

# THE PORTAL

Issue 65 - Summer 2018

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Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608



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## Front Cover

Close up and personal: the return of the water voles – see pages 24 and 30. *Photo: Mary Wilde.*

## Back Cover

Changing times at Cromford. Over a hundred years ago, Wheatcroft's men pose outside their office, now the cheese shop. More recently, Birdswood volunteers pose under the 'same' sign, which has been both recreated and moved. You will notice that the fenestration in the older picture has changed too – check it out next time you say 'cheese'!

## 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

## Of Voles and Volunteers

### Water Voles

Who doesn't love the water vole? They are such cute creatures and it's great to see them back on two sections of our canal (see pages 24 and 30) as well as featuring on our front cover.

The fantastic work done by the Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Reservoir group shows how clearing a section of canal brings the wildlife back. At FCC we'd like to see the whole 14½ miles cleared (plus the Pinxton Arm) and so create a far greater length for wildlife to thrive.

They are back in force at Cromford too, with photographers making regular 'pilgrimages' to capture them on camera. The Facebook pages have been overflowing with fantastic photos of water voles going about their daily lives unperturbed by passing public.

Well, most of the passing public that is. There is sadly a small number of irresponsible dog owners who actually encourage their dogs into the canal where they frighten, or worse kill, our wonderful voles and resident dabchicks. A comment on Facebook recently typifies the issue:

"Today we visited the Cromford Canal with the intention of photographing the splendid sight of a horse drawn barge. What I saw was rather distressing: a couple with four dogs repeatedly threw balls into the water despite the signs contrary to this. Why distressing you ask; well when you witness a family of our most endangered mammal moving their young to safer quarters because of their selfish actions. Also in the area were baby ducklings and nesting dabchicks. I respectfully ask any dog owners to be mindful of where they exercise their pets. I'm sure as dog owners you are animal lovers; well these little guys need your love and help."

I echo those sentiments entirely, although might not have been quite so polite!



### Waterway Volunteers

How do you fancy spending some quality time with a host of great people with similar interests to yourself? Well, you could do worse than considering volunteering for Friends of Cromford Canal!

A selection of 'vacant' posts is listed on page 6 and George Rogers is always on the lookout for helpers with his Strategic Restoration Committee too. There is a huge variety of roles to fill, from stay at home to fully active, from tea making through tree lopping to technical designing, from photography through publicity to practical maintenance, from rope handling through reed pulling to retailing, and from applying for grants through archives to advertising. Whether your main interest is wildlife, history, work parties, IT, boats or simply being sociable, we can find you a really worthwhile way to spend your spare time. Just drop an email to [volunteering@cromfordcanal.org](mailto:volunteering@cromfordcanal.org). I look forward to working with you!

### Birdswood on BBC?

It was somewhat daunting to be asked to speak about Arkwright's stormy relationship with the Cromford Canal Co for a new BBC4 documentary on 'Villages' to be broadcast later this year. But that filming was carried out on Birdswood one balmy spring evening in May. I dread to see how it will turn out, but at the very least it should be good publicity for us!

### Keep in Touch

To keep in touch with what's happening on the canal between Portals (including TV appearances!) visit the FCC Facebook page - that's where all the news is reported as it happens.

**The copy date for the Autumn Portal is 28th August**



# CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by John Baylis BEM

## There is possibility of a Pinxton grant

In my last Chairman's notes I mentioned that the Smotherly site had come into more friendly ownership, but I didn't expect the level of action required over the last month. About two years ago, following discussion with Derbyshire County Council at the Cromford Canal Partnership, we used the plans and calculations



from when we applied for planning permission to get some prices for doing the earthworks ourselves. The answers were not unexpected and suggested that we would be looking for around £500,000 to achieve what UK Coal had promised to do to restore Smotherly – a perhaps frightening figure, but for the restoration of nearly a mile of canal not very different from the cost of other restorations

We regularly get lists of grants but very few are in the region of £500,000 – and even less available to cover this type of work. Then there appeared the offer of grants under the Water Environment scheme but the drawback was that they were looking for applications within five weeks. An initial letter to them asking if our scheme was worth putting forward received the response that they only reply to full applications. As this grant is based on European money the speed was to get any grants completed before Brexit and future grants might not be available. The trustees therefore decided to complete the application.

As the Water Environment Grant comes under the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), red tape and practical difficulties abounded in completing an application which could only be submitted by the internet and without advice from the grant body.

Following the lead set by George Rogers,

several members of the Strategic Restoration Committee offered to complete the application, using the earlier detailed plans and updating the quotations already received. John Boucher, Chris Broome and Rebecca Craske led the main discussions and contact with other bodies; for the amount of work and

time they put they deserve the thanks of all members.

They were lucky in getting advice from Trent Rivers Trust – Lower Trent and Erewash Catchment Partnership, but the Environment Agency and Natural England as judges for any grants could not assist. Several trustees also got advice and written support from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Derbyshire County Council and local resident organisations. From the application it was obvious that restoration of the canal was not a major qualification, so the response majored on improvement of water quality to the River Erewash, creation of a water habitat and provision of flood scheme improvements for lower Pinxton.

The application was completed in time and submitted by email with hours to spare. We should hear in June if our application is being considered and, if we pass that hurdle, further scrutiny may result in the offer of a grant in August. We all hope that the application is successful. Towards the end of completing the application we were more hopeful than when we first started; but even if we are not successful, the exercise was very useful in preparing for the other grant applications needed over the next few years.

In the last Portal there was an article by John Boucher on the control system (in Arkwright's

Cromford Mill) that he had designed for the water supply to the Cromford Canal from Bonsall Brook. The system was well tested during the winter rain and snow without DCC Countryside Services having to lower the water level in the canal between Cromford and High Peak Junction. At a meeting of DCC Cromford Canal Partnership we were told that this was the only one of five canal sections under DCC ownership which didn't suffer from flooding over the winter.

Those of you who walk in the High Peak

Junction area may have noticed the new stop planks installed near Leawood Pumping Station. These have been installed by the FCC at the request of DCC so that the water level over the Derwent aqueduct can be lowered whilst keeping a sufficient level of water back to Cromford for Birdswood. The problem is that about 30 years ago a plastic membrane was installed over the aqueduct to prevent leakage through the stonework and as this may be leaking a lower water level is being tried.

## **Volunteers Needed**

Despite almost a thousand members, we are surprisingly short of members who volunteer to help out with the day-to-day running of FCC. Simply being a member helps us, but could you do more? We are currently looking for help in four areas:

### **Sales Stand & Representation at Events**

We are looking for members willing and able to attend local events to sell our books, souvenirs etc, spread the word about what we do and enrol new members. The person(s) would need to be able to transfer stock from the store at Cromford to and from the event as well as run the stand. We have a marquee, banners, stock and publicity material. Of course, this could be achieved by a small team, who could take on different responsibilities.

### **Publicity Officer**

We desperately need someone to keep in touch with the local media – newspapers, television, social media, websites etc. Our monthly meetings need publicising, and there are a host of FCC achievements that the general public are unaware of because we do not have someone to send out press releases, or phone up local news desks. Those who actually make the achievements do not necessarily have the time or skill to tell others about them – could you do that?

### **Birdswood Crewing and Maintenance**

We always on the lookout for new volunteers to help operate our passenger trip boat Birdswood at Cromford, but what we especially need is a team to do those little jobs that the regular crew does not have time for in between trips. Things like touching up paintwork, fixing the odd loose panel, mending a door lock, repairing a seat, improving the steps, cleaning the brasses. With up to forty people climbing onto and off Birdswood at least eight times a week, maintenance jobs constantly crop up; they often small and unpredictable but much needed. Passengers notice small details and we want to give them the best possible experience. Earnings from Birdswood provides the FCC's main income stream. Could you help out with these little jobs – or even better lead a team to meet perhaps once a week (month?) – to do them?

### **Weighbridge Shop**

Associated with Birdswood is the FCC shop on Cromford Wharf which opens when the boat is running (and more often if there are volunteers). We need more helpers in the shop to sell boat tickets and the other merchandise that is on display.

**If you think you might be able to help out with any of these – or if you have any other specific skills to offer – please get in touch with [volunteering@cromfordcanal.org](mailto:volunteering@cromfordcanal.org).  
You could make all the difference to our success!**



# MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

by Yvonne Shattower

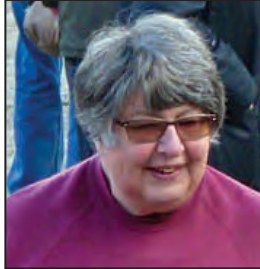
## An Update on People and Events

It was very encouraging to receive so many postal votes for trustees for the Annual General Meeting in April. The fact that members are interested in the governance of the FCC is much appreciated by the trustees.

I would also like to thank all those who have returned their green 'GDPR' form. This is a very important piece of paper as it will give us your preferred method of contact with you, our members. We have well over 300 forms to go through, but this is only about half of those sent out, and we really do need to have them back with us. If you have mislaid your form, please contact me and I will arrange for you to receive another copy. Please note that they should now be returned direct to me, not the IWA address on the reverse of the form. My contact details are on page 2.

There does seem to be a great deal of confusion nationally over this new Act; I think there are as many interpretations of the paperwork required as there are bodies affected; each one seems to ask for different information. However, for those of you who currently receive your Portal by email but have not yet returned your form, we cannot send the magazine by email until we have your form, and for this reason you will receive this edition by post. Those who have made a new request on the 'green form' to receive your magazine by email will have a posted copy this time, but future editions should arrive electronically, as it will, of course, take us time to transfer all the information to the data base.

I spent the late May Bank Holiday at the Erewash Rally at Langley Mill which was held in glorious sunshine. I'm afraid I opted to



wear my Erewash 'hat' this time and spent the three days serving teas in the marquee, so had no chance to see the FCC stand.

Our audience at the May meeting at Ironville was again very disappointing and we are wondering what we can do to revive interest. At one time we were getting at least fifty

members on a regular basis; this time we had only twenty in the audience, with seven of the Committee present. Our June meeting at Ironville will be the last for this summer, but we look forward to meeting you all again on 17th September when Glynn Waite, an author and railway enthusiast (and FCC member) will be talking to us on the Midland Railway in Derbyshire, and on 15th October, a Canal & River Trust representative will be telling us about the Trust's Heritage Approach to Conservation. Both of these talks sound as if they will be very worthwhile attending. All the profits from our talks go towards the restoration of the canal, and you will also have a chance to catch up on our latest news or speak to one of the committee so do come along and join us.



*The FCC stand at the Erewash Rally in late May.*

*Photo: Mike Harrison*



# BIRDWOOD & CROMFORD SHOP

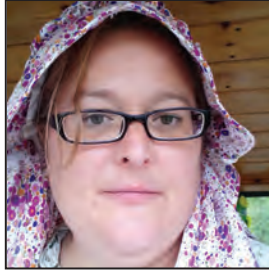
by Vix Wilding

## The Community Engagement Scheme explained

I have often been asked about the Community Engagement Scheme (CES) I run as part of the Birdswood business. Many questions fly back and forth about the reason for giving free services to some people and providing free learning activities for the community.

Well here is some of that information behind my decisions: The aim of developing an engagement strategy was to be able to plan and deliver an appropriate community engagement process that will allow me to achieve my desired outcomes. This meant setting clear aims, identifying a target audience, understanding resources and capacity, and planning accordingly.

The CES needs to identify stakeholders and plan methods of engaging with each of



these groups. How this is done will depend on the individual characteristics of the community, its existing relationship with the business, and the time and resources available for the process. It is important that sufficient time is allowed for community engagement. Over time, shared information and open dialogue builds trust and community ownership over decisions.

Community ownership, or at the very least, appreciation of the rationale for a decision, is another long-argued reason for good community involvement in decision-making processes. The deeper the involvement, it is argued, the more likely it is that your community will get the reasons for the decision, even if they don't necessarily



*Chernobyl children about to take a trip on Birdswood.*

agree with it. By indirectly promoting the Charity's aims through these events, it raises awareness, improves understanding and spreads the message out to the local people in neighbouring communities.

By establishing dialogue opportunities where individuals, groups or organisations can feed in ideas and help shape a project as it develops there becomes a strong sense of collaboration. These bodies are better known as Stakeholders or Partnerships.

Throughout the years I have provided funded trips to struggling urban communities, this being a chance to unwind from day-to-day pressures and improving mental health. I have also provided trips to physically and mental challenged groups from Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, the visually impaired, homeless shelters and an Autism outreach service. The bi-annual "Roll and Stroll" events are in conjunction with Derbyshire Dales District

Council's Walking for Health Scheme and EMH Care & Home Support and is an all-inclusive day out for everyone. This year I have also provided the Carers Association and Derbyshire Dementia Support groups with trips.

During the summer holidays I have also contracted an outside provider, Go Wild, to attend Cromford Wharf and deliver forest school activities for the families. This blows away the cobwebs for some and links people to likeminded persons. Being outdoors has been said to boost self-esteem and generally lift spirits by helping to eliminate social exclusion. Each year we also supply a group of children who visit from Belarus and are descendants of the Chernobyl disaster. They return to boost their immune systems and get essential health care in the UK, sponsored by Bonsall and Dales Chernobyl Life Line [www.ccll.org.uk/bonsall](http://www.ccll.org.uk/bonsall). One of Birdswood's volunteers runs this initiative.



*Making bug boxes.*



*Going wild at Cromford Wharf.*

## **SCARECROW FESTIVAL**

**Cromford Wharf on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th August**

Horse Drawn Trips 11am and 2pm, Scarecrow Trail, Canal Art Sales and Demonstrations, Sales Stand and Tombola. Fresh Produce Stalls, Locally Carved Wood and Model Boat Displays on the canal.

**[www.birdswood.org](http://www.birdswood.org) / 07552 055 455**





# STRATEGIC RESTORATION UPDATE

by George Rogers

## A recap of the AGM Presentation

### Part One: 'Structural' Progress

This refers to the structure of the Strategic Restoration Committee – defining the way the SRC works and building the means for it to do so. SRC's aim is to progress the planning of the restoration of the canal – including feasibility, engineering, heritage, ecology, hydrology, economics and stakeholder engagement. To try to ensure we don't get distracted, we're not directly responsible for ongoing restoration (work parties), maintenance or grant applications – but we do support those functions where requested.



### Restoration Principles

These aim to set out what the FCC's standard approach to restoration is – what we want to achieve and how we do it. Everyone has a slightly different interpretation of the same thing and so by getting them formalised we can arrive at a common consensus that we don't then have to continually revisit them every time we want to make a decision.

The draft principles below have been accepted by FCC Trustees, but I strongly believe that it is you, the FCC members, who need to have the final say and I would really like to receive your comments at [george.rogers@cromfordcanal.org](mailto:george.rogers@cromfordcanal.org).

#### **Principle 1: Working within current best practice**

Many official bodies and other canal restoration schemes across the country have already carried out significant restoration

works and have produced authoritative publications demonstrating best practice, including in the areas of design, environment, management, implementation and health & safety; these will be followed in the restoration of the Cromford Canal.

#### **Principle 2: Aligning the canal route**

The following hierarchy will be adopted when selecting the route of the restored canal:

- Where the canal exists, the line will be retained and restored.
- Where the canal no longer exists, the first preference will be restoration on the original line.
- Deviation from the original line will only be considered where one or more of the following is valid for the original or alternative alignment:
  - New obstacles have arisen since the abandonment of the canal – engineering, environmental or social – that cannot be suitably mitigated.
  - The flood risk associated with the original alignment is too great and cannot be mitigated or the canal could provide flood alleviation measures by realignment.
  - The environmental cost of retaining the original line is too great, cannot be mitigated and an alternative route can demonstrate a positive environmental impact.
  - There is a significant economic advantage to realigning the canal, related to income streams (eg mooring locations) or expenditure streams (eg back-pumping schemes).

### **Principle 3: Canal ownership**

In order to restore the right of navigation, a new act of parliament will be required, most likely in the form of a Transport & Works Act Order. To achieve this, it would be highly preferable for a future navigation authority to own the canal.

Therefore, the FCC will seek to own any land on which the canal is being developed. This does not preclude an outside body (eg Canal & River Trust) eventually taking on the duties of the navigation authority, but ensures that the canal is available to such a body if this path is chosen in the future.

### **Principle 4: Economic sustainability**

The canal restoration will include within it sufficient means to ensure it is economically sustainable without external funding. This will be a requirement of any future navigation authority, whether the FCC or an outside body. In assessing the economic sustainability, only income streams that would be available to the navigation authority (eg mooring fees, rental income from properties owned by the navigation authority, café franchise fees) will be assessed.

### **Principle 5: Choosing the right construction methods**

The canal restoration will be sympathetic to the environment and the historical context. In particular:

- New structures will be built in contemporary materials to avoid 'pastiche' and confusion with historic artefacts. Careful attention will be paid to ensuring acceptable future weathering.

- The canal will typically be puddled with traditional clay lining and landscaped to blend in with the local surroundings. Localised areas will require special engineering considerations (e.g. concrete lining or plastic membranes) but these will be kept as short and as discreet as possible.

- Apart from local narrows, bridges and designated mooring points, all canal banks will have a natural edging such as fascine

(bundled twigs), coir rolls, timber piling or local flora and fauna. Narrows, bridges and designated mooring points will be constructed in stone or timber piling in preference to concrete or steel piling.

- The channel and towpath profiles will follow the original where existing, subject to enhancement of the towpath to meet modern access standards appropriate for the length of canal considered. The canal profile will typically have sloping sides with a minimum depth of 1.5m and a bottom width of 7m.

- Construction techniques will, where possible, be chosen to suit the available volunteer skill base, subject to achieving a suitable high standard of finish.

### **Principle 6: Improving the environment of the canal corridor**

The FCC will work with other stakeholders, including Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, to use the restoration of the Cromford Canal as a means of improving the wider environment of the canal corridor. In particular, the following will be considered:

- Creation of new habitat and enhancement of existing habitat.

- Protection and management of all habitat currently in the canal corridor, with specific attention on endangered and nationally important species.

- Control of visitor access to the current environment through a well-managed footpath network and designated wildlife viewing spots.

- Continual monitoring of current species throughout the canal corridor – before, during and after restoration.

### **Working Partnerships**

Between the 2017 and 2018 AGMs, we held initial meetings with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, Langley Mill Boatyard and the Chesterfield Canal Trust Engineering Group – along with continuing our partnerships with the Canal & River Trust, Derbyshire County Council, Canal Regeneration in Bullbridge and the Bullbridge & Sawmills Area civic society.

## Part Two: Project Progress

### Beggarlee (Langley Mill) Extension

The list of documents included by Judy Berry in her article 'Red Tape – don't you just love it?' in the last edition of Portal is intimidating at first glance. However, if you break that list down it is actually dominated by (only) five elements:

**Design & Access Statement:** the main document that summarises what you're actually going to do. The work on this is well advanced and we have initial versions written by John Boucher going through proof reading at the moment.

**Drawings:** the design drawings that work with the text of the design & access statement to show what you're going to do. Again, these are well advanced courtesy of John Boucher and Doug Readle, and we have many drawings going through checking and tweaking at the moment. These are outline drawings for planning only – you wouldn't be able to construct to them – so there will be more work after planning permission is obtained.

**Environmental Statement:** the assessment of what impact the proposals will have on the environment and what mitigation measures need to be put in place. This is in hand courtesy of Susan White, Derbyshire County Council's Waterways Officer.

**Flood Risk Assessment:** the assessment of what impact the proposals will have in terms of flooding – will it raise flood levels elsewhere and have negative impacts anywhere removed from the site itself. The initial flood modelling has been carried out by an external contractor, and the FRA itself is now being written up by Chris Broome.

**Sustainability Appraisal:** how sustainable the development is and how construction and use will be carried out in a sustainable way (social and economic sustainability as well as environmental). Initial drafts of this, written predominantly by Doug Readle, are going through proof reading and tweaking.

As you can see, that means that much of the initial work is actually done. Several

members of the team have been temporarily distracted by the WEG application (see page 5), but whilst we await the result of that, the focus is back on Langley Mill and once the relevant documentation is complete we will be ready to apply for planning permission later in the year.

### Finance

The question of financing the works came up at the AGM – what is the FCC plan? I could be slightly glib and say that this isn't directly a concern of the SRC – our focus is to get projects to the point of being ready for construction, at which point they get handed over to others with responsibility for funding and managing them. However, I recognise it is a concern and deserves a slightly more reasoned answer – so here are my thoughts (my own, not necessarily FCC policy):

The initial element of the works at Langley Mill will be relatively low cost and carried out by volunteers. This is generally cheaper and quite significantly slower than contractors, and the financial outlay changes correspondingly. It is my expectation that the initial element will be carried out using current FCC reserves and income streams.

Once work starts, the visibility of the project will be used to do two things: help to launch further fundraising efforts from our members and local communities (as there will be a new 'focus' project to fundraise for); and give us greater credibility and demonstrate that we can carry out this work when we apply for funding for further sections.

Obviously, it would be beneficial to be able to build in funding streams to the project so that as it is developed it can provide direct funding for further restoration. At this moment, that isn't a focus of the Langley Mill project and we are awaiting the final results from the Economic Development Study (Portal 61) to help us shape this element further in the future. By the time you read this, the EDS should be at an end and it will be a focus of the SRC to look at the recommendations from that.



# POWER TO THE PUMPS!

by Kerry Green

## Many passengers ask about Birdswood's electric power system

*Birdswood* is powered by lead-acid wet cell batteries. These are made up of individual 2V cells contained in two tanks located at the rear of the passenger compartment either side of the galley doors. You may not have noticed these as they make very convenient tables for the souvenirs!

The battery, comprised of the combination of cells and tanks, provides 48V with 860Ah capacity and is enough to run the boat for about six return trips to Leewood pumphouse.

The batteries are connected to a motor controller which changes the DC (direct current) into 3 phase AC (alternating current). The voltage is transformed from 48V DC to 32V AC. This then powers a low voltage 32V AC motor which is maintenance free.

The motor controller runs the motor at a speed determined by the position of the speed wheel which is a brass wheel just in front of the boat master when he is at the helm. The speed wheel pushes a cable which moves a lever and turns a potentiometer, the same type of device you would find as a volume control on an old radio. The motor controller is a state of the art device which means it's very efficient as it chops up the DC power at ten

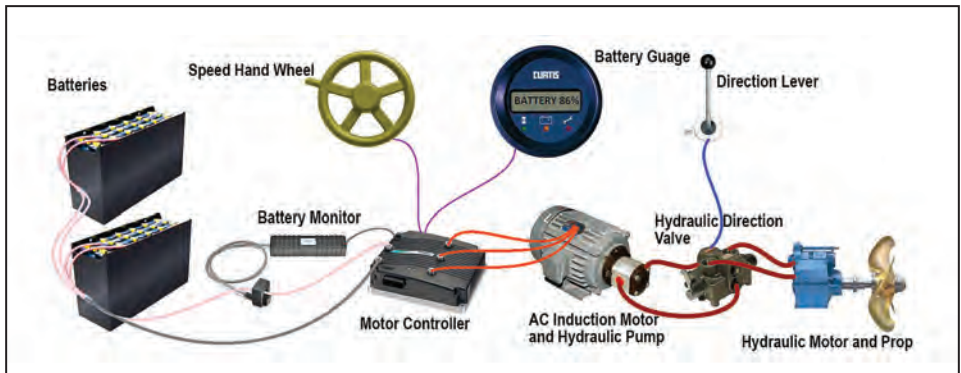
thousand times a second.

The electric motor then drives a hydraulic pump which is connected by pipes to a hydraulic motor in the rudder. The pump pushes oil through the hydraulic pipes which then turns the hydraulic motor to which the propeller is attached. You can see the black hydraulic hoses coming out of the rear of the boat and disappearing into the water next to the rudder.

If the boat is to be reversed then a brass lever opposite the speed wheel is moved which pulls a cable which changes a hydraulic valve which reverses the flow of oil to the hydraulic motor and so reverses the propeller.

*Birdswood* also has a battery-monitoring device which measures the power going into and out of the batteries. This communicates to the motor controller which then sends the information to the dashboard so we always know how much power is in the batteries, just the same as a fuel gauge on your car.

Another device called a DC to DC converter connects to the 48V battery and converts it to 12V to charge a small 12V car battery which is used to power the cabin lights, PA system and water pumps.





# NEWS FROM THE NORTH

by Rick Jillings

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



*Birdswood passes the impressive scaffolding of the Wharf Shed canopy from which most roof tiles have been removed.*

*Photo: Nigel Neale*

### Summer Events

We encourage you to make the most of the Cromford Canal and High Peak Trail, so please join us for one of our events this summer. As an incentive, pick up the DCC Events brochure and you could have a cup of tea on us – you'll find a buy one get one free hot drink voucher. There is also a £5 off voucher if you hire two or more bikes to explore the beautiful and flower-rich High Peak Trail.

### Photography Competition

Open to all non-professional photographers until 31st July. Categories: High Peak Trail or Cromford Canal. Entries will be displayed at High Peak Junction Visitor Centre from 6th to 12th August and will be open to public vote. Full terms and conditions from our Visitor Centres.

### Water Levels

Unfortunately the Derwent aqueduct near Leawood Pump is leaking and canal water is being lost through each of its three spans, so the water level has dropped on the aqueduct. Until a solution is found there will be little if any canal water flowing from north to south. We are seeking advice from our engineering team on how we resolve this. We have re-puddled an area with clay which has helped a little but have not been able to locate the main leak.

### Volunteer Work Parties – Thank you

The FCC volunteers have been busy through the winter and spring back filling coir bank protection with clay (see page 26). With the warmer summer weather we hope that the work to replant reed will give nature a helping



*The DCC Countryside Services Team involved with the canal about to set off on an inspection by bike. From the left: Rick Jillings, Bob Jeffery, Mark Brailsford, John Thompson and Sean Kent.*  
*Photo: Editor*

hand to green up the once eroded bank edges. Notices are up to discourage dogs going into the canal, a cause of erosion and wildlife disturbance, and to encourage dog owners to keep dogs on leads.

### **New Interpretation Boards**

DCC is working closely with FCC, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, and DerwentWISE to produce new site interpretation for the canal at Whatstandwell and Ambergate.

### **Resurfacing**

Work has taken place to repair the towpath surface at Leashaw Farm. This is to repair ruts caused by an excavator and dumper whilst removing significant reed blockages over the winter. As the saying goes, you can't make an omelette without cracking the eggs. Some further towpath repairs are planned for Ambergate too.

### **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 has undergone an overhaul. Many of the rotten timbers have now been replaced. A grant from Natural England has enabled this

conservation, with top up funding from DCC. This has also enabled DerwentWISE to work with us on a project to interpret the brake vans and the incline. This should highlight the now missing Cromford Engine that stood half way up the long incline ascending from the canal. The Sheep Pasture Engine House will become home to some nostalgic images.

### **Heritage Repairs**

Derbyshire County Council is currently conserving three historic scheduled ancient monuments. At High Peak Junction a contract has started to repair the roof of the Wharf Shed, the former transhipment shed for the canal and railway. Quotes have also been sought for work to repair the roof of Leawood Pump, which is currently supported on temporary props. Middleton Top boiler house roof is also awaiting repairs. This could mean that some of the summer open days have to change; please see the DCC website or contact Middleton Top for updates.



*Replacement of the incline pulley wheel underway at High Peak Junction.*  
*Photo: Editor*

### **Get in Touch**

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



# AQUEDUCT COTTAGE

by Hugh Potter

## When did the last person live there?



*The well-known photograph taken by the late Frank Rodgers showing the 'recluse' Mr Bowmer setting out to collect water. Note the old-fashioned 'yoke' on which he carries the buckets. This yoke can be seen standing by the door in two separate 1966 photographs suggesting he was still living there then.*

An enquiry on the Facebook page of The Friends of Aqueduct Cottage (well worth joining to find out the latest developments) asked when it was last lived in. As is often the case, such recent history is not well documented, behoving us all to keep better records of what is happening today – for that becomes tomorrow's history.

It had been suggested that Frank Bowmer (or Bowler) was the last occupant of the cottage, around 1970. He is the person famously photographed carrying buckets on a yoke to get drinking water from nearby springs.

However, Mike Kelley recalled "I was a member of the Wayfarers Rambling Club which used the house as a shelter for lunch, but I thought that was earlier than the '70s; I was courting my late wife at the time Wayfarers used it, and that was in the early '60s."

Tanya Kelsey recalled "In 1969–70 I worked at Lea Mills and used to walk past the cottage at lunchtimes; it was empty then, looked quite abandoned."

Likewise when I saw it in August 1971 I noted that it was "derelict", but unfortunately

did not take a photograph.

Nic Barfield recalled: "We moved to the area from Nottingham in 1967, just a couple of months after the Cromford & High Peak Railway was finally closed – some of the old rolling stock was still at HPJ and the top of Sheep Pasture.

"The cottage seemed to be abandoned then but was not derelict – there was glass in the windows, various bits and bobs around the place, and the garden plot was still recognisable. I remember a Cromford resident telling me about Mr Bowmer but I think he'd moved on by then."

Doing a similar exercise to that for the Gothic Warehouse Canopy (*Portal 64*) I looked through the photographs in our archive that are actually dated. If the dates are accurate then they reveal that in 1970 it was "still tenanted" and had all its windows and door intact. By 1975 it was definitely looking worse for wear and had "Wayfarers" painted over the door (you can still just about see that today!)

So, not all those dates tie up exactly. Can any members help us? Do you have specific



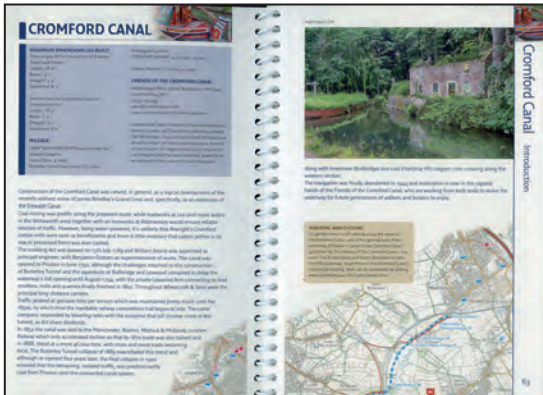
*This photograph is taken from Trevor Taylor's final year study at Birmingham School of Architecture submitted in November 1970, in which he describes the cottage as "still tenanted". Although overgrown it still looks cared for.*



*The earliest photograph with a date ("circa 1975") showing the cottage obviously derelict.*

memories of the cottage around that time or, better still, any dated photographs? If so do please contact the Editor.

## Cromford Canal 'on the map'



*The introductory pages to the chapter on the Cromford Canal in the latest Nicholson's guide.*

The Cromford Canal has achieved national recognition by being included in the latest edition of *Nicholson's Guide to the Waterways Vol 3 Birmingham & the Heart of England*. Nicholson's is the "Boater's bible" and is used by many people cruising on the canals today to plan and trace their route. In the past it has included only fully navigable canals and rivers, but this has now been extended to include those under restoration.

Hence it was my great pleasure towards the end of last year to meet Jonathan Mosse, who researched this latest edition, at Cromford Wharf to tell him all about our canal.

To be honest, I was not expecting such an extensive entry, but our canal covers no less than 16 pages in this prestigious guide. The entire route is overlaid on large-scale Ordnance Survey maps accompanied by descriptions of the canal and its surrounding towns and villages, pubs and restaurants, as well as a wide selection of colour photographs and details of cycling and walking the route. Nicholson's guides are available through most boatyards as well as online.

As an unexpected bonus, no sooner had I written this than the April issue of *Waterways World* magazine dropped through my letterbox and inside was a 5-page article on the our canal by Jonathan Mosse. It's great to know that FCC is getting the Cromford Canal well and truly 'on the map'.

**Hugh Potter**





# ANNIE BONAS AND MEASHAM WARE

by Judy Berry

## This ornate pottery was collected by the boating community

For over 50 years a lady called Annie Bonas sold Measham Ware pottery to the working boatmen and boatwomen whose cargo-carrying took them along the Ashby Canal. Such was the popularity of Measham Ware amongst the boating community that it was often called 'Barge Ware' – a name it retains in many auction houses and antique shops today. From the last quarter of the 19th century the name Annie Bonas was as familiar with boaters as were Ribbon Plates, Roses & Castles and Measham Ware itself.

I recently saw Annie's name mentioned in a couple of articles on Measham Ware and I decided to try to uncover the link between Annie, Measham Ware and the boating community. This is the result.

The Ashby Canal was opened in 1804 and ran from its junction with the Coventry Canal at Marston in Warwickshire to the coal mining area of Moira in north west Leicestershire. Originally commissioned to transport local coal and limestone, the canal passed through several villages including Measham which, although the pots were never produced there, gave its name to a range of flamboyant ornamental earthenware – especially spectacular teapots.

From the 1870s most Measham Ware was produced in the Church Gresley and Woodville areas on the Derbyshire/Leicestershire border just a few miles from the Ashby Canal. The pots were generally characterised by a dark brown Rockingham glaze which was then garishly hand-decorated with shiny blue, pink and green moulded flowers and birds. Each pot had a whitish plaque, perhaps two, and these were stamped with mottos – examples being 'A Present to a Friend' and 'Home Sweet Home' – and some were

specifically commissioned with the impressed name of the person who was to receive the pot. Although the range of Measham Ware increased to include jugs, bowls, chamber pots, money boxes and tobacco jars, it was the large teapots which became so highly prized and featured in homes across the country with some of the larger teapots having elaborate lid knobs in the form of miniature teapots.



*A flamboyant teapot with a miniature teapot on the lid, and a personal inscription:  
"A present to Mr & Mrs C Sturtivant"*

*From the Val Roberts Collection*

Annie Bonas (née Taylor) was born in Measham on 29th May 1859 the eldest daughter of Robert and Emma Taylor and grand-daughter of Thomas Taylor. Both Robert

and Thomas were boatmen working on the Ashby Canal as were other members of Annie's family. Annie lived all her life in Measham but, despite her family's background, she became not a boatwoman but a tailoress. However, on 26th September 1886 she married Thomas Bonas, a widower some 30 years her senior. Thomas was a licensed hawker of china, earthenware and haberdashery, a trade he had been engaged in from an early age and he had a shop on Measham High Street. Annie had married into the china selling business.



*A small Measham Ware jug.  
From the Judy Berry collection*

Measham Ware teapots were not cheap and cost far more than an ordinary but equivalent-sized teapot. The specially commissioned pots with mottos were even more expensive and yet they became widely purchased and used by boaters. There were a few distributors of Measham Ware, but seemingly it was Annie Bonas, perhaps because of her boater family background, who became well known as trading with the boaters. On their way up the Ashby Canal, the boaters probably commissioned a piece of Measham Ware through Annie, perhaps leaving a small deposit with her, and would then collect the item when they next passed through.

Annie had a lot of sadness in her life. Her younger sister Georgiana died when she was

but a child and Thomas, Annie's own child, died in 1891 from enteritis just 10 months old. Her father died in 1895 from cholera aged 58 years and her mother just 7 years later. When Annie's own husband died in 1907 at the age of 79 Annie did not cease trading – she continued selling china at the Measham shop. Kelly's Trade Directory records her as a Measham china dealer in her own right as late as 1928 and so she was until her death in 1933 when, at the age of 73, she succumbed to heart failure and bronchitis.

It seems the second World War spelled the end of Measham Ware production when potteries were required to concentrate on making essential items rather than fancy goods. With the death of Annie and the cessation of Measham Ware production, the connection between Annie Bonas, Measham Ware and the boating community could have been lost forever; but it hasn't. Her name lives on in various records and Measham Museum has a photograph of her sitting outside her double-fronted shop with its china-filled shelves and there are many of today's boaters who collect the wonderfully showy antique Measham Ware teapots.



*A more conventional shape teapot inscribed:  
"Mrs J Marhsall".  
From the Judy Berry collection.*



# 50TH ANNIVERSARY RALLY

by Mike Harrison

## It was a busy bank holiday weekend at Langley Mill



*Dawn Rose and Bath carry the brass band through the bottom lock of the Cromford Canal to open the Langley Mill Rally.*

*Photos: Mike Harrison*

The Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association held a rally at Langley Mill over the Spring Bank Holiday to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of their formation and the 45 years since they re-opened Langley Bridge Lock. The event was opened by the mayor of Amber Valley as narrow boats Bath and Dawn Rose entered the lock, with the Long Eaton Silver Prize Band playing on board in the now well-established ECP&DA tradition. Dave & Izzie with Bath were dressed for the part!

Since Langley Bridge Lock No 14 at the start of the Cromford Canal at Langley Mill was re-opened in May 1973, there has been a series of anniversary rallies at 5-year intervals on this site. This latest event was a great success. The weather was warm and sunny, there was a good turnout of boats, as many stalls as could be fitted on the quite extensive site, and an excellent and well patronised beer tent with professional and amateur entertainment for the boaters in the evenings.

A highlight was the fact that the new proprietors of Langley Mill Boatyard Ltd,

Dan and Vicky Cauldwell and family, enthusiastically opened their premises to the many interested visitors. This included welcoming the public into the dry-dock to view two historic boats under repair. They also had some interesting engines set up and running for inspection. Vicky and their two young daughters also swept the board with the cake baking competition!

An interesting visiting boat was Dawn Rose, a replica Chesterfield Canal Boat (known as a Cuckoo) built by the Chesterfield Canal Trust at Shireoaks. Dawn Rose had been towed from the Chesterfield Canal, up the River Trent by Python, a shortened working boat which was acquired by the Chesterfield Canal Trust a few years ago. Dawn Rose is equipped with a tall mast and square rig sail which was unique to these craft. The sail was occasionally used on the rivers Trent and Witham and Fosdyke Canal and sometimes The Wash en route to Spalding, but this was the first time such a thing had been seen on the Cromford!

Michael Golds, the founding father of all the volunteer work on the canal at Langley Mill



*Chesterfield Canal 'cuckoo' boat Dawn Rose with sail hoisted –never before seen on the Cromford Canal.*

since 1971, was also leading popular guided walks along the Nottingham and Cromford canals.

Another big attraction for the many visitors was the fly past of a Spitfire on the Saturday and a Hurricane on both Sunday and Monday.

The FCC stand was situated just above the lock and created quite a lot of interest, both with sales and some locals who came to chat about the canal in their childhood. George Rogers had produced an excellent display board explaining the progress of the FCC Strategic Restoration Committee at Langley Mill and Smotherfly, which also created much interest. It was good to be able to explain what the FCC is aiming for in the years to come, and then for the visitors to walk up beyond the boatyard to see the site of the proposed two new locks and the passage under the A610.

Such a large event needs a lot of organising and the volunteers of the ECP&DA had as usual put in a great deal of effort to make it a great success. Hopefully by the time of the next Langley Mill rally, there will be a bit more of the Cromford Canal full of boats!

## Letters To The Editor

Portal welcomes your thoughts, comments and queries at [editor@cromfordcanal.org](mailto:editor@cromfordcanal.org)

### The Cost of Red Tape

I was intrigued to read Judy Berry's article "Red Tape – Don't you just love it?" in Portal 64. Intrigued by the fact that every local 'authority', indeed almost every tax-payer-funded organisation, is complaining that it has no money following the Government's 'squeeze' on its finance.

Yet here we have a list of 23 pieces of paper that need to be completed in the pursuit of waterway restoration. The implication is, that on receipt, up to 23 people are employed to read, respond, comment, criticise or simply file these pieces of paper. It is true that more than one piece of paper may be processed by one person, but unlikely that the person in question sits in isolation.

If we take an average local authority clerical salary as being just £25,000 pa, with costs such as NHI, pensions, holiday pay, maternity leave and so on the actual cost would be closer to £50,000. Times 23 gives a figure of £1,150,000, and that's only the cost of the clerical staff dealing with the paperwork relating to the proposed restoration of an short piece of canal! Providing, furnishing and heating appropriate office space for these administrators adds to the financial burden of course.

Those of you old enough to remember the 1960s will be wondering how (allowing for inflation) David Hutchings restored the whole of the southern Stratford Canal for this sort of money.

**David Dawson, Retford**



# A GEM WITHIN A GEM

by Mike Kelley

## A canalside feature that is well worth a visit



*Birdswood passing High Peak Junction workshop during a Discovery Days activity weekend.*

I have often referred to the Cromford Canal as the Sleeping Beauty, for indeed it is such. Visited by people from all over the world, the northern part of this canal is well known as a tranquil nature reserve, set in stunning surroundings. Along this canal's illustrious stretches there is a gem, secreted away, hidden from the general public, a gem which can only be reached by walking, cycling or by the *Birdswood* trip boat. There is no vehicle access for the general public, which is why this gem is so hidden from the modern world – a world so used to going everywhere by car. Railway enthusiasts and/or historians will know of it as High Peak Junction, the base for the former Cromford & High Peak Railway.

Work began on this railway in 1825, being historically the first method of mass transportation across the Pennines, these hills being a feature of nature which restricted the movement of products across country from east to west or vice versa. Products carried along the Cromford Canal were off-loaded at High Peak Junction, placed onto railway

wagons, which were subsequently hauled up two long inclines by cable until they reached Middleton Top, from where steam locomotives would take the wagons across the hills to Whaley Bridge (via a few more inclines), and so by boat on to Manchester.



*The view over the inspection pit into the workshop, which still contains its original tools.*

In 1829 the famous Rainhill Trials were held to find out who could produce the best steam railway engine. Every rail enthusiast, and many more besides, will know that George Stevenson's engine *Rocket* won this competition hands down. Indeed, this was the birth of the Railway Age and at the very early stages of the Steam Age.

Just one year later, after this great industrial advancement at Rainhill, in the year 1830, the railway workshop at High Peak Junction was built. Yes, just one year after Stevenson's *Rocket*, making this workshop the oldest standard gauge railway workshop in the world that is still standing. Think of this for a moment; the oldest still in existence in the world, and it is connected to the Cromford



*The forge, which is still used for demonstrations, contains the original workshop tools.*

Canal. In order to check this I consulted with English Heritage who agreed. Yet only those intrepid enough to seek it out will find it.

High Peak Junction Workshop clearly dates from the earliest days of the railway, and remains virtually unchanged since its railway days, with tools, railway artefacts, joiner's bench, forge and bellows, along with an impressive model of how this junction used to be. The cast-iron, fish-bellied rails on either side of the inspection pit could be the oldest length of railway line in the world still in its original position.

Nowadays, under the ownership of Derbyshire County Council, the workshop is a museum, open to the public free of charge. A shop, toilet and old guards wagons are also there. Just over the canal is the original Leewood Pump House, still operating in steam the first weekend of most months, all of which can only be access by foot, bicycle or *Birdswood*. This whole area is a gem of great industrial heritage importance, but the workshop especially so.

The railway finally closed in spring 1967, and personally I am old enough to remember it working. (OK so I do look that old!) Unfortunately I never photographed it in its working condition, thinking it would always be there! I well remember once being chased off the canal towpath by the workers there, who shouted to me that this was private land. How things change.

Have you seen the world's oldest railway workshop yet? If not I suggest you seek out this hidden gem for yourself and make a day of it.



*A model of the workshop and adjacent buildings with the canal swing bridge in the foreground.*



*Fish-bellied rail as originally used on the CHPR, possibly the oldest railway line in the world still in its original location.*



# WATER VOLES

by Mary Wilde

## Hours of patience have produced excellent photos of our favourite residents

I don't know much about water voles – but I am learning. Not through books or Mr Google though. I sit and watch for long periods of time noting each odd movement and behaviour. I try to imagine what that behaviour means and only then do I check out my assumptions in books etc.

The Cromford Canal is a great place to see water voles and at present they have been reported at several places including at the Cromford end. Once you learn to read the ripples on the water and twitching of the reeds, spotting them is not difficult. Sometimes when it is quiet you can even hear them nibbling.



*Sometimes you can hear them nibbling.*

Recently I spotted one water vole doing a 'high five' with its tail. Was it scent marking? I am waiting for some expert information about



*High five – or high tail?*

that from the Derbyshire Mammal Group.

More obvious was a water vole popping its head out of a hole in a clump of vegetation and pulling a few dead reeds inside. I hope this is nest material as it would be great to see some young later in the year. There is a pair on this section of the canal so fingers crossed.



*Gathering nesting material.*

Activity on and by the canal is on the increase. It is great to see people enjoying a stroll and youngsters getting wet and having fun in canoes. I wondered what effect this

might have on the water voles. On one day I watched *Birdswood* the canal boat go steadily by and also a group of school children whooping and splashing as they paddled along. Within a minute a water vole popped back out and continued to groom itself and then swim across the canal to feed.

– although one at a time in general. They have a ‘track’ up the bank into the long grass where they feed for a while. This is also the time of day when they sometimes swim across to the towpath to feed at the water’s edge, often unseen by passers-by – and seemingly undaunted.

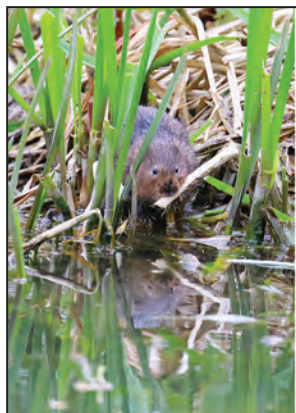


*Unfazed by humans!*

I don’t know if they are all creatures of habit, but the pair I am watching return to their favourite spot at about 5.30 each afternoon

I continued to watch my pair during May and having abandoned a nest on the towpath side (sensible water voles) they have now settled on a great spot on the opposite bank. I watched for half an hour whilst one kept coming out and cutting down a piece of dead reed and returning to its nest via an underwater hole.

Even with road noise in the background the reed felling activity was loud and crisp. More recently though, activity has reduced. So is it because of all the people enjoying a walk in the lovely weather, or are they just feeding early in the morning or later in the evening. It could simply be that as the vegetation grows they are able to slip away unnoticed? Or are they busy looking after some little ones? I am waiting and hoping.



*Cutting and carrying.*

*All photos by Mary Wilde.*





# WORK PARTY REPORTS

by John Guyler

The FCC work party has been very active in the last few months



*A remarkable amount of rubbish cleared from around the Coach Road.*

*Photo: John Guyler*

## Litter pick at Ironville

As part of a general community project for Ironville area, FCC was invited to participate in a litter pick on the old abandoned section of the Cromford Canal adjacent to Coach Road.

There were ten of us, on a very wet soggy car park at Codnor Park Reservoir. The area was absolutely flooded and with great difficulty we managed to work our way along the section to the metal walkway about quarter mile from the car park.

That section was cleared, except one small area where the access was too dangerous because of the flood water. This will be done later, in the summer.

After lunch we worked along the inside of the road wall from the reservoir car park to opposite the Pinxton Arm Bridge at what was Lock 1 of the Codnor Flight.

Altogether we picked 54 bags of litter and a lot of assorted rubbish, including car wheels, tyres, gas bottles, 30ft of garden hose,

various pieces of car body and a skull, of what we deduced after a detailed discussion was a hare. A good rewarding day.

## Coir rolls, take two

The FCC work party has finally finished the second phase of fitting coir rolls along the towpath between Lawn Bridge and High Peak Junction. For six consecutive Wednesdays, they have been working extremely hard to supply and fit the rolls – 55 in all, each 10ft long and 1ft diameter. These had to be loaded in the work boat and then either pulled by Birdwood or poled to the site – in itself is no mean feat.

On site, the rolls were tied together on the bank, so at one time we may have had ten giant 'sausages' lying on the bank. Then the bank might have to be cut away or vegetation removed to allow the rolls to be placed in the water in a slow progression before steel rods were hammered through them into the bank, three rods to a roll.



*Manoeuvring a giant coir sausage into place.  
Photo: John Guyler*

When all the connected rolls had been placed in the water they were left a week to allow them to soak. Puddling clay was then backfilled behind the rolls to provide a support for vegetation and to fill any voids. Finally, vegetation was replaced. Looking at the rolls that were fixed on the first phase last year, we can see new growth coming through, which is very pleasing.

We have been very fortunate to have the services of the DCC tractor and trailer, driven by Sean, for most weeks. He has kept us constantly supplied with clay to backfill and then helped us to clear the area on the towpath that was our supply dump. Without that, I doubt the project would have been completed, because it was very heavy, tiring work using wheelbarrows over the long distances.

Over both stages, FCC volunteers gave over 750 hours, moved over 20 tons of clay, and laid 105 rolls, equating to 1,050ft of repaired towpath. A brilliant job, and a great bunch of people; it is a pleasure to work with them.

## **Stop Planks at Leawood Pumping Station**

In early March, a small group of the regular work party started a project to put new stop planks in the canal at the northern end of the Derwent Aqueduct, near Leawood Pumping Station.

The six planks, each 7ft 6in long, 6in deep and 3in thick, were transported to site at the Wharf Shed by FCC Chairman John Baylis with his amazing trailer. That trailer is like Dr Who's Tardis; from the outside it looks like a normal width trailer and 5ft long, but no matter what the job is or the modification required, tools emerge out of it seemingly by magic. In one instance, we had to cut two of the planks about  $\frac{3}{4}$ in shorter to get the correct fit; up the towpath appeared the trailer being pushed by several of the work party, complete with a generator to power the circular saw which also appeared from its depths. We also needed a device to fit on the top plank, so we could load it with metal bars to keep the stop planks down before pegging in place. Two of these appeared out of the trailer with the required metal bars. Together with sledge hammers, chains, locks, flask, sandwiches and other paraphernalia, that trailer is an amazing bit of kit.

But before we could fit them, the planks had to be unloaded and chained together, to be immersed in the canal to soak for a few weeks; the chains were to prevent anyone thinking they might 'borrow' them. They were then towed from their storage area to where the canal narrows at Leawood Aqueduct.

What was envisaged as a reasonably straight-forward job turned into a bit of a trial; the precise way the boards had been cut to length and the runners for the boards being slightly out of true caused a bit of a delay in seating the boards.

With the use of the work boat, the portable generator and a circular saw, all the boards were in place and held down by a unique method of weights devised by John Baylis – the job was a good one.

The main reason for the stop planks is that a leak developing on the aqueduct needs investigation, and the lower water level will assist (see page 14). They will also provide another solution to the varying water level on the section from Cromford, which affects the operation of trip boat Birdswood.

At the time of writing, the top plank may



*Stop planks at Leawood Aqueduct with weights to hold them prior to securing.  
Photo: Mike Kelley*

have to be modified slightly to allow more water across the aqueduct – they possibly work too well!

### **Refloating the work boat (again)**

From time to time you may have seen references to the work boat. This is an aluminium punt about 5ft wide and 9ft long, which DCC very generously allow us to use.

The problem with it is that it has a long-standing leak, and when the work party came to use it for the stop planks it had very nearly sunk. So, a period of bailing out was needed using buckets that seemed to appear from the afore-mentioned trailer. After using it on the job in hand, a significant amount of sludge was removed from under the wooden floor slats, then the boat was man-handled onto the stone work at the Wharf Shed.

Chris Martin has a Land Rover that is a similar design to the trailer – another Tardis. It only has one visible seat (for the driver); the rest have disappeared under an accumulation

of tools. Chris usually finds something to do the job, in this case a special sealant, after which the boat was left to dry out. When we arrived a few weeks later to fit the stop planks, we went to get the boat, and found scaffolders there just starting the repairs to the Wharf Shed roof and if it hadn't been returned to the water then, they were going to scaffold around it! When returned to the water and after the stop planks had been successfully put into place, it was towed by Birdwood to Cromford Wharf and moored under the canopy.

However, when we came to use it again for transporting the coir rolls up the canal, again it was nearly water-logged, so it was all hands to the buckets and man handle it out again. When it is out of the water we look to see if the hole or whatever is identified by a wet patch, but nothing is observed. This is happening on a regular basis, so it will have to come out of the water for a proper inspection.



*Rescuing the work boat at Cromford Wharf.  
Photo: John Guyler*

### **Work party at Beggarlee Wharf**

In April, the work party was asked to do some clearance at a point which was once part of the Cromford Canal, called Beggarlee Wharf.

During a discussion by the Restoration Committee, it was noted that a survey of the old Beggarlee Wharf site was needed

to provide information on extending the River Erewash flood plain, to counteract any problems should a new extension of the canal be considered.

The banks were very steep and had thick brambles and undergrowth, which prevented the surveyors getting in.

On the day in question ten of us turned up and were faced with an enormous barrier of 40-plus years' growth of brambles. The area was measured out in sections of 10 yards and 17 marker stakes were put in. At each marker stake, we had to drive a wide cleared path down the bank to the flood plain below, so the surveyor could measure the bank profile.

Some of the brambles were 8–9ft high with thick stems, but we managed the task and the surveyors completed their job a few weeks later.

One interesting thing we did find in the brambles was an old truck trailer, from I think the 1960s. It had been dumped and a tree had grown through it and around the various parts of the chassis. It made an interesting diversion for the day.



*Long-abandoned lorry at Beggarlee Wharf site; no need for wheel clamps!*

*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).

You will be made very welcome



### **Stop Press**

As we went to press, work had finally begun to repair the collapsed wall at Whatstandwell which has been awaiting attention since September 2012. The path under the bridge is closed, but towpath users can continue by crossing the road – with care on the blind bend. The car park is also closed. The photograph was taken just 4 days after work began, by which time a liner had been laid, and the canal filled with stone to enable the heavy plant access to the wall. The water flow is maintained by a temporary pipe.



# FROM LITTLE ACORNS . . .

by Marie Brown

## A new group has achieved much in two years



Over the last two years, a small but significant section of the Cromford Canal has been enjoying a little tender loving care by a dedicated and hard-working group of volunteers, led by local nature enthusiast Andy Moon.

dam near Portland Basin at Jacksdale and on into Erewash Meadows Nature Reserve.

Initially, Andy asked the Trust if they would mind if he cleared a few reeds which were dominating the canal, blocking out natural light and eroding the sides of the canal bank. It was hoped that by clearing the reeds, removing years of rubbish and other weeds it would help to restore a better balance of open water and aquatic vegetation. Little did he know then what that would create.

In May 2018, the Facebook group reached 600 members, some as far away as New Zealand and America, and they now have a 5-year plan which is already coming to fruition.



*Some of the volunteers with their latest recruit 'Max'.*

*Photo: Andy Moon*

The Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Reservoir Group, under the watchful eye and care of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, has had a distinct and measurable impact on the 1.2 mile stretch of waterway beginning at the Ironville and ending at the Butterley Company

The group has now become a constituted group working alongside other local volunteer organisations on restoration projects, education and awareness of wildlife for local families and conservation of the abundant wildlife which is now flourishing along the

canal. Pathways have been laid to provide better access for all abilities, rubbish bins have been erected and three wooden seats have been placed in strategic beauty spots along the route. Overhanging intrusive trees near Lock 6 have been removed and pathways are regularly trimmed and cleared. The result has been a decline in litter, antisocial behaviour and dog mess and a wildlife haven which is now attracting visitors and interest from all over the UK and photographers keen to snap a great shot of birds, amphibians, insects, butterflies, mammals and fish.



*The group has also installed three new benches. Here Scott Severn, who made them, is testing them out with Chris Reynolds who helped install them.*

*Photo: Andy Moon*

One of the greatest success stories of this work has been the increase in the water vole population which is one of the UK's fastest declining mammals. The native water vole (*Arvicola Amphibious*) is thriving along the stretch of the canal and this year hundreds of local visitors have been able to see them in action.

Earlier this year, with assistance from Aviva Community Fund, the group purchased a 'Muck Truck Power Barrow' which is affectionately known as 'Max'. It's been a

very busy year for this newest member of the group. Max has already helped to lay tons of stone, all of which has been kindly donated by Longcliffe Quarries and the company are continuing to support the group.

Andy said, "I had no idea that something so small could turn into something that now brings us so much joy and satisfaction. It's a credit to the hard work of the volunteers who turn up, rain or shine, to help and to all of the local residents and visitors who have taken ownership and responsibility for the area. I am overjoyed to see how much we have achieved so far but I am even more encouraged by what we have planned and can't wait to see what happens."

The group is currently holding a Grand Summer Draw to raise funds for interpretation boards which will allow families to enjoy sharing facts and figures with their children and encourage the next generation to explore and take responsibility for the area. An information booklet will also be available by the end of summer.

If you are also inspired to get involved, then please get in contact at [cromfordcanalgroup@outlook.com](mailto:cromfordcanalgroup@outlook.com) and see what a difference you could make to your local area. Find us on Facebook and join in: Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Res.



*Clearance has led to great increase in wildlife including this orange tip butterfly.*

*Photo: Roger Breen*



# A 'NEW' BASIN DISCOVERED

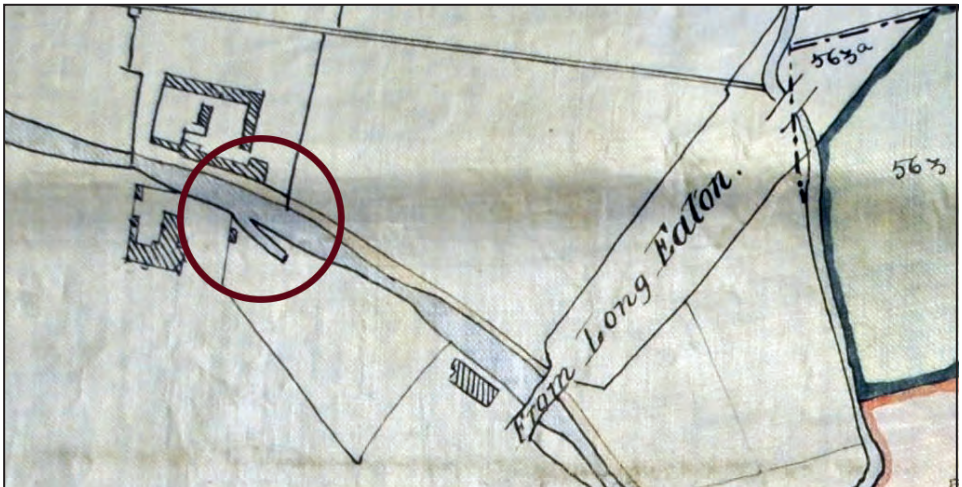
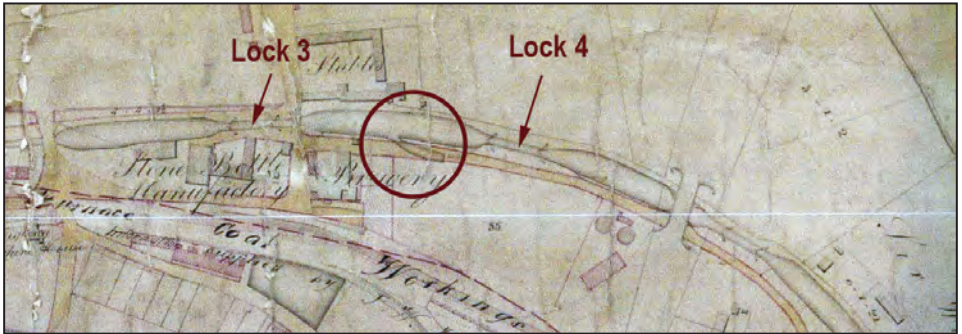
by Hugh Potter

## Maps reveal a previously unknown canal feature

A previously unknown basin off the canal on the Ironville lock flight was recently spotted by Martyn Taylor-Cockayne on some early maps. It is a small basin situated on the offside between locks 3 and 4. Its purpose is as yet unknown but it may have served the pottery which was located between locks 2 and 3 (the building still stands alongside the canal) or

the brewery which once stood here. The maps showing it are dated around 1840 and 1855. It does not appear on an 1811 map, nor on later maps.

There is no discernible sign of it on the ground today. Do any readers have any ideas about this, or have even heard about it before?



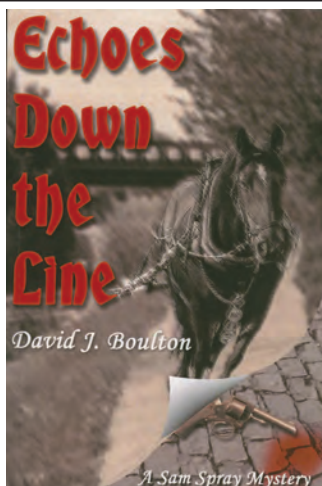
*The mystery basin shown on a map dated 1855 (top) and from the 1840s (above).*



# MYSTERIOUS DEATHS WITH CANAL CONNECTIONS

by Hugh Potter

## Two new murder-mystery books based in the local area



A review in *Waterways World* magazine of two recently published books by local author David J Boulton caught my eye on account of their local setting: *Fatal Connections* and *Echoes Down the Line*. I am not normally one for murder mysteries revolving around the intricacies of train timetables, but the local links of these two 'Sam Spray Mysteries' had me fascinated.

The first is based largely on the Cromford & High Peak Railway in the 1870s and in the solving of a mysterious murder on this railway. An accident involving a (rare) passenger train turns up two dead bodies; but one was not killed as a result of the accident . . . This turns out to be related to once worthless railway shares which were about to become valuable once again following potential takeovers. Sergeant Sam Spray and his sidekick Constable William Archer are assigned from the LNWR office in Crewe to investigate. At this time travel from Crewe to the Peak District

by train was much easier than it is today post-Beeching. In the process of the detailed investigation, much fascinating information is revealed about the way in which the unique CHPR was run.

The plot revolves around the trains on the CHPR as well as the almost 'parallel' Midland Railway line and the author's fascination by and knowledge of both

these lines is obvious. A map helps place the locations for those who do not know the area so well, but for those who do, the routes and the local towns including Cromford and Whaley Bridge and their pubs will be readily recognised, offering a further glimpse into the past and how people lived and travelled in the days long before motorised road transport.

*Echoes Down the Line* includes more canal relevance – but to the Peak Forest Canal, not the Cromford. Based on the northern sections of the same railways at around the same time, the story revolves around an Irish republican plot to steel explosives intended for the mining industry around Cromford, and the story takes a darker more sinister turn.

If you enjoy murder mysteries in general, or if you would like to be taken back 150 years to the area as it used to be, then I do recommend these books. Both are published in paperback by Melrose Books at £9.99 and should be available locally as well as online.





# SUMMER EVENTS

FCC social meetings take place on the third Monday of most months (not July or August) at 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall, Casson Street, Ironville NG16 5NN. Admission is £2 and there is a bar, raffle, tea and coffee. All are welcome to attend.

For further details of Birdswood events phone 07552 055455, check out [www.birdswood.org](http://www.birdswood.org) or the Facebook page.

## **Monday 25th June**

Ruth Grey workshop on Birdswood, "Impressionist Style" 10am till 4pm with light lunch and refreshments £65.

## **Sunday 1st July**

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

## **Saturday 14th July**

Jaguar car display 10.30am till 1.30pm in Cromford Wharf car park.

## **Monday 16th July**

Ruth Grey workshop on Birdswood, "Making Your Mark" 10am till 4pm with light lunch and refreshments £65.

## **Thursdays in August**

### *Forest Schools*

Derbyshire Outdoors will provide two sessions each Thursday at Cromford Wharf on bushcraft, ecotherapy, den building etc. Materials provided. Booking essential on 07764 511643 or [derbyshireoutdoors@gmail.com](mailto:derbyshireoutdoors@gmail.com). Birdswood departures 11am and 2pm. Children travel free with voucher.

## **Saturday 4th & Sunday 5th August**

### *Scarecrow Festival at Cromford*

Scarecrow trail, canal art sales and demonstrations, sales stand, tombola, fresh produce stalls, locally carved wood and model boat displays on the canal at Cromford Wharf.

Horse drawn boat trips depart 11am and 2pm. Booking advisable. Leewood Pump in steam.

## **Sunday 26th & Monday 27th August**

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

## **Tuesday 4th September**

Liz Wellby workshop on Birdswood "Linocut Printing" 10am till 4pm with light lunch and refreshments £65.

## **Tuesday 11th September**

Lucy Gell workshop on Birdswood, "Intaglio Dry Point Etching" 10am till 4pm with light lunch and refreshments £65.

## **Saturday 15th & Sunday 16th September**

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

## **Monday 17th September**

Glynn Waite will give an illustrated talk on The Midland Railway in Derbyshire. 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall.

## **Monday 15th October**

Ruth Garratt of Canal & River Trust will explain CRT's Heritage Approach to Conservation, with particular emphasis on the East Midlands and the Cromford Canal. 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall.

# CROMFORD CANAL BOAT TRIPS TO LEAWOOD PUMPHOUSE AND BACK



Departing from Cromford Wharf at 11am and 2pm

## *Horse Drawn Sailing on*

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

## *Electric-powered Trips Sailing on*

all other Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays & Sundays



### **Horse Drawn Return Fares:**

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

### **Horse Drawn Single Fares:**

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

### **Powered Trip Fares:**

Family £20.00, Adults £8.00, Seniors £7.00, Children £4.00

## ***Booking Information***

By phone: 07552 055 455

By email: [bookings@birdswood.org](mailto:bookings@birdswood.org)

Online: [www.birdswood.org](http://www.birdswood.org)



Trip boat BIRDSWOOD is owned and operated by  
**The Friends of the Cromford Canal**

Registered Charity 1164608  
[www.cromfordcanal.org](http://www.cromfordcanal.org) Visit us on Facebook at Birdswood



Foundation  
Derbyshire



