

THE PORTAL

Issue 70 - Autumn 2019

Price £1.00 - Free to Members



Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608

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Front Cover

The Lock-Keeper's Garden alongside Lock 4 attracts a wide variety of admirers. This local walking group stopped by to visit it in June. The fence protecting visitors from the lock edge was installed by FCC. More information on page 33.

Photo: Andy Cadman

Back Cover

Using slight adaptations of information boards recently installed on the canal by DerwentWISE, train passengers alighting at Ambergate or Whatstandwell stations now get a strong incentive to visit our canal. The new boards were installed by community rail support group Friends of the Derwent Valley Line.

Photos: Hugh Potter

The aims and objectives of the Friends of the Cromford Canal



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

EDITORIAL

by Hugh Potter

Once again, it is a delight to feature so many articles relating to successes on our canal. Particular congratulations are due to two associated groups with whom we share common aims.

Firstly the amazing success of the campaign for Aqueduct Cottage at Leawood has achieved another milestone in gaining planning permission for its restoration as an interpretation centre (page 14). It would be great if work could be completed in time for the Florence Nightingale Bicentenary Celebrations next May.

Further down the canal the 'Cromford Canal & Condor Park Reservoir' group have achieved the remarkable restoration of the former entrance bridge to Portland Basin (page10). From an unloved decaying structure it has become a thing of beauty and local pride.

And close-by, the Lock-Keeper's Garden continues to get local attention from visitors of all ages (page33).

You will see on page 6 our Membership Secretary's appeal for volunteers. Without volunteers we cannot publicise our aims



nearly as much as we would like, and this year several invitations to attend events to promote our work have had to be turned down due to lack of volunteers to staff display or sales stands. Do please consider if you might be able to help in any of the roles – perhaps as part of a small team. It's great fun and very sociable!

One event which will be taking place again this year is our participation in the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Discovery Days at Cromford Wharf on 2nd and 3rd November. (Don't forget the section between Ambergate and Cromford is the longest length of canal in England to be designated as part of a World Heritage Site – that is quite an accolade!)

This event allows us to showcase our work to a wider audience and gives you a chance to catch up with what is going on, as well as to experience a host of different activities in the Gothic Warehouse, on Cromford Wharf and at High Peak Junction and Leawood Pump House (see page 35). You could even travel from one site to the other on Birdwood pulled by either Ted or Chelsea of Arraslea Shires. This is one

of only five other places in the UK where you can experience the wonder of this totally silent 19th century form of travel!

And there are many other events up and down the Derwent Valley in the week before. Brochures are available locally and online. Please put the dates in your diary now – I look forward to seeing you there!

**Copy date for the next issue:
5th November**

Traditional Rose & Castle painting by expert Jes Inglis is just one part of Discovery Days on 2nd & 3rd November.



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

David Martin sums up his first few months in office

Well it's been a really busy first three months as the new Chairman of the Friends of the Cromford Canal, and the great British weather hasn't got the better of us; members of the public have been turning up in ever increasing numbers to take a trip on our now famous Birdswood trip boat up in the World Heritage site at Cromford.



To celebrate all the long hours and great work that our volunteers put in every week throughout the year, on 13th July we held a barbecue at Cromford Wharf as a token of good will for all of their efforts. It was a lovely warm and pleasant evening, a great time was had by all who attended, and we thank them all.

In the meantime the Strategic Restoration Committee continues its cumulative efforts through our team of engineers to wade through all the statutory requirements needed in this day and age to put in a full planning application to restore and build a new extension section of the Cromford Canal at Langley Mill, and if you're interested, you will learn more at our social evening in Ironville Church Hall on Monday 16th September at 7.30 pm.

It would be great to see more of you there, members or not, as we are always on the lookout for more volunteers with an ever-increasing range of skills. So come along and join us for a couple of hours.

I feel I must also mention in this edition that we offer our sincere thanks to our FCC stalwart John Baylis who with John Thompson

from DCC repaired the swing bridge at High Peak Junction and got it back in action again after a minor incident in late May. This action saved us the greater expense of having to crane lift the entire bridge out to repair it.

Looking ahead there's great news for Ron Common and the Aqueduct Cottage which has been successful in obtaining planning permission to further its aim to restore the cottage as a future visitor centre. As this project is covered as one of our objectives, the planning application was part funded by the FCC.

Lower down in the Erewash Valley the working group known as 'Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Res' were successful with an Aviva grant for the Portland Basin's former entrance bridge affectionately known locally as 'Old Humpy'. Robert Shacklock, a local stone mason, has done some excellent restoration work on the stone parapet overlooking the canal.

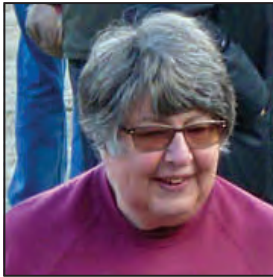


A good time was had by all volunteers at the barbecue in July.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By Yvonne Shattower

I am not quite sure where this summer has gone to. When Hugh sent out a reminder of the Portal press date, we were sitting in blazing sunshine; today it is wet and gloomy and I am sending out renewal notices for September. Not only that, I have already received catalogues for Christmas cards!



But – to Membership Matters. As always in the summer, things have been fairly quiet, with no meetings at Ironville and postponed Trustee meetings because too many people are on holiday. In the last edition of the magazine, I reported that we intended to close the HSBC Bank account into which some members are still paying their subscriptions by standing order; this decision has now been reviewed and the account will not be closed as we feel this will result in a considerable loss of income and membership numbers.

I was sorry not to be able to attend the barbecue for volunteers at Cromford on 13th July, but I understand it went very well and thanks are due to all who organised it. Hugh Potter is co-ordinating our events at Cromford Wharf for the Discovery Days on 2nd and 3rd November. As always we could do with more help over this weekend, if you are able to give just a couple of hours to give a break to one of our team, it would be much appreciated. Dogs and muddy boots welcomed and tea and biscuits provided – thanks to Hugh! This is now one of the few opportunities we have to reach out to the public at large and bring the restoration of the Cromford Canal to the notice of the wider public.

We will be re-starting our members social evenings on Monday 16th September with George Rogers giving an overview of the planning application for the Beggarlee

extension at Langley Mill. This will be followed by a ‘question and answer’ session with George, who is the Chair of the FCC Strategic Restoration Committee, and Dave Martin, our Chairman. If you are unable to come to the meeting but still have a ‘burning question’, please email it to me and I will make

sure it gets to George. The poster advertising this evening is available on our web site and it would be great if you could download and display this if you are local to the area. All meetings are held at the Ironville Church Hall, NG16 5NN, admission is £2.50 and there is a bar and raffle. Start time is 7.30pm. Our October speaker will be Tim Castledine who will be telling us about Codnor Park Forge and the part it played in the construction of HMS Warrior in the 1850s. November will be ‘our very own’ Hugh Potter who will be showing us some more photos from his ever expanding FCC Archive. Elsewhere in this magazine you will find an appeal for a new Social Secretary as Wendy Scarle will be stepping down from this role in December, and at the time of writing this, we have no speakers booked for 2020, although I am sure that we will have someone to talk to you in January.

Although we no longer publish names of new members, we do welcome them to the Friends of the Cromford Canal, and thank them for their support.

A wide range of Christmas Cards and unusual gifts available from the Canal Shop, situated at the end of the Gothic building, at Cromford Wharf.

QUEEN'S AWARD FOR ECPDA

FCC offers congratulations for recognition well deserved

We were delighted to learn that our friends in the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association have been honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group in the UK can receive.

The award is known as the "MBE for volunteer groups" and recognises all of ECPDA's members' efforts over 51 years, initially in preventing the closure of the Erewash Canal and the ongoing work to ensure the canal remains available for everybody to enjoy.

Norman Cornwell, Chairman, and his wife Shirley, Membership Secretary, attended a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May, along with other recipients of this year's Award.

ECP&DA is one of 281 charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups to receive the prestigious award this year.

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service aims to recognise outstanding work by

volunteer groups to benefit their local communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Winners are announced each year on 2nd June – the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation. Winners get a certificate signed by the Queen and a domed glass crystal, which will be presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire later this year.

It is, of course, thanks to the ECPDA that the bottom lock of the Cromford Canal was restored back in 1973 along with the Great Northern Basin and subsequently the development of the now thriving boatyard. ECPDA also were the 'launch pad' for the formation of FCC in 2002.

Further congratulations must go to ECPDA for being 'highly commended' in the East Midlands Charity Awards and for winning a prestigious Canal & River Trust Green Flag Award, recognising the high environmental standard of the canal.



Crowds line the banks as boats process into Great Northern Basin after the official reopening of Lock 14 on 26th May 1973 following restoration by ECPDA.

Photo: Mick & Carole Golds

WORK PARTY REPORT

John Guyler reports on recent activities

From 15th May until 5th June, the working parties concentrated on Phase 3 of the DerwentWISE coir roll project: moving coir rolls up to the work site and filling bags with clay. Some members of the group were cutting back vegetation and litter picking to allow access into the areas where rolls were required to be fitted.

Transporting coir rolls, filling bags with clay and transporting from HPJ to the work site with wheelbarrows was really hard work.



Filling bags with clay at High Peak Junction.

It was decided to bail out the DCC work boat which was on stocks at the Wharf Shed and return it to the water. We loaded 25 clay-filled bags into the work boat and transported them to Kelley's Corner and off-loaded. The boat was then pulled empty to Cromford Wharf for loading with nine coir rolls. Martin Culley and

myself paddled the loaded boat back up to the work site at Pisani's and off-loaded. While we were doing that, the rest of the group were using the clay bags and the coir rolls that were already up on site to fill small 'dog out' areas (where dogs create damage by scrabbling out



Having been taken out of the water to (successfully) repair a leak, the work boat was bailed out and returned to the water at the Wharf Shed.

of the water). A very hard but rewarding day for everyone.

These four weeks have resulted in the work parties fitting 26 coir rolls and 125 clay-filled bags, numerous steel rods and plenty of towpath top surface to finish the repairs off.

We also have had work parties on the Lower Hartshay section on three days, mainly pulling Himalayan Balsam and strimming the paths.



Reed clearance at Pinxton.

Pinxton Wharf had a visit at the request of DCC to clear newly grown reeds, which if left would have closed the channel again. Also previously dumped vegetation was removed to a more suitable area which gives the channel a more pleasing aspect. Clearance of vegetation around the weir area was done to help the Waterway Recovery Group gain access to repair the weir during August.

There were three work parties at Ironville, firstly to remove Himalayan Balsam around the overspill at Codnor Park Reservoir and to trim the path through to Casson Street.

The next work parties worked up from Lock 2 towards the overspill pulling Himalayan Balsam, the amount pulled and put on the bank to dry was the most we have seen in that area for a long time.

We also had a call to work on the vegetation at the swing bridge to give the masters of Birdswood a clear sight of the stonework when approaching the bridge.

The wall area along the sewerage farm section at High Peak Junction was also cleared as was the edge of the wharf at the workshops and the whole area looked less overgrown.

John Barker and John Sparham dug some silt traps out at Whatstandwell and the rest of the group went to Leashaw Farm Bridge pulling Himalayan Balsam.

It seems that Himalayan Balsam has taken the bulk of priorities for the past few months and I for one will welcome getting back to some more varied work.

Thanks to all the volunteers who give their time and also make for a pleasant day out, albeit very exhausting.

If you would like to join the work parties, please contact John Barker on 01773 760358 or [work@cromfordcanal.org](mailto:work@ Cromfordcanal.org).



Vegetation clearance at Brown's Bridge at High Peak Junction.

HUMPY'S COMING OUT PARTY

By Marie Brown, Secretary of Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Reservoir Group



The Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Res committee: Liz Holgate, Angie Sheard, Andrew Moon (with time capsule), Sharron Burton and Marie Brown.

On 31st August the Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Reservoir Committee plan to celebrate with supporters at the unveiling of the restored Humpy Bridge in Jacksdale. Ice creams and ribbon cutting will finish off the celebrations in style.

The project, which at first seemed like a bridge too far, had come together beautifully in under a year and, thanks to the skills

of stonemason Robert Shacklock, was completed on schedule.

The Aviva Community Fund granted the group just over £14,000 in December last year and little did they know how much this would enable the whole community to come together. Every day Robert was on the bridge, along with his wife Valentina; people would gather to learn about the traditional tools and skills used. Robert gave regular updates on the Facebook page and answered questions from passers by and visitors who came to see how Humpy was fairing.

There was a little problem at the start of the project with some vandalism but offers of cameras, all night vigils and overnight camping trips by supporters ensured that the work could continue. The pathway become a beacon for dog walkers as they all changed their walking route to check in daily, sometimes very late at night.

Andrew Moon, Chair of the group said: “We could never have imagined what interest this



Robert Shacklock at work.

Photo: Dave Wilson



These two photographs by Arthur Richards show the decayed state of Portland Basin Bridge before work began and after completion.



project would create, and we will be forever grateful to Robert and his wife for the work they have put in. It was far beyond what we asked of them and it has renewed interest in the area we are trying to care for. We are so grateful for everyone that kept him company and engaged with his craftsmanship”



One of the new interpretation boards, sited just below the main line railway bridge, with installers Joe & Paul Harizimow from DWT, Andy Moon and Martin Williams.

The group has also installed two interpretation boards along the canal and another two are being printed ready for installation before Christmas. Trees, plants and flowers have been planted and the area, now completed, is going to look fantastic for generations to come.

A time capsule, buried in a secret location within the structure of the wall, includes entries from competition winners Sophie Roberts and Lottie Hall and a poem ‘The Ballad of Old Humpy’ which was written by Andrew J. Wilshaw, a local supporter.

The Ballad of Old Humpy

You know, it’s not so long ago
 They looked at me and laughed
 You wouldn’t think it these days though.
 Young Shacklock’s worked his craft!
 My back was bent, my hat was gone
 My shoulders rough and lumpy
 A mockery. A rockery!
 They’d lost their love for Humpy.
 They’d scarce recall the years I served
 Before it went to rot

But that’s an old man’s curse, they say;
 My greatest years - forgot.
 Seen half a dozen monarchs crowned?
 Seen empires rise and fall?
 Seen countryside get lost and found?
 Old Humpy’s seen ‘em all.
 I’ve stood astride the water.
 Helped the Forge-men come and go.
 Helped the mothers and the daughters.
 (They’re the grafters too, you know.)
 Stood sentry all the seasons round
 Amid the din and smoke.
 Seen Iron Work - St. Pancras bound
 And pots come down from Stoke.
 And then I blinked. And all was gone.
 No industry, no noise.
 No need for Humpy then, you see?
 No jobs left for the boys.
 Seen waltzes, jigs and jitterbugs?
 Seen hem lines rise and fall?
 Seen vandals, thugs and litterbugs?
 Old Humpy’s seen ‘em all.
 I watched the foundries turn to dust,
 The paths get overgrown.
 Saw junk fill up the water
 As I stood here all alone.
 Grew old and cracked, but never frail
 Shed stones, but never fell.
 Then one day... workers on the trail.
 I know their boot sounds well.
 They came with happy stories.
 Told me tales of what they’d planned;
 A return to former glories.
 Old Humpy, strong and grand!
 No-one’s years are endless, duck.
 Old Humpy knows the score
 But bless my friends, and grant me luck
 I’ll stand a thousand more.

To find out more check out Facebook ‘Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Res’ or email the Secretary at cromfordcanalgroup@outlook.com.



NEWS FROM THE NORTH

Mark Brailsford of Derbyshire County Council Countryside Services reports on activities between Cromford and Ambergate



Our resident swans with their three young cygnets.

Photo: Mary Wilde

We had a good display of orchids on the High Peak Trail next to the canal near the lengthman's hut this year, as we have generally with wildflowers. Perhaps this is due to the dry summer last year suppressing the grasses, and therefore allowing the wildflowers to flourish.

Recreational cuts at pinch points were done in June with the conservation cuts planned for September.

The resident swans had three cygnets this year, nesting again near the water works at Whatstandwell, adjacent the towpath.

A sound collage was done by artist Jay Dean at High Peak Junction on 4th August which proved popular with the public. The recording itself, a composition of sounds inspired by the heritage of the area, is available at the workshops for visitors to listen to.

A scaled down Eroica Cycle Event is scheduled to take place on 18th August with up to 500 riders; it's planning on coming back as a big event in 2020.

Discovery Days will take place locally again this year on 2nd and 3rd November, with

High Peak Junction forge working, where you can have a go at making a poker, as well as Leawood Pump being in steam.

We have reached the end of Conservation Enhancement Scheme funding after 6 years, during which a lot has been done to meet management plan targets for the canal, such as a reduction in trees and reed removal, as well as dredging works to ensure the canal remains in open water.



Orchids at High Peak Junction

PLANNING CONSENT GRANTED

Exciting news from Ron Common, Cultural Heritage Volunteer, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust



The mission to save Aqueduct Cottage has achieved its most significant milestone to date. At the end of July, Amber Valley Borough Council confirmed Planning and Listed Building Consent for its owners, the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, to restore and re-purpose the cottage into a visitor information centre and 'gateway' to the Lea Wood Nature Reserve. Consent from Natural England to commence work alongside the SSSI of the canal was also granted.

This incredibly exciting development is great news for the cottage restoration campaign and is testament to the commitment of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust with support from James Boon Architects and the Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust, plus the on-going support and commitment from the local community, and the Friends of Cromford Canal.

With planning secured, the next priority is raising the balance of funding required to complete the restoration. Some success has already been achieved. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has provided money for materials to be purchased and a successful Crowdfunder 'Buy a Brick' campaign, launched in May, raised over £13,000 which is sufficient to allow Stage 1 of the restoration

work to get underway.

Stage 1 of the work, expected to begin in October, will involve fixing the 'shell' of the building ie repairing the stonework and replacing the roof. The goal is to get this work completed before the winter sets in.

Stage 2 will involve fitting the doors and windows, installing new floors, chimneys, plus completing the interior of the building. More funding needs to be found before this work can begin, but it is hoped

this can be achieved by spring 2020.

Around £40,000 is needed, which is a challenge, and is currently a 'work in progress' for Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. However, as heritage building restorations go, this is a modest cost for a building of this significance and it is hoped that donors can be found.

Assuming the additional funds can be raised in time, the aim is to complete the restoration by summer 2020 to coincide with the bicentenary celebrations of the birth of Florence Nightingale – an appropriate anniversary given that Aqueduct Cottage was built by Florence's great uncle, Peter Nightingale.

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

Saving the cottage is a community project and there's an opportunity for volunteers with a few hours to spare to have a stake in its restoration. Both Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and the Friends of Aqueduct Cottage Facebook Group have launched appeals for volunteers to register their interest.

The company appointed to lead the restoration is Andrew Churchman Ltd, a local restoration specialist with a great reputation. Andrew is happy to work with and train

volunteers and this will not only help keep the restoration costs down but will give members of the community a chance to be part of this unique and prestigious project.

Anyone who is interested should contact either Alex Morley at amorley@derbyshirewt.co.uk or Ron Common at ron.com@hotmail.co.uk.

Whilst there is still some way to go before we can confidently say that the building's future is secured, the momentum behind the project has never been stronger and come the autumn, when the scaffolding goes up, it will be the most visible indication yet that Aqueduct Cottage is making its long-awaited comeback!

STRATEGIC RESTORATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

By Committee Chairman George Rogers

Hi All, only a short report this issue – whilst things have been quite busy there isn't a huge amount worth writing about, as much of the time has been spent on the finer details of the Beggarlee planning application. Hopefully in the near future we'll start making some more progress in other areas, but in the meantime . . .

Beggarlee Planning Application

Last issue I said that determination of the planning application had been delayed until at least the end of June – well this is now at least the end of October. Unfortunately this has been unavoidable as we've needed to provide further information to answer many of the questions, and this takes time. The good news is that the planners have been happy with the progress being made so they haven't asked for it to be withdrawn.

As last time, I don't want to say too much about the ongoing discussions as things are still changing quite rapidly, but I will give you a brief insight into some of them. For a fuller picture, I'll be doing a brief presentation and then taking questions and answers at the next social meeting on 16th September.

Ecology – we've been doing a bit of further survey work to supplement the application, mainly focussing on checking for a couple of species that may be present but which hadn't been confirmed.

Structures – the engineering team have been developing the proposals further with DCC Highways to assess the impacts of the canal utilising the crossing underneath the A610. They've also needed to further develop some of the scheme to answer questions from the Canal & River Trust.

Traffic Management & Construction – some questions were raised about how access would be achieved to the site and what the impacts would be on the traffic flows. Although we thought we had dealt with this in our original application, these proposals are being refined and more detail provided.

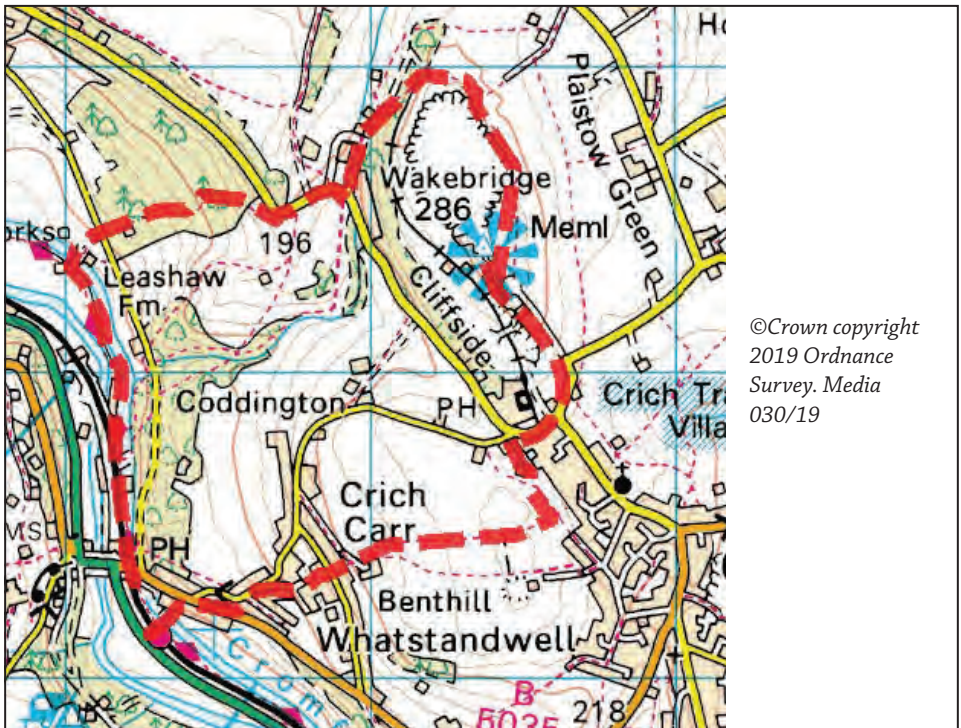
Water Quality – this one came out of the blue a bit, as alongside the assessment of flood risk we also have to consider the quality of the river water and how any changes we are making affect this. We had a very useful meeting with the Environment Agency to discuss this and the team is now developing the assessment.

Pinxton Weir

Last issue I said we would be welcoming a group from London WRG to do some work at Pinxton. For various reasons that work had to be delayed, although it is still planned to be completed this year. My thanks to our friends at the Derby & Sandiacre Canal Trust who were able to find the group some alternative work at short notice.

CANAL CIRCULAR WALKS – 4 WHATSTANDWELL

Ken Brockway offers a 4-mile walk with superb views



Distance: 4 miles.

Start point: Whatstandwell: station or road bridge.

How to get there: Train; Transpeak bus; small car park by canal or pay & display at station.

I said at very beginning that it's difficult to achieve a flat circular walk including the canal; this one will really test you with a climb of 750ft, but the elevation offers some great views. Add there's a further 63ft if you climb the Memorial Tower.

From the canalside car park head south, pass under the road bridge then under a foot bridge, turn immediately right and pass over the canal. From the station take the footbridge

over the line which continues as the bridge over the canal. This public footpath was donated by the vicar as a direct route to the station but today it offers a link to the canal.

Meet a road and cross with care into Hindersitch Lane opposite, signed as a route on foot to the Tramway Museum. The road is narrow and has no footway so extreme care is needed. Follow the road for just 250 yards although it will feel a lot more. About 100 yards after Middle Lane on the right the road splits either side of a house where a seat may encourage you to pause. Leave the 'main' road here and follow the track to the right of the seat. This leads onto Glen Road; follow this still climbing until at The Willows the road

ends and our route continues as a footpath.

Steps finally lead on to Top Lane. A stone seat by a water trough offers another invitation to pause. Turn right along the lane then after 20 yards turn left between houses up a long flight of stone steps. The path finally emerges into open fields under the canopy of a beech tree. Ignore a path on the right (if you see it) and continue through stone squeeze stiles with a view to the left of Crich Stand.

When the spire of Crich church comes into view ignore the unofficial path left, and follow the path which heads towards a point just to the right of the church. When this meets a cross path marked by a stone gate post and the remains of a wooden finger post, turn left.



A glimpse of Crich Tramway Museum beneath the Memorial Tower to which you climb.

Photo: Ken Brockway

The path soon forks; keep to the right through a stile by a gate. Ahead you will see the imposing facade of Derby Assembly Rooms at the Tramway Museum. At the road to your left is the Cliff Inn (open evenings only apart from weekend); turn right then a pause to watch the trams is worthwhile. It's interesting to note that the trams run along part of a former tramway built to carry limestone. It passed under the road here and went down to limekilns alongside the canal at Ambergate. You can see the bridge and track

bed on the opposite side of the road.

Follow the road left then when the footway ends a path has been provided along the field edge. This takes us to the approach road to the memorial; turn left along this. There is a tea shop here; check opening times in advance if you plan to stop. There is a charge to park but only an invitation to make a donation for those on foot unless you wish to climb the tower which is well worth 20p. Even without that extra climb the view is excellent so try and choose a clear day for this walk. There is also the Ordnance Survey 'trig' point behind the tower for those who wish to tick it off.

I've got a bit ahead of myself here because as the path approached the tower our path branched off right so either retrace your steps or follow the narrow but well walked path from the trig point. Either way our route becomes a surfaced path around the former quarry which is fenced to avoid accidents. There are occasional views right but over to the left the countryside is inviting across to the valley of the River Amber which flows out of Ogston Reservoir. The path bends round left until arriving at the upper terminus of the tram ride. There are picnic benches here if you wish to pause and watch a few trams.

Our journey continues by crossing the tram tracks and dropping downhill while bending to the left until meeting a metalled track at Wakebridge Farm. Continue along the track to the road. Cross with care and turn right to take advantage of the pavement. Ignore the first footpath and the second, even though this is signed 'Footpath to Cromford Canal'.

The pavement narrows and as the road bends right take the path left. At first enclosed by a fence on the left it then enters woodland. Continue downhill on the well-defined path. Cross the minor road and continue along the access track signed Leashaw Farm, where hidden among the buildings it crosses the canal. Turn right down steps to meet the towpath and turn right to pass under the bridge. Now follow the towpath back to the car park or beyond to the footbridge and Whatstandwell station.

BROWN'S BRIDGE

John Baylis reports on recent events at High Peak Junction



John Baylis replacing balls in the historic bearing race in 2015 in an attempt to improve the ease of swinging the bridge. The new plans involve a larger bearing ring outside of this.

Birdswood crews and regular visitors to the Cromford Canal will have noticed that Brown's Swing Bridge at High Peak Junction was out of action for several weeks following a minor collision that caused the deck to shift towards the towpath. The bridge was subsequently unable to be operated by hand as one of the longitudinal beams was catching a stone protruding slightly on the towpath.

A Derbyshire County Council Countryside Ranger helped to close the bridge but DCC Countryside Services stopped the Friends using the bridge until it had been checked and approved by DCC Engineers. Doug Readle of the Friends' Strategic Restoration Committee also took advantage of the closure to do measurements for possible future improvement work. Birdswood continued to operate in forwards to High Peak Junction Workshop, returning in reverse to Cromford.

DCC Engineers decided that the bridge couldn't be swung by volunteers until the end of the timber beams had been trimmed so that the deck missed the protruding stone. As the bridge is within a Scheduled Ancient Monument area, namely the oldest railway workshop remaining in the country (the bridge itself is not scheduled), the stone could not

be trimmed; however, the much newer timber bridge could be modified. One of the DCC Rangers tried to trim the end of the beam but due to poor access this was unsuccessful and the Friends offered to pay for lifting the deck so that the ends of the beams could be trimmed using mechanical tools.

DCC accepted the offer, but fate intervened and the DCC engineers needed an up-dated Construction Design Management Plan and the DCC Health & Safety Department wanted clearance from the electricity suppliers on the proximity of a high voltage cable on its utility maps. This happened at 8am the following morning; I had no alternative but to cancel the lift.

It was several days before Western Power could attend and the outcome of this visit was that the HP cable was no longer present and the utilities map was incorrect. By this time the DCC Ranger was back from his holiday and Waterway Recovery Group East Midlands offered to help him remove part of the deck to see if access could be achieved from between the beams. This was successful and after about 4 hours' work with hand saws, we trimmed off enough timber to allow the bridge to swing again. DCC approved re-use of the bridge by volunteers on 5th July.

The operation of Brown's Bridge has been difficult since Birdswood started and despite efforts to lubricate and improve the ball bearings, swinging is still difficult.

Previous planning by John Boucher and David Ratner suggested a new improved bearing might solve the problem. Doug Readle has now produced preliminary plans for improvements to the bridge. Outline plans have now been submitted to DCC; however due to recent severe weather and flooding the DCC Engineers have not yet been able to review and comment.

MEAGRE PICKINGS

Doreen Buxton attempts to unravel the story of cotton on the Cromford Canal

It has been a matter of debate for many years as to whether Richard Arkwright used the Cromford Canal to transport raw cotton.

It is important as with all topics to be clear about the period being considered and to have in mind that the Derwent Valley factory masters were running competitive businesses for which cost, including transport cost, was always an important factor. Involved in calculation of cost was how urgently stock was required and how best, dependent on weather conditions for example, to ensure its arrival in good condition. Occasionally for a small amount, or a sample maybe, that may have meant resorting to a fast, covered stage coach or a fly boat on a canal, fly boats being the fastest (but most expensive) form of canal transport, travelling by night as well as day.

For the Arkwrights at Cromford we have no records about how cotton arrived. What is certain is that Richard Arkwright senior did not see cotton arrive in Cromford by canal. He died in 1792; the Cromford canal opened in 1794. So for him cotton arrived at his mill gate by road, carried in bags by packhorses or in bales on carts or wagons. In 'Packmen, Carriers and Packhorse Routes', David Hey gives a packhorse load as about 240lb, so ten horses carried just over a ton; with a cart on suitable terrain two horses could move a ton. The choice of transport would be influenced by the state of the roads and that, in turn, by the time of year and its weather. Arkwright's cotton may have come by that means all the way from its point of entry to the country, of which the ports of London and Liverpool seem to have been the most important for Derwent Valley mill owners. But even for Arkwright senior, it may have come part of the journey by water and only the last stage by road.

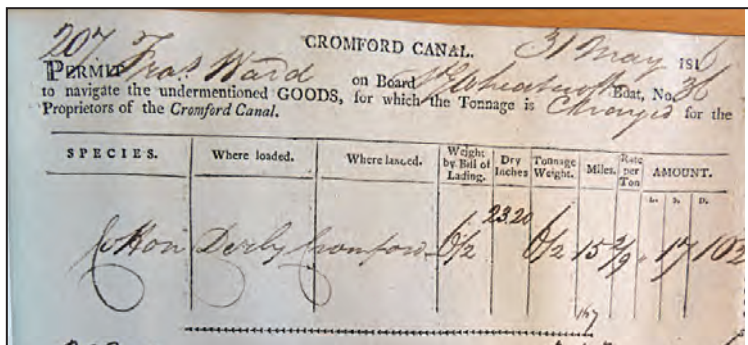
The oldest relevant route by water was by sea from London, up the east coast to the

Humber then by the rivers Trent and Derwent, which joined the Trent near Shardlow, to Derby. An Act of 1722 had authorised the Derwent to be made navigable to Derby but as with most river navigation it was not entirely satisfactory; it suffered from seasonal variations in the flow of water in the river. Writing in the 1720s Daniel Defoe, on his 'Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain', having described the Trent as navigable to Nottingham and navigation "lately reaching up to Burton and up the Derwent to Derby" describes its value to increasing the trade of these counties, especially in exporting great quantities of cheese from Warwickshire and Cheshire to Hull and "from thence to all the south and north coasts on the east of Britain".

Earlier there was a route out to the North Sea from Chesterfield by road to Bawtry on the River Idle which was described as a port in 1276. The Idle connected to the Trent and the route was used for the movement of heavy goods such as lead, millstones and coal. Bawtry was bypassed when the Chesterfield Canal was completed in 1777. Both joined the Trent at West Stockwith.

By the time we have any record of cotton being moved by water the important inland port on the Trent was Gainsborough and the important canal was the Trent & Mersey, completed in 1777. The canal effectively connected the east and west coasts of England from the port of Liverpool and Runcorn on the River Mersey, by the Duke of Bridgewater's canal to its connection with the Trent & Mersey Canal at Preston Brook near Warrington, to the Trent about a mile east of Shardlow and so to the Humber and Hull.

The Strutts of Belper, dealing with brokers in Liverpool and London, refer to using this canal to deliver cotton to Derby from either direction. The Evans from Darley Abbey similarly used it



Cromford Canal permit number 207 for Francis Ward steering Wheatcroft boat number 36 carrying 6.5 tons of cotton from Derby to Cromford on 31st May 1816.

and had their own canal boats. In September 1801 they were ordering 5 tons of Martinicos at 2s 1d from Liverpool “by the Duke of Bridgewater’s Flats, or any other persons, to the care of Wm. Salt at Preston port, and from thence to us by our T. Evans and Sons boats”.

Pickfords also sent cotton to Derby from London, a quick trade by fly boat or a slower, heavier but cheaper trade by barge. They also used Sherratt’s from London, by boat if the weather was OK, if not then by land. The Strutt account makes reference to cotton coming by canal directly from London using the carriers Pickfords & Co and Jas. Holt & Co and includes some details about speed and costs of delivery.

For both, where it came from was dependent on who had got the type of cotton required at the best price.

The Erewash Canal opened in 1779 linking Langley Mill to the Trent east of Sawley and in 1794 the Cromford Canal joined the Erewash at Langley Mill; the country’s growing canal network was now open to Cromford. Peter Nightingale quickly made use of this connection to obtain cotton through Gainsborough, then delivered to Cromford by boat by his chosen local carrier Joseph Hepworth who had other links to the Cromford Canal at that time. Nightingale opened his own wharf at Lea in 1802.

None of this information concerns the Arkwrights directly but in the absence of any positive information for them I think we might assume that they must have used some if not

all of the transport methods summarised here according to their needs at any given time.

A possible way forward might be to look for Arkwright transactions from the other end, from brokers’ records. The accounts provide a considerable list of names of brokers but I have not investigated what sort of archives exist for any of them.

Footnote: Permit Evidence

A new analysis of the increasing data from toll permits for boats carrying goods to Cromford reveals a certain amount of cotton, carried almost exclusively by general carriers Wheatcroft. Although the records that FCC have cover between 1814 and 1878, cotton is only recorded between 1814 and 1830. The majority of this is coming from Derby, with somewhat less from Shardlow. The weight carried varies between half a ton and 11 tons, probably the maximum weight of this bulky cargo that could be loaded on a narrow boat.

This could well have been destined for Arkwright’s mills. It would be interesting to know just how much cotton Arkwright’s mills processed each year.

Unfortunately, whilst the toll permits record all traffic entering the canal, they do not record outgoing traffic that originated from Cromford. So if Arkwright was shipping out finished cotton by canal, it would not show up in the permits.

WIGGLES AT WIGWELL

Hugh Potter tries to answer a question often asked by Birdswood passengers



Some of the 'Wigwell wiggles' can be seen in the view south towards the Leawood Arm.

'wiggle' in the horizontal plane. It is so much more obvious from below!

But there is more (of course!). When Jessop was building the aqueduct he had serious problems and ascribed this to the (lime) mortar not setting, causing the aqueduct to slump slightly after it was built. The late Reg Schofield describes this in detail in his excellent book 'Benjamin Outram', suggesting that the cause was more fundamental than simply the mortar not setting. He suggests that the long shallow river span was at the cutting edge of the technology and knowledge of the time, and that a better understanding of the

Birdswood passengers who have walked round from the Pump House to be picked up at the Wharf Shed often ask: Why is the aqueduct parapet so wiggly?

The recent tree clearance work undertaken by Derbyshire County Council allows part of the answer to be discovered. There is a path down to the river opposite Aqueduct Cottage and from here you can clearly see three different sections of aqueduct construction.

The main arch of almost 80ft width over the Derwent is straight sided, but the two smaller arches over the land on each side are built with more conventional curved abutments such as are found on canal overbridges. It is the outward flare of these supporting walls that causes the parapet of the aqueduct to



The view of the north-eastern face from below Aqueduct Cottage clearly shows the difference in construction of the three arches.

forces exerted on the spandrel walls would have assisted Jessop.

In the end Jessop solved the problem by (amongst other things) building buttresses to support the walls. These can clearly be seen on the south-western face of the aqueduct today – there is a path down, close to the run-off weir opposite Leawood Pump House. The sagging of the walls would account for the vertical ‘wigglyness’ of the western parapet.

But whatever Jessop did, he did a pretty good job, as it has lasted another 225 year!



The south-western face shows the two major abutments built by Jessop. The stonework on the left of the near buttress is the outer flare of the smaller arch carrying the canal over the land adjacent to the main river arch.



At some time in the past the north-western land arch was reduced in size. In the canal company minutes in 1801, Richard Arkwright Esq was given permission to rebuild this arch, the company donating £20 towards the cost – but there is no reason given.

Why Wigwell?

Another good question. The structure is known variously as ‘Derwent Aqueduct’ (after the river it crosses), ‘Leawood Aqueduct’ (after its immediate location) and ‘Wigwell Aqueduct’. It is not clear where or when this name originated; the only clue is that Wigwell Grange was a short distance south towards Alderwasley. The name Wigwell never occurs in the canal company minutes, where it is always referred to as Derwent Aqueduct. Perhaps readers can offer an explanation?

200 YEARS AGO ON THE CROMFORD CANAL

Christine Johnstone offers a glimpse of life on the canal when it was busy with trade

In 2017 I answered Hugh Potter's call for volunteers to transcribe toll records for the Cromford Canal. The spelling can be unconventional and the handwriting appalling, but the receipts contain a wealth of information about how the canal was used. Each receipt has the date, the boat's number [never a name], the names of the skipper and the owner, the cargo and its weight, where it's coming from and going to and the amount due to the canal company. Transcribe enough of these and put them into a sortable database and the stories hidden within the records are revealed. Here's a taste, using the 573 toll receipts issued between 9th November and 11th December 1819. No receipts were issued on the four Sundays in this period, so it covers 30 working days. I've retained some of the original spelling, especially for names.

Between 9th November and 11th December 1819, 17,272 tons of freight were carried on the Cromford Canal. 16,475 tons were outbound and 797 tons inbound. For every 20 tons that left the canal, less than one ton came in. This was because most of the freight was coal, and that only went one way – outwards. For every nine tons of coal that was carried, only one ton of anything else was carried. About 300 boats were working on the canal. On average 19 toll receipts were issued each working day, but any of these could cover more than one boat.

Almost all the outbound freight was coal – 15,724 tons of it. Over half of this came from just three pits: Beggarlee 3,586 tons, Brinsley 3,473 tons and Benty 1,918 tons. About another quarter of the total came from Birchwood, Forge and Codnor Park. Smaller amounts came from Swanwick, Summercotes, Selston and Pinxton, and tiny amounts from Hartshay, Pentrich, Stoneyford and Ockerthorpe.

486 tons of the outbound freight was pig iron [including a few castings]. It came from wharves at Codnor Park, Golden Valley, Pinxton, Pye Bridge and Summercotes. 146 tons of sundries

[miscellaneous goods] came mostly from Buckland Hollow but also from Pinxton, Pye Bridge and Codnor Park. The remaining 119 tons was made up of lime, gritstone, stone and lead, from Pinxton and Codnor Park.

The coal from Beggarlee went to 17 different places – Newark, Grantham, Nottingham, Kingston, Wollaton, Bridgford, Carlton, Langley Mill, Derby, the Trent, Sawley, Kegworth, Loughborough, Leicester, Market Harborough, Farndon and Bowadan. The journeys could be long – especially on dark November days. It's about 38 miles and 33 locks to Leicester – at least two days with a fully loaded horse-drawn boat.

There was a lot less freight coming on to the Cromford Canal and it was much more varied. 365 tons [almost half of the inbound freight] were sundries, or miscellaneous goods and packages. Half of the sundries went to Buckland Hollow, N. & G. Wheatcroft's base. 83 tons went to Cromford and 70 tons to Pinxton. Tiny amounts also went to 11 other wharves. There was also timber coming in [126 tons], sand [100 tons], salt [64 tons] and cotton [56 tons], as well as smaller amounts of barley, bones, bran, castings, gritstone, hay, iron, lead, lime, puncheonware [large earthenware bowls], scrap, sugar and wheat.

Just under half of the inbound freight came from Nottingham and about a quarter from Derby. The rest [in decreasing order by tonnage] came from Lenton [sand], London [sundries and scrap], Leicester, Birmingham, Langley, Sawley, Wollaton, Gainsborough, Eastwood, Newark and Loughborough. Some 195 miles and 180 locks separated London and Cromford – a round trip of 9–10 days, almost certainly by a series of boats. Those sundries must have been important!

The toll receipts also tell us about people. There were about 200 boat owners, of whom four were women. 122 owners skippered their own boats, 99 owners employed skippers, some of course did both. 161 skippers worked only on someone else's boat.

Two of the biggest freight operators were G. Brittain and N. & G. Wheatcroft. Each had 26 boats working in November/December 1819. Brittain's boats carried mainly coal, but also pig iron, castings, cokes, gritstone, sand and lime. Wheatcroft's carried mainly sundries, but also iron, lead, pig iron, timber, scrap, cotton, gritstone, castings, barley and [just once] 'empty things'! Brittain's skippers were Samuel Antony, Jos Bancroft, W. Burton, Thomas Cox, Daniel Foley, Thomas Gowley, B. Hodson, William Meaking, Samuel Nainham, William Smith, William Sparnham, J. Spencer, Thomas Water, Thomas Whitby and Thomas Wilkins. Wheatcroft's skippers were Josh Cutts, Anthony Grundy, William Hall, John Johnson, Samuel Kenney, James Key, Jos Key, John Mather, Jos Mather, Thomas Roper, Ralf Slack, George Smedley, Thomas Thacker, Samuel Vallance, Stephen Vallance, William Weston and Samuel Wragg.

And what about the women? Just four female boat owners are listed – Alice Ward, Ann Rice, Ann Ferniough Terry [either surname is used] and Mrs Merewood. Alice Ward was the only woman to skipper a boat. She appears just once, on one boat, which she owns, taking coal from Brinsley to Loughborough. Ann Rice has one boat on the canal just once, taking coal from Brinsley to Leicester. Ann Ferniough Terry has one boat in the records twice, taking coal from Beggarlee to Newark. Mrs Merewood has three boats on the canal for a total of four times, taking coal from Summercotes to Nottingham.

What was a working month like? The receipts let you follow individual skippers up and down the canal network. These are all the journeys made by just three of the skippers.

George Smedley worked for N. & G. Wheatcroft (always with same boats) and made six journeys. On 11th November he was taking two boats loaded with sundries from Nottingham to Codnor Park, Buckland Hollow, Bull Bridge and Cromford. On 13th November he was returning to Nottingham, loaded with sundries from Buckland Hollow and pig iron from Pye Bridge. On 18th November he was taking two boats from Nottingham, loaded with sundries for Codnor Park and cotton for Pinxton. On 20th November he was taking one boat loaded with pig iron, from Pye Bridge to

Nottingham. On 24th November he was taking two boats loaded with sundries, from Nottingham to Codnor Park, Buckland Hollow and Cromford. And on 6th December he was taking two boats from Nottingham, loaded with sundries for Cromford and timber for Buckland Hollow.

Josh Cutts also worked for N. & G. Wheatcroft and always used the same one boat. He did ten journeys in the same period. On 10th November he was taking sundries from London to Buckland Hollow and Pinxton and on 12th November, gritstone and sundries from Buckland Hollow and Pinxton to Leicester. On 16th November he was taking sundries from London to Buckland Hollow. On 19th November he was taking sundries from Buckland Hollow to Leicester, and on 24th November sundries from London to Buckland Hollow, Cromford and Pinxton. On 27th November he was taking sundries from Buckland Hollow to Leicester, returning on 2nd December with sundries from Leicester to Buckland Hollow, Cromford and Pinxton, as well as some 'empty things' [destination unknown]. On 4th December it was more sundries from Buckland Hollow to Leicester and on 8th December more sundries from Leicester to Buckland Hollow, Cromford and Pinxton.

G. Wharton worked on boats that he owned and is recorded on seven journeys. On 10th November he was taking 19 tons of coal from Beggarlee to Derby, on one boat. On 15th November he was taking 3.5 tons of lime from Eastwood to Forge, also with one boat. On 16th November he was taking 25 tons of coal from Beggarlee to Nottingham, this time on two boats. On 17th November he was taking 8 tons of coal from Brinsley to Eastwood, on one boat. On 20th November he was taking 36.5 tons of coal from Beggarlee to Derby again, but with two boats. On 2nd December he was taking 26 tons of coal from Beggarlee to Nottingham, again with two boats. And on 6th December he was taking another 34.5 tons of coal from Beggarlee to Nottingham, again with two boats. That's a lot of coal to load and unload!

In 1819 the Cromford Canal was the only bulk freight route in and out of the area. There were horse-drawn tramways from some of the pits, but they acted as canal feeders, not competitors. Just this quick exploration of just a month's receipts shows how vital the canal was to the local economy.

HIMALAYAN BALSAM

John Guyler checks out some recipes - but says 'take advice' before trying them at home!



Wendy and Shirley with enough Himalayan Balsam to make at least two glasses of gin!

Photo: Chris Martin

but care should be taken as they contain concentrations of calcium oxalate (which is broken down and leached out on cooking) but it is advised that they are not consumed too frequently. Calcium oxalate forms salt crystals and subsequently kidney stones

Immature seed pods (before they reach the explosive stage) are edible whole and can be cooked like radish pods or mangetout and used in stir fries and curries

The seeds themselves can be eaten raw and have a nutty taste. Collect the seeds by covering the whole seed head with a bag. Touching the seeds through the bag will make the seeds explode into the bag. Both unripe cream coloured seeds and the dark brown ripe seeds are edible. The seeds can be eaten whole, toasted or ground into flour, crushed as a spice or substituted for hazelnuts. They are excellent baked in breads, cakes and biscuits and make a welcome addition to soup, stews and curries.

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is a relative of 'Busy Lizzie', but reaches well over head height and is a major weed problem. Its common names are Indian Balsam, Jumping Jack and Policeman's Helmet.

Having spent a number of weeks pulling Himalayan Balsam and having heard several reports of it being edible, I decided to have a look at its potential.

The River Severn Custodians enthusiastically say that Himalayan Balsam is a tasty plant, commonly eaten as curry in its native Northern India. The flowers can be used to make floral jams and jellies or added to salads. The young shoots and stems are edible, when cooked,



The attractive pink flowers are all too familiar along our canal banks.

Photo: PHS Greenleaf



The claw-like root of a Himalayan Balsam.

Photo: John Guylter

Mature seeds, after being carefully picked over to remove bits of pod, can be stored in an air tight jar as a store cupboard standby.

They are a useful substitute in cakes for nuts for those with nut allergies and ground Himalayan Balsam seeds can be substituted for ground almonds (please take medical advice, before using Himalayan Balsam as nut substitute).

In the September Towpath Talk, there is an article about Himalayan Balsam flowers being used to make gin.

According to the Royal Horticultural Society, Himalayan Balsam was introduced to the UK in 1839 as a garden plant and is now naturalised. It is found especially on waste ground, river banks and canals where it has become a problem weed.

Himalayan Balsam tolerates low light levels and also shades out other vegetation, so gradually impoverishes habitats by killing other plants. It can grow to 2–3m (6–10ft) tall. The 800 seeds in each pod can be dispersed up to 7m (22ft) when the pod explodes.

There are two main methods of control: with weed killer with all its problems near a water course, or the non-chemical ‘Balsam Bashing’ which we at FCC use.

The plant has a shallow claw-like root and is usually easy to pull out of the ground, although some of the very large specimens take a fair bit of pulling. Our work parties have spent a

lot of time recently clearing the area on the old Lock 1 site down to Lock 3 at Ironville and at Lower Hartshay.

Noting that the tube-like stems have water in them when pulled, a large area of Balsam must draw up a tremendous amount of water in the growing season.

Authors notes: I am not advocating using Himalayan Balsam as a food substitute, please take advice and only use from safe water courses. Calcium Oxalate can cause Kidney Stones.

Exterminate!

*Derbyshire Wildlife Trust add:
Himalayan Balsam is considered to be an INNS - Invasive Non Native Species - and a lot of effort goes into clearing it and trying to break the cycle/seed sources constantly being washed downstream as it out-shades our natural vegetation and erodes banksides. The shading out of natural vegetation has a very negative effect on many UK animal and bird species through loss of food sources and nesting/egg laying habitat.*

WHAT DID THE CROMFORD CANAL DO IN THE WAR?

Hugh Potter wonders why the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht was interested in our canal



Thanks to David Rumsey Historical Map Collection website for the German information.

The Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, as I am sure(?) you will know, was the Nazi German Supreme Command of the Armed Forces in World War Two. What you may not know is that they used a photograph of Aqueduct Cottage in their publication Unternehmen Seelöwe (Operation Sea Lion – the Original Nazi German Plan for the Invasion of Great Britain).

The photograph had first appeared as a full page spread in no less a newspaper than The Times on 9th October 1936. The caption read “A Pleasant Inland Waterway – In recent correspondence in The Times the possibility of the greater development for pleasure craft of those of our inland waterways now little used for commercial purposes has been suggested. Our picture, taken by a staff photographer, shows a pleasant stretch of the Cromford Canal near Matlock Bath. This canal was at one time of importance in connection with the trade between the Midlands and London, but now carries little traffic.” Perhaps it was a slow

news day!

But . . . the photograph then mysteriously appears in the German publication mentioned above with the caption “Cromford-Kanal in Derbyshire (BB13) Bei Matlock Bath im Derwent-Tal”. Quite why it featured in German invasion plans is a total mystery, unless it was to show what a wonderful place it would be to live in. It was hardly a military or strategic target.

But it was a great photograph and it was used again in The Times in an article on ‘The Future Use of Inland Waterways’ in January 1953 (when the canal fortunately was still controlled by the British) and in The Story of Our Inland Waterways by Robert Aickman (a founder of the Inland Waterways Association) in 1955.

Perhaps if one of our members has a copy of Unternehmen Seelöwe and is fluent in German, they might be able to solve this riddle.

LETTERS

Please send your thoughts, comments and questions to editor@cromfordcanal.org

Made It At Last!

I have finally boated on the Cromford, and here are the photographs to prove it. The friendly locals at Langley Mill suggested we went right up the far end of the moorings to turn round (in a 70ft hire boat), so we did.

Later we had the pleasure of locking on the

Erewash with a working boat (Bath) whose owners are also FCC members, and saw our (former) esteemed Chair, Mr Baylis, boating through Shardlow!

The East Midlands were great fun and very distinctive (especially the yo-yo-ing Soar).

Christine Johnstone



Tying up above Cromford Canal's bottom lock (14) at Langley Mill to take on water.



Nearing the end of the boatyard moorings at Langley Mill.



Turning at the very end of the current navigable section.

Photos: Christine Johnstone

Cleaning Up in the Cut

A little query your readers might be able to enlighten me on. During the consultation on the Beggarlee Extension at Langley Mill recently, an elderly local resident came in and recalled the days when Barber Walker ran a miners' train from Moorgreen Pit to the end of their line at Beggarlee Wharf. It must have been in the days before they had pithead baths, because he recalled seeing miners

getting off the train and jumping in the canal to clean up before going home. I wonder if any readers can provide further information on this practice as it will be a valuable addition to support the historical review in our planning application. Did they, for instance, strip off completely like they did in the baths? Even better, does anyone have a photograph recording it?

John Boucher



The Barber Walker train at Watnall (the second coach may be hidden round the corner). It used to run Langley Mill–Moorgreen–High Park–Watnall Colliery.

Photo: Industrial Locomotives of Nottinghamshire (Industrial Railway Society, 1999)

LEAWOOD JOTTINGS

Ian Yates reports on progress at the Pump House

Nearly half of the steaming season has already passed. There was a good start to the year with visitors but the June, July and first August steamings have been poor, even with only steaming on the Sunday; hopefully the remainder will improve.

Progress has been slow with regard to boiler repairs; sourcing a new lagging which will not disintegrate too much is the problem but we are progressing. There has been an issue raised with the smoke produced so we are looking at possible supplies of a different coal but ultimately they all produce some smoke. Other fuels, ie oil or gas, are not really suitable due to our location and the environmental issue with oil storage. As our firebox is copper we also understand that oil damages this material as found on some preserved railway lines. Smokeless fuels at present are not suitable due to their small size.

Last year the pump house was filmed operating for a television programme. This programme has now been aired on BBC4 under the title 'Revolutions: The Car' with Jim Al-Khalili as presenter. Leawood featured in several shots showing the cylinder top, beam and the pump. Unfortunately there were no credits at the end but it was put out on our social media and website. A bit more publicity like this would be helpful.

Earlier in the year there was a visitor from Severn Trent as a member of the public. He was well impressed with what we do and it was pointed out to him the issue with the adjacent oak tree and the roof. Severn Trent's boundary is the pump house wall so it is on their land. He agreed it looked in a poor state and was close to both the building and on



our incoming culvert. Several weeks later we arrived on a Monday night to find it on the floor. Our hunch was correct because as the tree hit the ground it split open to reveal a considerable amount of decay inside and large area of black fungus in the base. It was best felled before it

caused any damage. It is intended to leave the wood where it is and allow it to become a natural habitat. All permissions were checked prior to this being carried out. The only downside is that Himalayan Balsam has shot up and is over 8ft high a bit intimidating!

The group have been trying to get in touch with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust with regard to their plans for the cottage. They were finally collared when they had a stand by the cottage; three of us independently unknown to each other complained of no replies which did get a response. There is now a small display in the pump house showing the proposals and some nice photographs of the cottage over time. It was mentioned that it was their intention to have the trees cut back along the Severn Trent boundary to give a view between the cottage and pump house. Contact with our man again and working with Derbyshire County Council it is hoped to get this done in the autumn. The work will be carried out with the Wildlife Trust's volunteers when all the paperwork is in place.

The wood for renewing the gates, handrails and mooring bollards has now been delivered. It is intended to progress this work as soon as possible as the coal gate especially is in a bit of a perilous state. Everything is now ready for the next few steamings so hopefully if you have not been before you will have trip on the boat and come and see us. For steaming dates see Events page 35.

MYSTERY BOAT

Hugh Potter is looking for answers



The iron bows of the boat as it appeared in February 2017.

Following the donation of the length of canal from near Bridle Lane Bridge to Hartshay Hill Road Bridge (see Portal 69), the FCC work party decided to take a closer look at the old boat that has been visible in the dry section close to Hartshay for many years.

Trial excavations found that it was a riveted iron boat, with apparently no cargo, and that it was pointing away from the tunnel towards Cromford. After taking photographs the holes were refilled to protect the remains.

The mystery remains as to exactly how the boat got to where it is. Butterley Tunnel collapsed in 1900 so it must have been trapped to the west of the tunnel then. The few photographs of the boats carrying coal from Hartshay to Cromford all show wooden boats. This traffic stopped around the mid 1930s so the boat must have ended up where it is after that date as it is in the middle of the channel.

Les Mason in his book 'On The Boats' recalling the coal trade in the 1920s states it "was full of lime stone and belonged to

the Butterley fleet of boats used to carry lime stone to their foundries at Butterley and Codnor Park" but as it is heading away from Butterley this seems unlikely.

So what was the boat? Had it been carrying? Or was it a maintenance boat? Surely there must be some history passed down as to what it was and how it got there. Can any members offer any information?



The results of the excavations in June this year.

HOW LONG TO LONDON?

Hugh Potter discovers how long canal boats took

The transcriptions of the permits recording boats passing onto and off the canal at Langley Mill can offer some interesting insights into canal transport in the 19th century. One commonly asked question is “How long did it take to get to ?”. Well, the database can answer that question.

Taking a look at just one boat (No 1246) reveals that it was owned by Wheatcrofts in the late 1820s and was regularly steered to London and back by John Johnson. Wheatcrofts were the general cargo carriers of the (pre-railway) day for the Cromford Canal – the ‘DHL’ of today – and the cargo is entered as simply ‘Goods’ or ‘Sundries’.

The table includes entries that show how long the boat was away from the canal on some of its trips to London. (This is far from a complete record as only around 10% of permit books survive.) It shows that a round trip took consistently 9 or 10 days, which would include some unloading/loading time. It might also involve stops to drop off at intermediate points. The calculation assumes no travel on Sundays (a rule enforced on many canals, and certainly the Cromford). Although not entirely consistent, a Wednesday departure was the

norm, with a return on Monday.

So the one-way journey, pulled by horse, to or from London took 4–5 days. That makes today’s boaters look like real wimps! If you put the route into CanalPlanAC (canalplan.org.uk) at its default settings (3mph and 15 min per lock) it suggests it will take 14 days! That is boating 7 hours per day. If it was a 5-day journey in the 1820s, that would mean travelling 19.5 hours per day, which would have meant they were ‘fly-boating’, ie travelling day and night, changing horses periodically.

Such a service advertised in local directories of the time stated “German Wheatcroft & Sons sends a fly-boat to London daily from Cromford” – but there is no evidence that it was daily.

Just for the record (thanks to Trevor Griffin) the stagecoach journey from Derby to London at this time took 14 hours and the mail coach from London to Derby or Nottingham took 13 hours.

A comparative exercise for the 67-mile, 72-lock canal journey to Birmingham shows a typical return trip taking 3–4 days with boats leaving Langley Mill regularly on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

To London	From London	Days of week	Days exc Sun
11.05.1826	23.05.1826	Thur-Tue	10
24.04.1827	05.05.1827	Tues-Sat	10
09.05.1827	21.05.1827	Wed-Mon	10
23.05.1827	02.06.1827	Wed-Sat	9
07.06.1827	18.06.1827	Thur-Mon	9
20.06.1827	02.07.1827	Wed-Mon	10
04.07.1827	16.07.1827	Wed-Mon	10
06.02.1828	18.02.1828	Wed-Mon	10
12.05.1830	24.05.1830	Wed-Mon	10
29.05.1830	09.06.1830	Sat-Wed	9

THE LOCK-KEEPER'S GARDEN

Andy Cadman reports on a colourful canalside display at Lock 4



On 15th May Ironville Primary School (Kestrels Class) paid a visit to the garden. The object was to sow several different varieties of radish and discover which is the best one to grow. After 6 weeks the children paid a second visit to harvest their crops and return to school to count, weigh, assess and taste the different varieties. This therefore also became a Science, Food Technology and Maths lesson too. On each visit the children learnt all about the different plants there and how they grow. The history of the canal and local wildlife also formed part of each lesson.

The aim of the project at Ironville, now in its fourth season, is to recreate what might have been present in a traditional lock-keeper's garden. The garden provides an opportunity to highlight the local heritage, educate young people and enhance the local environment. Much of the produce from the garden was given to the OAP Community Centre. The photographs show some of the young people who have worked on the project during the last season. The local primary school carried out some scientific research in the form of a radish trial. This resulted in recommendations

from the children, to the local community, via the village newsletter.

Although the principal aim of the primary school visiting was to carry out some scientific research, the children also had an opportunity to learn about the history of the canal. They were able to discuss the function of a lock and how it works safely (safety fencing installed by the FCC was invaluable here). They also had the opportunity to observe and discuss the local wildlife at first hand. Many other aspects of local history were also discussed on the visits.



SITUATIONS VACANT

By Yvonne Shattower

We have several situations vacant which we desperately need to fill. Can you help us?

PUBLICITY OFFICER – we need someone to communicate our activities to the press, television, local radio stations etc and supervise distribution of posters etc. Ideally you would have contacts within these areas, but we would welcome someone who would be prepared to establish these contacts. You would inform the media of our talks, events such as Discovery Days, special Birdswood events, and Work Parties. If the FCC does it, the media need to know.

EVENTS SALES OFFICER/TEAM – this really is a job for a minimum of two or three people. You would travel locally to various events such as Fetes, Open Days, and Steam Rallies. You would need to be fit enough to put up the FCC marquee or a gazebo, and close down at the end of the day, and have a vehicle suitable for transporting all of these items as well as suitable storage for the items for sale.

SOCIAL SECRETARY – this is our latest vacancy as Wendy will stand down in December. We need someone to book speakers for our monthly Ironville meetings starting from January 2020; you would also book the hall. You would arrange for any equipment the speaker needs such as projector, screen etc to be available; we have our own projector and sound system which you would also be responsible for setting up. At the meeting, you would welcome the speaker, making sure that he/she has everything they need, and also arrange for payment to the speaker. This is usually done by bank transfer, so you would liaise with the Treasurer to ensure this happens. Wendy also runs the raffle. We would also like the Social Secretary to be responsible for advertising the talks via posters and social media; this would not necessarily mean producing the posters, but making sure that the relevant information is passed to those who do.

Are you able to help with any of these positions? Please contact Yvonne Shattower if you can, my details are inside the cover of the Portal. Your FCC needs YOU!

Donald Campbell and the Cromford Canal Hugh Potter discovers a strange coincidence

Donald Campbell is world famous for his water speed records set in the 1950s and 1960s, but did his interest start on the Cromford Canal? In records held at Wakefield is a copy of an agreement dated 6th May 1937 by which the Midland Railway Co (as owners of the canal) granted permission to one Donald Campbell of The Poplars, Matlock Road, Ambergate to “ply a small canoe on the Cromford Canal”. However, speed was not involved here as Mr Campbell was prohibited from using artificial means of propelling the canoe! It cost him 5s (25p) a year.

The famous Donald Campbell would have been 16 at the time, but it is unlikely to have been him who began his attraction to the water on the Cromford Canal as he lived “down south”.

AUTUMN EVENTS

FCC 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 £2.50 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.

Leawood pump is free to enter (donations welcome) and is accessed on foot from High Peak Junction (car park on Lea Road, DE4 5AE).

Saturday 14th & Sunday 15th September

Leawood Pump in steam noon to 4.30pm.

Monday 16th September

FCC monthly meeting: An Update on Beggarlee Extension at Langley Mill followed by a question and answer session with chairman David Martin and Strategic Restoration Chairman George Rogers. 7.30pm, Ironville Church Hall.

Saturday 5th & Sunday 6th October

Horse-drawn trips on narrow boat Birdswood depart Cromford Wharf 11am and 2pm. Leawood Pump in steam noon to 4.30pm.

Monday 21st October

FCC monthly meeting: Ironclads, HMS Warrior and Codnor Park Forge. Tim Castledine investigates the Forge's part in the downfall of Napoleon III's navy outlining how the Industrial Revolution enabled the British Navy to quickly respond to the threat of the French Navy in the 1860s – with a little help from Codnor Park Forge. 7.30pm, Ironville Church Hall.

Monday 18th November

FCC monthly meeting: More From The Archives. Hugh Potter will be showing a further selection of photographs from the ever expanding Archives of the Cromford Canal. 7.30pm, Ironville Church Hall.

DISCOVERY DAYS EVENTS

Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd November

Horse-drawn trips on narrow boat Birdswood depart Cromford Wharf 11am and 2pm. Leawood Pump in steam 11am to 4pm.

Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd November

Celebrating the Cromford Canal. 10am to 4pm in the Gothic Warehouse at Cromford Wharf, DE4 3RQ. Follow the sound of the street organ for demonstrations of traditional canal 'Rose and Castle' painting, peg weaving, a historical slide show, watercolour paintings for sale, and the Friends of Cromford Canal tombola and sales stand, with books, souvenirs and locally themed Christmas Cards.

Outside, on the Wharf, miniature traction engines will be in steam, chuffing their way around and offering trailer rides. On the canal, Nottingham Model Boat Club will be demonstrating their miniature boats as well as some more unusual items. Alongside them will be a 'pop-popping' collection of historic stationary engines.

Saturday 2nd & Sunday 3rd November

High Peak Junction Open Day. 11am to 3pm. Visit some of the oldest railway workshops in the world and see them come alive. FREE workshop entry and Heritage Audio Tour. You will be able to learn about the fascinating history of this building and the industry it served. Have a go at being a blacksmith on the historic forge and, with the help of our Engine House Wardens, make a poker to take home and keep (£10 per poker).

Saturday 3rd November

Climbing Wall Experience. 10am to 4pm at Cromford Wharf. Thanks to Acclimatize of Cromford, there will be the opportunity to have a go on a climbing wall at Cromford Wharf - for FREE - with correct equipment and professional tuition.

SANTA CRUISES

This year Santa Cruises will operate on Birdswood from Cromford Wharf on 7th & 8th, 14th & 15th and 21st & 22nd December. Advance booking essential.

For full details see www.birdswood.org.

Welcome to Whatstandwell

Cromford Canal is just over the footbridge. For nearly a century, Cromford Canal was a critical transport link, transporting lime, stone, coal and water to and from local businesses. Now the towpath gives you access to five miles of easy-going towpath rich with industrial heritage and wildlife.

Derwent Valley Heritage Way

The Derwent Valley Heritage Way is a 55 mile walking route. It follows the meanders of the River Derwent from Leabrook reservoir in the Peak District to its confluence with the River Trent. It joins the canal from Cromford to Ambergate.

Grass Insects

Grass insects are at home in water. With a bit of luck you might spot one of these elusive (and harmful!) creatures winding its way through the reeds.

Ambergate

YOU ARE HERE

Wonderful Wildlife

A rich variety of plants live in and around the canal. They attract many different insects and animals. As a result this wetland is recognised as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The section from Whatstandwell to Ambergate is one of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's nature reserves.

Dragonflies
Dragonflies arrive in towpaths from surrounding fields where they lay their eggs.

Damselflies
Damselflies arrive in towpaths from surrounding fields where they lay their eggs.

Whatstandwell to High Peak Junction - 2 miles

Junction to Cromford - 2 miles

Ambergate to Ambergate - 3 miles

KEY

- Ambergate
- Ambergate
- Whatstandwell
- High Peak Junction
- Junction to Cromford

Cromford Canal

Engineers William Jessop and Benjamin Outram built the Cromford Canal in the early 1790s. Enormous embankments allowed the canal to hug the hilly Derbyshire countryside at one level for 12 miles - a remarkable feat for the 18th Century.

Whatstandwell

YOU ARE HERE

Water Skaters

Water skaters are at home in water. With a bit of luck you might spot one of these elusive (and harmful!) creatures winding its way through the reeds.

Water Skaters

Water skaters are at home in water. With a bit of luck you might spot one of these elusive (and harmful!) creatures winding its way through the reeds.

Welcome to Ambergate

Cromford Canal is a short walk from here. For nearly a century, Cromford Canal was a critical transport link, transporting lime, stone, coal and water to and from local businesses. Now the towpath gives you access to five miles of easy-going towpath rich with industrial heritage and wildlife.

Lower Kilns at Ambergate

The railway means that lime could be transported and processed on an industrial scale. 'Father of Railways' George Stephenson built twenty lime kilns at Ambergate. The efficiency of the growing rail network also brought us one of our first for the canal. When you look over the top of the embankment in the 1960s, this industrial threat to the canal led to the one bigger transport link to the township of Bulcliffe.

Ambergate to Whatstandwell - 2 miles

Ambergate to Cromford - 10 miles

KEY

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- Ambergate
- Whatstandwell
- Ambergate to Cromford

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