

# THE PORTAL

Issue 76 - Spring 2021

Price £1.00 - Free to Members



Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608

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## Front Cover

The roof of Aqueduct Cottage begins to take shape in mid-February. See page 12.

*Photo: Becky Coleman*

## Back Cover

### Two recent Archive acquisitions.

**Top:** Thanks to Linda Briggs who found this photo of George Sellors on Ancestry.co.uk posted by a descendant of George and his wife Emily Key (daughter of George Key, Linda's g-g-grandfather, a boatman, 1828-1897). He is believed to be with his daughter Clarissa and grandson Eric.

**Bottom:** Thanks to Val Caddick (née Allmore) for this photo. Her grandma used to live in Junction House (pictured) which still stands at the Ironville end of Codnor Park Reservoir. Her grandma used to run the chippy in Ironville.

**The copy date for the next issue is 21st May 2021**

## 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

Despite the most recent lockdown, there is still much happening on the Cromford Canal. Most striking is the dramatic transformation taking place at Aqueduct Cottage (page 12) which is proceeding at a remarkable rate. When easing of Covid restrictions permits, I strongly recommend a visit to see it for yourself. If you park at High Peak Junction car park, there is a great short circular walk taking in High Peak Junction (take-away refreshments daily from Easter), Leewood Pump House, Derwent Aqueduct, the cottage and the Leewood Arm.

At the other end of the canal, a huge amount of work is being put into fulfilling the conditions for the restoration of the Beggarlee

Extension, and the great news is that the huge number of volunteer hours are paying off in other ways than physically improving the canal – they are saving us costs! See below.

Finally, although we are all itching to get *Birdswood* back in public service again, easing of lockdown will take place only gradually, but as soon as the Government and Derbyshire County Council allow us we will be back! A 'straw poll' at the last Boat Committee meeting suggested that it was likely to be June or July before that was possible. Updates will be posted on the website and social media.

Meanwhile, stay safe. I look forward to meeting you out and about on the canal as soon as we are allowed to! **T**

## VOLUNTEER PAY BACK

**John Guyler finds FCC's volunteer work rewarded**

The value of the collection of the FCC volunteer hours, on all disciplines, has proved its worth, to the advantage of the FCC.

As part of the planning and preparation of the site at Langley Mill for the Beggarlee Extension, one or two bore holes will have to be put into the ground at particular places to determine the ground structure and any possible ground contamination. These bore holes or hole will have to be in an area owned by Canal & River Trust and permission has to be gained from them to proceed. Our application for permission was returned with the proviso that each hole would cost the FCC a considerable amount of money, running into thousands.

As part of the reply to this revelation, I was asked to go back through the records of all FCC volunteer work since January

2015, on CRT sections. FCC work parties had picked 250+ bags of litter, lifted several tons of assorted rubbish and generally done a large amount of work to return the areas to worthwhile visiting areas. Also we had, in partnership with Waterway Recovery Group, re-laid the towpath at Lock 4 Ironville, with 1,010 volunteer hours involved. The total cost, worked out for all the CRT volunteer hours, came to around £60,000. This information was conveyed back to Richard Erwin-Jones, Strategic Programmes Delivery Manager (East Midlands, London & South East), and the CRT have now informed the Restoration Committee there wouldn't be a charge on the bore holes.

Success! I hope we can again use the volunteer hours as an offset to a large costing to the FCC in the future. **T**

# CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I'm hoping that you are all staying safe and keeping well. We all have a lot to look forward to this year and hopefully by the summer we shall start to see a return to a more normal way of life. The pandemic has really impacted on the physical operations of the charity this last year affecting all of our abilities to get out there and get stuck in.

The biggest casualties for us as a charity have been our work parties, our sales events, and last but by no means least our world famous trip boat *Birdswood* with all of the volunteers and visitors that will surely have missed her ploughing up and down the cut at Cromford. What I can say is that behind the scenes our dedicated committee members and engineers have been very busy beavering away on many things for the charity, but two separate projects stand out the most.

## Browns Bridge

With the diligent assistance of a mixture of volunteers on a separate Bridge Construction Committee we have written a tender brief for this project and sent it out to four various companies. Initially we had hoped to get all that sorted out and on the way for Easter, but this has sadly been delayed for various reasons – Covid and their respective abilities to comply with our timelines – so it was not of our making or lack of trying and subsequently we have sent them out again extending the time constraints and are awaiting their responses.

If the current pandemic restrictions change, allowing us to start running *Birdswood* trips again, we would only be able to go up to the bridge and then reverse back. This is because it currently takes more than one person to operate the swing bridge; this is why it is so important for us to get it repaired as soon as we can, but it is no simple task.

## Beggarlee Extension

The Beggarlee Extension pre-commencement conditions are the other project that we have been working on; see the report on page 8.

This successful dual planning application is

of course a major triumph for the Friends of the Cromford Canal. By designing a scheme that gets the canal under the A610 without having the massively expensive construction costs of a new tunnel and which also brings us back to the original canal line on Stoney Lane opens up a whole new future for the further restoration of the whole canal.

So, we are now going to move this project away from the Strategic Restoration Committee to a new committee called the Construction Planning Team as we always intended to do so that we could concentrate on the planning application and the subsequent implementation of it. This is a very exciting project but equally very complex process. The crux of the matter is to ascertain the overall costs of all of the component parts so that we can apply for the funding from the vast array of different sources that are currently available to us even today.

There are currently five different landowners with all of the associated legalities and rights and expectations that go with all of that. Then there are all of the various surveys associated with dealing with the 29 planning conditions from the two separate planning authorities and their associated costs that go with satisfying them. Finally, the complete comprehensive construction costs and along with that the management of the volunteer elements that will need to be managed safely contained within the main construction programme. So, if you feel that you could help us in any way large or small please do get in touch with us.

## Thank You

Finally I would just like to say a huge thank you to all of our volunteers, and the members of the public, who have continued to support the Friends of the Cromford Canal throughout what has been an exceptionally difficult year for everyone everywhere. I look forward to seeing you all out and about on the canal in the near future. **David Martin**

# MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By Yvonne Shattower

I would have liked to be able to start this first report of 2021 on a good positive note, but here we are, still stuck in a lockdown, with little happening on the canal and members' meetings still no nearer in view.

Even though we may have not been able to meet face to face the various FCC committees, including the trustees, have been meeting on a regular basis using Zoom, so things are still going on, including plans for our 2021 Annual General Meeting which will be held by Zoom to avoid last-minute cancellations. You will find details elsewhere in this magazine. Do please read them and vote; this is your opportunity to find out how we run the FCC.

We were all very sorry to learn of the sudden death of Val Roberts; not just a blow to the 'Friends', but a loss to the whole of the narrowboat community. Val and Mike were founder members of FCC, present at the meeting in the Newlands Inn where a handful of us decided to set up a group to reopen this lovely canal.

Val quickly became our Sales Officer, and what a superb job she did, aided by Mike, who was her invaluable 'gopher'. She sourced and ordered items for sale, everything was of good quality and fairly priced, and she steadfastly refused to entertain anything she considered as 'tat'. She was responsible for the printing of Christmas cards which we shared with the Historic Narrow Boat Club to save costs for both groups. She arranged attendance at all kinds of events from little local gatherings to major national festivals, frequently wearing her traditional boatwoman's costume which attracted much interest. Her stand was set out with the precision she must have displayed working as a lathe operator at Plessey's.

She could tell you immediately how many copies of a particular book or item of clothing

she had with her or in stock in the loft at home. Her record keeping at an event was equally immaculate, and woe betide anyone who was allowed to help out on the stand but did not detail a sale in the prescribed form. They were not asked a second time! Even packing up the stand at the end of the event was done with regimental accuracy. Each of the items had its own box and even the tablecloths had to be folded according to instructions.

After a while, Val and Mike were joined by Beryl and Eric Singleton (Eric has not been well lately, and we send our best wishes). Together they made an 'awesome foursome'; they even won awards for the stand at the IWA National Festivals. When we started holding monthly talks at Ironville, Val would bring along a wide selection of items for sale, and this proved very popular on the whole, although she was very annoyed if she made no sales, as occasionally happened. I don't know how much money Val raised in total for the FCC, but it must run into many thousands. Apart from selling the items, she promoted us to her customers, and frequently came away with new members. She was a team all on her own.

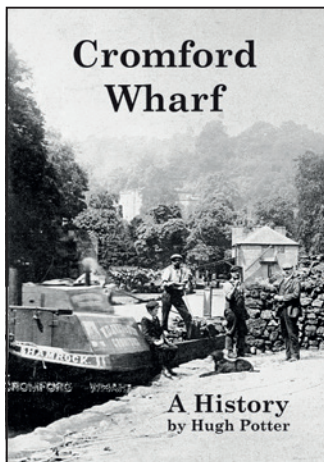
Having sold the boat which was their home, Val and Mike moved into the bungalow at Horsley Woodhouse, and over the last few years they enjoyed themselves travelling the country in their motor home, disappearing for several weeks at a time to the far flung corners of England and Scotland.

Several FCC members were privileged to attend Val's funeral, which was necessarily restricted according to Covid regulations; otherwise I am sure the place would have been packed, and we would have raised the roof singing the Dubliners' songs chosen for the service.

We will miss you, Val.

# CROMFORD WHARF BOOKLET

## A bonus of lockdown



From the outset this was a place of arguments and disputes, initially caused by Sir Richard Arkwright; if he had had his way the wharf would not be where it is today but closer to the road bridge across the Derwent. Fortunately the canal company ignored him (but at the expense of having to pay him compensation)!

Fifty years later, when the railway was being built through the valley, there were plans to move the wharf half a mile down the canal and give the original terminus land back to the Arkwrights. Thankfully, this did not take place. But most striking perhaps, and most recent, is that there were plans to fill in much of the canal basin that leads to the Gothic Warehouse; again, thankfully, these were not acted upon.


Lockdown has given FCC's Archivist extra time to delve into the documents and images held in the extensive archives and to assemble a selection of them into a fully illustrated booklet. *Cromford Wharf: A History* summarises the story of the area and reveals previously unknown information about one of Derbyshire's most popular tourist destinations. It turns out it could have looked a lot different . . .

The story of the wharf with its two warehouses, the Feeder Arm, the weir and sluices in Cromford mill yard – and some buildings that no longer exist – are all featured, and illustrated with historic maps and photographs. Anyone who knows or plans to visit the wharf will

learn much from this definitive 24-page full colour guide.

Copies cost just £3 (plus £1 p&p) and are available from the online shop at [www.birdswood.com](http://www.birdswood.com), or you can send a cheque for £4 payable to 'Friends of the Cromford Canal' to Yvonne Shattower, 264 Bennett Street, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 4JA. **T**


### The Water Supply



Water enters Arkwright's mill yard from the bottom left, having passed under the first mill on its way to the wheel pit at the second mill at the end of the stone-lined channel. The bridge shown carries a road south from Platock Barr, which spanned the rocky gullions on the left through which the A6 runs east. The weir supplying the canal lies just beyond the bridge and feeds water under the mill yards, the buildings on the right, and the road to enter the open feeder channel. There are more detailed photographs of the scene on pages 10-11. Arkwright's Rock House is seen top right. ©Historian Farmer

Once the Canal Company had committed to building the terminus in its present position, it had to create the channel for the ground water supply from Bonall Brook and Cromford Slough. For the first 25 years, the water was carried by pipes, but the method by which water was fed into the pipes is not clear. It is thought that prior to building the canal, surface water was diverted to the river by the existing curved weir in the mill yard, which was then adapted to accommodate the sluice to the canal as it starts today. It is not known if the original pipes were replaced by this same weir, or from elsewhere.

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A map amended in 1829 to show the culvert (A-B) that fed water from the water in the mill and under the buildings and across the road to the Feeder Arm. Excess water would be taken by the culvert C-D which eventually fed to the River Derwent. The cross-section of culvert shown above is the main culvert to the west 'hat' of the canal. Feeder culvert (A-B) was smaller averaging 18 inches and 36 in tall (below).

The weir fed water to the canal after it left the first mill and before it reached the second. Water could only be taken from the weir on Saturdays to open on Sunday, to protect supplies to mills further down the valley.

The original water supply from Cromford Slough to last mine stream was greatly decreased in the late 1850s after the construction of the Moorbrook Slough which drained the mine to a lower level and entered the Derwent at Rowsley, around two miles downstream of Cromford. As a result, Cromford Mills lost their guaranteed water supply and could no longer work as a spinning mill. This loss of water also caused the Canal Company to build Leaswood Pump to feed water directly from the Derwent.

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# BEGGARLEE PROGRESS

## John Boucher looks at work behind the scenes

Nothing much has happened on the ground at Beggarlee up to now, but we're working hard behind the scenes to satisfy the planning conditions that have to be cleared before we can begin on site – and this has not been helped by the Covid pandemic, which is delaying everything.

To date we have commissioned the specialist reports required covering an archaeological watching brief, a landscape and ecology maintenance plan and a water vole protection plan, and we have made arrangements for a soils survey (which will also assess contamination risk) to start as soon as we can get clearance from Canal & River Trust and Derbyshire County Council to start on the parts of the site they own.

Once these are complete they will form the first submission to Amber Valley Borough Council for clearance of the planning conditions so we can start on construction work – but that process is likely to take two months (at least). The time required for these routine procedures is very frustrating as we are keen to get going, but we clearly need patience for a bit longer yet!

Discussions are in progress with DCC to obtain their formal licences to do work on their land. We also need a licence from the Environment Agency as some of the initial work is within 8m of a main river (the Erewash), even though they have already approved our Flood Risk Assessment which clearly sets out all the work required in that area! A formal request for a footpath diversion order will also have to be submitted before we go much further.

On the east side of the A610, which is in Broxtowe, we are in discussions with the landowners for transfer of the necessary

land, and are in the process of retaining the services of a land agent to assist us with valuation and the landowner negotiations.

We would certainly welcome some more backroom help from volunteers with knowledge of or interest in all aspects; having put in a lot of effort to obtain the planning permission we are keen to maintain the momentum into the construction stage. We are rather short-handed on the ecology and habitat, forestry, landscaping, archaeology, and geotechnics fronts.

We are very conscious of the need to make the most of the scheme's potential green corridor effect and demonstrate our credentials on this front, as this will be a major factor in future planning through the nature reserves upstream. A keen publicity officer and an experienced fundraiser would also be invaluable.

Please, if you feel able to help with any of this detailed planning, do make contact with the Beggarlee Team as soon as possible. Please contact Judy Berry at [judyvberry@gmail.com](mailto:judyvberry@gmail.com) in the first instance.

With the Covid pandemic it is difficult to predict when we will be able to start on site, but once we get the go ahead, the preparation of the flood relief compensation area will have to be done first, before we can start any new construction on the existing Erewash flood plain. The first section will then be the construction of the new towpath from the Langley Mill basin to the bottom of the new locks, and the diversion of the route of the existing footpath, before we can start the extension of the basin itself. Then, we will be recruiting navvies with shovels and all other trades in large numbers! **T**

# PURCHASE OF LAND AT LANGLEY MILL

Three years ago the Friends of the Cromford Canal were offered a narrow strip of land adjacent to the turn into the A 610 railway bridge by Shires Development before they sold the rest of the site that they initially purchased for opencast coal mining. This is the area FCC purchased and is shown in blue on the map.

The main site was sold to another company who failed to obtain planning permission to develop the site as it was part of the flood plain designated by the Environment Agency. The land is now up for sale again and the FCC has been offered more land adjacent to the canal before the remainder is sold by auction. This could be an essential storage area for the Beggarlee restoration and later maintenance access. It is shown on the map by the black dotted lines.

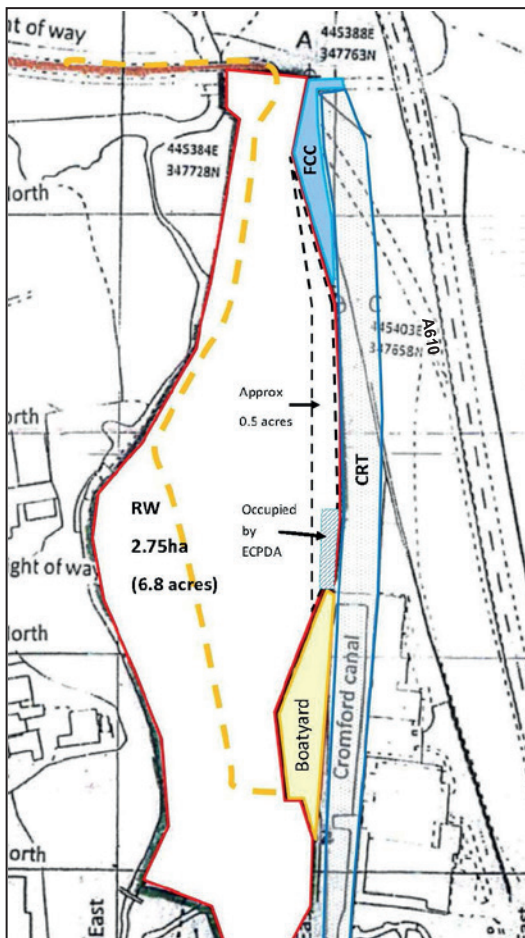
As this is a once only offer and time is very short the FCC Trustees have started discussions with vendors with a view to purchasing the 0.5 acre strip of land illustrated. One of the FCC members has suggested that we should ask the membership if they wanted to contribute personally to the purchase so that the FCC can use its assets for restoration work. Time is of the essence and if anyone is interested in making a contribution please let me know as soon as possible before the sale takes place. My contact details are:

215 Clipstone Road West, Forest Town,  
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG19 0HJ

**Email:** [secretary@cromfordcanal.org](mailto:secretary@cromfordcanal.org)

**Phone:** 01623 621208

**John Baylis, BEM, Executive Secretary**



*The existing and proposed canal at Langley Mill. The section in water currently ends alongside the top of the yellow area labelled Boatyard. North of that is the dry channel restored by ECPDA, above which is scrubland, the canal line all being owned by Canal & River Trust. The blue area labelled FCC was purchased by FCC to enable the sharp turn into the bridge under the A610. The area now offered to FCC is bounded by the black dotted lines to the west of the canal line.*



# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## Monday 19th April, by Zoom

In the last *Portal* I announced that the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Cromford Canal would be held at 7.30pm on Monday 19th April at Ironville Church Hall; unfortunately that was written before the current Covid lockdown. The termination of the lockdown and move to a tiered personal contact system might not allow holding that meeting. The Trustees have decided that in order to avoid the problems of last year with stop-start postponement the AGM will be held by Zoom at the above proposed date and time.

We had a good attendance at the 2020 Zoom AGM but we still need postal votes in order to make the meeting quorate. In

order to avoid printing costs the audited accounts, biography of nominees and postal voting form will be on the website from 29th March. Details of how to join the AGM Zoom meeting will be posted on the website at the same time.

For members without the internet please phone me or drop me a note as soon as possible and I will ensure these are posted to you as soon as available; or you can use the table below and post to me.

**John Baylis, BEM**, Executive Secretary  
215 Clipstone Road West, Forest Town,  
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG19 0HJ (01623  
621208)

Name:	Address:		
Resolution	For	Against	Withheld
Minutes of the fourth AGM of Charity 1164608			
Report of the Chairman and Trustees			
Receive the accounts for 2020			
Approve Community Accounting Plus as auditors			
<b>Trustee Election – there are five nominees for five places</b>			
Jack Brown MBE – Re-election			
Mike Kelley – Re-election			
David Martin – Re-election			
Stephen Parish – Nominated Mike Kelley			
Yvonne Shattower – Re-election			

# ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

## There are five trustee nominations for the five places available

As advised in *Portal 75* nominations for trustees closed on 17th February. We have received the following five nominations; their names and a short CV are listed below.

### Jack Brown MBE

I have been a partner in J.B. Transport for over 50 years. I live in the Old Stable Yard alongside the Cromford Canal. I am an early member of FCC, been a trustee for last three years and campaigned for restoration of the Cromford Canal for over 40 years. I am also a member of Amber Valley Borough Council. The FCC and other groups share a small room in my yard in which to keep their tools and I have stored building materials and plant over a number of years.

### Mike Kelley

I am a founder member of the FCC, being the first Chairman for several years, then Vice Chair. I was the first Project Manager for *Birdswood*, which included handling the initial grant from the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. I look after the stringent requirements from the Maritime & Coastguard Agency. I am a qualified teacher, and training manager a role which required me to manage many projects. I was a founder trustee and am still as keen as ever to continue this role.

### David Martin

I have been the Chairman for nearly two years now and little could have prepared us for the utter turmoil that last year brought with it. We have had some casualties but equally we've had some great success. We have managed to keep up with all of the business of the Charity with the help of

technology, we repaired Pinxton Weir, and repaired the very complicated motor on *Birdswood*, but our greatest achievement has been the successful planning application for the Beggarlee Extension. I would like to continue in my role as a Trustee to now bring this exciting plan to life.

### Stephen Parish

I am a life member of FCC, and since 2002 have handled most planning issues for the charity, and worked on a grant application (re Smotherfly). Because of distance, I have only been able to give one day to work on site (clearing vegetation at Cromford), but have spent many hours on dealing with responses to planning applications that would impact on restoration. I have been on the management board of a homeless charity for many years, and as a local councillor am familiar with the workings of local government.

### Yvonne Shattower

I have been involved in Canal restoration for over twenty five years, I am a founder member of the FCC, and Membership Secretary since its inception; also assisting with the despatch of the *Portal*. I am passionate about the restoration of the whole of the Cromford Canal and the return of boats to that waterway. I am a Trustee and Secretary of the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association, and a member of other canal restoration groups. I attend work parties and meetings with outside bodies such as Canal & River Trust. My professional background is in Local Government. ■

# NEW YEAR, NEW ROOF

## The Aqueduct Cottage team “raise the roof”

In these challenging times, it's rare to find some good news to cheer about, but against the odds, the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's Aqueduct Cottage restoration project has made some exciting progress over the winter and there's plenty to smile about!

Faced with lockdown restrictions, supply chain problems, one of the coldest, wettest Januarys ever and problems with the building, the restoration team had more than its fair share of challenges to deal with over the last 3 months. But, where there's a will, there's a way and despite everything, it's been one of the most productive periods on the project so far.

It began on that brilliant day, last October, when we witnessed *Birdswood* transporting the roof timbers from Cromford Wharf to Leewood Pump House...



*Birdswood arrives at Leewood with the roof timbers on board.*

A few days later, on 1st November, the wall plates and first rafters were fitted and the original idea was to press ahead to get the roof frame completed by Christmas. However, that plan was quickly revised when it became clear that modifications were needed to the wall heads and the front wall needed supporting before the heavy roof structure was built.

On 18th November, a decision was made to install the first floor since this was designed to provide additional support to the walls. The joists are attached to the front and rear walls using stainless steel bolts, so the whole floor becomes a structural member. Also, two steel beams were installed connecting the original central wall to the front wall, providing further support.



*Free floor timber supplied by Ilkeston Ply and DIY.*

Originally, the stone central wall (inside the cottage) supported the front wall, but it partially collapsed years ago and is not being replaced. Instead, a central timber truss will span the cottage supporting the roof.

The installation of the first floor also provided a useful working platform for the construction of the roof frame, which had to be assembled piece by piece on site.

We had some welcome help with the first floor. One of the most heart-warming aspects of the project is the generosity of local people and businesses in their support of the project (the Friends of Cromford Canal are among the most important of these). On 1st December, 2020, we were delighted to receive another wonderful gesture of support – from Ilkeston Ply and DIY. It provided all the timber we required to install the first floor, as a gift to the project. ►



*Socially distanced carriage of timber.*

The management had been following the restoration on the Friends of Aqueduct Cottage Facebook page and made the offer over a year ago. Despite the months of delay caused by the pandemic, they stuck to their original commitment and delivered the timber within a couple of days of a follow-up call. How brilliant!

On 8th December (the 4th birthday of the FoAC) the first joists were fitted by our volunteers. It was an exciting moment to see the first new timber being fitted and the start of the replacement of the first floor (missing for 40 years).

By Christmas, the steel RSJs were installed and the first set of joists fitted. Outside, the large crack in the north gable end was repaired and the roof ridge-board was installed. Our volunteers also finished rebuilding the dry-stone wall around the north-end garden.



*The beginnings of the floor transforms the interior. The steel beam connects the central internal wall to the front wall.*

Tinsel still adorned the scaffolding in the New Year when, on 4th January, activity had to be scaled down following the lockdown announcement. Thankfully, our builder, Andrew Churchman was able to continue working and by 13th January, all the first-floor joists were in and the floor was boarded.



*High level work!*

The installation of the first floor transformed the look of the cottage. Not only did it create 'rooms' downstairs, but we had an 'upstairs' too and this enabled the project to move onto the most exciting stage of all – the building of the new roof!



*With the floor above in place, the interior is looking homely with its original fireplace.*

On 25th January, work started on the construction of the timber roof frame. The design (consisting of a central truss and four purlins) was conceived by Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust's architect James Boon, to meet the needs of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust for an open-plan activity room on the first floor of the cottage. James was assisted by ►



*The massive purlins can be seen along with details of other timber work.*

By 29th January, the long-awaited repair to the north gable end was completed and the main timbers were installed. Over the next few days, the rafters were added and by 11th February, the timber frame was complete.

At the time of writing, our volunteers, assisted by DCC, have transferred the tonnes of roof tiles to the cottage and construction of the two chimneys is underway using reclaimed bricks which match the originals.

GCA Structural Engineers Ltd, Derby, which provided the loading calculations. Due to weight of the stone tiles (4.5 tonnes), the roof frame is a substantial structure which makes an impressive visual statement in the newly created first floor room.

Each of the four purlins consists of three large beams bolted together. The individual beams are almost 5m long and weigh around 70kg each. The 'composite' design was a practical solution to enable the heavier sections of the roof frame to be cut and assembled on site.

Laying of the roof tiles will start once the chimneys are built. Stone tiles will be fitted to the front and blue slate to the rear. For additional light, four Velux roof lights will be fitted to the rear. The process is expected to take 4-6 weeks.



*The roof takes shape with the spaces for the Velux windows visible.*

The start of the construction of the roof was obviously an exciting moment and a key milestone of the build. The news was soon picked up by the local media and it even appeared on ITV's Central News.



*Moving the massive stone roof tiles.*

Experience on this 4-year project makes me hesitant to give forecasts, but we're in buoyant mood and hope (with fingers and everything crossed) that by the end of March, we will be attaching a piece of yew to the top of the roof in a 'topping out' ceremony.

Now that will be something to celebrate! **T**

# VAL ROBERTS

## Mike Kelley pays tribute to a stalwart supporter of FCC

Sadly I have to report the death of Val Roberts. Val, along with her husband Mike Harrison, was a founder member of the FCC and worked tirelessly for many years towards the restoration of the Cromford Canal, serving as a trustee for a number of years and as head of the FCC's sales team for many more.

When out and about with the sales stand she would dress in traditional canal boater's clothes, and frequented many canal events on behalf of FCC throughout the country. Her 'traditional' appearance caught many a photographer's eye and resulted in great publicity for FCC.

She died suddenly on Saturday 9th January when she had been apparently recovering from a short illness.

Val was born in 1939 at Blidworth in Nottinghamshire where her parents ran a hardware shop and garage where she started work after leaving school.

In 1968 she attended the first meeting of what became the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association and became a founder member, a group which later oversaw the formation of the FCC.

Val and Mike helped restore the lock and Great Northern Basin at Langley Mill where the Cromford, Nottingham and Erewash canals join, and both were active at the grand



reopening of this part of the canal in 1973. Their work here has created an oasis within an urban jungle, a feat that will live on for a long time and one from which the FCC has greatly benefited.

Val and Mike loved the canal scene so much that they decided to live on a boat permanently. Mike was one of the original Langley Mill restoration volunteers who formed the Langley Mill Boat Company and built the dry dock and moorings. So Val and Mike took up residence on their boat *Ambergate* at Langley Mill, where Mike started to work on boats full time and where they lived on board until 2006.

Together with Mike, Val boated extensively on the inland waterway system on various boats and travelled over 45,000 water miles. They also both developed a particular interest in ex working historic narrow boats, buying a former Grand Union motor boat *Saltaire* from British Waterways in need of major work and rebuilt it between them.

In 2002, Val took on the voluntary post of editing the Historic Narrow Boat Club *Newsletter* and used professional desktop publishing software to produce an award-winning full-colour newsletter for 18 years.

HNBC, ECPDA and FCC owe much to her tireless enthusiasm. She will be sadly missed. ▀

# LITTER PICK ON THE EREWASH CANAL

By John Guyler



*The motor scooter recovered from below Anchor Bridge was difficult to load onto Pentland.*

*Photo: John Guyler*

In December, FCC teamed up with the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association at Langley Mill Basin for a litter pick along the Erewash Canal between Langley Mill and Ilkeston, under FCC's Covid-19 Risk Assessment. There were four FCC volunteers: two started at Potter's Lock, Ilkeston, and walked back towards Langley Mill until they met the other two who had started at Langley Mill and were working with the ECPDA work boat *Pentland*, manned by three ECPDA volunteers.

Adjacent to the KFC, at Lock 14 of the Cromford Canal at Langley Mill, was a lot of various litter, as expected. The crew of *Pentland* had a difficult task; they had to recover a motor scooter that had been dumped on the opposite bank to the towpath.

They got it half into the boat but the back end was too heavy to lift, so *Pentland* was positioned alongside the towpath and the two of us who were litter picking helped to eventually get the scooter on board.

A wrecked angler's tent was pulled out of the hedge bottom complete with its carrying bag and a bit further down an angler's heavy coat had been dumped. Just before Eastwood Lock, a full bag of litter and a large supermarket bag were left on the canal edge, for collection by *Pentland* on the return trip. An hour later, this bag was recovered from the water by a Canal & River Trust volunteer who was walking the canal. Someone had decided it was funny to dump it back into the water, with the bag floating off down the canal. ►



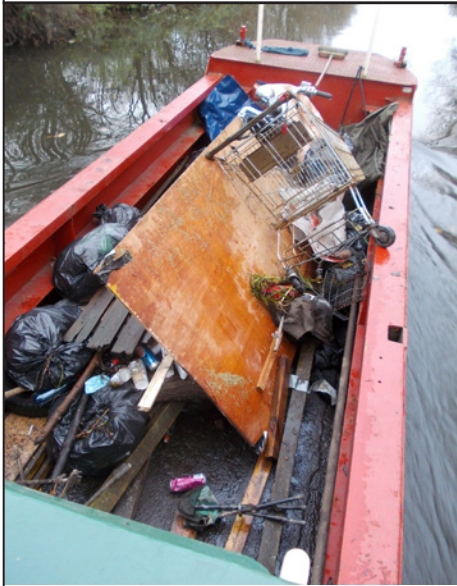
*Drink anyone? ECPDA Chairman Norman Cornwell offers fellow workers a drink from the rather expensive Vodka bottle that he found (empty of course!).*

*Photo: John Guylar*



*No shortage of coffee containers. Perhaps the vendor would like them back?*

*Photo: Norman Cornwell*



*Quite a haul: some of the 'litter' picked along the Erewash Canal.*

*Photo: Norman Cornwell*

At Eastwood Lock the crew set about clearing litter in the lock run-off whilst we carried on towards Shipley Lock, trying to retrieve the litter in the hedgerow safely, a difficult task. We found a large number of coffee cups from the local coffee house dumped in the hedge bottom at one point, obviously a gathering point for coffee lovers. These filled several bags, which were deposited next to the council bin for collection. In total, 11 bags of rubbish, plus the angler's tent, a large piece of wooden panelling and other bulky items including the motor scooter and the obligatory supermarket trolley were recovered.

Just before Christmas, John Barker, the FCC's work party leader, was made aware of eight bags of builder's rubbish that had been thrown over the wall on Coach Road, Ironville. This is an area that FCC has adopted and had cleared all the rubbish previously. He arranged with the Bailiff to collect the rubbish, which was made up of floor tiles, with the FCC trailer and taken away for correct disposal. ■



# VOLUNTARY SUPPORT FOR FCC IN 2020

## John Guyler counts the hours

I suppose 2020 will go down as the year everything stopped due to Covid, but I am very pleased to report that the background volunteer work of FCC still carried on. Not having *Birdswood* operational was a major disappointment, but the FCC did have other things to do.

The restoration group took a major step forward with planning permission granted for the Beggarlee extension and there was a great deal of maintenance done on *Birdswood*. The work parties were able to resume in July, albeit under social distancing rules, and the lock-keeper's garden at Lock 4, Ironville, was in full bloom and was able to supply the Oscari food bank at Riddings with fruit and vegetables.

The volunteer hours are well down on previous years, mainly because of *Birdswood* not operating, but the resulting hours and the value of FCC volunteer hours since 2015, when recording began, is quite significant.

The FCC is a charity and charities are only as good as the volunteers who give their time freely. The reported figure at the end of this report proves the FCC are an active and effective group.

At the beginning of the year, I contacted all FCC officers and volunteers who do work for FCC and invited them to submit their volunteer hours and travel time. My thanks go to all those who put up with my constant requests for information.

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

The FCC work party group are acknowledged to be very active and have a very good working relationship with Derbyshire County Council and Canal & River Trust. FCC work parties also have a lot of help and advice from WaterSide Care, which monitors waterside activities on rivers and canals.

The recorded hours for all volunteers doing various roles and work for the FCC in 2020 was **5,636 hours + 349 travel hours**. In addition, work parties' recorded activities totalled **1,793 hours + 291 travel hours** making **7,429 hours + 640 travel hours or 8,069 total recorded volunteer hours for 2020.** ►

### Activities conducted on behalf of the FCC in 2020 include:

- Meetings (Trustees, Boat Committee and Restoration): 524.5 hours + 58 travel;
- Restoration planning for the canal's Beggarlee extension, the rebuild of Pinxton Weir and repair to the bearing of Browns Bridge: 180 hours;
- *Birdswood* maintenance, crew training and shop operation: 339.25 hours + 56 travel;
- Ironville, Lock 4 garden activities: 74 hours.



*Volunteers fitting steps to the Forge site at Lawn Bridge, Jacksdale. Photos taken pre-Covid.*

*Photo: Wayne Scarle*

**Examples of some of the projects that the FCC work parties completed in 2020:**

- Pinxton weir rebuild: 360 hours + 70 travel;
- Fitting new steps for Friends of the Forge: 122.5 hours;
- Removing an estimated 22 tons of pulled reeds, over a period of five working days, around Mold's Wharf (Percy's cottage), Ambergate: 206.5 hours + 19 travel;
- Fitting a memorial seat at Codnor Park Reservoir: 4 hours + 1.75 travel.



*If all else fails, there is always reed pulling.*

constant requests each month for their hours, but with the figure above and the very difficult year for everyone, the Friends of the Cromford Canal have shown themselves to be a truly credible group. **T**



*Volunteers get down to it. Looking into the problem of Birdswood's motor.*

I am pleased to report that since January 2015, when the FCC volunteer hours were first recorded, to the end of 2020, we have direct volunteer hours valued at **£534,328** (calculated by using DerwentWISE figures).

Thanks to everyone for putting up with my

**Recorded direct volunteer hours**

2015 .....	6,858.25
2016 .....	10,784.5
2017.....	14,183.5
2018 .....	18,158.75
2019 .....	17,392
2020 .....	7,429

**Total 2015–2020 74,806**

*If you would like to volunteer with the Friends of Cromford Canal in any of the work areas mentioned in this article please contact:  
[work@cromfordcanal.org](mailto:work@cromfordcanal.org).*

# BIRDWOOD: READY FOR ACTION AGAIN

## Kerry Green ponders on what should have been a simple job . . .

*Birdswood's* new motor/pump unit was returned from the manufacturers in Devon after being returned due to an oil leak. The oil leak was disappointing for everyone as so much hard work had gone into the upgrade and modification of the hydraulic system. This is a brief recap on the series of unfortunate events.

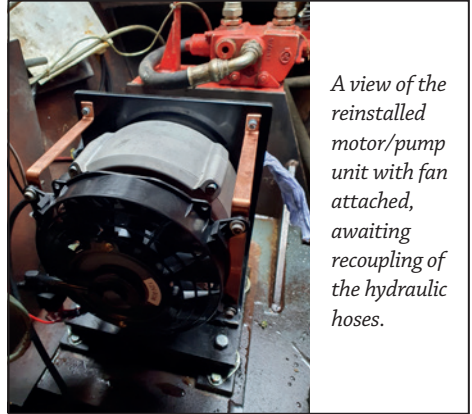
Back long ago when we were in a land of bliss and running *Birdswood* without a care in the world (2018) we could hear that the propulsion system was becoming very noisy. Some passers-by on the towpath thought we were running a diesel engine!

As with an old car, strange noises mean something is on the way out. So after much head scratching it was decided that it would be beneficial, so as to avoid a mid-season breakdown, to change (what appeared to be) an extremely noisy hydraulic pump.

A direct replacement was very expensive and we found it was more economical and technically astute, to replace the electric motor and separate pump for a new combined 'silent' all-in-one motor/pump unit from a British manufacturer in Devon. The new unit has a higher efficiency so giving us more range on the batteries. The combined pump unit is a helical screw design as opposed to the earlier piston pump which was totally worn out. The motor is a hybrid Internal Permanent Magnet Alternating Current (PMAC) design as used in modern electric cars.

As a reminder, *Birdwood* runs an electro-hydraulic propulsion system which evolved from an earlier ICE (internal combustion engine)/hydraulic system.

The power flow is thus: battery–electric motor–hydraulic pump–oil under pressure through the pipes to the rudder–hydraulic motor–propeller.



*A view of the reinstalled motor/pump unit with fan attached, awaiting recoupling of the hydraulic hoses.*

However the lead time on the new parts was quite lengthy and we missed the winter 2018/19 down time to change the parts, so we limped on with crossed fingers through 2019.

In November 2019 *Birdswood* was lifted out of the water for the MCA (Maritime & Coastguard Agency) inspection and we installed the new motor/pump and new electronic inverter. Once back in the water we started sea trials . . . sorry, getting carried away there . . . but we did a few runs up the canal.

Disappointingly the trials highlighted a previously hidden problem with the now very aged hydraulic propeller motor which was set to seize at any moment. As with the hydraulic pump from the same era, the prop motor was so old that it had to be replaced with something nearly, but not quite, the same. John Baylis had to lift the entire rudder and prop motor out and re-manufacture the fixing plates to hold the new hydraulic motor. Also work was done on the rudder pivot which was very worn and highlighted in the MCA inspection. ►



*The reinstalled motor/pump unit with fan attached, awaiting recoupling of the hydraulic hoses.*

Then Covid snuck in and slowed life down in every way possible. There was much frustration at not being able to run *Birdswood* and at times frustration showed, but in the true British way we stayed calm and carried on. Much tea drinking and sucking of air through clenched teeth helped I'm sure.

So late summer when lockdown was relaxed the rudder was re-installed and reconnected and we were able to start trials. Trials are used in every marine application and the Royal Navy ships have years of sea trials even though they cost billions to engineer. So our trials should be understood; we were still ahead of the Navy in terms of cost and time.

The trials immediately threw a curve ball as we heard a reciprocal knocking noise synchronised to the speed of the propeller. It was not obvious where this noise was coming from and John Baylis did a lot of work in tracking this down and called in his hydraulic expert (Tim) whereby pressure testing and flow rates were checked. Quite laborious and exacting work this, and would cost an absolute fortune if not done by volunteer contribution. So then larger hydraulic pipes and a new high flow filter were installed. Then some sound deadening

around the old diesel tank, which still sits in the stern and was acting as a sound amplifier. Similar to beating a drum with a length of hosepipe, as you do occasionally.

So then we ran sea trials No. 3. The drive was quiet, but due to the canal now being very silted we were back to ploughing a furrow through the channel. This in turn led to an overheating of the drive motor which was economically sized to the power required for the worst conditions in the good times. Now we were in the worst conditions of the worst times! Consulting with the manufacturers they advised that the motor could supply a lot more power if we ran a cooling fan on the rear of the motor. When *Birdswood* was originally converted to electric we did prepare for both hydraulic oil and motor cooling fans so we were kind of prepared for this.

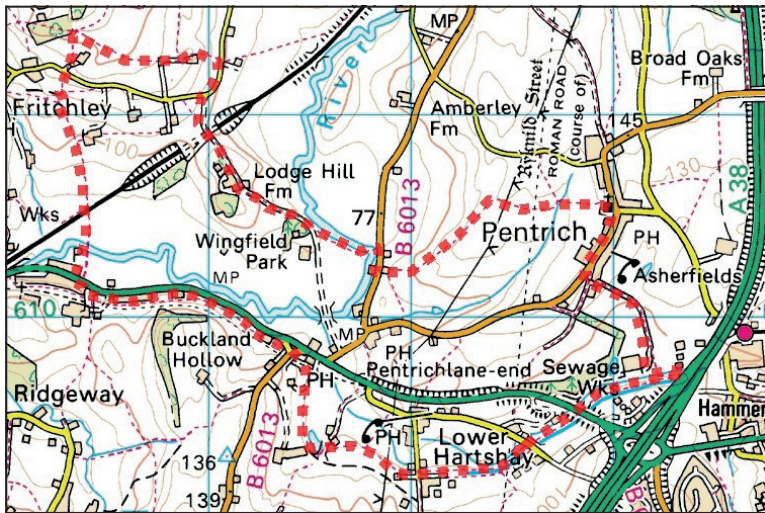
Then just as we believed we were getting on top of all the events it was noticed that oil was dripping out of the new motor pump unit. So it had to be removed from the boat and sent back to the manufacturers. Critically the motor/pump unit was out of warranty due to the time taken from purchase to install. However as we know, it's good to have contacts and at times a few strings need to be pulled, so it was agreed the motor would be investigated and repaired free of charge. It was found that an oil seal on the motor/pump drive shaft had been damaged on assembly and so this has been replaced.

While the motor was out I installed the cooling fan on the rear of the motor which will switch on if needed and switch off automatically when cool enough. So outside of the few balmy summer days that we have, and with the canal channel clear, it may not ever be used, but it's there as a belt and braces measure.

So now we are just awaiting the reconnection of the hydraulic pipes and a few more vaccinations (I am one of the young ones and don't get mine for another month or so) then we can get on with preparation for summer 2021. It has been a challenge in more ways than one. ■

# CIRCULAR CANAL WALKS – 10 PENTRICH

Ken Brockway offers a revolutionary stroll from Pentrich



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**Distance:** 6 miles.

**Start point:** By bus: Pentrich Church DE5 3RE. There is parking on the road here but much better parking at Lower Hartshay DE5 3RP where the old Ripley road crosses the canal.

How to get there: Bus 148 Alfreton, Ripley, Codnor. By car, take the turn signed Lower Hartshay (only) off A610 just east of Buckland Hollow traffic lights. Start instructions from "Lower Hartshay".

**Refreshments:** The Dog at Pentrich; The Excavator at Buckland Hollow; The George at Lower Hartshay.

Take the steps up to the church, signed public footpath to Pentrich Mill. Keep to the left past the church door to locate a hand gate into the field. After another gate in a dip bear left to cross the invisible course of the Roman Road from Derby to Chesterfield. Cross into the next field and follow a hedge on the right. From the next stile turn left and follow the ridge with views across the Amber valley and Crich beyond.

Drop down to the mill and turn right along the road for a short distance. Take the next footpath left to cross the Amber and enter Wingfield Park. Initially follow the river on your

right then join a track passing through Lodge Hill Farm. The track continues to a road, crossing over the railway tunnel along the way.

Turn right along the quiet road then take a crossing footpath left across the field. The route through the next thick hedge can be hidden but enters the field behind a large tree. Climb the hill and turn left through Tithe Farm; what a view these residents have.

Join the track and turn right away from the farm. When the track turns left continue across fields through squeeze stiles and passing close by the crumbling stone base of an old windmill. ►

Four paths meet at the corner of the wood. Turn left here down the hill to the road. Note the parish boundary stone on the verge. Take the path opposite through one field then dog leg right and continue down the hill to Sawmills. From the footbridge over the rail line you will see the short tunnel crossed earlier.

Turn left along the pavement of this busy road then cross at the entrance to Lockwood's. Climb the steps on the left; this leads to the line of the canal and its towpath. Follow this well used path until a short tunnel brings you to Buckland Hollow and former headquarters of the canal carrier Wheatcroft's now The Excavator Inn.

Bear right under a bridge which once carried the canal under the railway but now leads to the overflow car park. Continue along the wide track until water appears ahead. Bear left with the short watered section of the canal on your right. This was dug out as a fishery in the 1960s.

Pass under Starheimvalley Bridge and enter a field. The well-walked path curves across the field then passes in front of cottages to Bridle Lane. Cross the lane and continue; water reappears along the section of canal now owned by FCC.

### Lower Hartshay

The square 1930s bridge carries the old Ripley road, which offers the best place to park if arriving by car. Walk under the bridge and past a large house on your left which stands on the site of Lower Hartshay Wharf where the last coals were loaded for Cromford in 1937. Take the steps up to the A610 and cross the busy road with care. Turn right for a short distance then down steps back to the towing path.



*Pentrich parish church which houses a memorial to William Jessop.*

*All Photos: Ken Brockway*

Continue along the muddy section of path to reach the current west portal of Butterley Tunnel: a disappointing feature created when the A38 was constructed which required a second extension to the tunnel making it now 3,083 yards (2,819m) long. ►



*An elegant water pump seen en route.*



*The isolated Starvehimvalley Bridge dates back to the canal's opening in the 1790s.*



*The remains of this windmill mark the "high point" of the walk.*

After inspecting the tunnel mouth retrace your steps but stay on the high level path with a stream on your right. Turn right to cross the stream where a high level pipe bridge crosses the canal on your left. Here to your right is the site of Pentrich Colliery which supplied the coal for Cromford. Turn right onto a tarmac access track which then bears left. After a dip in the track take the stile right into the field. Continue with the hedge on your left to meet Old Lane, and turn right to return to Pentrich church.

In the village you pass the Dog Inn with and an information board on the Pentrich Revolution. And should you be lucky enough to find the church open, there is a plaque inside to William Jessop, engineer for the canal's construction. ■

# DERBYSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES

By John Baylis



*Rick Jillings (left) about to set out on a canal inspection with other Countryside Services staff: Bob, Mark and John.*

*Birdswood* as a tourist attraction and in supervising the work of FCC volunteers doing maintenance work on the canal.

In view of Rick's support over many years the Trustees have made him an Honorary Life Member of the Friends of the Cromford Canal. I have had a very nice letter from Rick saying "Honorary Life membership of the FCC is a wonderful and unexpected surprise; I happily accept!" and thanking all the volunteers and members for

their support over his years with DCC.

Susan White became Waterways Officer over six years ago largely concentrating on the Chesterfield and Cromford canals. As an ecologist Susan monitored the action of *Birdswood* on the Cromford Canal as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the new Environment Agency licensing of water abstractions and as co-ordinator of the DCC Cromford Canal Partnership. During this time Susan gave the Friends very useful advice on working in an SSSI and other ecological problems. Susan has now become Countryside Project Officer in the DCC Economy, Transport & Environment Department and we wish her well in her new post.

DCC are now looking for a hydrologist or engineer whose remit will be to take over the water side of Susan's work and in addition to monitor the reservoirs and other water bodies. If you know anyone who might be interested please ask them to contact me and I will pass their details on to the appropriate DCC Department. ■

For a number of years the closest point of contact for our volunteer officers with Derbyshire County Council has been through the Countryside Services and the Waterways Officer. Over the past 18 months there has been some consultation with the Friends and similar organisations on our expectations of DCC in the current financial climate. For various reasons this has now reached some permanent conclusions.

Rick Jillings, who has been with Countryside Services for more than thirty years, has taken early retirement due to prolonged ill health. Rick started as a ranger at Epping Forest before coming to Derbyshire Countryside Services where he spent most of the time at Middleton Top, except for a secondment as Derwent Valley Way Officer, setting up that route on the ground.

He finished up as Assistant Area Manager, after Chris Coombes' retirement, managing all of the Countryside Services sites in West Derbyshire including the Cromford Canal. Rick has been a great help in establishing



# WORK PARTY REPORT

By John Guyler

The FCC work party has been operating for both Canal & River Trust and Derbyshire County Council under a Covid-19 Risk Assessment, which we submitted to both parties for approval before restarting work parties in July.

All volunteers are asked to read the Risk Assessment and to indicate to the work party leader that they have read it; this is then recorded on the work party signing on sheet.

All work was done with reduced numbers in the work parties and with social distancing whenever possible.



*Socially distanced barrowing. Returning from the tipping area for yet more reeds.*

*Photo: John Barker*

When the third lockdown began, all work parties were cancelled from 16th December. Work put on hold included clearance at Sims Bridge, Whatstandwell, a litter pick along the Pinxton Arm, and a job planned at Ironville, from King William Bridge (Jack Brown's) up to Lock 2, replacing the towpath, funded with a bequest left for this purpose, from a gentleman who walked this area regularly. It will now be planned for later in the year, once we can begin work parties.

Prior to the latest lockdown, on the Wednesday of each week there were three work party groups each day. One was at High Peak Junction, for one day, working from the bank, pulling reeds out. They had a very successful day, until they required a boat, either *Birdswood* or the work boat, to finish the job. That will have to be completed when we resume work.

There was a group at Mold's Wharf (Percy's Cottage), Ambergate, removing reeds that had been previously pulled on to the bank to drain. With wheelbarrows this is a very daunting prospect and over the weeks up until we were told to finish, the team there had done 250+ individual trips down the towpath to dump the reeds.

I don't know which end they started but the trip would either get shorter or longer each time. All barrows, forks and rakes were supplied by DCC Countryside Service, and it has been estimated the work parties moved some 22 tons of pulled reeds. I don't think anyone calculated the total mileage they walked, but it must have been a good number.

There was a small group who worked from the middle of November until 16th December at Codnor Park Reservoir on the abandoned section of the canal adjacent to Coach Road. The first week was mainly removing and



*Some of the estimated 22 tons of reeds that were moved.*

*Photo: John Barker*



*Memorial seat installed by the FCC work party.*

*Photo: John Barker*

cutting up a tree that had fallen across the path and was overhanging the reservoir. The following weeks they were cutting back trees and shrubs and making wildlife refuges with the cut material.

One special job John Barker and Malc Chisnall were proud to do was to install a memorial seat, near Codnor Park Reservoir. The seat was a gift from a couple in Underwood, who are keen walkers around the reservoir, remembering a member of their family. They had been given permission by the CRT for the seat to be installed. They have ordered another seat and hopefully CRT will give permission and that will be in the same area as the first.

The area was dug out to a firm base depth and the seat secured in place. The area in front of the seat was filled with gravel to

avoid making a mud bath. Malc has been back several times and it has always been in use, with very favourable comments on its position. I hope the FCC helped in paying tribute to the family member, by installing this seat.

There were several work parties in the spillway from Codnor Park Reservoir, widening the channel, under the direction of the CRT. This work has to be done with care, because of water voles.

The litter pick, on 5th December, on the Erewash canal, is reported in a separate article. **T**

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

# CROMFORD CANAL & CODNOR PARK RESERVOIR GROUP

## Marie Brown on the benefits of nature

Who would have thought that a year after we first learned about the virus that we would still be in lockdown and wondering is life is ever going to return to some sort of normal?

Over the last three months, the group has had to cancel much of the largescale work included in the 5-year strategy and, like many other groups, around the country, we are missing being with our volunteers and friends.

Mother Nature is an amazing thing though isn't it?

No-one told the local wildlife that the world was on hold and over the last three months they have been a reliable reminder to us all that life carries on and that the beauty of all that we see in the natural world can be calming to the soul.



Looking at the water vole and white clawed crayfish numbers steadily increasing as we approach the spring has given us a renewed sense that happier times are on the way and that birds, insects and mammals are doing OK.

It was great to see that the flood alleviation work had, to a great extent, allowed the footpaths to remain open and

that the rain levels had allowed the new wetland marsh near the Erewash Nature reserve to begin to fill. We could not have predicted the water levels to be as high as they have been, but the work carried out in the last couple of years allowed us to offer a place for people to walk during their 'lockdown' days.

Photographers came out in their hundreds and our resident superstars did not disappoint us; ►



*Kingfisher posing for the photographer.  
Photo: Marie Brown.*

the kingfishers actually took to posing for people and seemed to be catching fish just to entertain the passers-by. This year, for the first time many more people have told us that they have finally seen this magnificent bird for the first time in their lives.

One of the key successes of any waterway is also having otters and this year they were present both in the river and the canal.

As many of you will know, having otters is a wonderful sign that the ecosystem is doing well, and food sources are good. It is also a clear indication that the water quality is of a high standard. This is constantly being monitored for several organisations by one of our group's volunteers.



*Otters are back!*  
*Photo: Roger Breen*

There were minimal, socially distanced and Covid-safe work parties taking place in the autumn as a few of the reed beds were pulled and now the 'meandering' pathways through the water is clear for all to see. It may be worth mentioning that this helps water flow, prevents flooding and of course provides safe habitats at both sides of the canal wall.

In autumn we concentrated on making sure that the increase in visitors was managed

and that litter and dog mess was kept to a minimum. Many people came forward to donate their 'exercise time' and to help out in their bubbles.

There was also an obvious change in litter types as more people disposed of their face masks along the route. Please try to break the elastic straps before you pop them in the bins provided as they do pose a threat and a danger to wildlife and many millions will end up in landfill.

Litter picks did go ahead but in shifts of individuals helping out where they felt able to do so. The local council were very supportive and regularly collected any litter bags when we contacted them.

Although we couldn't come together for a coffee and a bacon roll at the reservoir afterwards, we have been able to keep in touch with people and to respond to questions, queries and to provide support for any emergency calls on trapped or injured wildlife.

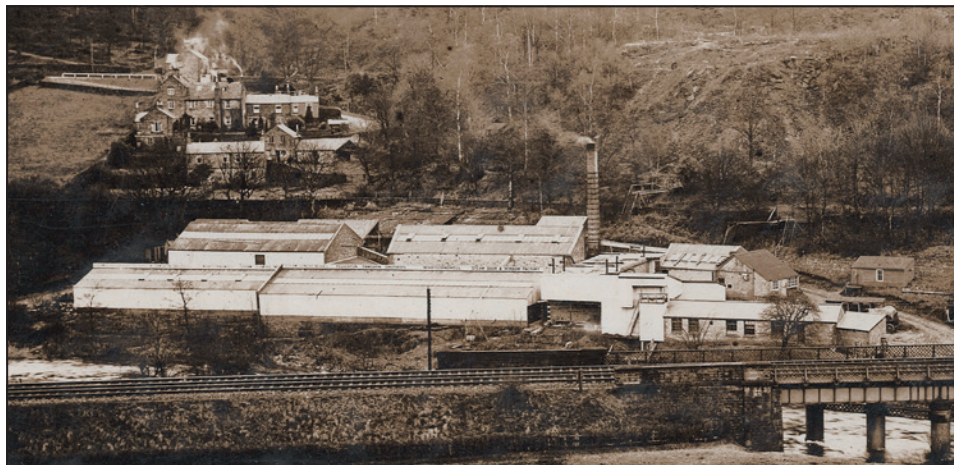
As spring approaches and we look forward to the summer months ahead our thoughts turn to our mental health and the well-discussed subject of fresh air, beautiful surroundings and of course, for some, the process of grieving for loved ones lost to the pandemic.

Green spaces in our busy world are a vital part of that healing process so it is with grateful hearts that we thank everyone, far and wide, who continue to support the work we do so that all have access to healing and comfort during these days of uncertainty.

If you would like to get more involved, then please contact us to find out more on our Facebook page 'CromfordCanal&CodnorParkRes' or via email at [cromfordcanalgroup@outlook.com](mailto:cromfordcanalgroup@outlook.com). **T**

# THE OLD SAWMILL AT ROBIN HOOD

Grenville Smith seeks out the true story behind this surprisingly industrialised hamlet



*An enlargement of a postcard showing the new and old timber sawmills at Robin Hood. The original hamlet is in the background, with Wharmby's sawmill nearest the camera and alongside the canal. Just to the right of the factory chimney is the footbridge across the canal and, to its right, steps and a loading chute down from the towpath into the new works. Coal was probably delivered by boat for convenience.*

The old sawmill at Robin Hood near Whatstandwell has long been thought to have provided water-powered stone sawing services to the adjacent Duke's Quarry. But my recent research in newspaper archives suggests otherwise.

The area we now know as Robin Hood was called by its enclosure name of Barn Close for the first half of the 19th century. Bounded by Leashaw Brook, Cromford Canal and part of the Nightingale estate, it was originally developed by Joseph Wass to have a wharf and smithy to service his ill-fated quarrying activities in the nearby Crabtree Knowle Wood that are mentioned by Farey.

Wass also constructed a tramway to the wharf from the northern end of Duke's Quarry. Steve Carver, the current owner of the sawmill, recently found a stone sleeper block

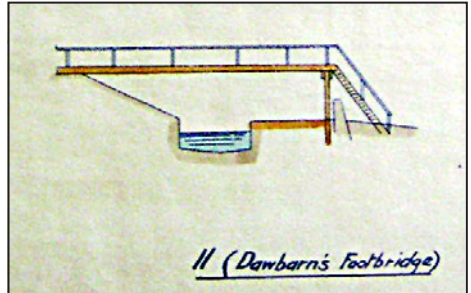
from that tramway. Wass's quarrying had ended by 1810 and William Sims constructed Duke's own canal wharf on Devonshire estate land soon after, so industrial activity at Barn Close ceased.

The name Robin Hood first appears in the 1835 Nightingale Estate plan and for many years consisted of a single dwelling occupied by the Barton family. James Barton is listed as a stone cutter; we assume he worked at Duke's Quarry but there were other quarries within easy walking distance. Note that stone cutting does not necessarily imply powered stone sawing, it can just be another term for a mason.

Industrial activity recommenced around 1855 when Robert Turner, living at Crich Carr and described as a timber and coal merchant in the 1861 census, established his business ►



*The water of Leashaw Brook still tumbles into the 'bear-pit' where once a turbine was housed to drive the sawmill.*



*Taken from Evidence given to the 1907 Royal Commission, the drawing of Bridge 11 labels it as Dawbarn's Footbridge.*

at Barn Close. Unfortunately, Turner would end up in the law courts when he became bankrupt in 1871.

The business that would define the area for the next 80 years – wood sawing and moulding – began around 1864 and features another of those remarkable self-made men of that era, Samuel Wharmby (b. 1834). He grew up in Nottinghamshire and, like his father, became a joiner. In the 1861 census he was living and working at Lea Hurst where he met his wife to be, Fanny Walker (b. 1827), who also worked there as the housekeeper. Samuel and Fanny were married on 7th October 1869 at Crich church.

Wharmby constructed the sawmill building around 1864, from comments in the press made in later years. This is now the house whose garden fronts the canal. He was also involved in a land exchange with W. E. Nightingale in 1868, in which he

was described as a joiner from Holloway. Interestingly, the source of mill power from initial construction appears to have been a water turbine installed in the 'bear-pit' close by (Portal 69). Adverts for this improved technology appear in the local press at the time from manufacturers such as MacAdam Brothers in Belfast and local installation engineers such as Mr C. Milne, who, like the Wharmby family, also came from Selston.

In the 1871 census, there are three households described as being at Leashaw: Wharmby's, German Amatt (a farmer) and Samuel Prince (a boatman). He is described as a joiner and employing five men, so clearly business was going well.

In 1881, he was still living in Robin Hood with his wife Fanny and is described as a builder and employing four men and two boys. He is one of four households there together with German Amatt, Samuel Prince and a new resident, Samuel Swindell and family, a stone cutter.

In 1884, Wharmby was the appointed contractor to build the new British School in Crich, a project worth £1,400 that opened to great fanfare in December of that year.

Around 1887, Wharmby transferred the proprietorship to Arthur Statham from Starkholmes, thus relinquishing day-to-day operation of the business while retaining ownership. The site was extended to the ►



*During 1945–47 extensive work was needed to repair the culvert carrying the water of the Leashaw Brook under the canal.*

opposite side of the canal at this time and there followed a period of investment, installing “costly steam machinery at great expense”, a two-ton capacity weighing machine and employing “between 20 and 30 men and lads”. It is assumed that the footbridge over the canal was also built at this time. This was just to the east of Robin Hood. It was included in the Midland Railway numbering sequence as Footbridge 11 and appeared in the 1907 Royal Commission report. It was taken down in 1921.

## **A Destructive Fire**

Around 9pm on Friday 10th May 1889 a fire was observed in the machinery department of the main building on the west side of the canal. Mr Wharmby and Mr Foster, the foreman who also lived close by, were quickly on the scene and Mr Statham was alerted by telegram. The fire spread quickly and a crowd of onlookers assembled. Mr A. F. Hurt’s private fire engine from Alderwasley Hall arrived after half an hour, followed by the fire engine from Lea Hosiery Factories.

Water was pumped from the canal onto the fire but by 10pm the main building’s roof had

fallen in. The crowd of people then turned their attention to salvaging as much stock as possible, keeping it from the flames by throwing it into the canal. The following day a quarter mile stretch of the canal was filled with floating timber that was drawn out onto the east side bank of the canal to allow boat traffic to resume. By this time the main building was a lost cause so the fire engines were used to save the stock warehouses and the four domestic residences in

Robin Hood, their furniture being removed as a precaution. Damage was estimated between £2,000 and £3,000.

Despite this setback, the business returned to full health and by August 1890 Arthur Statham was advertising to recruit more joiners for the business. In 1898 it was decided to consolidate the business, by now known as Robin Hood Mills, on the west side of the canal. The old sawmill, that had now been partially converted to a corn mill, was offered for sale by auction. Included were the water turbine and a smaller, new replacement.

Samuel Wharmby died on 7th May 1906 and his estate was valued at £1,000. By this time the timber works were owned by Mr R. Y. Dawbarn and the history of that company, including further destructive fires, has been documented elsewhere.

In conclusion, although not extensively researched, I think we can safely conclude that there has never been a powered stone sawmill at Robin Hood, but that the area was dedicated to the far more widely applicable business of wood processing and products and using the latest technology available at the time. **T**

# LITERARY LINKS AT LANGLEY MILL

## Hugh Potter compares two images taken 30 years apart



These two photographs of boats above Langley Bridge Lock were taken from a similar viewpoint but three decades apart.

The earlier photograph above shows boats belonging to West & Ellis, coal, lime, salt and granite merchants of Market Harborough. The boat on the left was originally *Elizabeth*, built in June 1904 for William Phipps of Leicester, then renamed *Betsy Prig* by West & Ellis in September 1916. On the right is *Sairey Gamp*, built in August 1905.

Both boats were mainly used to carry coal from Derbyshire to Market Harborough and their unusual names came from characters in Dickens' novels. Both were sold to John Ellis

& Son, coal merchants of Leicester, in March 1920, which dates the picture to 1916–20.

In the later image the boats are thought to be *Atlas* and *Vela* and are painted in British Waterways early predominantly yellow livery suggesting a date of 1948–1952 when the coal traffic from Beggarlee stopped

Note that the 'Ripley Rattler' tram, just visible on the right of the top picture, is replaced by the trolley bus. There is another literary connection here as D.H. Lawrence wrote about the Ripley Rattlers in his short story *Tickets Please*.

*Thanks to Chris M. Jones for information about the West & Ellis boats.* ■





# BENJAMIN OUTRAM'S KEYSTONE - 1791

## Tim Castledine on the rediscovery of an important piece of local history

This locally famous stone was for many years held in Butterley Hall, the headquarters of the Butterley Company and former home of its main founder, Benjamin Outram, until his death in 1805. The existence of the stone was last recorded in the company's in-house magazine *Ad Rem* in 1952 where it was referred to as "the original keystone and the most cherished Butterley possession, being housed in the Head Offices".

In 1968, the company was in the throes of being taken over by a certain Mr Hanson (later Lord Hanson), Jim Slater and the Wiles Group. Many of the valuable contents of the Hall were auctioned off but some just 'disappeared'. One such item was the keystone; where it eventually ended up has remained a mystery for the past 50 years.

Fast forwarding to summer 2020, Ripley & District Heritage Trust was contacted by a former Butterley employee, Tom Denniford of Maidenhead. He had joined the company as a young executive in October 1967 to bring in some new blood at senior management level. His position was that of Group Surveyor and Land Agent. At that time, the Group Personnel Officer was Peter Sanders and the two gentlemen kept in contact after leaving the company.

Following the recent death of Mr Sanders, his stepson, Giles Berry, contacted Mr Denniford to ask if he would be interested to have a dated stone previously owned by his step-father. He declined, but immediately contacted RDHT. It was established that the stone was in Mr Sanders' house in the village of Breinton, near Hereford. The house was up for sale and under offer. Mr Berry lives in Cornwall and it was agreed that the stone would be collected when the contents of the house were being removed. It was duly

collected and is currently in safe storage.

The stone measures 51cm x 34cm x 10cm and weighs 35kg. It can be clearly seen that the stone's thickness has been reduced by about 50%, probably by using a slitting wheel. This suggests that the weight of the original stone was approximately 70kg. It is not known when this was carried out but it was most likely done to reduce its weight, presumably to make it more transportable.

Steve Freeborn, leader of Ripley Town Council and Chair of Butterley Ironworks Trust has arranged to store/display it for safekeeping in the Town Council's office in Ripley until it can be put on permanent display, perhaps following the development of the works site at Butterley.

A more detailed article about the keystone can be found at [www.rdht.org.uk](http://www.rdht.org.uk) under the Butterley Ironworks Trust section. ■



*The elegant carved keystone photographed at its original thickness before it went missing.*

# MEET THE TRUSTEES

## A new series of who's who in FCC



### **Richard Handley**

#### **Tell us about yourself...**

My family had boats on the Chesterfield Canal (which ran at the bottom of our farm field), and also on the Trent and Beeston cut. My professional background was in public service, ranging from senior management in the NHS, to owning the business relationship with HMG's Cabinet Office for a leading commercial supplier.

#### **How did you get involved with FCC...?**

Basically I went for a walk one day, and saw "Volunteers wanted"!

#### **How long have you been Trustee and have you a specific role?**

I have been a Trustee since March 2020 and Boat Committee Chairman since June 2020.

#### **What have you brought to the party?**

Through 2019 I have been one of the volunteer crew on *Birdswood*, and have latterly produced the *Birdswood* Business Plan, and created and published the new FCC eNewsletter and other material. I've made various cost savings in the shop and have secured three grants for FCC.

#### **What are your aspirations for FCC ...**

I want to see more of the canal opened up for boats and the rest continually protected for future generations of restorers.



### **Ian Hooker**

#### **Tell us about yourself...**

I was born and grew up in New Zealand but have spent most of my life in the UK. I worked until retirement as a lecturer in law at the University of Nottingham. I live at Lea Wood, close to the canal.

#### **How did you get involved with FCC...?**

I have been a member of the Friends of Cromford Canal since its foundation.

#### **How long have you been Trustee and have you a specific role?**

I have been a Trustee for more than six years and also advise FCC on Health & Safety matters.

#### **What have you brought to the party?**

I have also served as a Boat Master and boat crew since the introduction of *Birdswood* in 2013.

#### **What are your aspirations for FCC ...**

I have a keen interest in the natural environment and the industrial archaeology of the area. **T**

