

THE PORTAL

Issue 71 - Winter 2019

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Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608

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Front Cover

Birdswood is lifted out at Cromford Wharf for her biennial inspection by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency.

Photo: Hugh Potter

Back Cover

Five new Christmas cards have been produced by FCC and are available in packs of five of the same design for £2.00 per pack or £3.50 for two packs. From top left clockwise: Stockton Brook; Bullbridge Aqueduct; Horse-drawn Birdswood; Cromford Wharf; Sandiacre Lock Cottages. When ordering (castia91@gmail.com) please state which card(s) are required. Please enquire about postal costs.

Copy date for the next issue is 14th February 2020.

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

Hugh Potter considers the work of volunteers

I was amazed when I added up the number of volunteers and volunteer-hours that went into organising and running Discovery Days over the first week in November (see page 17). The FCC is indeed fortunate to have such dedicated supporters. But that was for just two days; there are another 363 days in the year when there are things that need to be done for FCC.



We are supported by the 'obvious' volunteers, who are regularly seen to be furthering the FCC aims: the work party and the Birdwood crews are perhaps most prominent in the public eye. But then there are the many 'hidden' but vital tasks: maintaining Birdwood (as important as crewing it!); running the website; editing and laying out Portal; keeping the membership up-to-date; looking after the finances; maintaining the Archives and transcribing historic documents; attending meetings with partners like Derbyshire County Council; running the society to comply with the Charity Commissioners requirements.

Then there are things that we used to do but cannot do at present owing to lack of volunteers; running the sales/publicity stand and ensuring publicity in local media are two posts that have been vacant for over a year and are crying out to be filled. Without them we cannot let the wider world know what we are doing.

And then there are the essential meetings where we plan what we are going to do. As well as the trustee meetings (and they are all volunteers too), there is a Boat Committee and Strategic Restoration Committee, all of whom have to get together monthly and, for each one, detailed minutes have to be taken by – you've guessed it – another volunteer.

But the burden of actually running the FCC

is falling on a diminishing number of people and we will only make progress whilst we have sufficient volunteers to keep moving forward. We are making remarkable progress with the Beggarlee Extension, but once the strategic planning for that is done a whole host of new volunteers will be needed to implement it and achieve the first new section of Cromford Canal for many years.

Elsewhere, as reported in this and recent Portals, we are supported by several excellent volunteer groups working on our canal and we are extremely grateful for what they do. The Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association keep things running around Langley Mill. Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Res group are doing great things in the area around the locks. Canal Regeneration in Bullbridge are trying their best to get a favourable outcome for the housing proposals there, but they are desperately short of volunteers. Ron Common and his increasing number of supporters are achieving what was previously thought impossible with Aqueduct Cottage at Leewood. And the latest group are the enthusiasts working around Robin Hood, opening up the area's history.

Together we will achieve great things. Of course, not all members are in a position to volunteer, and simply by being members we are grateful to them for supporting the cause. But for every extra volunteer we have, we will achieve more, faster.

What is your New Year Resolution going to be? Happy Christmas!

20th January 2020

Illustrated talk by David Amos on the Bicentenary of the Pinxton to Mansfield Railway
7.30pm, Ironville Church Hall NG15 5NN

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

By David Martin



Well I really don't know where this year has gone but our world-famous trip boat continues to attract many visitors to visit the beautiful Cromford Canal here in the heart of the World Heritage Site in the Derwent Valley. All of a sudden the boating season is over and we are in our maintenance month for Birdswood which is being crane-lifted out in November for her two-yearly Maritime & Coastguard Agency inspection and essential annual maintenance. Our hard-working and dedicated volunteers will be beavering away as usual in this short window, and before you know it she will be back in the water cruising along for the much sought after Santa Specials like she had never been out!

It only feels like yesterday since that warm summer morning on 31st August when many local residents from Jacksdale, Ironville and beyond attended a ceremony celebrating the restoration work that has been carried out on the Portland Basin bridge, otherwise known locally as 'Old Humpy', by Robert Shacklock and the local volunteer group Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Reservoir. The repairs to the parapet wall, the surrounding paths, and two new interpretation boards have enhanced this area for locals and visitors alike. The group have since continued their good work with regular litter picks and we thank them all for their achievements here.

The very small Weighbridge Office which serves as our shop has also been a success story this year with increasing sales and broadening its range of goods under our current shop manager, although sadly she is moving on. We wish her all the best and hope to find a new recruit for this role very soon.

Our own work parties headed by John

Barker have been as busy as ever all year working up and down performing maintenance on all sections of the canal. Of course we are always after new volunteers to help out wherever they feel that they can, be it reed pulling, general canal maintenance, working on the

boat, in the shop or at the many sales events, with our websites, or even actually recruiting new volunteers. So if feel you can spare any time to help us fulfil one of these many satisfying rolls or you would like to add to your current CV then please get in touch with us.

The Strategic Restoration Committee is another facet of FCC and they have been very busy this year dealing with the many wide-ranging enquiries and requirements for our dual authority planning application for the proposed Beggarlee Extension at Langley Mill, on which George Rogers reports on page 11.

Our Patron Brian Blessed recently celebrated his 83rd birthday on 9th October so it's a Happy Birthday to you from all of us!

The recent Birdswood Boat Pop Up Art Exhibition proved to be a great success with the Derby-based artist Tracey Meek's collage exhibition of her interpretation of the many famous things to be found within the Derwent Valley, and the music created by Haiku Salut created a soothing atmospheric soundscape in the background. The full effects of the display were particularly dazzling when viewed on the boat after dark! Thanks goes to Vix Wilding and the Derwent Valley Mills Team for organising this event.

The Discovery Days weekend turned out to be a game of two halves this year, just like the Rugby World Cup, with the Saturday being particularly wet, but normal circumstances

were resumed on Sunday when the weather became more clement and autumnal and the crowds returned. We had the FCC sales stand in the Gothic Warehouse, impeccably displayed and manned by Mike and Val Harrison, along with local landscape artist Peter Rodgers, Hugh Potter's informative slide show, George Rogers with the Beggarlee Extension information stand, long-distance regulars Jes & Lin Inglis demonstrating traditional 'Rose & Castle' painting and peg weaving, and a tombola run by Yvonne Shattower and Dave Ratner.

The stand equally attracting a great deal of deserved attention this year was by Ron Common displaying future plans for the Aqueduct Cottage and their eventual outcomes which will of course be of great benefit to the canal and the High Peak Junction visitor area, which will mean getting that swing bridge fixed will be even more crucial! Outside, as has become a tradition, stalwart Peter Keating wound away on his barrel organ, enlivening the whole wharf with his jolly music (see page 17 for full report).

Our October social evening talk from Tim Castledine about Ironclads, HMS Warrior and Codnor Park Forge was given to a packed

room, and we thank Tim for his fascinating insight and knowledge into how some of our local industry impacted on the Napoleonic wars and other various events throughout our more recent history.

Sadly, by the time this issue is released, we shall have had our last FCC social event of the year with our archivist Hugh Potter enlightening and entertaining us with a selection of the latest historical pictures that he has acquired for FCC.

At this point I would also like to say a big thank you to Wendy Scarle who has been our Social Secretary organising these events at Ironville Church Hall over the last three years, a volunteer role that she has carried out, as well as being an able crew member on Birdswood along with her husband Wayne.

Finally it only remains for me to wish all of our members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We thank you for your continued support.

Speaking of which we have some great new Christmas cards on sale designed by one of our very own FCC volunteers, all of whom we simply could not manage without! So in the New Year why not become an FCC volunteer; together our possibilities are endless!



The interior of Birdswood was transformed in a pop-up art event for Discovery Days.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By Yvonne Shattower

As I write, the last weekend saw the annual 'Discovery Days' at Cromford Wharf. Unfortunately the weather was not at its best on the Saturday and there were very few people around, especially in the morning, but Sunday was a definite improvement. Most years we have been lucky in that the weather was at least dry if chilly, but the rain left our stewards little to do in the way of counting visitors at the Wharf on Saturday morning.

I have had a rush of new members recently, and I would like to extend a very warm welcome to them, and also to thank those members who have renewed as life members. Your support is much appreciated.

It was heartening to see a much greater audience for our talk by Tim Castledine at Ironville in October. By the time you receive this magazine, we will have had our last talk at Ironville for this year, and our next talk will be on 20th January 2020. This will be David Amos speaking on the Bicentenary of the Mansfield & Pinxton Railway. I hope to see you there. At the following meeting on 17th February, FCC's own Mike Kelley will be delivering a talk on his

book 'The Fall of Saxon England'. His book will be on sale and all profits will go to FCC. We have not had any offers of a replacement for Wendy Scarle, who was our Social Secretary and arranged the talks (thank you, Wendy), so if you think you could fill this role, please let one of the Committee know. In the meantime, the Committee are seeking speakers for the next few months. If you know of anyone who gives interesting talks please let us know.

I have to apologise to recent members who have asked to receive Portal by email. For various reasons we are unable to put your names on the email list, but we will ensure that you receive a hard copy so that you can keep up to date with our news and activities.

Even though there is still a good while until Christmas, the shops are full of cards and Christmas advertising; if you are stuck for the present for the 'person who has everything', how about giving them FCC membership?

With very best wishes for Christmas and 2020. Let us hope that it brings the Friends of the Cromford Canal real success in our efforts to reopen this lovely canal.

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

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

Conservation cuts were done along the canal by end of October, leaving strips of approximately 50 yards uncut to allow for over-wintering insects. This is done on a 2-year cycle to ensure woody vegetation is cut back, allow better access along the towpath, and encourage wildflowers to flourish the following spring.

Discovery Days proved a success at the beginning of November at High Peak Junction with the forge working, where the public had

a go at making a poker, as well as Leawood Pump being in steam.

Works planned for this winter include ongoing reed removal, cut back woody vegetation along the canal verges, as well as dredging works from Poyser's Bridge south to the Ambergate end with a mechanical digger.

Meanwhile the boat Duchess was towed to Cromford to be craned out alongside Birdwood for a hull inspection (see page 15).

WORK PARTY REPORT

By John Guylor

Pinxton

We had two work parties in September at Pinxton Wharf. Derbyshire County Council supplied a boat so we could remove reeds encroaching across the channel and the group working on the far bank removed 50 yards of dense vegetation and saplings. On the first session John Dyson picked four bags of litter, walking around the fishing lake and down of the length towpath to the weir.

We also cleared vegetation along the stone wall adjacent to the Boat Inn and behind the reed bed for approximately 50 yards opposite. John Dyson picked a bag of rubbish from where he had cleared the week before, mainly beer cans. A broken fence which was partially across the footpath was removed by John Sparham and John Barker for DCC to dispose of and to replace.



Amazing what the good folk of Pinxton leave by the canal . . .

Around Cromford

At the request of the Birdswood team, the work party cleared high vegetation around Stella (the Stegasaurus that is seen from the boat). The group were conveyed across

the canal on the work boat. Stella can once again be clearly seen from the towpath and Birdswood. The group also cleared vegetation on both sides of Lawn Bridge on both banks so there is now a clear view for the masters of Birdswood. On the island at Cromford Wharf the nettles and high vegetation were cut, but some sections were left to allow the waterfowl some sanctuary.



Poling the work boat over to a rather overgrown Stella.

At High Peak Junction, using the work boat, the width of the reed bed at the swing bridge was reduced, and the towpath group cleared approximately 100 yards of wall of vegetation and brambles. Some saplings around the winding hole at Leawood were cleared, but a more concentrated effort using the work boat will have to be made over the winter.

We will have work parties over the winter on all sections and also at the Cromford /HPJ section reducing the weeds and overhanging trees using Birdswood and the work boat.



Stella's clearance is not just for the benefit of towpath walkers and Birdswood passengers; regular groups of canoeists pass by too.



Short back and sides for Stella.

Ironville

At Ironville, we had four weeks clearing and widening the watercourse from Lock 2 up to Codnor Park Reservoir overflow. Imogen Wilde (Canal & River Trust Ecologist) was present and directing working areas; she sought out and identified water vole holes, which were then marked with stakes and tape and we worked around them. Some small trees were



Clearing the remarkably wide channel of the Codnor Park Reservoir overflow at the request of CRT.



Reed clearance by High Peak Junction swing bridge.

also removed. At the overspill we widened the channel for water to get away from the area a little quicker. At Lock 4 the edges of the channel were cleared to provide a faster flow rate when the level rises. This is as a result of the emergency at Whaley Bridge and the subsequent inspection of all structures.

flowering Himalayan Balsam which seems to flourish in this area. They also cleared the runoff of obstructions and the water is now flowing well. A kingfisher was sighted.

Also at Lower Hartshay, we are very slowly clearing a channel through the reeds, and the channel walls both sides at the southern end have been cleared to show the original stonework. In the area around the sluice, we continued the previous group's work, removing with difficulty an old oil drum and some really serious reeds. A controlled burn of a significant amount of cut saplings and logs recovered from the channel was carried out. Reed pulling is continuing.



Lunch break at Lower Hartshay.

Come and Join Us!

If you feel you would like to join the work parties, please contact John Barker 01773 760358 or Email; work@cromfordcanal.org.

Lower Hartshay

At Lower Hartshay, a small group comprising Wendy, Dennis, Angela and Adrian have spent several days clearing the vegetation and overhanging branches and pulling the late



High water at Lower Hartshay; this has now reduced back to normal.

BEGGARLEE EXTENSION

George Rogers, chairman of the Strategic Restoration Committee, looks forward to 2020 and the start of construction at Langley Mill

It seems I have to start every issue at the moment with yet another delay. Having had the original determination date for the Beggarlee Planning application delayed twice until the end of October, it's now been pushed back to mid-November. The good news is that we now believe all of our necessary responses have been submitted, so hopefully this delay (due to the relevant officers being away) will be the final one and we can get a decision soon.

Previously, I've held off writing in much detail about the comments and discussions – they've been in a constant flux and it wouldn't have been helpful to anyone for me to report on out-of-date information. However, now that all of our comments have been submitted, I'll explore some of the areas where we've been busy responding:

- Ecology – several comments were made regarding crayfish, and particularly the risk associated with the potential damage to the native white-clawed crayfish present at Ironville. This risk is specific to the long-term aim to restore the canal, not the immediate planning application, and the advice we have received (and submitted) is that we are not increasing the risks by virtue of this application, and the long-term situation isn't a valid reason for rejecting the application. We have done some further sampling for crayfish to supplement the response.

- Water Framework Directive – this came as a surprise to us (and is still quite new to planning authorities), but alongside the flood risk assessment we also had to consider the effect of the development on water quality. Fundamentally, the extension to the canal requires water (to supply the locks but also to replace water lost to seepage and evaporation), and the assessment needed to consider where the water comes from and whether this adversely affects the quality of

the water in the river. Thankfully, we don't think it does!

- Structures – one of the reasons for submitting the planning application for the extent we did was to facilitate a discussion with DCC Highways about passing underneath the A610. We've now had further conversations with them to discuss the engineering details about how the load from the canal (which is higher than the ground currently within the bridge) will be transferred to the foundations of the bridge, all without causing the bridge to fail. Whilst there are still details to be resolved in the detailed design phase, DCC have now agreed to the principles which is a big step forward.

- Structures (part 2) – we've also had to give further consideration to the bridge required within the boatyard. An initial design for a lift bridge has been submitted to the relevant parties.

- Traffic Management – one of the other concerns was about how traffic would be managed, particularly without causing any impact on the new Junction 26 development. We've enhanced the traffic management plan and the relevant drawings to hopefully address these concerns.

- Archaeology – the DCC archaeologist has some concerns regarding the initial assessment that we submitted in the original application. A further assessment has been submitted which we believe is sufficient, although the archaeologist still has comments. However, we don't think that these will be significant enough to reject the application so we now await further advice from the planning officers.

Finally, I would like to correct a statement I made in my presentation to the September social meeting regarding the footpaths. Anyone who attended will remember I

reported on an objection to the plans by the local footpaths society – this was incorrect. On the whole they support the application, but have stated that they don't feel it is necessary to lose the existing footpath to the east of the boatyard (the new towpath will be on the west side of the canal). We disagree with this as it would render operation of the boat yard virtually impossible and this isn't acceptable to Canal & River Trust, the boatyard operator or us. We will await further advice from the

planning officers on this.

My thanks, as always, to the team behind the planning application. It is my privilege to write and present their fine work, but I never forget that it isn't me who has done the hard work – in particular I'd like to thank John Boucher, Chris Broome and Doug Readle for their ongoing efforts.

I hope to have some positive news for you in the New Year, let's hope 2020 is the year construction starts!

IWA Stamp Bank

A fund-raising idea from George Rogers

Did you know that you can save all your used stamps to help raise funds for charities? No?

Well you do now . . .

The IWA/WRG stamp bank raises approximately £1000 a year that goes back into helping these organisations restore canals up and down the country – including the Cromford when we have work for them to do! It also helps towards many of the back office and campaigning functions of the IWA which are invaluable. So how do you help? Basically, cut the stamps off the envelopes, leaving approximately 8–10mm around all sides of the stamp (1/3in in old money). Save them up and pass them on to me when you see me (or to another committee member at social evenings, work parties etc). I'll then pass them onto the relevant people at IWA. **Note:** The scheme works by bulk – ie individual stamps are not worth much, but together it becomes significant Therefore please don't post them – the stamp and envelope will cost more than the stamps inside will raise. It's only worth passing them on at events you would be going to anyway.

STEAMING BACK TO KIRKBY

Ian Handley on a new railway group with links to the canal

A Steering Group was formed in April 2019 to try to secure funding for a heritage project to commemorate the forthcoming 50th anniversary of the closure of Kirkby-in-Ashfield locomotive sheds and sidings, which took place on 11th October 1970. The project is entitled 'Steaming Back to Kirkby: Memories of Kirkby-in-Ashfield Loco Sheds and Sidings (1903–1970)' and will be based at Kirkby Heritage Centre.

Plans include a book, website with social media links, walks, illustrated talks, exhibitions and displays, including a special week of events in October 2020.

There is an historical link with the Cromford Canal via the 1819 Mansfield & Pinxton

Railway, coalmining being the common denominator. As the concealed coalfield developed eastwards away from the old exposed coalfield on the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire borders, the railways developed with it, resulting in the Midland Railway opening its locomotive sheds at East Kirkby, as it was then known, in 1903. Significant development took place following the 1955 Modernisation Plan but it was a false dawn and following the rapid demise of the local coalfields in the 1960s, the loco shed and sidings were closed.

Details of the proposed project can be found on the Steaming back to Kirkby Facebook page.

VOLUNTEERING IS FUN

Angela Marsh discovers where to find a dingle

Browsing through back copies of Portal, I came across Meg Tarlton's article "Volunteering is Fun". Meg was writing about work parties back in 2007, so I thought it would be good to remind everyone that volunteering on a work party is still fun.

Now, very many FCC members already know that work parties are brilliant. So apologies to all those who already know. I'm talking to Newbies, like me, and to those who've yet to have a go.

Work parties are amazing. They're a great way to meet new people, while exercise and fresh air are thrown in for free. All you have to do is enjoy.

Don't worry, if you don't know too much about narrow boats or canals. No one minded that I hadn't a clue. But, attending the work party has given me an opportunity to begin learning about boats and canals from some very knowledgeable members. Now I can recognise a dog out. I know why Himalayan balsam has to be uprooted. I've found that a butty isn't always good to eat. And I know where to find a dingle (but you will have to come to the work party to find out where!).

It's a chance to see the whole length of the canal. That's not as easy as you might imagine. There are long stretches of our canal that I would never have found, if I hadn't had help from others on the work party. Some parts no longer carry water and some parts just aren't there anymore. I understand it all better, thanks to being on the work party.

I'm finding out about the multitude of jobs that need to be done to maintain the canal, help protect wildlife habitats and generally keep the canal looking its best. Don't think it's all reed pulling and clearing vegetation. There's plenty more to do – fencing, installing information boards, painting woodwork, litter picking, repairing damaged banks and, my

very favourite, balsam bashing. There are lots of great jobs. Something to suit everyone, no matter how skilled, or unskilled, you might be. Yes, some jobs are more demanding than others, but I've never been asked to do anything that was beyond my ability or that I haven't been completely happy to do.

I've always been made 100% welcome on the work party. And I've always gone home feeling that I've done something useful and contributed, at least a tiny bit, to restoring our canal. That's a really good feeling.

Work parties are every Wednesday and can be anywhere from Cromford Wharf to Langley Mill. Not everyone makes every work party. People come when they can. But, there's a definite "can do" feeling about the work party: everyone has a positive attitude and, absolutely, everyone enjoys the day – if you've never been on an FCC work party you really don't know what you're missing. Volunteering is Fun.

Find out how to be at a work party by contacting our work party leader John Barker on 07860 632837 or 01773 760358. See you there. Have fun.



One of the more unusual jobs was emptying the work boat prior to relaunching.

BIRDWOOD INSPECTION & MAINTENANCE

John Baylis reports



*Towing Duchess away from her Wharf Shed mooring.
Photo: Tony Bolton*

was landed on steel stands, loaned by the Langley Mill Boatyard, for cleaning, examination and then painting the outside of the hull. There was also a professional hull thickness survey at the request of the MCA together with the requirement to remove the propeller and strip down the fire pump for inspection.

This year whilst the crane was on site we also lifted out Duchess, the boat used by

This November it was time for the biennial Birdwood 'out of water survey' for the Maritime & Coastguard Agency. Basically, this allows FCC to carry passengers on the canal. The lift out was carried out on Monday 11th November by Walkers Crane Hire on to the peninsular area at Cromford Wharf. The boat

Leawood Pump volunteers to get coal across the canal at High Peak Junction. Duchess had previously been towed to Cromford by Birdwood.

Over the past year the internal hydraulic pump, which powers the propeller, was getting noisy and a new pump and motor was a



*Negotiating Duchess through the swing bridge in preparation to pick up the 'bridge crew'.
Photo: Nigel Neale*

cheaper option than having the pump rebuilt as we did with the external pump three years ago. In the past this type of work has been carried out by volunteers from Waterway Recovery Group East Midlands based at Langley Mill; and once again they agreed to do the work.

When the old motor and pump had been removed, a new Elika pump supplied by Curtis Instruments was fitted along with several new internal hydraulic pipes. The old hydraulic fluid was cleaned out, filters replaced and refilled with new Texaco 46 hydrobio-fluid; this is recommended for use in the water environment by the Environment Agency.

FCC volunteers removed the passenger seats so that the internal parts of the hull could be cleaned and repainted and the seat frames also cleaned and repainted before refitting.

The flush toilet had been giving trouble with leakage and a new toilet bowl and flush system has been fitted. Following a full examination by MCA surveyors the outside of the hull was given two coats of black paint. The tiller and



After lifting Birdwood onto the peninsular wharf at Cromford, Duchess was craned out and placed behind her for inspection.

Photo: Hugh Potter

the 'diamonds' at the bow and stern were also repainted. When the boat has been re-floated the MCA will carry out an 'in water survey' prior to granting a new carrying licence.

Hopefully Birdwood can then begin the 'Santa Special' cruises, one of the highlights of the year for the younger generation.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Fourth Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Cromford Canal, Charitable Incorporated Organisation Number 1164608, will be held on Monday 20th April 2020 at the Church Hall, Ironville, commencing at 7.30pm.

David Ratner retires as a trustee and is willing to stand for re-election; there are two vacancies for Trustees. Nominations must be sent to the Executive Secretary before February 14th to be included on the voting form to be sent out with the next Portal.

The accounts for the year ending 31st December 2019 and the Trustees' annual report will be available on the website from 29th March 2020.

*John Baylis, BEM, Executive Secretary,
215 Clipstone Road West, Forest Town, Mansfield NG19 0HJ*

BOOK REVIEWS

Hugh Potter looks at two new local books

A Perfectly Romantic Place

“There are few places in the world so quirky and historically interesting as Matlock Bath.” So begins this long-awaited, highly detailed history by Christopher Charlton and Doreen Buxton published as a follow-up to their definitive history of Cromford (‘Cromford Revisited’).

It is the culmination of decades of research about the long-established tourist resort just north of the Cromford Canal terminus. It established itself as a desirable place to visit from the early 18th century on account of its scenery and its warm mineral springs, despite the atrocious roads that led to it. It was a genteel place where whole families came with their servants and stayed for several days.

Its status as the ‘place to visit’ for the elite was rudely changed by the coming of the



railway in 1849, when suddenly every man and his wife could visit for the day, and it rapidly transformed into something more like what we know today. The train trippers were later joined by cyclists who found it an

ideal destination, a tradition continued today with the motorcyclists.

Well designed, printed and illustrated, with highly detailed captions, ‘Matlock Bath – A Perfectly Romantic Place’ costs £18 from local stockists.

Famed Across the Nation

Delving along the Derwent is an equally meticulously researched work, looking into quarrying in the area encompassed by the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site and a little beyond.

Thus it includes quarries sited between Cromford and Bullbridge, many of which used the canal for transport prior to the coming of the railways, including the famous Duke’s Quarries at Robin Hood just north of Whatstandwell. Portal-contributor Grenville Smith is one of the authors of the book and his piece on these quarries is titled ‘Famed Across the Nation’; their stone was used historically as far afield as Waterloo Road Bridge, Euston Station and Victoria Docks in London, Grimsby Docks, and Avoncliff Docks at Bristol. More recently the stone has been used in Merry Hill Shopping Centre, Ireland and Germany. However, he dispels the myth that Duke’s Quarry stone was used in any large



way in rebuilding the Houses of Parliament after the 1835 fire.

There is also brief mention of the quarries for which the ‘Feeder Arm’ of the canal (where Birdswood moors) was built.

The book is highly detailed and profusely illustrated and will be of great interest to anyone with an interest in the industrial history of the area. It was one of many projects sponsored by HLF-funded DerwentWISE and so is available free of charge (although a donation is requested) from The Stone Centre at Wirksworth.

DISCOVERY DAYS

By Hugh Potter

This is the 15th year that FCC has organised special events at Cromford Wharf as part of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Discovery Days, which take place each October half-term. The weather is notoriously variable and this year, whilst Saturday was a 'wash out', Sunday was a hive of activity. The photographs on these pages will give you an idea of what you missed if you did not attend!

The amount of effort that goes into this is remarkable; during the weekend over 30 volunteers put in over 350 hours, and that is not including the regular volunteers on Birdswood who ran the last horse-drawn trips of the season.

Much publicity was generated for the canal, and donations alone from the generous public were over £176. With gift aid this increases to £220, plus income from sales and tombola.



First one up the climbing wall was Lance & Corrine's 6-year-old daughter Billie, who regularly accompanies them on horse boat days. Sam and Chris from Acclimatize were kept busy all Sunday offering free climbing experiences.



Val Roberts – always cheerful on the FCC sales stand.

Photo: Adrian Farmer



Jes and Lin Inglis, master traditional painter and peg weaver, have supported Discovery Days for many years, travelling from Oswestry to do so.



The ever reliable and cheerful Lance & Corrine Rose of Arraslea Shires with Ted ready to haul the last regular Birdswood trip of the year.



Stalwart Peter Keating always livens up Cromford Wharf with his organ.



Getting steam up; the miniature traction engines were a great hit as usual offering trailer rides around the site.



Nottingham Model Boat Club are regulars at Discovery Days and always bring a varied and entertaining selection of 'boats'. This year saw a beautifully modelled narrowboat on the canal – with a stunning fit-out.



Anthony Fox, one of the Manifold Valley Bygones Group exhibitors, uses all his amazing machinery to produce . . . a tiny ladybird on a flower!



*The irrepresible Ron Common was on hand to enthuse about progress with Aqueduct Cottage.
Photo: Adrian Farmer*



Ted and Corrine return with Birdswood's penultimate horse trip of the year.

EXCAVATIONS AT ROBIN HOOD

Steve Carver reports on exciting finds by the canal near Whatstandwell

Our story (first reported in Portal 69) is set in the hamlet of Robin Hood and the seven dwellings that sit in the natural amphitheatre between Duke's Quarries and the eastern side of the Cromford Canal. Stepping out from our homes, the landscape begs some obvious questions and clearly owes something to the area's industrial past. Exactly how, is proving difficult to determine, so we find ourselves joining the dots with the help of conjecture and occasionally beating a hasty retreat to start afresh.

For instance, we know that Joseph Wass had a land lease from Peter Nightingale, a mineral railway, canal wharf and smithy here in 1811. Also, the brook that makes a steep descent along our southern boundary has been shored up on both sides and extensively terraced: Why? On reaching our garden it is effectively 'cut and covered' twice, while descending vertically some thirty feet within a stone lined shaft and tunnel, passing under the canal unnoticed by walkers at Robin Hood aqueduct, and into the Derwent.



*Geoff and his digger reveal the stable floor . . .
Photo: Steve Carver*



*The large stable/smithy building is soon revealed. This is clearly seen from the path leading up from Sims Bridge.
Photo: Steve Carver*



*. . . with its distinctive drainage grooves.
Photo: Steve Carver*

When it was in full flow, what kind of obstacle did the brook present to surveyor William Jessop for his report in 1788? The water could not always be accommodated by the canal especially in winter when the flow was torrential, so canal and brook would have to be kept apart.



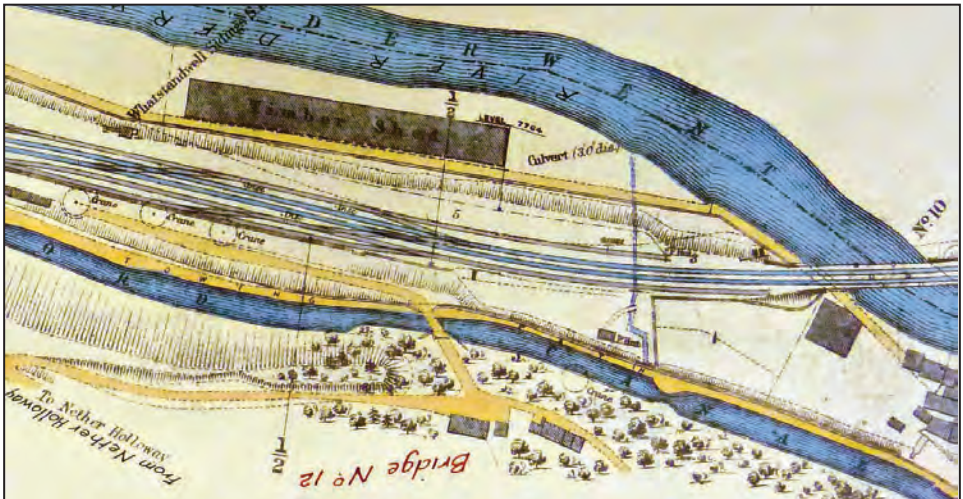
The base of the canalside crane with the small stream to its right which enters the canal by a silt trap. On the towpath opposite is the run-off sluice and adjacent more modern weir.

Photo: Steve Carver

From here the story takes an unexpected turn. In our six years at the Old Sawmill we have dabbled in tree planting: “messaging about in the woods” I call it. Don Zmarty corrects me with “Woodland management, Steve”. Yes Don. Either way, the work has been largely growing oak from acorn and rescuing beech and hawthorn, potting them up and planting out a few years later.

In the search for places to re-home the saplings we inevitably found ourselves in and around the area of Sims Bridge; and from the towpath by the stop planks there was clearly a suggestion of a structure beneath the brambles.

A couple of years ago we cleared them to find a spring flowing intermittently, and what I thought would be a means of capturing silt. Unlike our sometimes-angry brook, this was a watercourse that Jessop’s canal could accommodate. Little more than fifty yards from this spot there was also a suggestion of infrastructure long gone, and again there’s a



A railway map of around 1905 showing Sims Bridge in the centre and the site of the canalside derek/ gin marked ‘Crane’ to the right. The excavated stable/smithy is one of the buildings below Sims Bridge whilst the track over the bridge leads to three cranes for loading stone onto rail wagons; the bases of these cranes can still be seen.

sense of taking an educated guess.

Getting your eye in, looking for, and knowing what to leave out are all ways of saying that enquiry seldom starts with a blank sheet. Without looking at maps and documents we were compelled to ask: could this entire area have been a hub of activity, one associated with the movement of stone? Nature might help corroborate this theory, and in this case even the sheer volume of nettles in the area would suggest that the answer was: Yes, people were here frequently!

Preliminary excavation at the canalside revealed the edge of a large stone base, and eventually a beautifully carved hole at its centre with a hefty metal ring at the bottom. The stone mason's work was as if done yesterday: clearly no signs of wear, but what was the hole for? Fast forward: Enter Hugh Potter, Grenville Smith and Robin Hood residents, and we now know this to be Sims Canal Wharf as it appears on the 1811 survey by Richard Wilkes. A civil engineer friend suggested we think in terms of a Scotch Derrick crane. A Google search solved the riddle of the hole which we believe to be for a very basic type of crane consisting of a pole and several stays, one known as a 'Gin Pole'.

More questions: why was Sims Bridge not built to cross the canal at a right angle? Perhaps to make a turn towards the towpath easier? For what, the carriage of stone? Towards the railway? Armed with that conjecture you look for evidence of cranes and immediately find the base of what we now know to be one of three cranes at Sims railway wharf a hundred yards or so south of the bridge.

Enter the owner of the land, Mr Jonathan Wildgoose of Wildgoose Construction Ltd. Jonathan has an eye for conservation and was keen for us to continue messing about in his woods. He was clearly very interested in heritage and promised help. We drew up a plan. Excavate Sims canal wharf, the area once occupied by buildings, cut back trees and install at least four groins on the path up to the quarries to divert water and silt that threatened to cover the wharf every time it rained.

In August, with Jonathan's son John and digger man Geoff, we did just that using large fallen tree trunks as groins. The footpath was also prone to flooding so we used rubble excavated from the buildings for elevation and generated wood chippings for cover.

After a few weeks with pick and shovel to see what might be worth preserving, Geoff and his digger soon found the base of a beautifully preserved limestone stable floor with fine grooves cut at 45 degrees. We continue to find items from a smithy. All of which lends evidence to the theory that stone was moved down to canal and railway by horse and cart, not by a 'plateway' or 'tramway' as has been suggested, and preliminary stone-carving was done there. Our work continues, and we'd like to hear from anyone with photographs or information that might help with the permanent joining of more dots.



A horseshoe found in the stables area. Our friends at Arraslea Shires (who provide Ted and Chelsea to pull Birdswood) say that the shoe is for a draft horse and looks like it's made of wrought iron with heels to help with grip when pulling. If it is wrought iron it could be 80-100 years old.

Photo: Hugh Potter

STEVENSON'S SITE AT BULLBRIDGE

Gill Hirst reports on initial negotiations for the canal route

I am the secretary of both the Bullbridge & Sawmills Area Civic Society (BASA) and Canal Reinstatement in Bullbridge (CRIB). Both these organisations have the reinstatement of the Cromford Canal at their heart. However CRIB is the coming together of members of FCC and BASA to look specifically at the development of the former Stevenson's dye works site at Bullbridge.

Over the last three years we have studied the particular history and idiosyncrasies of this site, and considered other canal orientated developments and how their experience and expertise could be applied to Bullbridge. We have also consulted with the residents for their views on our vision for the reinstatement of the canal, with the ancillary issues of housing, environment and heritage.

Meeting with Developers

Once this former dye works site was sold and we knew the identity of the developers we emailed them, welcoming them to the area and introducing our group. Peter James Homes are based in Long Eaton, and their Managing Director is Simon Gardiner.

They replied almost immediately and said that it was a little too early to meet and would contact us as soon as initial surveys and assessments were done.

True to their word, a couple of months later they contacted us and we arranged a site meeting. In our party were George Rogers, engineer; George Jones, architect and planner; Geoff Simms, BASA walks leader and heritage representative, and myself as secretary of both BASA and CRIB and holder of archives and correspondence. They sent their MD, planner, site manager, and engineer.

We initially met on the site which we walked together and then retired to the Canal Inn for coffee and a look at initial plans.

We were clear that ideally we would like

them to reinstate the canal at the same time as they developed the site; our minimum requirement was for them to leave enough room to reinstate the canal through the site in future with enough access for the work to be done. Simon Gardiner told me that reinstating the canal was a 'no go', but that they would certainly look at how they might support us for the future reinstatement.

They informed us that since they had purchased the site they had had three constraints put on them of which they were unaware when purchasing:

- Severn Trent would be needing access and room in the future to replace the water pipe through the site;
- DCC required that the road through the site should be circular to minimise holdups etc.
- CRIB were asking for room for and access to reinstate the Cromford Canal.

These factors meant that the site was becoming less lucrative.

Initial Plans

The development will be in three phases. Phase One is the Malthouse Close site to the east of Bullbridge Hill, where the small stretch of canal, known locally as 'the pond' skirts the north of the site, with the embankment for the aqueduct rising to the east.

This was formerly the site of Stevenson's car park and factory shop. I tentatively asked what the chances were of them allowing or selling a tranche of land along this embankment so that we could divert the line from the pond, by-passing the two houses built on the canal line, to the bridge over Drovers Way. He was unable/unwilling to answer this (well it was worth a try!).

Phase Two is the first part to the west of Bullbridge Hill to roughly half way across the site. Phase Three is from there to the Transco



The plan for Phases 2–3, was submitted shortly after Phase 1, which on this plan is shown in outline to the east of Bullbridge Hill, with the existing canal to its north and the start of the aqueduct embankment to its east.

site/Hag Tunnel site boundary.

Looking over the initial plans we could not see how we could get access for plant to work on the canal and while the line of the canal was drawn through the site it was unclear as to whether this was wide enough to allow for a towpath.

It was clear that re-scoping of the hillside was going to be necessary for the development of the site and certainly for the footprint of the canal and we asked that the latter be considered.

Because of the required circular road layout any reinstatement of the canal would mean there were two places at which the road would need to cross the line of the canal.

With our BASA and CRIB hats on we discussed the number and type of housing and presented them with a copy of the consultation that CRIB had carried out with local residents in 2016. George Jones introduced some house design layout suggestions to the developers' planning rep.

Throughout the meeting we were able to fill in some gaps in their knowledge, especially concerning what had happened on the site over the years. George Rogers informed them of the engineering issues such as drainage.

We had a good rapport with their

representatives and they promised they would consider what we had said.

The plans went in to planning and over the last few months there have been small adjustments, none of which seem to compromise the canal.

Outcomes

We have now had the chance to study the submitted plans and we can ascertain that:

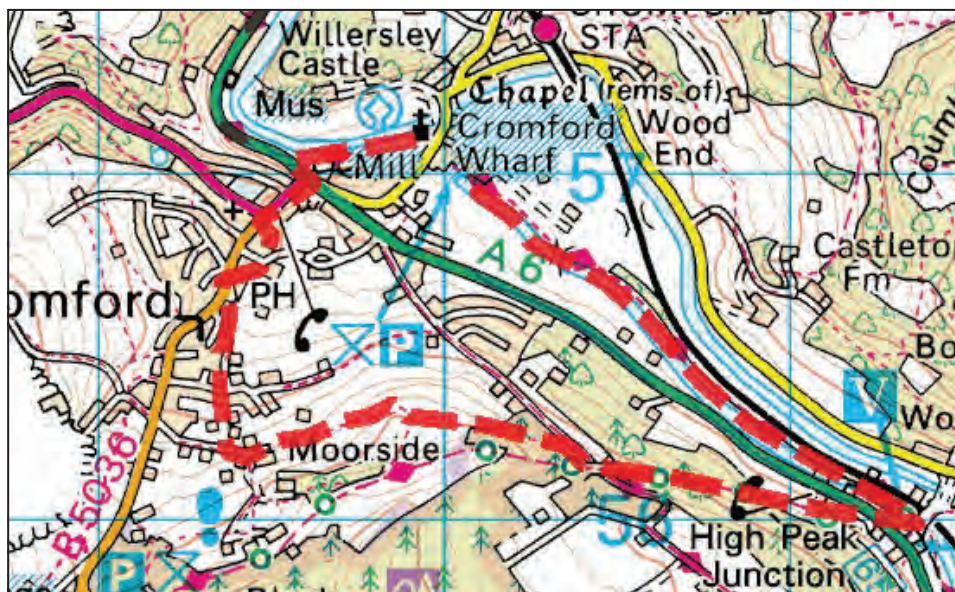
- Because of an altered layout, the canal and road only cross at one point, necessitating only one bridge;
- The land at the point is sculpted to enable the building of this bridge;
- It was unclear as to the actual width of the line – was it wide enough for a towpath? The plans did not tell us;
- There is improved (though not ideal) access to the line of the canal for the work for reinstatement to take place;
- The number of houses has been further reduced, with no accessible housing for elderly/disabled.

Further Consultation

From an engineering point of view with culverting, drainage etc there needs to be further discussions between FCC engineers and the developers.

CANAL CIRCULAR WALKS – 5 HIGH PEAK TRAIL

Ken Brockway offers an easy 4-mile winter warmer that includes a fascinating tour of the hidden gitties of Cromford



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Distance: 4 miles.

Start point: Cromford Wharf.

How to get there: Train to Cromford. Bus: Transpeak, Sixes, 140 or 141. Car park at Cromford Wharf (pay and display).

Refreshments: Wheatcroft's on Cromford Wharf; The Greyhound, The Boat, plus cafes, restaurants and chippie in Cromford village.

This is a good winter walk as the paths are mostly wide and well surfaced, so little likelihood of mud.

From the Canal Wharf follow the towpath to High Peak Junction and cross over the canal swing bridge. Allow time to look around the Visitor Centre if it's open (weekends only in

winter). When you are ready, start the climb up the incline, passing the guards vans on your left. You will see the recently renovated pulley wheel, then beyond the A6 bridge is the 'catch pit' designed to trap runaway waggons and described on a display board above it. The incline is a constant 1 in 9 for more than five hundred metres – and that's not the top!

Originally there were two inclines up to Black Rocks. They were worked with chain; the noise from this and wear on pulleys must have been significant. When wire rope became available it was possible to combine the two inclines into what became known as Sheep Pasture Incline. The site of the abandoned engine house is by the bend in the trail (aka 'The



Splendid views include Willersley Castle (left) and Rock House (centre right).

Dingle'), with a new information board offering further explanation.

Soon after the bend left, note when a low stone wall starts on the left. Go to the left of the tree and left of the wall. You can see the stone block embankment supporting the trail as it climbs above you on the right. This unofficial path links to Intake Lane which climbs out of Cromford and passes under the

in the stone wall and continue. At the brow of the hill the path becomes very clear sweeping left and down. Ahead you see the massive and still operational Dene Quarry. Enter what may appear to be the garden of a house and join the track which serves the house, Ivy Cottage, to exit via their gate onto a lane.

This is Cromford Moorside, bear right along the lane, then turn right onto an enclosed metalled footpath. This is a bit narrow but



Boundary stone on the A6 near Tor Café.

trail. Turn right under the bridge and after just 50 metres take the fork left to climb gently while Intake Lane continues to descend.

Cross the stile and follow the well-defined track for about 50 metres then bear right, staying on a level elevation. There are excellent views up the Derwent Valley towards Matlock from this path including the two Arkwright residences of Rock House and Willersley Castle. Pass through the opening



Intake Lane passes under the High Peak Trail.



Old cast iron rail seen in the High Peak Junction workshops.

eventually becomes the vehicle access to a number of houses. At Barnwell Lane, dog leg right and continue down Bedehouse Lane. There are a few twists and turns but keep going downhill along a metalled path and you will exit Bedehouse Lane onto Cromford Hill.



The view from the brake vans up the incline.

Turn right down the hill for about 50 metres then turn right again onto a signed footpath opposite Hawthorn Drive and Arkwright Gardens. Again twists and turns take you almost into cottage sculleries until a turn left brings you to the end of North Street, a splendid row of houses built by Arkwright for his workers and now much in demand for bijou living.

The school is still a school on the right. Continue across the end of the street then take a footpath left through a gap in the wall hidden behind a large tree. This passes allotment gardens and enclosures where the family pig would be kept, note the chute where food slops could be tipped without the pig escaping.

The round stone wall surrounds 'The Bear Pit' – no, not for baiting bears but a water control feature built for Arkwright to divert water from Cromford Sough to the Greyhound Pond. Back on the main road, turn right and unless tempted by facilities opposite do not cross the road.

At the road junction, traffic lights cross the A6 to the tiny Tor Cafe. Turn left passing the cliff face blasted away to widen the A6 then turn right through the decorative iron gates and follow the riverside path towards St Mary's church, also built by Arkwright. From the church it's just a short hop to the car park or you can continue to or past the mill for bus stops.

THE OLD HOUSE AT HOME

Hugh Potter sheds more light on the 'Old House'



Mr W. Trim and Mr H. Holmes, some of the last customers of the Old House at Home.

One of the best known pubs on the Cromford Canal when boats were still running was The Old House at Home, roughly half way between Pye Bridge and Pinxton. Simon Waller recalled it in Portal 69 and some of its story was told in Portal 7 (downloadable from FCC website). Recently two other items have come to light. The first is an article in the July 1954 issue

of British Waterways house magazine Lock & Quay, which read as follows:

No Drink at the Inn

For many of us it will be an interesting piece of news that among the responsibilities of the Board [Docks & Inland Waterways Executive, later British Waterways, now Canal



There was direct access to the pub from the towpath over a small footbridge.

& River Trust] is numbered the ownership of licensed premises. It is so, indeed. In the early days of our canals, when the centres of village life shifted from the turnpike road to the busy canalsides, inns were built at many points along our waterways and many of these became regular tying-up places for the boatmen. Some of the inns were acquired by the canal authorities and, when the canals passed into public ownership in 1948, were transferred also.

At one of these old inns, the 'Old House at Home', alongside the Cromford Canal at Pye Bridge, the last drink was served recently following the expiry of the licence. There have been so few patrons latterly that the local magistrates have not renewed it. The licensee since 1911 has been Mr Leonard Waller who has recalled in an article published recently in the Derby Evening Telegraph, some of his memories of his long life at the inn.

In the early days he served in the tiny bar from 6am to 11 o'clock at night, his day starting when he was roused by the clank of chains and the plod of hooves as the boatmen removed their horses from the stables. As soon as the boatmen had left he would have a great deal of custom from dry-throated miners seeking a drink after a night's shift. These miners were not averse to thundering at his door in the early hours of the morning.

Among his regular customers at one time was an old lady of 80 who smoked a blackened clay pipe and drank her pint like any man.

Mr Waller, who is now a 70-year-old and

farms the land adjoining the inn, is to remain there despite the closure. There is no intention of disturbing his occupation.

Objection Upheld

The cause of the demise was explained in more detail in an undated newspaper cutting from around the same time. The police objection to the renewal of the beer-house licence, on the grounds of redundancy, was upheld by the justices. The police submitted that it was not required because of the number of licensed houses in the vicinity and also that the premises did not meet the sanitary and structural standards necessary.

In two ambiguous statements the Sanitary Inspector said the property fell far short of the requirements and that the council intended demolition. However, he added that "the house was kept in a very clean state by the tenant, Mr Leonard Waller, and he assured the Bench that his remarks had no reflection whatsoever upon him".

It was stated that Mr Waller had been tenant for about 40 years but on several visits there were very few people on the premises.

The defence called it 'a little summer pub'. No one would want to go out in bad weather but this was no reason why the inn should be considered redundant. In 1952 it sold 8.5 barrels of beer which had increased to 10.5 in 1953, indicating rising consumption.

However the licence was not renewed and Mr Waller was referred to the compensation authority.



This sketch map from the early 20th century shows the ferry that gave access to The Old House at Home from across the canal. The red section indicates where it had damaged the towpath bank.

THE GREAT RIVER DERWENT CLEAN UP

An enterprising group has been clearing up our local environment



Paddle Peak, a community group of Derbyshire paddle-sport businesses, clubs and professionals were out in canoes and kayaks in October cleaning the River Derwent and its banks. On Tuesday the group were joined by the entire staff from Peak UK Kayaking Co and members of Matlock Bath's local community. The local clean-up was also part of the Surfers Against Sewage Autumn Beach Clean week.

The intrepid team cleaned the entire river over a 20-mile stretch from Rowsley to Milford, much of which parallels the Cromford Canal. The mammoth effort took five full days and the Paddle Peak volunteers shifted five truckloads of rubbish from the river totalling several tons. The waste collected included a TV, wheelie bin, wheelbarrow minus the wheel, shopping trolley, road barrier, garden furniture set including parasol, poly bags, plastic bottles, chip trays, polystyrene cups, a broken kayak from the 1980s, a bike and more – road cones and wet wipes being the most common.



River Clean organiser and Paddle Peak founder Pete Astles commented:

“At the top of the valley we were pulling out agricultural plastic waste that was stuck in the trees. As we meandered our way down the valley and into the towns, we pulled out bigger items that had clearly just been thrown in or fly tipped. Downstream of Matlock Bath there's always a load of drinks and food waste that's been discarded over the fence or blown in off the pavement.

“The River Derwent is the life blood of our valley. It used to be the power that drove the mills. Cleaning the river preserves the valley and protect its wildlife. Cleaning plastic from the river saves it washing out to sea therefore protecting our wonderful environment for everyone to enjoy.”



Thanks to all of the volunteers from the community of Matlock Bath, Peak UK, Peaks and Paddles, Rapid Horizons, Escape UK, Peak Paddlers, Acclimatize, Abworx and more for making this huge undertaking possible.

Further thanks must go to The Square and Compass, Masson Mills, Willersley Castle Hotel, Cromford Mills, The Family Tree, White Peak Distillery, Litchfield Group, and The Hurt Arms for helping Paddle Peak access the river.

And last but not least our friends at Darley Dale, Belper and Matlock local councils for believing in our project, and Derbyshire Dales

District Council and Amber Valley Borough Council for their amazing support and collecting all of the rubbish!

Paddle Peak's future goals include inspiring local businesses, especially fast food outlets, to go plastic free, attempting to eliminate plastic bags of flour being thrown into the beautiful River Derwent during the Boxing Day Raft Race, and to provide more rubbish bins and recycling in key areas along the riverside.

If you want to find out more about Paddle Peak's work and vision for the Derwent Valley checkout their website www.paddlepeak.org.



LETTERS

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

What's in a Name?

In Christine Johnstone's Article in the Autumn issue of Portal I would like to correct the spelling of the name William Sparham. I believe the name to be William Sparham and the reason for this lies in George Sparham & Jim Dunn's 'A coppice of the Sparham family tree'.

In his introduction Jim Dunn says that the tree is the work of George Sparham who has cajoled, coerced, threatened, pleaded with, pestered, irritated and annoyed every Sparham and relative of a Sparham wheresoever they could be found, for information concerning this illustrious family. My father was one of those contacted.

George linked all Sparham's into one huge family tree, which was displayed at the Sparham gatherings at the Black Boy.

The family tree goes back to the Parish records of Epperstone, Nottinghamshire, where on 15th April 1751 the baptism of Mary Sparham, daughter of William and Mary Sparham, was recorded. At the age of 23, Mary was living in Codnor, where she gave birth to William Sparham and 3 years later George Sparham. Interestingly the officiating minister made a slip of the pen initially entering William as daughter to then cross out the offending word and enter son of Mary Sparham.

Both William and George worked the canals. The following navigation permits were found in the lock keepers' cottage at Langley Mill:

8th December 1823. Ticket No. 5135 George Sparham: Coal Hartshay to Derby 15½ tons 12s 10d; 2 journeys 7 miles. + 19½ tons 16s 3d.

1828. Ticket No. 5424 George Sparham & W. Hunter: Coal Hartshay to Derby 21 tons 17s 6d; Iron Nottingham to Hartshay 14s 7d.

6th May 1831. Ticket No. 1997 William Sparham. G. Brittain (owner): Castings Golden Valley to Beggerlee 2s 4½d, 4¾ tons 4 miles.

1823. Ticket No. 5094 William Sparham. G. Brittain (owner): Coal to Nottingham.

William married and had five children; his youngest son James also worked the canals mainly the Cromford and Erewash. On 20th October 1841 at the age of 24 he was caught stealing 5cwt of coal at Long Eaton. He was given a prison sentence of 3 months with hard labour. He died in 1887 in Ironville. Is he buried in the churchyard behind the church hall where we meet? Do I have an ancestral interest in the Cromford Canal?

Linda Handley (née Sparham)

Hugh Potter replies: *You are of course correct and you do have an ancestral interest in the Cromford Canal! But it was not Christine who was in error – it was the toll clerk who made the original entries. That made me look a bit further and it turns out that a name entered as Sparrow was also almost certainly Sparham, as he uses the same boat on similar runs. Perhaps it was something to do with the way the name was pronounced?*

A Classic Piece

I enjoyed Marie Brown's article in the last Portal immensely; she described all the various aspects of the employment of the stonemason and his wife, funding, vigil, boards, public enthusiasm, photos of personnel, poetry, time capsule and the bridge itself. Marie put together a classic piece of writing in which young and old can delight.

My praise does not do it justice.

David Bartrop

Letter from Wales

Thank you for another fine magazine. I shall always think of you now in your editor's office all alone and wondering if we are out there . . . Well, I am, at least! I am in Harlech in Snowdonia, and hoping to come to Derbyshire to see the Cromford Canal again.

I shall now sit down and read every word of the Portal, Issue 70.

Thank you once again.

Melanie-Jane Martin

ENCOURAGING YOUNGSTERS ON THE CANAL

Pete Astles reports on a very successful weekend

Paddle Peak headed up by Escape UK (Belper based adventure providers) and Peak UK (Darley Dale based paddle-sport equipment manufacturers) ran 'come and try' kayaking sessions over the scorching August bank holiday weekend as part of Cromford Mill's Outdoor Weekend.

Free of charge sessions for local youngsters ran every half hour on the Cromford Canal around the Wharf. Every session was fully booked up and gave 240 young paddlers a great introduction to the wonderful sport of kayaking.

Instructors included James Bebbington and Sally Montgomery, who were just back from filming the Expedition TV series with Steve Backshall in Bhutan. Freestyle kayaking demonstrations were given daily by international athletes including World Champion James Bebbington, wowing the sun baked crowds into the different disciplines of the sport. Olympic Champion Etienne Stott was canalside with his medal, inspiring the youngsters with his story from boy scout to London 2012 glory and beyond.

The weekend was part of Paddle Peak's vision to inspire local youngsters to take up

paddle sports.

Paddle Peak's goal now is to set up a waterside activity base with changing facilities, boat storage and classrooms for use by local clubs, emergency services and activity providers. The base would give local young, disabled and less fortunate people the chance to try and take up paddle sports, in turn promoting healthy exercise, lifestyle and good mental well-being.

For more details on where and how you can take up paddle sports in the Derwent Valley checkout: www.paddlepeak.org.

Paddle Peak is a group of Derbyshire paddle-sport businesses, clubs and professionals, powered by a shared passion. Their vision is to work collectively on the following areas:

Access: Open up the River Derwent Valley for paddle sports.

Inspire: Enable local youngsters to take up paddle sports

Care: Preserve the River Derwent Valley and protect its wildlife.

Share: Responsibly and respectfully share the River Derwent Valley with other users.

Promote: Boost the visitor economy by promoting local business.



FCC WORK AT IRONVILLE

John Guyler sums it up

This article is based on a report I created for submission through Councillor Jack Brown to HM Inspector on the Planning Application public consultation on 22nd October, for the proposed upgrade of the towpath at Lock 4 Ironville to a Bridleway.

It is also to inform FCC members of the value of the work that has been done by FCC and Waterway Recovery Group work parties since the start of 2015. Recently, criticism has been levelled at the work parties, by third parties at Ironville, for both not doing enough and doing too much.

At Ironville, the work parties have to work to the management plan set by the Canal & River Trust and this involves working in certain areas, such as in the water course, on a calendar timeline. The result of our managed work in creating certain situations, that may in the view of some people alter the flow of water down the channel from the overflow, is the result of working as directed by CRT and not the perceived whims of FCC work parties.

The following shows the commitment by the FCC work parties on all sections at Ironville.

The FCC has adopted from CRT and worked on the section of the Codnor Park flight of locks at Ironville since the beginning of 2015. This includes: from the railway bridge at Lock 5 westward to the spillway at the Codnor Park Reservoir; northwards along the Pinxton Arm to the boundary with the section owned by Derbyshire County Council; and westward along the abandoned section of canal adjacent to Coach Road to the boundary with the DCC.

Work has included clearing self-seeded trees from the channel, a regular clearance of saplings each winter, cutting back brambles particularly around fencing and to provide a safe work place to paint both sides of the fences, renewing where necessary and repainting all fencing and placing a 50-yard length of fencing at the community garden by Lock 4.

The litter picking and removal of rubbish from

the channel has been a challenge, especially in areas difficult to reach. We also replaced the towpath between King William Bridge and the railway bridge at Lock 5.

The actual FCC work party hours on the adopted section from January 2015 to 30th September 2019 are 3144 volunteer hours + 277.5 hours travel. Plus two days of work by a licenced arborist working in the boat dock at Lock 2: £300. In excess of 200 bags of rubbish were picked, totalling approximately 2 tons of assorted rubbish from the canal and adjacent banks.

Towpath renewal in partnership with Northwest WRG, in three phases from 2016 and 2017 totalled 1,010 hours.

Operations carried out by licenced and approved machine operators:

Mini digger 7.5 days x £150/day = £1,125

Roller 7.5 days x £150/day = £1,125

Dumper x 2 7.5 days x £150/day = £2,250

Billet of volunteers and machinery hire for all three working groups: £3,000 (provided by the FCC from IWA donations, gift from the Will of a deceased FCC member and the FCC budget). All materials and sundries were provided by CRT.

Using the figures from DerwentWISE in association with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, the total value of all the volunteer hours on this section of the Cromford Canal is:

Working hours: 3144 x £10/hr = £31,440

Travel: 277.5 x £10/hr = £2775

*2 days of licensed arborist in the boat dock
Lock 2: £300*

Relaying hours: 1010 x £10/hr: £10,100

Machinery Hire & Billeting; £3,000

Machine operators value total: £4,500

Total cost of volunteer hours on the Ironville section is £52,115. I think that it is a very creditable figure produced by volunteer labour from a great group of people. And Ironville is not the only site we work on over the entire 14.5 miles of our canal!

BIRDSWOOD REPORT

By Boat Operations Manager Vix Wilding

The volunteer team on Birdswood has been dwindling this year but the ones that remain and keep coming back are really the most pleasant people I have ever met. They turn out come rain or shine with smiles for co-workers and customers alike.

One very supportive and committed lady is Pauline Eversden and without her my job would be impossible. The tiresome recording of data into spreadsheets is a long process every week and with me already stretched this data wouldn't be available if Pauline didn't complete it. The information from these statistics helps with the general business plan for Birdswood set by the Boat Committee and the information is also required for funding applications, marketing targets, audience analysis and most importantly the total number of passengers. As well as all this Pauline is one of the persons nominated to assist me with the banking process each week. We count, record and bank the money together for security purposes and she has been doing this as a volunteer for 3 years now.

We have had a super year with over 8,000 passengers and have provided nearly sixty private charters. The Santa Specials bring around 400 people and this should result in our second best year for passengers figures. The feedback and reviews from passengers speak very highly of the work the volunteers do on the day to make their trip as comfortable and informative as possible and the smiles on their faces are very rewarding.

There have been many successes this year and training for new helmsmen has been taking place. This requires understanding all the workings and safety requirements of the operation to MCA standards. Trainees must spend many hours practising to become fully competent at steering Birdswood and be able to react to prevent incidents. This is not as



Pauline Eversden also regularly crews on Birdswood.

easy as it sounds as Birdswood often has a mind of her own! The qualified masters have been giving their 'spare time' to help with training these new people, so we hope to have new MCA-qualified masters next year.

Several new team members joined this year after a recruitment drive I instigated. There was need for enthusiastic all-rounders, and we have found several! Without their commitment we wouldn't have got through the busy summer months when we have so many extra shifts to fill because of the private charters.

As always there is need for additional crew help as there are not enough of us to cover all these shifts. Making the drinks especially is as important as steering due to the continued contact with the customers. Any spare time you can offer would be very gratefully received.

A final word of thanks goes to Arraslea Shires who turn out in all weathers to enable us to continue the legacy of horse-drawn boats on the Cromford Canal.

New Christmas Cards

Friends of Cromford Canal

