page 19), Judy Berry has compiled a short report listing the myriad of documentation that is required in order to submit a planning application – and it is daunting! The SRC is currently working away compiling some of the key documentation, in particular:

- **The scheme design** – eg the route of the canal, where locks will be situated and what the canal will look like in cross-section. This also has to include details of earthworks required both on the canal line and elsewhere – eg where is the excavated earth going, and what works are required to mitigate any intrusion into the floodplain. For all of this, we are indebted to the work of John Boucher, aided on occasion by the other engineers on the committee.
- **The flood risk assessment.** As part of the works will intrude onto the existing River Erewash floodplain, we have to demonstrate what effect our works will

have on flooding within the Erewash Valley. In particular, we have to show that there is no adverse effect on the modelled flood levels under various conditions, so that we don't increase the flood risk to any existing properties up or downstream of the project. Any loss in floodplain storage volume

also has to be compensated elsewhere and the work to identify suitable areas is ongoing. This element of the work is being led by Chris Broome, a retired hydraulic engineer, with the flood modelling being done by a specialist consultant.

- **The ecological assessment.** Throughout construction and subsequent use, the canal will have a significant interaction with the local environment and we need to understand what there is to interact with, what effect those interactions will have and how we mitigate the negative and enhance the positive impacts. The large majority of this work is being done by Susan White, the Derbyshire County Council's waterways officer and a qualified ecologist. Without Susan's support, we'd currently be paying a lot of money for this work as our own expertise in this area is very limited – hence my continued pleas for help!

One of the other key elements that has been keeping the FCC Trustees busy has been the purchase of a key section of land at Langley Mill. This has been ongoing for nearly 2 years, but we believe that the issues are finally resolved and we are just waiting for the final signatures. Most of the rest of the land for

the scheme is already owned by existing or supportive partners to the restoration, so this key element will unlock the scheme for the Friends.

Strategy

Last issue, I mentioned the Chesterfield Canal Engineering Committee, which has a similar remit to the SRC, and how I'd suggested that we occasionally link up to exchange ideas. I've since been to one of their meetings and hope to attend regularly, along with extending a similar invite to their members. It was fascinating to see the works they are looking at and their methods for tackling the issues – some of which are similar to our own.

Additionally, since my last report, John Barker and I met with representatives from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. Although there are only short sections of the canal within Nottinghamshire, NWT works closely with their counterparts in Derbyshire on the management of the Erewash Valley nature reserves and so we consider them to be important stakeholders in their own right. The NWT representatives were initially concerned about the canal passing directly through the nature reserves on its original line, but when we were able to demonstrate some of the steps we've taken to remove the canal from direct interference with the most sensitive areas they were much happier and were keen to talk further about some of our ideas for habitat creation and improvements along the route. The canal works would also give an excellent opportunity to create linking habitats between the different environments within the Erewash Valley.

In the last issue, I also discussed the formation of the 'Restoration Principles' – principles that underpin the SRC approach to canal restoration. A draft set of principles has now been approved by the SRC and will shortly go before the FCC Trustees – and once this is complete the text will be published in *The Portal* for you, the members, to comment. I will also discuss these further in my annual report to the AGM in April.

The Other Odds'n'Ends

Regular readers will remember the works of CRIB (Canal Regeneration in Bullbridge) – a group formed from members of the Bullbridge and Sawmills Area civic society (BASA) and the FCC to focus on the Stevenson's site in Bullbridge. I attend regularly, along with other members of the FCC. We met towards the end of 2017 and were lucky to be joined by Councillor Trevor Ainsworth, Deputy Leader of Amber Valley Borough Council. He was interested in our work and alerted us to the second round of consultation on the Local Plan that had just started. He suggested we provide a formal consultation response with our concerns for the site so that they were registered when the planning inspectorate examines the plan.

I undertook this, which was an interesting exercise, as the rules for commenting and consulting were quite strict – it wasn't acceptable simply to have an alternative proposal, I had to demonstrate why ignoring that alternative meant that aspects of the Local Plan were not sound. I therefore argued that the failure to consult with CRIB on the issues of the site, despite being aware of CRIB's alternative proposals, went against the requirements on the council to consult and how this had led to them missing opportunities to better realise their own targets for home numbers, affordable homes and enhancing community spirit.

Finally, I've been asked by the FCC Trustees to look again at the Greenway at Sawmills. This has been on and off the agenda since I first joined in 2010, but DCC are keen to look at it again and I will represent the FCC and BASA in trying to find a solution suitable to all so that it can finally be built. I'll hopefully have more on this in the near future.

As ever, I finish with a general plea for anyone with an interest in getting involved to get in touch. 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!



BIRDSWOOD & CROMFORD SHOP

by Vix Wilding

An update from the boat operations and shop manager

Work on the boat does not stop for winter!

There are always many jobs to juggle in and around the *Birdswood* operation. Over Christmas I was checking and double checking the files from the year, ensuring all the accounts were correctly



categorised and ready for the auditors. Once that was completed we began looking at the figures and the ways in which we can improve the attraction at Cromford. Moving forward and planning is an exciting time; fresh ideas, changes and improvements are discussed and implemented.

The first thing to change was the shop storage. This had become increasingly overwhelmed with items that we may or may not need. So one damp January day I took on this challenge and emptied the space and put new shelving in and then only put stock away. Everything else was thrown away or found new homes! The Christmas displays and sale items were packed away and new stock bought in to fill the shelves on the shop floor. It's a very satisfying feeling once all is done and I can sit back and enjoy the outcome.

Shortly after this the plans began for further maintenance on *Birdswood* and the reed pulling dates were organised. These were done by the main FCC work party team and some crew volunteers. The days have been fun-filled and the great company takes the edge of the hard work (see page 16).

The MCA left us in November with a couple of jobs to complete and one was to make access to the inside of the hull under the galley flooring. To do this, four large (and heavy!)

steel plates had to be removed, cut offsite and replaced as three narrow lengths. This is because the kitchen units are fixed in place along each side and the panels along the middle section will allow future access without demolishing the kitchen again. (See the back cover for before and after pics.)

A super team, led by Sean Dodds, removed the kitchen and floor plates and then put them all back together in just two weeks.

Bookings are already coming in for private hire, school trips and the ever popular horse days. There will be free crafts and stalls at events at Cromford again this year. In May and August I organise fundraisers for the *Birdswood* Community Engagement Plan. We do our bit to provide pleasure to others less fortunate than ourselves and all the money raised is used to provide free trips to special community groups and free outdoor educational activities for families in the summer.

In addition to the annual events there are always additional special events throughout the year. The Art Afloat trial was a success last year and some artists are returning to deliver the full day workshops on board. There have been new contacts made and there will be an exciting programme released shortly. The usual craft trips will be happening with the addition of Folk Art painting for you to try.

If you haven't already, please subscribe to the *Birdswood* contact list and I'll keep you regularly updated. This can be found at www.birdswood.org - bottom of screen. Your email address will not be used for any purpose other than updates about *Birdswood* and the events happening in the area.



FRIENDS OF THE FORGE

by Hugh Potter

A new nature reserve is to be set up alongside the canal

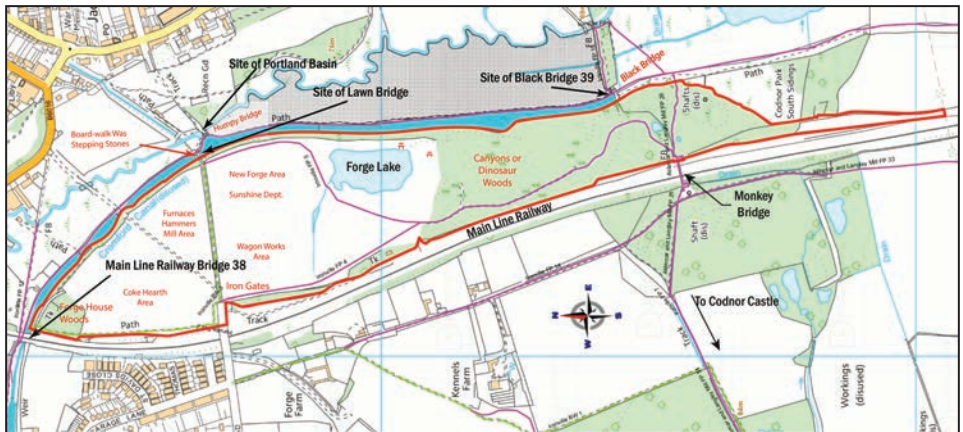
Over 120 people packed the Anvil Club at Ironville on 29th January to learn of plans for the former Butterley Company's Codnor Park Forge site. These 71 acres have been purchased at auction by Friends of Belper Parks (FoBP) with the intention of developing the area as a wildlife reserve. It is already rich in butterflies, and the increasingly rare skylarks nest there. FoBP is a non-profitmaking organisation which now owns the freehold (but not the mineral rights) of the site which runs alongside the Cromford Canal from the operational Midland Main Line railway bridge (38) past locks 5-7 to just beyond where the canal water discharges into the River Erewash at the former 'Black Bridge' (39) where the link line between the Great Northern and Midland railways once crossed.

FoBP plan to return the site to its natural state so that flora and fauna will flourish,

but will allow public access to the site and also recognise the historic significance of the area, which contains Scheduled Ancient Monuments relating to its former industrial use: "We are as interested in archaeology and history as we are in wildlife" said FoBP, whose Belper Park lies within a World Heritage Site.

To enable the purchase, £121,000 was raised from FoBP members within the few days up the auction; otherwise the site might have been turned into agricultural land with access only to existing footpaths and bridleways.

A new group 'Friends of the Forge (Codnor Park)' is being set up to organise work parties etc and details can be found on their Facebook page. Those interested can also contact Pete Clark, who organised the Ironville meeting, on 07971 772184 or at pete.clark@hotmail.com. An open day is to be held on Sunday 20th May, 11am to 3pm.



The boundary of the Forge site is shown as a heavy red line, with the watered section of the canal in blue.



CREW TRAINING

by Sean Dodds

What's involved with volunteering on Birdswood



With plenty of supervision, crew members are trained to safely open the swing bridge at High Peak Junction.

pointed out. They are then shown the galley and 'office area', where our sales stock is kept, and have the paperwork for recording sales and takings explained. They are also given a quick tour of the back cabin where the boat crew once lived and which is shown to passengers.

The training is to ensure that the new crew member understands about the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) competencies they are required to know as well as our own requirements.

After this introduction they shadow a crew

During the last year I took on the job of training Birdswood's crew, which up to then Vix Wilding had been doing, along with all the other roles she manages.

Each new volunteer that joins Birdswood undergoes some initial training before becoming part of the crew. This is either done before their first allocated shift, or just before when they take an acclimatisation cruise. Doing this ensures that they know what their role will be when the boat is operating and that they can carry it out with a degree of competence.

The new volunteer is shown around the boat, having things like the toilet, fire extinguishers, recovery equipment for 'Man Overboard', the batteries and power sockets

member who will explain how they go about their job and why it is done in such a way. Further training is given on such things as tying the boat up – important to make embarking and disembarking passengers, and crew, safe. They will also learn about walking the towpath, where to stop and what to point out and, of course, how to operate the swing bridge.

Training Sessions

Each year, in February and March, we have crew training sessions to revise what volunteers have already learnt, to catch up on anything new, and to confirm what new members of the crew have been taught and picked up (even though they may have been with us for nearly a year).

We cover not only the subjects that the MCA require us to know, mainly concerned with safety, but also our own domestic requirements, such as paperwork and sales layouts.

The MCA subjects cover the safety equipment and its use, man overboard actions, how to throw a life ring and lifeline, recovery of a 'body' from the water, and firefighting equipment, location and use. This training consists of both theoretical and practical sessions. By the time we start the new season everyone should be up to speed and happy about what they are expected to be able to do.

Last year we had some new paperwork for use with the boat takings, and we started using radios for communication between the Master, towpath walkers and shop. There are also some new features along the canal bank, thanks to the work parties.

The sessions also give everyone the chance to raise any points that they may have or questions about something they are worried about. The plan is that every crew member will have copies of the aide-memoirs covering all

the subjects that they are trained in, and that these will be updated as things change or new procedures come into force.

There may still be some things to be learnt during the coming year, as they arise, but at least we will all be starting on a level playing field.

Have A Go!

One thing I would like to do this year is to ensure that as many crew as possible try steering. It is a fact that the MCA want a person on board who is capable of getting the boat back to a safe place in the event of the Master being incapacitated in any way. It won't involve an exam, just a couple of sessions of steering so crew know what to do. If they want to go further they can become Helmspersons, involving quite a bit more practice, and an understanding of where to make a passage in the canal. Still no exam, but the approval of a couple of the Masters to say they are competent. It's really not that difficult and it's interesting; you get a different perspective to that from inside the saloon. Of course, from there, they may want to become a Master.



One of Birdswood's Masters, Hugh, teaching Kerry the art of turning the boat.

Photo: CJ

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For Further Information

Phone: 07552 055 455

Email: recruitment@birdswood.org

Ask in the Canal Shop



NEWS FROM THE NORTH

by Rick Jillings

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

This winter has been a busy time on the canal with tree work, channel clearance, volunteer work parties and work on the wheel pit at High Peak Junction.

Cromford Canal Management Plan

Over the last 10 years a great deal of work has taken place on the canal to reverse deterioration of the structure and ecology. The work was identified as necessary within a management plan, drawn up in 2008. The last 10 years have seen DCC repair the scheduled aqueduct that spans the railway, rebuild numerous dry stone retaining walls, repair leaks, carry out significant tree and woodland management work, undertake two major dredging schemes and resurface the whole 5½ miles of towpath.

Investment in water control by DCC and FCC has taken place to protect the canal from flood, with the installation of overspill weirs and new paddle mechanisms. Support from Natural England through a Conservation Enhancement Scheme grant helped fund some of the management but the end of this grant is approaching. We are now reviewing the achievements of the last 10 years and developing a new management plan for the years to come to protect the canal, its heritage, wildlife and value for people. For more information see goo.gl/Y7PnFj.

FCC Work Parties – Again a big thank you

Over the winter, volunteer work has focussed on clearing the canal channel of reed; this can be heavy work but the results are rewarding. The FCC volunteer team has received more deliveries of clay and coir rolls purchased with grant funding from DerwentWISE. This is to

help to protect the canal banks from erosion. Your volunteer support is and will be much appreciated.



The most time consuming part of the mechanical dredging was disposal of silt, for which there were very limited sites. Most was tipped onto the canal embankment above the railway, and this involved long trips using dumpers small enough to fit under the bridge.

Winter tree work

Following on from work around the canal winding holes we have worked closely with the volunteer team at DerwentWISE who have felled and thinned trees near Whatstandwell at Duke's Quarry near Sims Bridge.

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 will soon be conserved. We await

the wheel along with the wheel tensioning gear being returned and installed following refurbishment. Many of the rotten timbers have now been replaced. A grant from Natural England has enabled the conservation, with top up funding from DCC.



The dumper truck was the largest that could just fit under Grattan's Bridge, but could only carry two 'bucketsful' of silt.

and DerwentWISE volunteers have hand-cleared hundreds of meters of encroaching reed. Reed is good habitat; however the canal ecology also requires open water. An open channel allows water flow to improve water quality and reduce the chance of flood. Ironically the work to reduce tree shade and leaf drop encourages the reed, so we have a cycle of management.

This winter Tim Wright, a local agricultural and drainage contractor, has excavated some of the worst sections of reed and silt, whilst taking great care not to damage the canal bed. Work has taken place at Leashaw Farm and Chase Road, Ambergate. An excavator with an extended arm managed to reach the parts that other excavators cannot reach. This has proved a very effective way of managing the channel. Budgets, bridge structures and towpath width restrict where the machine can operate. In some areas the work to remove reed and silt will look stark and the towpath may be muddy in places but with some dryer spring weather the canal will be a better place for people and wildlife.

Maintaining the channel

One of the main aims of the Canal Management Plan is to maintain a 4m wide channel in the canal along its 5½ mile length. This winter DCC staff with help from FCC, WRG

Get in Touch

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



Use of an extended arm allowed the excavator to reach the parts others can't.



WORK PARTY REPORT

by John Guylar

FCC has been working at a variety of sites

In December, the FCC work parties concentrated on reed clearance at an area we know as Percy's Cottage, properly called Mold's Wharf, about a half mile north of Ambergate. We had some very productive days with clearing a large amount of reeds and fallen trees. The work parties had twelve volunteers on each of the days.

something, probably a plug or gate to drain the canal at this point, as it was directly above the culvert. Fortunately he did not pull too hard. [A similar 'plug' is located in the railway narrows near Cromford; definitely not a good idea to pull the chain. When a workman on the Chesterfield did just that, it drained the canal and hit the national press! – Ed]



Retrieving a rather large fallen branch during reed pulling at Percy's Cottage.

Photo: John Guylar

Near Miss!

We were working just north of Percy's Cottage and I was talking to John Dyson about the large culvert under the railway line that I had just spotted, the railway at this point being much lower than the canal; its actual size seemed bigger than necessary. About an hour later John commented that he had caught a chain with his crome, the long-handled 'bent' fork we use. On trying to remove it from the canal it was obvious that it was attached to

Grappling with the Problem

On another work-party a bit further towards Whatstandwell, we had a problem retrieving a grappling hook from the far side of the channel. The grappling hooks are thrown across the canal and dragged back, pulling trees and branches with them, but on one throw the hook was well and truly jammed. Retrieval was a bit awkward; it didn't look too deep so Roger volunteered to wade across, he put on waders and a lifejacket and we made sure the safety throw-rope was available. He was checking the depth with a pole before every step, but near the middle it was going to be too deep, so he retreated. It was then down to plan C, D or even plan E, which

involved walking half a mile back to Gratton's Bridge to cross the canal and then walk back to the jammed hook along the other bank – with difficulty through the dense undergrowth. On arrival, it was evident that the problem was a tree with multiple branches under the water.

Eventually the hook was freed and a rope was attached for the group to pull it to the towpath, whereupon it was sawn into more manageable sections. All he then had to do was walk all the way back to the bridge and



*Working on the Sawmills narrows.
Photo: John Guyler*

return along the towpath, a good example of how to use up two hours of a working day.

Stepping Down

We had a group consisting of Chris & Fabian Martin and John Barker repairing the steps leading to the western portal of the Butterley Tunnel, which needed some serious attention.

The steps will have to be replaced with new timbers and back filled with aggregate and is an on-going project. On the same day, the rest of the work-party went to Ironville and continued clearing undergrowth and saplings around the Pinxton Arm Bridge and Lock 2.

Tree and Cake?

There was a very good workday at Sawmills just after New Year, when the FCC linked up with the Bullbridge & Sawmills Area Civic Society (BASA) to clear the overgrown gauging narrows. There were nineteen of us working and the result of a very intensive day was pleasing, aided by some very good cake provided by one of the BASA ladies. A second day was planned to work on the western side of the narrows, at the beginning of February.

Pinxton Wharf

There was a group operating at Pinxton Wharf on 17th January, clearing a large amount of undergrowth and small trees around the footbridge, which the bailiff had identified as in need of attention and will hopefully provide a more accessible area for fishermen. Pinxton Wharf may be subject to some intensive FCC work in the next year. One of the big concerns from everyone on the work party was the amount of dog fouling, which needs to be addressed.



*Clearance work at Pinxton Wharf.
Photo: John Guyler*

More Coir Rolls

Also in January, we had the delivery of 55 coir rolls for the second phase of the DerwentWISE project. The weather was absolutely terrible with heavy rain and wind.

On the first phase back in spring, the delivery was made with a truck and trailer, but on this delivery I don't think a bigger truck could have been found. This multi-wheeled giant was unable to get to the Gothic warehouse through the usual entrance, due mainly to parked cars on Mill Lane. The other option was to stop the traffic on the bridge over the river and allow the truck to reverse down Mill Lane and then drive into Cromford Meadows. The next obstacle was the double gate next to the car park toilets. There are three locks on this gate; one is seized solid, the second has a broken key in it and on the third the key turned but the lock was seized. With copious amounts of WD40 and a little encouragement with a metal bar the lock now works fine. With the truck now at the Gothic warehouse, unloading commenced. With all rolls stored and the truck dispatched back through the double gates the



Unloading coir rolls from the oversize truck at Cromford Wharf.

Photo: Mike Kelley

next task of the day was reed pulling at Lawn Bridge. There were thirteen of us including the crew of *Birdswood* and the use of the metal work boat. A good but very tiring day all round.



Reed pulling at Lawn Bridge in January.

Photo: John Guyler

Lend a Hand?

If you fancy lending a hand at one of the work parties, contact John Guyler (john_guyler@yahoo.co.uk; 07717 010830) or John Barker (07860 632837).



RED TAPE – DON'T YOU JUST LOVE IT?!

by Judy Berry

Canal restoration requires an awful lot of paperwork

Back in spring 2016 I wrote an article in Portal 57 entitled 'Paperwork – Don't You Just Love It?!' I wrote about all the paperwork a charitable organisation is required to have, from the minutes of meetings to a great many policies. Well this is the sequel!

I am privileged to minute the meetings of the Strategic Restoration Committee, a group that is headed up by volunteer civil engineers. The Committee has begun the process of seeking planning permission to restore the section of the Cromford Canal from Langley Mill Basin through to Stoneyford Lane – the 'Langley Mill Extension'. The distance is 970m which is just over 0.6 mile. As well as ensuring meetings have taken place with land owners and all interested parties, the following list of completed documents will be required when the planning application is made and delivered to the appropriate authorities.

RED TAPE

- Block Plan of the Site
- Design & Access Statement
- Site and Other Plans
- Location Plans
- Additional Plans
- Biodiversity Survey and Report
- Coal Mining Risk Assessment
- Drainage Documentation
- Economic Statement
- Environmental Statement
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Heritage Statement
- Land Contamination Statement
- Landscaping Details
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Photographs and Photomontages
- Planning Obligations

RED TAPE

Admittedly a new lock or couple of locks may be needed and there may need to be a slight re-alignment of the canal, but the amount of background work required for the submission of this planning application is just mind-boggling to my untutored eyes. Fortunately, many of the SRC members are able to undertake a lot of the required work but, where they are unable to do so, external specialists are, and will need to be, involved. The process is slow and sometimes frustrating, and our FCC members will not see work beginning on the Langley Mill Extension just yet – but soon.

In answer to my question 'Red Tape – Don't You Just Love It?' the answer is probably NO but, if the Cromford Canal is to be restored, then red tape is what we must deal with and it must be dealt with competently. All our FCC members can help. If you have an hour to spare every so often to look through records or documents at home for us, that would be a great help. If you enjoy walking and feel able to count trees as you stride out along the towpath, that would be a great help too. There are lots of jobs which volunteers could help us with so please, please do get in touch. George Rogers would love to hear from you and his contact details are on page 2. Alternatively, you can contact me and I will pass your details onto George. Thank you.



THE CROMFORD WHARF CANOPY

by Hugh Potter

A Gothic tale of mystery and intrigue



The latest known photograph of the old canopy in place – taken on 28th August 1971. Notice the stack of coal, suggesting that the area was still leased to Wheatcroft's as a coal yard. Also note that there is a second canopy visible at a different angle in the foreground. This was not replaced, and indeed its purpose is not at all clear. Photo: Hugh Potter

It was a dark and stormy morning – around 10.35 to be precise. Boarding of *Birdswood* does not start until 10.45, so passengers were sheltering under the canopy of the Gothic Warehouse – except that they were not much drier as it had started leaking.

And so the debate began. What was the roofing material, and when was it last replaced? Looking at old photographs, it became clear that the whole structure had been replaced, as it is absent in a large number of photographs taken when the trip boat *John Gray* was operating in the late 1970s and 1980s. So the questions grew: When was it replaced – and why?

Well, we have solved some of the mysteries, but not all. Read on . . .

Time Line

An email exchange with Simon Stoker, former canal manager for the erstwhile Cromford Canal Society, as always threw much light on the matter, as well as some photographs, which he has kindly allowed us to reproduce here.

Simon could confirm that the new canopy was erected by CCS using a Job Creation Team in January 1985, but he was not sure how long it had been absent, nor why it was not there.

A trawl through the FCC Archives revealed many earlier photographs with the canopy in place, the latest dated ones being those that I took on my first visit to the canal on 28th August 1971. Meanwhile, Simon found the earliest dated photograph without it was taken during a clean-up by CCS in 1973.

So that narrowed it down to within a couple of years. It is possible that either British Waterways or Derbyshire County Council – or perhaps a lessee of wharf – removed it on safety grounds during that period.



A photograph taken during a clean-up by CCS, dated 1973 – this is the earliest known photograph without the canopy.

Photo: ©Desmond Stoker



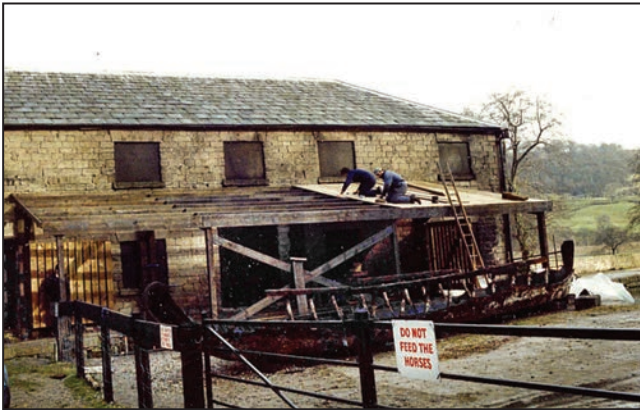
The framework for the new canopy begins to take shape in January 1985 with additional 'cross' strats as requested by DCC.

Photo: ©Simon Stoker

Of its reconstruction Simon recalls “We rebuilt it working from earlier photographs. All but one of the original iron stanchions were

there. DCC supplied the materials but insisted on the cross-brace in the middle to prevent matchboxing [ie to improve stability]. The roof was finished by contractors in ordinary felt which did not look right, so we went over that with a layer of hessian covered with bitumastic.” The story is told in more detail in Simon’s book *There and Back Again*, available from FCC Sales.

So, we have determined fairly accurately when it was removed, but not why. Do any readers have any recollections of it being taken down? Do you recall when the use of the coal wharf ceased? Do you know the purpose of the second canopy – seen in some photographs – that no longer exists? Do you have any photographs in some dusty album of the wharf around that time? Oh, and do you fancy re-felting the canopy roof – or may be suggesting a source of funding for the project?



Work proceeds on the roofing. The boat in the foreground was the ice-breaker rescued from where it was sunk opposite Leawood Pumphouse.

Photo: ©Desmond Stoker



Arkwright Society removing the 30-year-old felt covering in November 2017 to prevent it getting blown off and causing injury.

Photo: Vix Wilding



WRG AT AMBERGATE AND GREGORY'S TUNNEL

by George Rogers

The canal hosts welcome winter visitors from the north



Once the reeds had been pulled out of the canal they had to be barrowed away to the disposal site a hundred yards along the canal.

Photo: Diane Richardson

In December 2017, the FCC once again hosted Waterway Recovery Group North West volunteers holding their annual Christmas Dig. This is becoming a regular fixture for us and WRG NW, mainly because the catering team particularly likes the standard of kitchen that Waingroves Community Centre provides – always a plus when cooking a full Christmas dinner for up to 20 people!

Although the evening meal is clearly a focus, they do also want to do some work on the canal, and this year the work was divided, with a different site each day. This was in response to their plea to do slightly less of the reed pulling that has dominated the work for several years – and as our own work party and boat volunteers know, it can be incredibly hard work. The WRG NW volunteers have often been asked to work on sections of reed on the non-navigable sections between High Peak Junction and Ambergate, so they don't have

the reward of seeing *Birdswood* come through the channel they have cleared.

However, joined by some of the FCC volunteers, they still did some reed pulling at Ambergate, working predominantly on the south side of Poyser's Bridge. This work, whilst hard, is very useful to both the FCC and Derbyshire County Council, as it allows DCC to focus the limited resources of their canal rangers on managing other sections of the canal – so it really helps to improve the overall quality of the canal and ensures that some of the areas outside of the most publicly visible are properly managed and improving.

As you can see from the photos, they did a fantastic job – and shortly after their visit DCC were able to use machinery to clear a channel to the north of Poyser's Bridge (the south side not having been accessible by machine) and therefore there is a noticeable channel that hadn't been present before the weekend (see



*A snowy start for work on Sunday!
Photo: Diane Richardson*

page 14).

On the Sunday (in the snow – nothing stops a hardy WRGie volunteer!), a slightly reduced workforce moved on to clear brambles and brash around Gregory Tunnel. Most were very grateful for the less strenuous activities – but perhaps they'd have been kept warmer reed pulling!

As always, the works were greatly appreciated by DCC, and Rick Jillings (DCC's Countryside Service's Assistant Area Manager) sent very positive feedback on to us and the WRG team. Hopefully WRG NW will be joining us again very soon, although we haven't got any dates fixed in the diary at this time. Thanks to everyone involved.



What a difference a day makes . . . the view from Poyser's Bridge at Ambergate as work began and after completion. Water could once again flow through the formerly reed-blocked channel where there was no access for machinery.

Photos: Editor



NEW WHEATCROFT SIGN

by Dave Ratner

FCC have restored a bit of history at Cromford Wharf

Last November a replacement sign was erected over the door of the Weighbridge office, now the FCC shop, from where *Birdswood* tickets are sold.



The old decaying sign on the Weighbridge office with much abbreviated wording.

understandable as a garish plastic sign would look completely out of place and ferrous fixings could, given the length of time we expect the new sign to be in place, rust-stain the stonework.



The new sign in place on what is now the FCC shop.

For some time the condition of the previous sign had been giving cause for concern – and not just because of its tatty, moth-eaten appearance. As well as the surface peeling and cracking, the frame appeared to be disintegrating and the thought that it might fall off the wall altogether was not without foundation.

So, what to do about it? Because the Gothic Warehouse is a listed building, nothing can be done to it without permission from the planners. A planning application was made on 16th November 2015 and permission was granted on the 26th April 2016.

There were 3 years in which to carry out the work to the conditions attached; essentially, it had to look like the original and be fixed to the wall with non-ferrous fixings. This is

Thanks to the work of several FCC volunteers, the wood was sourced (Chris Wilding), the sign constructed and primed (Ian Hooker), sign-painted free of charge by Steve Kemp and finally it was erected free of charge by Beighton Construction who were working on the sluice in Arkwright's yard (see page 25).

The original sign on which the current one is based was over the door of Wheatcroft's office which is now the 'Cheese Shop', and must have been erected in the late 1800s or very early 1900s as it appears in a photograph dated around 1910. The newer sign with much less writing (presumably because Wheatcroft had stopped dealing in those items) was over the door of the Weighbridge office, where the replacement sign with the original wording has now been placed.



CANAL FEEDER CONTROL INSTALLED

by John Boucher

There is a new 'canal' feature at Cromford Mills

Ever since we started our trip boat *Birdswood* on the canal at Cromford, varying water levels have created considerable difficulties in its operation. The canal is fed from the Bonsall Brook, and in storm conditions an enormous quantity of water flows straight into the canal at Cromford. When storms were forecast, the Derbyshire Countryside wardens who look after the canal had to take precautions and raise the run-off paddles at High Peak Junction to drop the canal level in order to minimise the risk of it rising enough to overtop and breach its banks. This left times when the canal was too low to enable *Birdswood* to operate.

Examination of the canal feeder intake at Cromford within the premises of the Arkwright Society at Cromford Mills suggested that there was formerly a control device at the feeder mouth, which was now missing. The feeder had been constructed in 1821, by making an opening through the side of the original 1777 mill by-wash system. Evidence of the original layout became clear during the progress of the work (Fig 1). I was asked to look into the problem at the end of 2015, and reviewed the steady water demand for efficient operation allowing for evaporation and leakage (see Estimation of Water Demand).

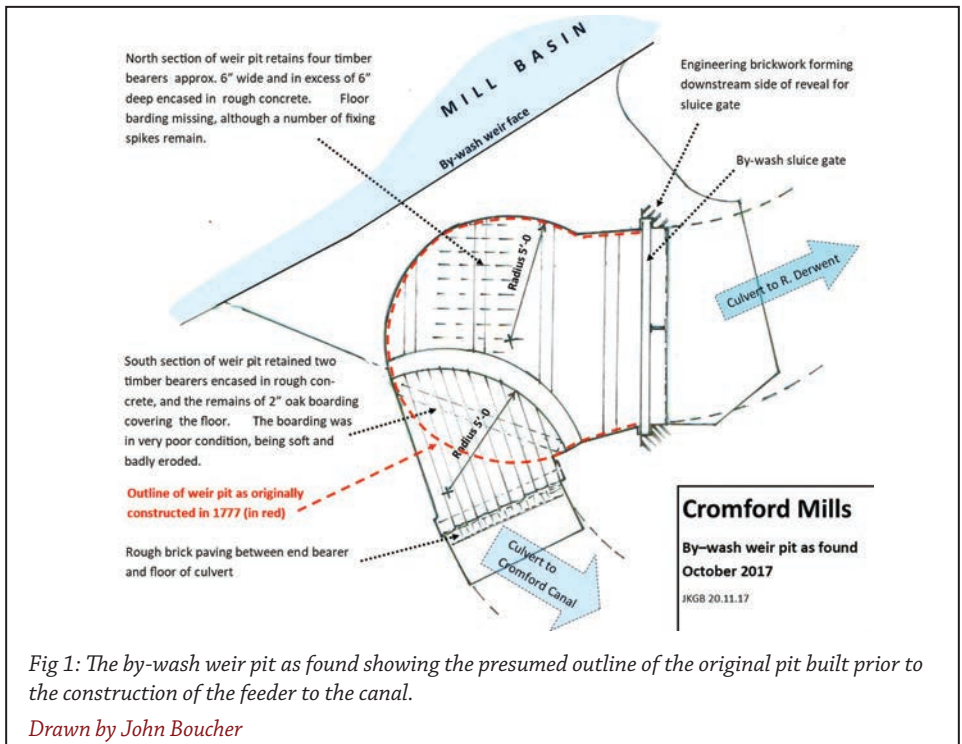


Fig 1: The by-wash weir pit as found showing the presumed outline of the original pit built prior to the construction of the feeder to the canal.

Drawn by John Boucher

Estimation of Water Demand

The first problem in the design of a water flow control is to decide how much water should be let through. This had to be enough to allow for normal leakage and evaporation, and to allow some water to flow past Wigwell Aqueduct to keep the rest of the canal to Ambergate topped up, but not so much that it would risk the canal overflowing and possibly cause a catastrophic breach. Unfortunately, there are no good standards to work to, and each canal length must be assessed on its own.

When a detailed engineering study was undertaken in 1995 for the canal below Ironville, the consultants stated *“Experience by British Waterways in monitoring canal losses due to leakage and evaporation (of which leakage is by far the greater part) indicates a wide range of leakage rates, varying by site and by season. Data recently supplied from twenty locations throughout the network gave an average loss of about 3.3MI/km/wk. BW considers a loss of 1.75MI/km/wk a reasonable target for canal restoration work.”* The consultants then considered evidence from other sources and adopted a figure of 30mm/day average loss to be a reasonable figure for design.

For the Cromford Canal northern section, with an average width of about 9m, this becomes 1.9 MI/km/week. We adopted a rather higher figure for the design of the orifice, to allow for the anticipated high leakage rate, and to allow a regular small flow to overtop the stop planks at Wigwell Aqueduct. During the sluice construction, when the flow into the canal was completely stopped, the opportunity was taken to carefully record the canal level each day, so that the rate of fall could be plotted. As expected, the rate of loss reduced as the canal level fell, but it showed that the rate at the normal working level was less than the flow rate calculated for normal operation, which allowed for the required spillage over the stop planks at Wigwell aqueduct and supported the values calculated.

In view of the tendentious nature of the estimates we were pleased that it looked about right, but just in case we have made the orifice plate adjustable so the flow can be adjusted if necessary.

It became clear that the replacement of the missing structure with a barrier gate or sluice incorporating a device to limit the flow of water into the canal in storm conditions would make a significant improvement. It would also provide a cost saving for DCC resulting from a reduction in the need for time-consuming attendances by its Countryside wardens. A constant head orifice system was recommended (see Principles of Flow Control) and full details of the problem and the current proposals were set out in a report dated July 2016, which was used both to support a planning application for the necessary work, and also for the subsequent application for grant aid to fund the installation. We were fortunate that Chris Broome, a professional water engineer who had led an earlier hydraulic study commissioned in 2006 by DCC, was ready to retire; he also lived near Cromford and was a canal enthusiast. He kindly checked my calculations and offered useful suggestions, and has now become a valued member of FCC Strategic Restoration Group.



Existing by-wash sluice gate, which forms the overflow weir maintaining a constant head for the new flow control.

Photo: John Boucher

Principles of Flow Control

If a hole is made in the side of a tank full of water, water will flow out of it. If the size of the hole, and its depth below the top surface of the water are known, the rate of flow can be calculated. When I was at school the physics laboratory kept a constant flow apparatus. Water was run into a small tank from a tap, and excess water allowed to flow over the side, keeping the top level. A pipe was attached lower down, and water flowed out of this at a constant rate to enable experiments to be performed irrespective of how much was flowing out of the tap, provided that it was enough to keep the tank overflowing.

This principle was used in early canal reservoirs which took their feed water from side streams, but were obliged to let a calculated minimum flow down the stream at all times – what was commonly known as a compensation flow. The situation is reversed at Cromford Mills, where the calculated flow goes into the canal, and all the rest goes back into the river.

The system should work well to prevent excess storm flows entering the canal and causing problems. Unfortunately, we can't invent water, and in very dry weather when the flows are low, all the water will be going into the canal but it might still not be enough to keep the canal level up. Overall it should improve availability for navigation, and reduce the cost of manually controlling levels. With the likely increase in storm flows predicted due to global warming, its benefits should be even greater in the future.

The feeder is within the World Heritage Site and is part of a Grade I listed building complex, but it was considered that a new barrier with control gear could 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 adjacent sluice. It was believed that such a barrier

was originally installed when the feeder was constructed. Construction would be entirely within the existing feeder entrance, and no additional land take was required.

Once the scheme had been developed, planning permission and listed building consent had to be obtained. Fortunately the Arkwright Society who owned the site and DCC who control the canal at this point were

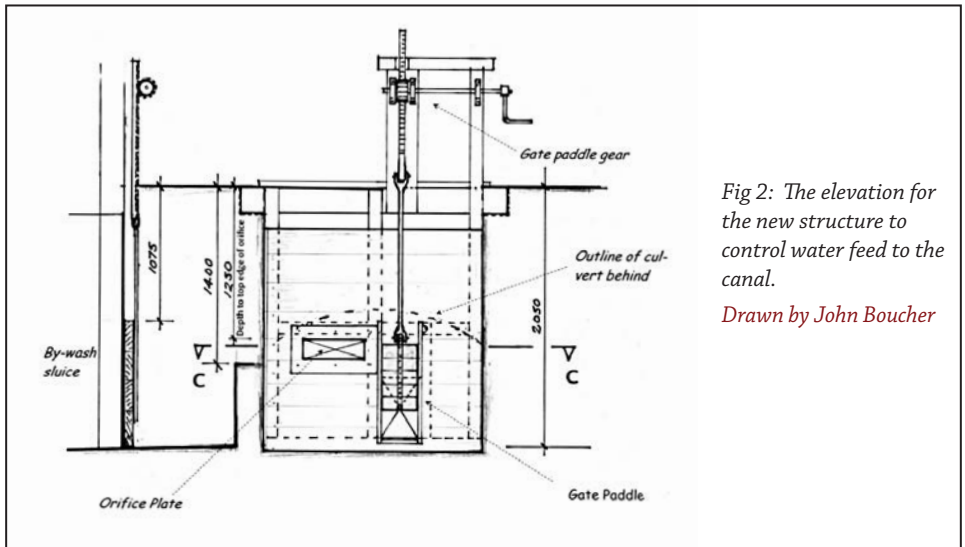


Fig 2: The elevation for the new structure to control water feed to the canal.

Drawn by John Boucher

both supportive, and the details in the report enabled the permissions to be sought from and granted by Derbyshire Dales District Council without delay. Fortunately also, shortly afterwards the Inland Waterways Association, having been left a substantial legacy in the will of their late consultant engineer and hydraulics specialist Tony Harrison invited applications for grants, and we were one of four who were successful. The grant awarded covered about three quarters of the cost, the remainder being provided from voluntary input, *Birdswood* income, and other FCC resources. A contract was awarded to Beighton Construction of Chesterfield who had worked previously on the site when they replaced the by-wash paddle a few years ago. As part of the work necessitated lowering the canal level for a few days, work was scheduled for early November, the end of *Birdswood*'s regular operating season when the boat would be lifted for its MCA inspection.

Design and Construction

The new structure utilised the existing grooves in the masonry side walls at the feeder entrance. It was built in English oak, left as bare timber to weather to match the existing adjacent by-wash sluice gate, and in many ways resembles a small canal lock gate. A fixed aperture and an adjustable paddle sluice gate were incorporated to control water flow (see Fig 2). The steel for the orifice plates and trash screen frame was galvanised, with all bolts and fixings in stainless steel. The paddle itself was a reclaimed ex British Waterways plastic paddle, reconstructed to the required size by John Baylis and his team at Langley Mill (see Paddle Construction). The masonry walls and floor enclosing the gate were cleaned and inspected prior to the gate installation, and where necessary repointed using hydraulic lime mortar.



New oak boarding being fitted.

Photo: John Boucher



Installing the paddle rack gear. The orifice plate and weed screen can also be seen.

Photo: John Boucher

Paddle Construction

Over thirty years ago the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association started a workshop at Langley Mill to repair plant and make items for restoration work on the lower Cromford Canal. Since then we have also made and designed paddle-gear and steel-work for the Canal & River Trust and other canal societies. When John Boucher designed the water control I saw it as an opportunity to recycle old paddle gear and for volunteers to save a considerable amount of money.

The orifice plate and weed screen were designed by John Boucher using new steel and prepared and welded by Ernie Boddy our resident welder. Holes were then drilled and tapped to fasten the parts together with stainless steel studs. The weed screen was largely made from 12mm round steel rod; about 12m in total, with some slight modifications to facilitate cleaning when in use. Following welding and cleaning, all the parts were hot dip galvanised.

I had fitted Coplastik paddles at Langley Bridge Lock twelve years ago; ease of use and minimal wear make them a modern alternative to Elm which is now practically unobtainable. I found some large second-hand Coplastik paddles near Daventry and for £60 they provided sufficient material to make a back frame, runners and slide. The paddle was to John's design and the parts were bolted together; a recycled cast iron bracket was used to fasten the paddle slide to the operating rod.

I wanted the paddle gear to look old, and from our collection at Langley Mill, I cleaned up an old Grand Union 1:1 ground paddle gear and rack. The design of the paddle posts was similar to the existing flood relief paddle and the operating rod and restraining pawl was made from old GU gate gear.

John Baylis



Water starts flowing again to the canal.

Photo: John Boucher

At some time in the past a short section of low wall adjacent to the horseshoe weir had been removed down to water level and replaced by sandbags which created an untidy appearance. The opportunity was

taken to install copings to replace these. This enhanced the surroundings, and the finished work has received much positive comment.

The work was completed expeditiously and is now being monitored carefully to check that the calculated flow is achieving the results required. This will be reviewed from time to time, and there is provision for adjusting the size of the orifice if it is found to be necessary change the maximum flow.



The date 1821 carved into the stone coping where the water from the mill yard enters the feeder arm of the canal.

Photo: Editor



VOLUNTARY SUPPORT FOR THE FCC

by John Guyler

Volunteer hours on the canal increased dramatically again in 2017

The FCC is a charity and charities are only as good as the members who freely give their time. This is the third year I can report the recorded volunteer hours for FCC. This year with better recording and more related activity from volunteers, there is a significant increase.

At the beginning of the year I contacted all FCC officers and invited them to confidentially submit their volunteer hours and travel time. My thanks go to all those who put up with my constant requests for this seemingly trivial information; I hope that more will get on board this year.

Throughout the year the average response has been about 70% of those I contacted, an increase from 2016. The volunteer hours record is invaluable when applying for grants or demonstrating the commitment of the FCC to potential donors or indeed to the membership.

As an indication of the importance of the information, each month I submit the total work-party hours for the FCC, and our Canal & River Trust Ranger at Ironville, to Waterside Care and CRT at Newark. Waterside Care is supported by the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water, CRT and Keep Britain Tidy. At the end of last year, a Waterside Care for the Midlands Region report stated, since 2011, there have been 3,200 volunteer events, 740 volunteers, 12,500 bags of litter collected and 57,000 volunteer hours. CRT are building up a similar report of their business. The FCC are acknowledged to be a very active group.

We also had a team from Waterway Recovery Group working at Ironville in April on the third phase of the towpath resurfacing and in December WRG did a weekend pulling reeds at Ambergate and Leawood Aqueduct;

altogether they gave **334.5** hours, which are not included in the final FCC total.

We will have work parties in 2018 at Cromford, High Peak Junction, Whatstandwell and Pinxton Wharf under the direction of Derbyshire County Council. Also Ironville and Lower Hartshay will have work parties under the direction of the CRT, and Sawmills is coming onto the rota for 2018.

Some specific hours may be of interest, all of which are included in the total recorded activities:

Work on the coir rolls at Cromford	457.25
Fence erection at Lock 4, Ironville	101
IWA Festival at Ilkeston	159.5
World Heritage Site Discovery Days weekend	150

The 2017 total recorded volunteer hours are as follows:

Volunteer Crewing of <i>Birdswood</i>	5973.5
MCA Inspection of <i>Birdswood</i> and associated maintenance	433
Shop volunteer operating hours	998
Boat maintenance in July, removal of rudder	34
Work-parties and other recorded activities	2549.75
Installation of a safe	20
Repair to the water supply inlet valve at Cromford	30
Recorded volunteer hours for FCC officers	3464.25
Recorded hours at all FCC management meetings	681
Total recorded direct volunteer hours	14,183.5
Total recorded travel hours	1,007.5
Total volunteer hours	15,191

For comparison, recorded direct volunteer hours for 2015 were **6858.25**, and for 2016 were **10784.5**.



LEAWOOD JOTTINGS

by Ian Yates

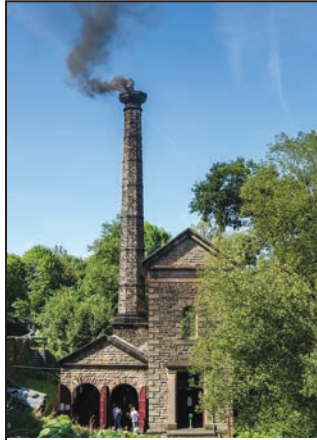
Regular maintenance has taken place over the winter

The start of the new steaming season will be with us by the time you read this and we are working steadily on some small jobs to get ready; it does not seem long since shutting down for last winter. Luckily we do not have any major issues – just some bits and bobs which need attention.

Some years ago we replaced the defective wood packing in the joint below the bottom valve on the beam engine. This has now started to leak again and we are replacing it with new, carefully cut to match the thickness and shape of the joint, from spare cedar blocks. This will then be covered over with tape and the restraining strap replaced.

The packing on the main pump in the engine house has also started to leak again and this will be replaced; we have some spare from the last repair which we can use. This packing is a modern equivalent to what we used to use and it will be interesting to see its condition when we open the pump up.

In the boiler house we are rectifying some minor maintenance issues. The fire doors on boiler 43 became very hard to open and close so we have removed them and cleaned out the runners. The wear had caused a V to form and this was trapping the door as it moved. We are also replacing the drain pipes from the steam main making them longer so they can be seen from the gantry when adjusting the flow of steam. For some time we have struggled with the guard around the feed pump; it is heavy to move and restricts



Leawood Pumphouse in steam.

Photo: CJ

access for maintenance. We have carefully assessed the item and are in the process of modifying it to make it easier to move and also we can get at the pump more easily. We have had to look at all the places that access could be gained and think we have covered the issues adequately.

There is a problem with the brick arches in both boilers. There has been some crumbling on the front edge due to the heat so we either carry out a temporary repair or replace them altogether. We may have a source of some new firebricks for this. All being

well we will have the same coal supply this year from the small drift mine in Eckington; it's quite a talking point with visitors that we use Derbyshire coal – most think it is imported.

We are always on the lookout for volunteers to help look after and work on the engine and boilers. Whilst this is generally day-to-day maintenance and cleaning works, sometimes more extensive and interesting works come along. Whilst getting dirty is optional, it is not always necessary. Should anyone be interested, come and see us on a steaming day or we are generally there on a Monday night. An initial contact to Middleton Top on 01629 533298 should be made at other times; they will put you in touch with us. There are no joining fees – just provide your own safety boots and overalls. Refreshments are taken at the end of each working session in the quiet atmosphere of the engine house.



CRUSHED BRICK TO LANGLEY MILL

by Mike Harrison

One of the last 'commercial' loads onto the Cromford Canal

As many members will know, the first length of the Cromford Canal at Langley Mill, including Langley Bridge Lock, was restored and re-opened in May 1973 by the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association. Since then, more of the canal above the lock has been restored in stages by Langley Mill Boat Company, and ECPDA work parties have continued. Boat rallies have also been held regularly, mostly every five years, on the anniversary of the re-opening. In May 2018, there will be the latest in this series of rallies, commemorating not only 45 years since the re-opening, but 50 years since the ECPDA was formed. This milestone reminded me of past Langley Mill rallies, and I particularly remember the one in May 1993.

For several years prior to 1993, volunteers had been restoring the former sewage pumping station adjacent to the canal above the lock and installing a new pump and pipework which could be used to back-pump the canal water from below the lock to supplement the limited water supply (*Portal 62*). It was therefore decided that the 20th anniversary rally in May 1993 should include the ceremonial re-opening of the pumping station. But after the excavations involved in installing the pipework etc, the area around the building was very muddy and in need of some resurfacing before the opening ceremony.

At this time, I owned *Saltaire*, an ex Grand Union Canal Carrying Company motor narrow boat which, assisted by Val, I had restored to working condition. One of my ambitions was to carry a load up the Erewash Canal on to the Cromford Canal. I was also aware that at Coseley (in the Black Country) was a canalside brick crushing plant which we had

seen several times when boating in that area.

Therefore, over a pint in the Great Northern, the venue of countless discussions on canal work at Langley Mill since 1971, Michael Golds, the ECPDA work party organiser, and I hatched a plan to carry 30 tons of crushed brick by boat from Coseley to Langley Mill (a trip of 75 miles and 74 locks) and spread it around the pumping station as part of the public entertainment at the 1993 rally.



Plywood chute to guide the crushed brick into the boat. Nowadays there would be hard hats, high viz coats, goggles and dust masks!

Photo: Val Roberts

I decided we should not be too ambitious, so enlisted our friends with their boats *Bath* and *Petrel*, who were also coming to the rally, to share the load with *Saltaire*. Admittedly, 10 tons per boat is only really half a load, but I thought that would probably be prudent in view of the proposed route. The Birmingham Canal Navigations, then probably more so than now, are notorious for being full of all kinds of rubbish, which can cause problems for deep-draughted boats.



Storming down the Trent from Sawley to Trent Lock, with the camera man living dangerously.

Photo: Margaret Pottinger

So it was that on Friday 7th May 1993 at the appointed time of 8am, *Saltaire*, *Bath* and *Petrel*, together with *Tench* which was to act as a lightening boat and/or tug if necessary, assembled at the wharf of William Gabriel Ltd, Coseley. Loading was by mechanical shovel – two tons per bucketful. *Saltaire* loaded first and we soon had our ten tons on board, having to rig a plywood chute to complete the loading, as we could not get near enough to the bank due to the aforementioned rubbish in the canal. However, very little went into the water, although a considerable quantity seemed to get into my pockets and my hair. A red dust cloud billowed up and settled on everything and everybody. *Bath* and *Petrel* quickly followed into the berth and all three of us were loaded before 9am.

We then moved off round to Factory Junction at Tipton, away from the dust and noise, to mop off the boats and indulge in bacon sandwiches. We then attacked the New Main Line to Birmingham with renewed vigour and turned on to the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal and down Farmers Bridge Locks with very little trouble. We did have the expected delays down Aston Locks and around Salford Junction (better known as Spaghetti Junction since the motorways came), but made it to tie behind the Tyburn House just above Minworth for the night.

Next day we passed down Minworth locks

without too much trouble and on to Curdworth, where we had a very warm welcome from Don Clive, the enthusiastic lock keeper. Then it was a pleasant run down the more rural Curdworth Locks and on via Fazeley to Whittington for the night. From there it was an easy two days via Fradley Junction down to Trent Lock, including a good blast down the River Trent for the benefit of our video crew.

The next morning, I was very disappointed not to be able to achieve my ambition to steer a loaded boat up to Langley Mill. I was struck by some sort of bug and spent most of the Erewash Canal passage either in bed or on the loo, having handed the tiller over to Carole Golds.

Saltaire was unloaded before the rally, using the ECPDA Ruston 3RB excavator, driven by the present FCC chairman John Baylis. This was because, together with *Tench*, we were to carry the band for the traditional rally opening ceremony. The unloading of *Bath* and *Petrel* proved to be quite an attraction on the Monday of the rally and a big gang of volunteers duly spread the crushed brick around the pump house.



John Baylis unloads the crushed brick with the Ruston 3RB at Langley Mill before the rally.

Photo: Val Roberts

Although by no means commercially viable, it was still very satisfying to be able to carry a load and get some idea of what working with narrow boats was really like. And apart from that, it was jolly good fun!



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Portal welcomes your thoughts, comments and queries at editor@cromfordcanal.org

Butterley Inside Information

First of all thanks for a very interesting edition of *Portal* (63) and the excellent advert for our Butterley DVD which topped 550 sales in just 5 weeks! [And copies are still available from FCC Sales – Ed]

I was also very interested in Grenville Smith's article about William Smith meeting Mr Outram. It was recorded that Mr Smith "met with Benjamin Outram . . . who took us into the tunnel at Butterley Park, then making: not a stone of the great ironworks since established was then laid".

Grenville Smith in his article then notes that this date seems to be at variance with the currently accepted early history of Butterley.

Perhaps this is not true for the following reason. As Smith and Outram entered the tunnel at *Butterley Park*, presumably this was via the east portal. If the pair had been in the vicinity of the canal around Locks 6–7 (the forge site) there would not have been a stone laid as the work did not start until 1808 when Brunton came on the scene with the first blast furnace and foundry being built around 1811.

As such I believe that there is no 'variance' with the currently accepted early history of Butterley. Just a small point but one which I think deserves a little clarification.

Tim Castledine, Butterley Heritage Trust

The Editor replies: I hold up my hands; it was I who caused the 'variance' sentence to be included! I had read it as the tunnel "then making" – and certainly the tunnel was completed by 1794 – but if you read it that it was "Butterley Park, then making" that explanation would make entire sense. Thanks, Tim – good to know that members read the articles in detail!

Archives in the Attic

I read your request in *The Portal* 62 and was prompted to do something I had been thinking about for some time and had never quite got round to. I am enclosing various documents and cuttings which I came across when I was going through my parents' belongings following the death of my father.

In this package you will find various leaflets produced by the erstwhile Cromford Canal Society (including what looks like a membership badge) and a copy of *Diggum* which they presumably kept as a memento of their letter which was printed in it. There are also cuttings from the *Ripley & Heanor News*.

I would also like to say how much I look forward to receiving *The Portal*. It is really impressive for both content and presentation. I spent my early years in Heage and Ripley and have many fond memories of the canal.

I wish the FCC every success for the future.

John Musgrave, Eye, Suffolk

The Editor (and Archivist) replies: Thank you so much for your surprise package, John. I do like that kind of surprise! It is heartening to know that my appeals are sometimes acted upon. All the items you sent are very welcome additions to the FCC Archives, in particular the badge, which I had not seen before. If other members have material secreted away in their house, please take a look to see if you can find it – I would love to see it!



The gold and white CCS badge donated to the FCC Archives by John Musgrave.



SPRING 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.

For further details of *Birdswood* events phone 07552 055455 or check out www.birdswood.org.

Saturday 17th March

Regular trips on *Birdswood* start, 11am and 2pm from Cromford Wharf on weekends and Wednesdays (plus Thursdays April to October).

Saturday 17th March to end April

Now & Then Image Trail - Take a stroll into the past from Cromford Wharf, reminisce, and see how the landscape has changed over the last century. Free, self-led activity along the towpath, suitable for pushchairs and wheelchair users.

Monday 19th March

Roses and Castles - A talk by Suzie Litton-Wood. 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall.

Easter Sunday 1st & Monday 2nd April

Arraslea Shires will return for *Birdswood's* first horse-drawn trip of the year. Leawood Pump in steam, noon to 5pm.

Friday 6th April

Book Folding Hedgehog themed *Birdswood* trip for all ages and abilities. Making hedgehogs from books and colouring pictures to make badges to take home. 1-3pm. £6 each.

Monday 16th April

AGM - Details elsewhere in this and previous issue. With an update from George Rogers. 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall. Free admission.

Sunday 6th & Monday 7th May

Horse-drawn boat trips from Cromford and High Peak Junction on *Birdswood*. Leawood Pump in steam.

Sunday 20th May

Open Day at Codnor Park Forge - An opportunity to learn about this 71-acre site alongside the canal, recently purchased to become a nature reserve (see page 11). 11am-3pm. More details on Friends of Forge Facebook page.

Monday 21st May

Bess of Hardwick Hall - With the help of examples of period costume, Sonia Preece explores Bess's time at the Old Hall and life within a Tudor mansion in the 1580s. 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall.

Spring Bank Holiday 26th-27th May

Celebrating Derbyshire - Stalls and demonstrations by local people. Model boat displays, tombola and free crafts for children. A fundraising opportunity for the *Birdswood* Community Engagement Plan.

Spring Bank Holiday 26th-28th May

A major waterway festival is taking place at Langley Mill to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the reopening of the lock and Great Northern Basin and the 50th anniversary of the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association. Historic narrow boats, real ale bar, entertainment and - of course - the FCC stand. Free admission 10am to 4.30pm.

Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd June

Horse-drawn boat trips from Cromford and High Peak Junction on *Birdswood*. Leawood Pump in steam.

Sunday 17th June

Fathers' Day - Pre-book your seats on *Birdswood* and fathers travel free. Departures 11am and 2pm. See website for further details.

Monday 18th June

Off the Boats - A light-hearted talk by Elizabeth Holloway about a middle-aged couple who have a 60ft narrowboat built, and spend the next 5 years living on it, cruising the canals. Illustrated by a small exhibition of canal art, photographs and maps. 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall.

HORSE DRAWN BOAT TRIPS TO LEAWOOD PUMPHOUSE IN STEAM

Departure times of
11.00 am and 2.00 pm
from Cromford Wharf



Departure times of
12.15 pm and 3.15 pm
from High Peak Junction

Sailing on

April 1st & 2nd » May 6th & 7th » June 2nd & 3rd » July 1st
August 4th, 5th, 26th & 27th » September 15th & 16th
October 6th & 7th » November 3rd & 4th

Return Fares:

Family £29.00, Adults £12.00, Seniors £10.00, Children £6.00

Single Fares:

Family £19.00, Adults £8.00, Seniors £7.00, Children £4.00

Booking Information

By phone: 07552 055 455

By email: bookings@birdswood.org

Online: www.birdswood.org



Trip boat BIRDSWOOD is owned and operated by
The Friends of the Cromford Canal
Registered Charity 1164608
www.cromfordcanal.org Visit us on Facebook at Birdswood



Foundation
Derbyshire



www.cromfordcanal.org