

THE PORTAL

Issue 74 - Autumn 2020

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Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608

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Front Cover

The Boat Inn at Pinxton looking resplendent in the sunshine. This would have looked rather different if you took Christine Johnson's 'Virtual Walk' in 1878 (page 22), although for some reason it does not appear on maps of the time. Since its extension and long-awaited reopening this has proved to be a popular pub and restaurant.

Photo: Tony Fisher

Back Cover

Two images taken in 1966 of the section now subject to the recent planning permission (page 6). **Top:** The canal in water with the remains of the Beggarlee coal loading chute just beyond the line of railway wagons – taken from roughly where the boatyard now ends. **Bottom:** The decaying remains of Lock 13 which were obliterated by the construction of the A610.

Photos: J.G. Parkinson/Online Transport Archive

The copy date for the next issue is 13th November

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

Well, despite the lack of physical progress over the last three months, there has been much going on 'behind the scenes' for the Friends of the Cromford Canal. The biggest and best news of course is the approval of planning consent to extend the canal north from Langley Mill (page 6).

Then we have the new edition of the Walker's Guide (page 15) hot from the press. Even if you have an older version, you really do need this fully revised edition with completely 'new' photographs. It is surprising how much has changed over the years!

I don't know if it was an effect of Coronavirus, but there was a great response to the last issue of *Portal*, as reflected in our packed Letters pages this month (page 28) and Jan Columbo's article (page 26). It really is good to get such positive feedback. Keep it coming!

Let's hope things get better before the next *Portal* comes out. Keep safe and, for those who are able, do go out exploring the lesser known stretches of our canal using the new guide. I'll be interested to know what you think of it.

Hugh Potter

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Being the chairman of a large voluntary organisation can be challenging at the best of times, taking into consideration all of the different hopes and aspirations of its wide and varied membership. Some members are fully engaged and play very active roles, whilst others just subscribe to the membership and read this quarterly magazine - but all support in any form is welcomed. However, we all have one common dream and that is to protect the line of the once thriving and beautiful Cromford Canal and restore her back to her former glory.

This year has been fraught with all sorts of problems as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and FCC has surely been another casualty amongst many across the country and around the world. Our core active volunteer base working groups are predominantly over sixty years old and some are in their eighties, which is remarkable, but they have mostly fallen into that vulnerable age group whether they have liked it or not. That has produced a unique set of problems for the charity, and although we are now all trying our best to emerge into some kind of new normal we aren't out of the woods yet.

The situation will hopefully only be temporary and all of the influences that have impacted on us will start to recede as time goes by. In the meantime we all have to adapt, improvise and carry on as best as we all can. This will mean, because of the risks involved in the running of *Birdswood* and the proximity of the visiting passengers and the volunteers staffing the boat, that FCC have decided to err on the side of caution for all concerned, and so sadly our world famous trip boat will not be running until the spring of 2021.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Tim Ogle of G.C. Ogle & Sons of Ripley and all the volunteers, Malcolm Chisnall and John Baylis in particular, who have been involved in fixing the issues with the boat's drive system. It is no easy task to repair a hydraulic pump that is run by an electric motor driving an 'outboard' motor on an 82-year-old boat. There are so many variables to consider, and the conversion from diesel to this propulsion model will never be without its issues, but that's boating for you!

Technology has been another challenge for our committee system too, but from late ►

May and by the end of June we had all three committees back up and running on Zoom. I'm really impressed with my fellow members and their ability to embrace and adjust to this new meeting format; in fact we all cheered as members who had struggled with the technology appeared on our screens like rabbits in the headlights!

We have also had a change in the chairmanship of the Boat Committee, and we would all like to welcome Richard Handley on board. I hope he continues to receive the support he deserves for all of his meticulous and thorough hard work that he is doing there. He is very passionate about the role and that can only be of benefit to us all in the years ahead as the society focuses on other project areas.

Finally, as you may have seen from the article on page 6 we have recently overcome a major obstacle in the progress of the restoration of the Cromford Canal – to achieve the full planning permission for the Beggarlee Extension in Langley Mill. This is realistically only the end of the beginning for this project. It is a huge and complex undertaking and for that we shall require a whole new range of volunteers from all walks of life for fundraising, project management, and from the construction industry; the list goes on!

So seriously folks if you think that you could help us in anyway shape or form please do not hesitate to get in touch; the Cromford Canal needs you! We have a new volunteering 'hotline' at volunteer@cromfordcanal.org or contact any of the officers listed on page 2.

David Martin

Annual General Meeting

In the last *Portal* I mentioned that we would try to hold the postponed FCC AGM at a members' meeting in the autumn. We have received advice from the Charity Commission that postponed AGMs must be held before 30th September, unless the Government decides that there should be a further relaxation. With the imminent publication of *Portal* we couldn't wait for a further relaxation and so the AGM will now take place as below.

Ironville Church have not yet allowed the use of the Church Hall for meetings and, as we needed a suitable location before *Portal* went to press, we have had to look at other locations. I am pleased to say that the New Horizon Church at Langley Mill will be happy to host the meeting and their room is already set out for social distancing.

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Monday 21st September at the New Horizon Church, Linkmel Road, Langley Mill NG16 4AA. This is next to the Great Northern Inn and there is plenty of car parking.

In order that we can control the spacing of the attendees, everyone attending must book beforehand by contacting the Membership Secretary whose details are on the inside front cover. The maximum attendance to allow adequate social distancing might well in the region of forty and booking will be stopped when this number is reached. If you haven't booked you might not be able to get in unless there are still vacant seats.

The agenda and other papers will be as in previous *Portals* and are also on the website; refreshments will not be available.

John Baylis, BEM, FCC Executive Secretary

BREAKTHROUGH AT BEGGARLEE!

After almost a year and a half of waiting for planning approval, FCC Chairman David Martin celebrates the biggest breakthrough for restoration in decades

The Friends of the Cromford Canal have finally overcome one of the main obstacles in extending the canal further north from Langley Mill and reconnecting with the rest of the now derelict and isolated canal in Derbyshire. Late in August, planning permission was granted for the extension of the canal from the present terminus close to the former Beggarlee Wharf to pick up the original route at Stoney Lane.

In 1973 the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association restored the first lock on the Cromford Canal, along with Great Northern Basin. Then they continued to restore the canal further along the original route; much of this section at the terminus is currently a private boatyard.

The A610 bypass caused a major obstacle, blocking the original route of the canal and severing the existing towpath around 1984 after the NCB opencast the area. The Friends set up their own Strategic Restoration Committee in January 2016 and formulated a plan to start work on reconnecting the rest of the Cromford Canal with the national network.

FCC's chief engineer John Boucher designed a scheme to utilise a former colliery railway bridge that still exists in the A610 embankment, thus overcoming the obstacle. The new permitted route will incorporate a staircase pair of locks to elevate the canal so that it can turn right to pass under the A610 without affecting the bridge foundations. It will then turn immediately left to head around the western edge of Brinsley's former Moorgreen Colliery spoil heap and terminate at Stoney Lane in Brinsley.

John Boucher said "It's been a long process because it involved two planning authorities

– Broxtowe and Amber Valley – along with many statutory consultees, but with the help of friends and colleagues in FCC we have finally managed, after 17 months, to achieve our goal".

When George Rogers and I planned this back in 2016 I never really believed it would take this long! Now the real work will begin. This is only the first stage and there is still a long way to go! I would like to take the opportunity to say a massive thank you to all who have been involved in this extremely arduous and complex process, from John Boucher and the Friends of Cromford Canal's engineers, to the consultees, and also the planning officers at Broxtowe and Amber Valley, Peter Langford and Helen Frith, who have had to correlate all the information and convert it into a workable solution.

Our next focus will be on funding, because now we have a plan. We will of course never turn away any willing volunteers who would like to play a role in history by reinstating a key part of our rich industrial heritage here in the Erewash Valley, the Cromford Canal.

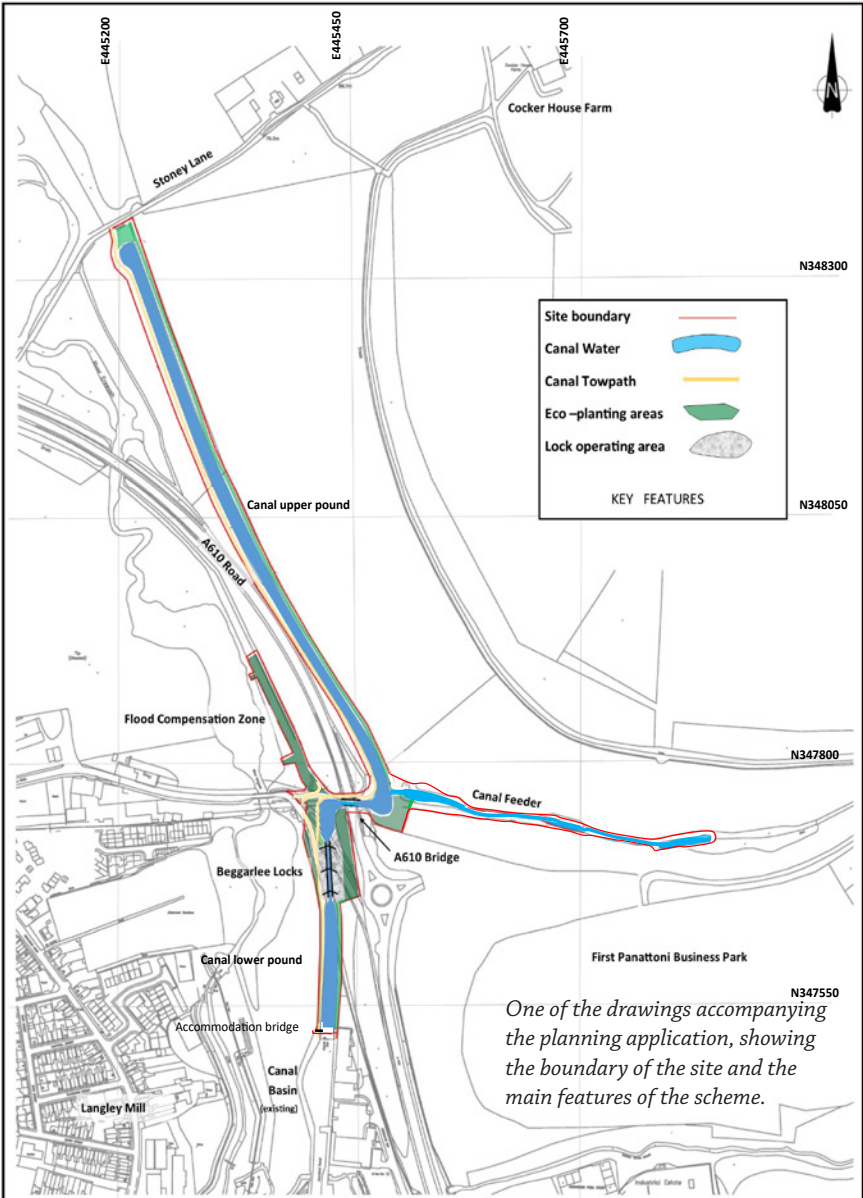
If you would like to get involved in any way, please contact me: chairman@chromfordcanal.org; 07976764439. ►


Right: *An artist's impression of the new canal for which planning approval has been granted. Many more details of the work that went into the planning application and of the route were published in Spring 2019 Portal (68). A new team of volunteers will now be needed to raise funds and see this scheme through to completion.*

Cromford Canal Beggarlee Extension



A	Stoney Lane, Brinsley, Nottinghamshire
B	Winding hole at end of new canal
C	Canal feeder from side stream
D	A610 Road and bridge over canal. Boundary between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire
E	Flood risk compensation area
F	Link to Hall Road
G	Beggarlee Locks
H	Former Beggarlee coal loading wharf
J	Canal Towpath forming part of the Erewash Valley Trail
K	Accommodation bridge at start of canal extension
L	Langley Mill Basin, Derbyshire, head of existing Cromford Canal navigation, linked to Erewash Canal and River Trent



 <p>FRIENDS OF THE CROMFORD CANAL</p>	<p>Cromford Canal - Beggarlee Extension</p> <p>General Layout Drawing</p>	<p>Scale: 1:2500 @ A2 Drawn: JKGB Nov. 2018</p>
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MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By Yvonne Shattower

In my report in the last *Portal* I ended by saying I hoped that, by the time I wrote the next 'Membership Matters', we would be again holding our monthly meetings and *Birdswood* trips and work party activities would have recommenced. How wrong I was! Even if we are having a few limited work parties, *Birdswood* will not be running in 2020, and there is no sign of our regular monthly meetings resuming.

These are indeed very strange times, and I hope that you have all come through the last few months without too much difficulty, although I know there are some who have had a hard time, and I hope things are easier for them now on what will be a long way back.

Now that we have to cope with 'social distancing', my visits to the bank to pay in cheques for your membership fees can involve even longer queues than before, so I have been keeping visits to a minimum, I therefore have to apologise again for the

delay in banking some of your cheques. If any of you who pay by cheque would prefer to pay by standing order, please let me know and I will send you the appropriate form.

Our programme of talks and meetings at Ironville has, of course, been totally disrupted, and our next meeting will be the postponed AGM which will be held at the New Horizon Church at Langley Mill on 21st September. Numbers will be strictly limited and you will need to book your place beforehand (see page 5). At the time of writing this report, although many restrictions are being relaxed, there is still no real information on when we might be able to recommence our regular meetings at Ironville.

On a brighter note, we had the pleasure at the end of July of appointing John Baylis as an Honorary Life Member. John was a founder member of the FCC and this award was in recognition of all his work as Vice Chairman, especially the time when he was

covering for Mike Kelley whilst Mike was working abroad; Chairman; latterly Executive Secretary; and his participation in the general running of the Friends and getting *Birdswood* up to Cromford. Those of you who know John will know of his wide expertise in canal restoration and his more than useful contacts in waterways and engineering. If John doesn't know the solution to a problem, then there probably isn't one! The Life Membership also coincided with a 'Big Birthday', so happy belated birthday, John.

I hope that we will see as many of you as possible at the AGM. ─



John Baylis, in the driving seat as usual, with Dave Turner, John Barker, Norman Cornwell and David Martin.

BIRDWOOD AND THE COVID YEAR

By Mike Kelley

The last time that our narrowboat *Birdwood* carried passengers was for the Santa Specials in December 2019. Our newly enrolled member of the Boat Committee, Richard Handley, had produced for us by far the best business plan that we had ever had and we were raring to go for 2020.

The hydraulic motor had been playing up during December, but we were confident all would be well for the new season. During 2019 we had carried 8,536 passengers and we were hopeful of passing the nine thousand mark in 2020. The Boat Operations Manager, Vix Wilding, went from part-time employment to become our first full-time employee, and all was well with the FCC's world. And then . . .

Well we all know what happened next, for we are hardly likely to forget it. Covid-19 struck and Lockdown was ordered. We were told elderly people were the most at risk, and most of our volunteers fell into that bracket. Stuff happens!

The boat engine and rudder were in bits and spread over a wide area. Crew, masters, and

trustees were locked in for several months, but as restrictions began to ease slightly we were not even able to run the boat without passengers to keep the canal's narrow water channel open. New bearings for the rudder were made and a new motor and hydraulic pump were purchased with John Baylis and others trying their best to fix it; but at the time of writing (late August) it still does not run correctly.

Our colleagues Alan Oakley and Peggy Cope used the post-lockdown period to repaint the outside of the boat, and made a lovely job of it too.

Even so, no money was coming in, but money was going out (as it does). It was sad to see such long warm summer days pass us by. Normally it would have been a very profitable summer, but it was not to be.

A day was set aside for Covid precaution training, which went very well. Then as summer slowly turned to autumn it became clear that even if we could get *Birdwood* operational we would not be allowed to carry



Training and videoing for Covid 'Good to Go' approval.

the number of passengers on the scale we used to before, and our expenses continued to mount up. It was clear changes would have to be made. So good folk, we are down, but not out. The year 2020 has knocked us all, in many ways. Things will improve, on the basis they can't get much worse for *Birdwood*, and all. In 2021 we plan to run, but may be still with imposed restrictions; we shall see.

And if all this is not bad enough, even Santa will not be visiting us this year. Pass the whisky someone! **T**

WORK PARTY REPORTS

John Guyler on resumption of work post lockdown

A short report this quarter, due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Before work parties could re-commence, a Covid risk assessment had to be produced and accepted by the FCC. I then had to work with John Barker to produce a risk assessment for Derbyshire County Council and Canal & River Trust, which were sent back and forwards several times before approval was given.

The main points were that we had to define methods for working as a group and keep the public away from the works.

At the start of each work party the leader has to sign everyone in and each individual has to acknowledge they have read the risk assessment, which is sent out with the work party email.

Also, there is a request that volunteers who are showing symptoms of Covid-19, or who are at risk, do not attend.

29th July & 5th August: Lower Hartshay

The work party had a major headache with all the Himalayan Balsam and dense vegetation, which had had a great growing season. I don't think social distancing was a problem, with the density of the vegetation!

12th August

No work parties due to the DCC and CRT not giving approval for work on their respective sections.

19th & 26th August: Pinxton

Preparation work for the upcoming rebuild of Pinxton Weir in September. Jet washed all the stones in the weir. Lots of damage to trees from the high winds noted.

26th August: Ironville

Working in Lock 4 area, clearing vegetation along the edge of the towpath and the wall against Jack Brown's yard. Cleared some saplings on the far bank. A tree was down across the path at Codnor Park Reservoir. **T**



Plenty of room to socially distance at Lower Hartshay.

Photo: Adrian Booth



Preparatory work on Pinxton Weir.

Photo: Chris Martin

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

CIRCULAR CANAL WALKS – 8 LANGLEY MILL

Ken Brockway offers three canals and a historic viaduct



Sign at Langley Mill.



Erewash Canal milestone.



ShIPLEY Lock.



Great Northern Basin Langley Mill.



Nottingham Canal brick bridge.



Bridge Inn at Cotmanhay (closed).

Distance: 7½ or 4 miles
Start point: Langley Mill Basin
How to get there: Train to Langley Mill. Bus Rainbow see Traveline for details. Car parking on street, Linkmel Road, NG16 3RZ
Refreshments: Great Northern Inn, KFC, McDonalds, Railway Tavern all at Langley Mill



The swing bridge over the Nottingham Canal and toll office at Langley Mill.

This walk starts and ends on the Cromford Canal but in between explores the connecting canals that were essential to longer journeys. Many of the paths have a good surface but are used by cycles.▶

From the east side of the lock, which is Lock 14 of the Cromford Canal, head away from the road. Cross the end of the Nottingham Canal across the swing bridge. The public footpath continues with the canal on your left but is diverted around the boat dock, so take the gate right after the small brick building. This was the Nottingham Canal toll office, restored by the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association. Follow the winding path to rejoin the canal path beyond the work area.



The aqueduct over the River Erewash.

Continue past the moored boats to a metal gate, go through the gate, with water still on your left. When the water ends the path becomes less distinct but continue and a line of fence posts will appear on your left. Follow these as the embankment of the road gets closer on your right. The last post has waymark arrows attached. This was close to the site of Cromford Lock 13 and ahead will be the location of locks 12 and 13 for the planned restored route.

Go no further but turn around and take the path waymarked forking right. Pass a large concrete structure then bear right to pass

over a large pipe and ahead is a substantial footbridge crossing the River Erewash. Turn left from the bridge and follow the path to the road.



The extensive remains of the Nottingham Canal swing bridge near Langley Mill.

Turn right along the road towards Asda then cross the road using the central reservation to McDonalds, and take the road towards Heanor. Just before passing under the rail bridge turn left into Milnhay Road, and follow this for about 600 yards. Houses on the left end with a terrace row and the road crosses a stream, Bailey Brook; immediately after this take the footpath left.



The spectacular Bennerley viaduct is now under restoration.

The path crosses grass fields with the brook over to your left. As you approach level with buildings over to your right, Lacy Fields Farm, seek a footbridge over the river. Cross the bridge then head to the far right corner of the field where a gap in the hedge allows access onto the Erewash Canal towpath by a waymark post. Turn right along the towpath.▶

At Eastwood Lock the towpath changes sides. The canal crosses the River Erewash on a three-arch aqueduct before Shipley Lock; here there is the choice. For the 4-mile walk, leave the canal and turn left up the lane to meet the return route at point A (blue line on map, see instructions below).



The route is generally well signed.

For the full walk, continue along the towpath below the lock, noting the very low tail bridge. Pass under the rail bridge and on to Bridge 23 and what was the appropriately named Bridge Inn – until it closed. After a further 200 yards take a footpath left, down a few steps. This shortly leads to a bridge over the railway which offers a fine view of Bennerley Viaduct. This Grade II Listed structure was built by the Great Northern Railway in 1877 allowing that company access to the lucrative Erewash Valley coal traffic. Redundant since closure in 1968, it is at last being restored and will provide a link which this walk can use in future.

Continue across the footbridge then pass under the viaduct; note the wrought iron legs that sit without fastening on the simple brick foundations. Follow the wide track with the active rail line on your right. No need to join the road, a path offers a safe route just inside the field before meeting a roadside pavement to cross the River Erewash.

A short hill takes you to the contour level of the Nottingham Canal; turn left onto this towpath alongside water which is usually busy with anglers. There is another view of the

viaduct from the information board before the water ends. The canal from here has, like the Cromford, been much destroyed by mining. The original course headed north but it's now easier to follow the Erewash Valley Trail which is well signed so don't be distracted by any side paths. It's a bit enclosed initially but after crossing a footbridge it offers easy walking and pleasant views.

The tall wind turbine stands to your right. The track turns right then take the left turn, all signed Erewash Valley Trail. Five paths meet at Shipley Gate and here the track re-joins the route of the Nottingham Canal. Continue along the main track to a road crossing.

This is point A. From the short route turn left through the barrier, or on the long walk cross the road and continue. The old canal bed while not immediately obvious does gradually become a damp reed filled depression on the right. Having passed an almost complete swing bridge, the track meets and crosses an original brick arch bridge. Beyond this the canal bed soon disappears, replaced by a wide area of grass through which the track gently curves, coming very close on the left to the water of the Erewash Canal.

At the next road crossing turn left to take the 'Short Cut' over the canal then turn right along the towpath. The original terminal basin of the Erewash Canal was under the car park of KFC and Lidl, so as you pass under the bridge you have re-joined the start (or is it end?) of the Cromford Canal. **T**



The signs at Langley Mill welcome you to the finish of the walk.

NEW WALKER'S GUIDE

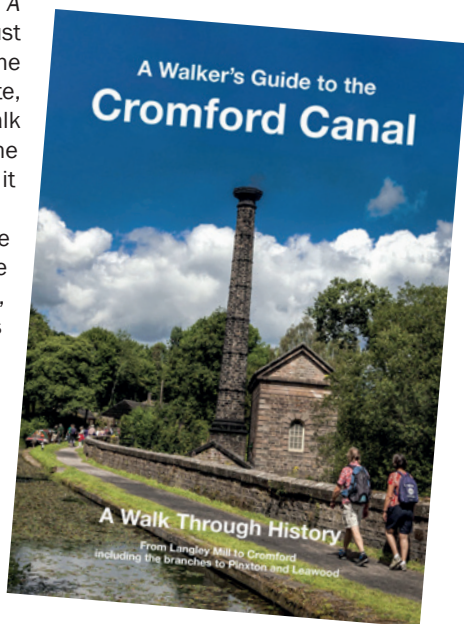
A new edition of the FCC's perennially popular *A Walker's Guide to the Cromford Canal* has just been published. Edited by Hugh Potter with the help of Ken Brockway who advised on the route, this third edition takes on a new form as "A Walk Through History", guiding you not only along the route of the canal today, but showing you what it used to look like in the past.

So much has changed on the canal since the 1960s that it is hard to imagine what it was like prior to parts of it being sold off, demolished, opencast or infilled. Although the majority was abandoned in 1944, little changed until the mid-1960s when British Waterways decided to dispose of as much of the canal as possible. They had no regard for its future, except the top 5½ miles from Ambergate to Cromford which remain mercifully intact thanks to BW donating it to Derbyshire County Council.

It is that length that most people think of when the canal is mentioned – but that is less than a third of the total length. Fortunately there is a public footpath along most of its route, but there are some diversions necessary in places, and the footpaths are not always easy to follow.

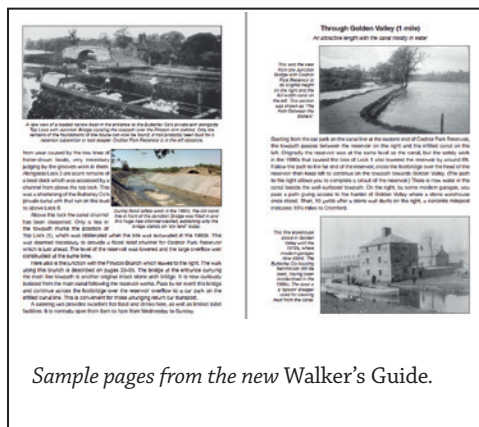
With this guide you can confidently trace the entire route of the canal from Langley Mill to Pinxton and Cromford. The guide breaks the walk down into shorter sections, from one to five miles, which can be combined to suite your walking abilities. Car parks and local public transport services are detailed to facilitate one-way walks, and local refreshment stops are listed.

Graced by a splendid cover photograph by Ashley Franklin, the remainder of the illustrations show what the canal used to look like in its working days and before sections were destroyed, enabling you to get a feel for what an important busy canal it used to be, and how much has been lost. You will also appreciate some of the challenges



that face FCC in achieving restoration.

Copies of the new 36-page guide are available at just £5 (post free) from the online shop at www.birdswood.org or by post from FCC Sales, Weighbridge Office, Gothic Warehouse, Mill Lane, Cromford DE4 3RQ. **T**



Sample pages from the new Walker's Guide.

ANY OLD IRON?

Simon Stoker recalls how the Bullbridge swing bridge ended up at Cromford

On the upper reaches of Wheatcroft's Wharf lies a heap of scrap – various bits of contorted wrought iron, some cast-iron plates, a couple of old railway lines and some rotting wood. I wonder if many people now realise what these are? In fact there are bits of several structures just slung in a heap by some unsuspecting (or uncaring?) agency. To me that is a painful and depressing (but not surprising) waste of history. It's a long story . . .

One day in late 1968 the wonderful Bullbridge Aqueduct at Ambergate was demolished to facilitate road widening (the iron trough inserted over the railway line followed soon after), leaving a truncated and forlorn structure on only one side of the valley. To compound this act the



Terminus: the truncated remains with the new gas works behind.

All photographs A D Stoker 1968/Simon Stoker 1988/2020

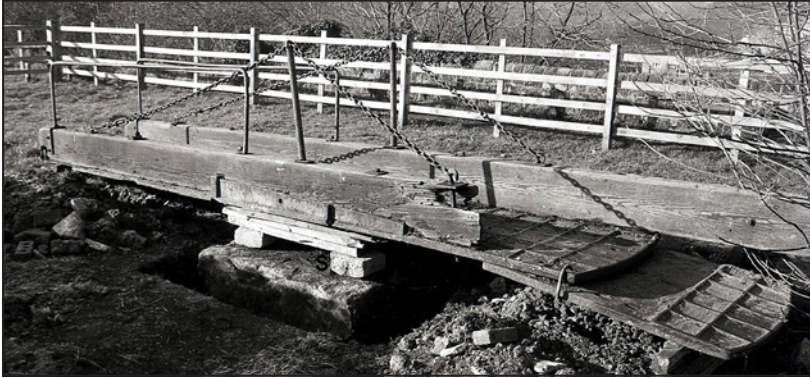
Cromford Canal was further undermined, and a large part removed, by the construction of a new gas processing plant near Stevenson's

Dyeworks. All that remained of the upper part of the canal was the section from there back to Cromford, much of which came to be restored by the then Cromford Canal Society.

For most of that restoration work, which gathered pace from 1968 onwards and saw the first operational horse-drawn boat in mid-1977, not much thought was given to the other parts of the canal. We always took the view that since, without ►



The swing bridge in situ with the aqueduct filled in.



The swing bridge awaiting lifting out on 30th March 1988.

a miracle, it would be impossible to recover the central sections (let alone the tunnel) it would be better to concentrate on what we *could* do.

For all that time, lying unloved on top of the remains of Bullbridge Aqueduct, was the small iron swing bridge. I do not really remember why the matter came to our attention – it might have been a prompt from the County Council – but in 1988 but a decision was made to recover the swing bridge from the now infilled aqueduct.

This is an interesting little bridge. It is not wood, like the others on the canal, but cast-iron plates with a large chequer pattern moulded in to give horses' hooves a purchase. It is only wide enough for a horse to cross from

the Buckland Hollow end towards Cromford.

At some time a crack appeared just near the centre ball-race, possibly due to bad design or poor casting, and the structure had been reinforced with two timber baulks to stiffen it.

Counterbalancing was achieved through a second moveable cast plate with a number of holes made in it so that it could be moved in or out.▶



Take off – the swing bridge being lifted away.



The crane's 90ft jib lifts the pad-stone away and down to the lorry.



Unloading at Cromford

In March 1988 we arrived at Bullbridge with a crane and a low-loader. In that respect we were eternally grateful to people like the crane company who would respond to a suggestion “if you’ve got a crane passing xxx at around 9am on Thursday do you think we could make use of it for a while?” Of course there never was a crane (or a lorry) passing by but we were never invoiced for its use.



The large pad-stone with the lower ball-race intact.



Making foundations for the pad-stone next to the feed.

With a great deal of care and respect for the structure the bridge was freed from its local environment, straps were hitched and the 90ft jib of the crane took the load. Interestingly the *whole bridge* was lifted as one, so it must have been fairly strong.▶



The swing bridge intact alongside the pad-stone at Cromford Wharf.



Various bits from the swing bridge and the old icebreaker in a heap on the wharf.

There also remained the lower half of the structure – its mountings, or pad-stone, with the lower ball-race attached to it. This in turn was excavated and lifted down onto the waiting low loader.

Then everyone trundled back to Cromford Wharf to unload.



The cast iron plates with the counterbalance nearest the camera.

The original intention was to do what restoration was possible on the bridge and then mount it on its pad-stone so that it spanned the restored feed next to the canopy dock. It would make a fine exhibit for the canal.

To my eternal regret, things did not quite work out that way. CCS lost its (highly useful) job-creation gang at the end of 1988 and itself fell victim to outside forces in 1989. The bridge was never restored, although the pad-stone remains in situ.

Thirty two years later its remains lie in a jumbled heap on Wheatcroft's Wharf.

What is quite amazing is that when so many other things have disappeared from the wharf, the major parts of the bridge have

not been sold off for scrap. The structure was originally Grade II listed and was only delisted in 2000, 12 years after it left Bullbridge! Surely there must have been a Duty of Care somewhere?

The other bits in the scrap heap consist of a couple of railway lines which were removed from the drydock. It is thought these were originally from the Manchester, Buxton, Matlock & Midland Joint Railway (later LMS) and are a very heavy profile.

There were also some wrought-iron knees from what remained of the old icebreaker (recovered from opposite Leewood Pump House with a view to preservation and display) which have recently been 'rescued'.

How wonderful it would be if, phoenix like, the old swing bridge could be reconstituted and exhibited once more. Who's up for it? ■



The pad-stone in position. (The lump on top has nothing to do with the bridge!)

FCC AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Richard Handley takes a look at how things are changing

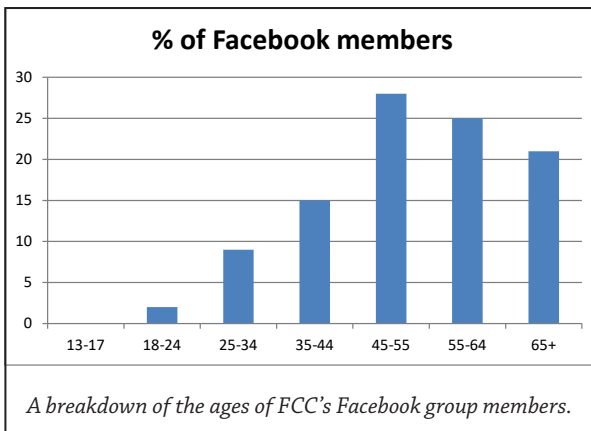
In the Spring 2014 edition of Portal, Nic Barfield pondered on how Social Media might benefit the FCC in his article 'Are the Friends ready to be social?'. Back then Facebook, Twitter and YouTube were in their infancy, being barely 10 years old, and FCC was only 12 years old, so mere children compared to *Birdswood* (75 years old at the time) and don't even mention the age of the Cromford Canal (220 years)!

Yet Nic and the Trustees recognised that 'social media' was something to be explored and potentially used to the benefit of the FCC. He thought that "this new digital dawn heralds a bright new day for small societies like us".

And was he right?

A Facebook group for the Friends of the Cromford Canal had been created in 2010; initially with quite a small following, it was intended to be a resource for FCC members. No Twitter account had been created at that time, as Twitter was in its infancy and few people understood its potential.

A Facebook page was created for *Birdswood* in 2013 as a shop window to promote the trip schedule and to bring our followers updates about programme alterations, special cruises etc, and as a contact point for people coming to us for the first time. This page is currently curated by our Boat Operations Manager - Vix Wilding. There's even a sub-page for volunteers where *Birdswood* crew can communicate in a closed user group.



Facebook Membership last 60 days			
Top Countries		Top towns / cities	
United Kingdom	1177	Nottingham	181
Australia	11	Matlock	166
United States	6	Derby	146
France	2	Alfreton	111
Mongolia	1	Belper	79
Norway	1	Ripley	58
Taiwan	1	Heanor	33
Congo	1	Chesterfield	27
India	1	Sheffield	26
Benin	1	Mansfield	23

A Twitter account was set up for *Birdswood* in 2014 aimed at what was perceived to be a younger target market of potential *Birdswood* passengers. That original page lapsed (although it still exists, no tweets have been broadcast since 2014), and a new Twitter account (created in 2016) for *Birdswood*, again curated by Vix Wilding, is now been used.▶

So both Facebook and Twitter were seen as being potentially useful for promotion of *Birdswood* and associated activities, and hopefully extending reach into a younger demographic, but neither has been fully exploited so far.

FCC has recently recognised that communication with our members, volunteers, stakeholders, and potential customers is absolutely vital, and to that end we've been trying to do much more in the social media space.

Recently we've been promoting the FCC Facebook group through a number of routes and membership of the group currently stands at more than 1,200 – up by 40% in about 6 months – and our group site has been updated so that new member applications are approved more quickly and more up-to-date content posted.

The current version of Facebook now allows us to monitor top-posters, demographic and location information. A couple of examples are shown on these pages.

An FCC Twitter account was created in March 2020, and reasonably regular Tweeting has increased our followers to more than 120. More important than the number of followers is the 'quality' of them;

for example some of our followers have lots of followers, which means that our Tweets potentially get seen by a very large audience: About 50 Tweets since creation have been seen by more than 40,000 Twitter users: all potential members, volunteers and customers!

No attempt has been made to create a dedicated FCC YouTube channel, as there are lots of videos about the Cromford Canal already posted by lots of individuals: so what we've been doing is posting occasional presentational style content and encouraging our e-Newsletter, Facebook and Twitter readers and followers to go and search themselves and find content that they might be interested in (just search for 'Cromford Canal').

The upshot of all of this recent social media activity is that our communication with FCC members, volunteers, stakeholders and potential customers is much more frequent and consistent, and has been driving a noticeably younger demographic to be interested in what we're up to.

So Nic was right, social media is a vital part of FCC's communication mix, although we don't think we're quite ready for TikTok just yet Nic! **T**

LOCK STOCKS BUT NO BARRELS

Hugh Potter poses a query

In the transcriptions of the Cromford Canal Permit Books, out of over 85,000 entries, there are just eight recorded passages of boats carrying Lock Stocks, all from Pinxton to either Birmingham or Wolverhampton between 1822 and 1838. The tonnage varies between 11 and 29.5 (the latter on two boats).

But what are Lock Stocks? Are we talking canal locks or security locks? Canal historians have suggested both. It could be part of the

paddle gear (but that is known also to have been made more locally in the Black Country) or it could be using a specialist metal needed for security locks which were manufactured in the Black Country (but then the tonnages are rather high).

We have a good number of permits from before 1822 and after 1838, which begs the second question of why they were apparently carried for such a relatively short period.

Do members have any ideas? **T**

A VIRTUAL WALK ALONG THE PINXTON BRANCH

by Christine Johnstone

Let's take a walk along the Pinxton Branch in 1878. All we need is the Cromford Canal toll receipts and some old large-scale Ordnance Survey maps – 6 inches to a mile will do, 25 inches is even better. The FCC already has a database for the toll receipts from Langley Mill, which includes 14th February to 3rd May 1878, and the National Library of Scotland has put thousands of OS maps online, including the ones we need, surveyed between 1877 and 1880.

Soon the houses along Casson Street are on our right, followed by Christ Church, with the cemetery on the opposite bank. After Bullock Lane bridge, the Vicarage with its garden and summer house is on the far side, and the backs of houses in Victoria Street and Tank Street are on this side. Soon the Ambergate & Pye Bridge Branch of the Midland Railway crosses the canal, followed by the Nottingham Lane Bridge, with the houses of Oakes Row off to the right and Fletchers Row off to the left.



Bullock Lane crosses the Pinxton Branch beside Ironville Church.

Setting off from the junction with the 'main line', we see the bridge which carries the 'main line' towpath over the Pinxton Branch. On our right [the towpath side] are 32 terraced houses facing each other across Ironville's Market Place and another 16 on Queen Street. On the opposite side of the canal is Junction Cottage, served by the next bridge we come to.

Then Riddings Colliery appears on the left bank, and a mineral line crosses the canal to serve it. As we come up to the Pye Bridge wharf, the far bank is filled with shafts, railway lines, brickworks, gasworks and the mighty Alfreton ironworks – a sharp contrast to the fields on the towpath side. We might even see a boat at the triangular wharf. Three times in eleven weeks a pair of boats take a cargo out – bricks to the chemical works just north of here or castings to London. There is only one other receipt for a delivery here

in Spring 1878 – a mixed load of old castings and timber from the Erewash Canal.

Passing the Alfreton-Nottingham road bridge, and not turning right to visit the Dog and Doublet public house, we continue on towards Pinxton. Under another Midland Railway bridge, a footbridge leads to Kempson's new chemical works on the far ►



The Alfreton–Nottingham road bridge at Pye Bridge.



Approaching the Pinxton terminus with collieries on the left and Meadow Rows on the right.

bank, which is where the bricks are landed. And once every eleven days or so, a boat comes here from Nottingham with 20 tons of gas tar. On our right, the River Erewash runs through farmland. Crimea Cottages are tucked away between the canal and the railway on the far bank, and here's the Old House at Home beerhouse right on the towpath.



The Old House at Home was right alongside the Pinxton Branch.



Office Row Bridge was used in the film of DH Lawrence's Sons & Lovers.

A basin on the far side links up with a colliery tramway, but the wharf is disused now. A bridge provides access to Office Rows, then the Great Northern Railway's Pinxton Colliery Branch crosses. Immediately after are

the Meadow Rows houses on this side, with the Pinxton Colliery wharf on the far bank. We might see a boat here – once every three or four weeks a boat or a pair of boats take about 53 tons of coal down to the Erewash Canal. Nothing comes up here from Langley Mill though.

On the last leg of our journey now. On the far bank the air shafts, smithies and mineral lines of Pinxton Colliery. On this side, a footbridge crosses a small canal arm behind a building, then there are a few more buildings. Our journey ends at Pinxton Wharf, surrounded by limekilns, gasworks, factories and railway lines. Where to next? **T**

LOCKDOWN LESSONS

Marie Brown considers which bits of 'normal' are worth going back to

I wish I had a pound for every time I have heard the saying 'in these unprecedented times' over the last 6 months.

Now, with schools reopening and things beginning to return to normal we wait for the second wave, the conspiracy theories and the inevitable political aftermath that will follow.

We must all decide as individuals what bits of 'normal' we want to keep and which bits of these 'unprecedented times' have changed us for the better.

I, for one, enjoy working from home instead of sitting on a smelly, stuffy, often late train to London once a week. I have replaced that with a daily lunchtime walk, saying hello to neighbours along the way and enjoying clean, fresh air in the sunshine.

Don't get me wrong here, I know that many of our village residents are desperately trying to keep roofs over their heads, keep businesses afloat and, sadly, have lost loved ones to the virus. I would never underestimate the devastating affect that this killer has had on the lives of local people. That must be something that we never forget as a nation and we must all do what we can to support each other now, more than ever before.

I think back though, and I am grateful for the beauty of what we have right here on our doorstep and for the abundance of wildlife around us. I am grateful that we live in an area that has had relatively low case numbers and that all of the people I care about are still safe and well. I have also loved watching people expressing a new interest in nature and seeing people take solace and peace from enjoying the local outdoor spaces.



Our mental health can only be improved when enjoying the colours and the sights of life going on all around. This year's brood of five cygnets are nearly ready to lose their baby feathers and we will all soon be posting on Facebook that the Dad (the Cob) is chasing them off the reservoir for pastures new.

The water vole population is thriving and signs of regular visits from otters are present along the canal side. Butterflies in their thousands can be seen every day and the bees are attracted to all the wildflowers we have in the village and along the canal – quite a sight to behold.

If you are new to wildlife or the area or would just like to know more, why not get in touch and join us for a leisurely walk about the local area. All of the group are highly knowledgeable and would be happy to tell you more about the wonderful things that you have on your doorstep but maybe never get the opportunity to stop and see.

Derbyshire Wildlife News

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust have two charity shops – in Bakewell and Belper – which fund the vital work with local wildlife and are always looking for donations. Like many other charities across the UK their income has been in sharp decline, so we want to support these more in the coming months.

As an affiliated group we would be happy to collect donations locally and act as a collection point. If you have any good quality items such as clothes or bric-a-brac please contact our Secretary on 07812 130061 and we will arrange collection. ►

Plans for the coming months

Many of you will know that the group has the motto 'The Wildlife Comes First' and that everything we do locally centres around that commitment.

Last year we concentrated our efforts on infrastructure and information as we repaired 'Humpy Bridge' and provided interpretation boards in key areas to inform visitors, tourists and photographers. This year, the 5-year plan of investment will continue and the work focus will be on environment and engagement.

Much of the work for the rest of this season will be concentrating on catching up with things that we have been unable to do safely. This will include strimming and cutting back brambles so that the pathways are clear and accessible and continuing to ensure that litter and dog mess is minimised.

We will also be announcing some exciting news that will benefit the whole of the local community, so keep an eye on the Facebook group for that coming up soon.



Common Blue butterfly.

Photo: Rob Smith

2020 Community Litter Picks

This month we got the long-awaited call to say that our work parties and litter picks can resume. There have been slight changes and we have had to adhere to some new guidelines, but we are up and running once again and keen to continue the development of the local area.

Firstly though, may we take this opportunity to thank the individuals who have continued to keep the area free of litter and dog mess during lockdown, knowing that you were doing it as part of your daily exercise is very much appreciated.



Ladybird.

Photo: Dave Wilson

Litter pick dates: 12th September, 10th October, 14th November, 12th December, from 10am for a couple of hours, maximum. The December litter pick is usually followed by our annual fuddle to say thanks to all the volunteers working alongside us this year.

All volunteers need to wear sensible clothing such as sturdy boots or shoes but will be provided with all the equipment necessary such as litter pickers, bags, hi-vis vests and gloves. Due to the Covid-19 Regulations, we will now also be issuing disposable gloves, antibacterial wipes for the equipment and sanitiser. The wildlife may be a priority, but the safety of our volunteer helpers is something that we take very seriously and is the cornerstone of everything we do.

All of the information about forthcoming nature events, litter picks, competitions and news will be listed on the group's Facebook page 'Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Res' but please, feel free to get in touch with us directly on 07812 130061 or by email at cromfordcanalgroup@outlook.com. ■

HEAD OF NAVIGATION, 1976

Jan Columbo recalls her first boating holiday



Moored at the head of the Erewash Canal, in fact the very start of the Cromford Canal, below Langley Bridge Lock.

When I read Hugh Potter's article 'Erewash Achievement' (*Portal 73*), which referred to the certificate given for reaching the end of the Erewash Canal, it took me back nearly 45 years to September 1976.

In 1976, our friends had hired a narrow boat for two weeks, planning to travel with another couple. Later, their friends could only get leave from work for the second week. So, my husband and I went with them for the first week. This was my first trip on a narrow boat and I thoroughly enjoyed the novelty of it all.

Starting at Tardebigge, near Redditch, meant that I quickly learned how to work a lock. We travelled towards Birmingham and then on towards Nottingham. When we reached Sawley, we went up the Erewash Canal, then back to Trent Lock and on to Nottingham.

As my friends commented, we travelled quite rapidly in those days.

Like Hugh, when we reached the end of the Erewash Canal at Langley Mill, we were given a certificate, which I still have. It's amazing that

in my constant decluttering, I had always kept it, as a reminder of a very pleasant period.

We spent one night moored at Sandiacre, but I can't remember whether going up or back.

After the Erewash Canal, we went into Nottingham and spent the night alongside the station, so that in the morning we could get the train back to Chesterfield, where we lived at that time, and the other couple arrived to join the boat for the second week. I still can't remember how we got to Tardebigge for the start of the trip.

The hire boat was the 40ft *Bacchante*. It was made of wood, and when it rained very heavily one night, we woke up to find it had leaked and some of our beds were wet. Luckily, we had spare bunks and could move berths to dry out the bedding.

In 2005, early one morning, I was driving to Long Eaton, as I then worked in Erewash District and I was passing through Sandiacre, by the canal. I saw a narrow boat moored and thought that it was the one that my friends ►



Work was still underway constructing the boatyard above the lock in 1976.

by then had a twelfth share in and that it might have been them. I couldn't stop as I had to get to a site meeting at Long Eaton. So, when I arrived, I rang my friends, whom I hadn't been in contact with for many months, and asked where they were. Yes, they had spent the night at Sandiacre, exactly where we had moored

on the holiday. What a coincidence that I should happen to see them there, thirty years after our holiday.

The article in *Portal* brought back wonderful memories. I got in touch with my friends and they have looked out some slides that they took. **T**



Great Northern Basin with Mick & Carole Gold's boat Electra moored outside the full-length wooden unconverted boat Avon. This was then owned by Hugh and Chris Cauldwell, later the parents of Dan Cauldwell who now runs Langley Mill Boatyard. They moored on Sawley towpath in the early seventies and were one of the first to have a mooring at Langley Mill.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Leawood Stop Lock

Ron Common's piece in *Portal 73* about the uncovering of the gate anchor strap and your article on the possible layout and evolution of the stop lock at Leawood are very interesting. Assuming that a full-length lock was originally built my guess is that it would have had just the one gate or set at the Nightingale end to allow working only when the water level in the arm was above that in the main canal. That way the Cromford Canal Co could be assured that its precious water was not being lost. Most canal companies were extremely possessive about their water and it was usually who was there first who called the shots.

Also if a full-length lock was subsequently shortened by removing the walls at the one end, has anybody had a look in the canal bed to see if any remains of a cill or its substructure are still there?

Dave Turner

A Dry Dock for Birdswood?

If I may make a couple of comments on your interesting article on Leawood Stop Gates (*Portal 73*):

The 28.5.1800 agreement referring to "a good and sufficient lock and stop gate" suggests to me there was only one stop gate against the main line, and the purpose of that would be to protect the main line from a burst in the branch (serving a similar purpose to the Brindley gates at other points on the main line). It might even have been a simple gate without a balance beam. There would be no need for a second gate to allow boats to lock down into the arm, as Nightingale was obliged to keep the water in the arm higher at all times (at least after the 1802 plan). If it did fall for any reason and boats could not pass, that would be Nightingale's problem and not the Cromford Canal Co's.

I presume that once the supply from the Lea Brook was lost the water would have to be supplied from the main line, and then there would be no need for the lock. However, the stop gate would still be required, in theory right up to the end of navigation on the branch. Do we know when it actually ceased to function? If a gate is to be re-instated, it should be this stop gate rather than one of the lock gates, for the same reason – to protect the mainline against a burst in the branch. My own view is that would also provide an excellent opportunity to improvise a dry dock to service *Birdswood* and any future boats. The cost of doing that would be paid for within five years by the saving in crane hire costs.

The 1802 terms are also interesting with references to the water level being higher on Sundays than on other days. I presume this is because the agreement to take water from the Cromford Sough only allowed it to be taken on Sundays. It's very interesting that the weekly filling made such a big change in level. Are there any other references in minutes or elsewhere to this weekly effect? [*Not that I know of – Ed.*] Had *Birdswood* been operating in those days then the crew might really have had something to complain about!

It will be very interesting if they are able to clean it out and excavate at any time to confirm details and check the original cill level which might confirm whether the canal was constructed one foot deeper than a normal canal as has been suggested to enable it to act as a reservoir.

John Boucher

Butterley Memorial?

Thanks for another excellent issue of *Portal* (73). The new steps at Jacksdale look good, although personally I was sad to see the loss of the old Butterley bridge. It's a pity nothing was done to preserve it; the design was one of Butterley's more successful ventures and could ➤

have been some sort of memorial to the company, especially being alongside the site of their large Codnor Park works. [See *article on page 32 – Ed.*]

Another lost bridge is featured on the back cover, the one over the railway at Bullbridge. My memories of this event are complaining about having to make a detour during the demolition when I should have been there with my camera – it doesn't make me much of a canal enthusiast! [Has anyone seen any photos of the demolition of the railway bridge? – Ed.]

The Lea branch certainly caused some problems, far more than one would expect from its short length. Some of these could have been avoided if it had been built by the Cromford Canal Company itself, or is that just an outsider's view?

The restoration project has certainly brought together a group of people with a wide range of expertise, it seems whenever there is a problem someone from the group comes forward to help.

Keep up the good work. I am looking forward to the next issue already.

Brian Key

Brown's Bridge

Further to the article about Brown's Bridge (*Portal 73*), I would just like to say how outstanding is the design work. Truly inspired thinking by all the team involved, retaining the historic elements whilst building for the future.

A difficult job – getting the bridge to fit and to function. Well done all concerned.

Charles Pratley

LEA WOOD SEWAGE WORKS

Ian Hooker reports on planned improvements

Ever since we began operating *Birdswood* on the upper reaches of the Cromford Canal the single most common complaint from our passengers (pretty well the only common complaint) has been a chorus of voices asking "What is that awful smell" as the boat approaches High Peak Junction. The answer to that is that it comes from the sewage works at Lea Wood, just across the railway line that runs beside the canal.

The works were built originally in the 1920s and modernised about fifty years ago but have been largely untouched since then. Six years ago, a complete modernisation of the plant was planned, but then the capital funds were diverted elsewhere. Now, three years after renewed complaints from the FCC and others, a partial improvement has been agreed and planning permission granted by DCC.

Until now the tanks that collect the solid matter from the sewage have been open and the smell can escape to linger over HPJ and surrounding area. They stand just the other

side of the railway and a stone's throw from the canal towpath. Lids are to be fitted to these and an odour control filter system will be added. This will mean that the conical lids will be visible from the towpath especially in the winter when trees are bare and a new tall but slender chimney will be added, but it should mean that a major source of the smell is eliminated.

As well, the storm tanks that fill with overflow of sewage whenever there is extra rainfall in the area will be fitted with an improved flushing system that will mean a more speedy removal of another source of smells.

With these improvements, the smell should be greatly reduced – removed completely is probably too much to hope for. And just in time too – Matlock and Darley Dale are to have over a thousand new houses built and all their effluent comes down to the Lea Wood works. This improvement should be only phase 1 of modernisation for the whole process. ■

THE BULLBRIDGE SCANDAL

Under the title 'The Cromford Canal Scandal' this article was first published anonymously in the September 1968 edition of the Inland Waterways Association's Midlands Branch magazine *Navigation*



Demolition of the aqueduct underway, without the aid of barriers to keep the public out.

The Cromford Canal was 'closed to navigation' by the LMS [London Midland & Scottish Railway] Act of 1944, apart from half a mile at the Langley Mill end. Despite this, the canal was in reasonable condition and held water for most of its length. It is a magnificent canal engineered by William Jessop.

In 1962, the BTC [British Transport Commission] Act sounded the death knell for the remaining half mile, the Derbyshire County Council objection to this, passed by a full majority, was withdrawn by the permanent officials of that body, without apparent reference to the council, for no reference to this has ever appeared in council minutes.

Now to the sinister developments which have followed. In 1965 DCC decided that in order to speed the inevitable motor vehicle, the famous and important aqueduct, by which Jessop crossed the A610, and the adjacent aqueduct over the railway, by Stephenson, must be destroyed. This was challenged by both

ourselves and the Inland Waterways Protection Society who produced a brilliant scheme to maintain navigation whilst enabling a road, far wider that was proposed, to be provided (see *Portal 33*, Spring 2010). Naturally the so-called experts at Matlock ignored this completely and conveniently overlooked the fact that the canal was closed to navigation, not abandoned to navigation, so the County Council agreed to destroy the length of canal over railway, river and road.

At this time the matter was taken up with the Minister of Transport on the grounds that the towpath, which was a designated footpath, would be destroyed. However, both ourselves and Mrs Bunker of the IWPS were assured by the Minister that the DCC must follow statutory procedure and apply for a diversion order and that no action could be taken until this was done. This, of course, also involved the exhibition of notices for 6 months. Enquiries to the DCC in the meantime ►

elicited the response that no action was being taken at present.

So to 1966 when the Ministry informed Mrs Bunker after many letters had passed, that DCC had decided to apply to the Minister for an order under Section 155 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1962, to authorise diversion of the Public Right of Way. So much for the Ministry. But they had reckoned without the 'Legal Boys' of the County Council, who must have applied themselves very diligently to the task of finding a way round the law, which presumably is designed only for lesser mortals to abide by, for a few weeks ago came the news that work on the demolition of Bullbridge Aqueduct had started and that most of the masonry would be tipped into the River Amber, the course of which was being diverted to facilitate the construction of the new road.

In view of this a spate of letters descended on Matlock Council Offices demanding to know why this work had started without the Statutory Order being made. The reply, in the words of the Clerk to the Council Mr D G Gilman, "there are a number of statutory provisions of which the best known are Sec. 108 Highways Act 1959, and 153 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1962, where application is made to the Ministry of Transport. The County Council do not find it necessary to reply upon either of these provisions, and I have long since submitted my reasons to the Ministry of Transport who have accepted them".

So the machinations have continued and the towpath walk, together with the aqueduct will soon be irrevocably destroyed. The proposed diversion takes the public across a busy main road, which now will become a racing straight, and across a main railway line with no crossings, then climbing a steep bank the pedestrian, if he is still intact, will regain quietude of the canal towpath. But not for long, for he will soon meet further development, permitted very graciously by this

same County Council, which has destroyed the canal completely. Statutory permission obtained? Not on your life. This time the East Midlands Gas Board have been the guilty party and have ignored all requests by the Planning Department to seek a diversion order for the towpath. They too, it seems, are above the law. Now for the final twist, the Planning Department of the County Council envisage a pedestrian walk from Ripley to Cromford, using the towpath, and then the High Peak Railway, now alas destroyed. Perhaps this is a question of the left hand being unaware of what the right is doing.



A pause in the demolition allows a family with small children to pass under the half-destroyed arch.

Photo: George Lynam

But what of the vast cost of this road improvement? No one has so far dared to estimate this. The cost of diverting the River Amber alone must be astronomical, and advice from a competent engineer, not employed by the Council, indicates that a much more effective method could have been employed, which would have retained the two aqueducts and would have provided a dual carriageway not the only 24ft-wide road which will result from this costly experiment. Costly in lives as well as destruction of amenity? This only time will prove – and the ratepayers will know. **T**

THE STANDARD UNIT BRIDGE

Tim Castledine on the background to the now lost Jacksdale bridge



The bridge as many people remember in its later days until it was demolished in 1998.

Butterley Company's Standard Unit Bridge was initially designed as the Company's entry for a Government bridge design competition at the beginning of World War Two. The aim was to produce an easily assembled emergency replacement bridge for those destroyed by natural or military causes. The structure needed to be easily stored, quickly transported and rapidly erected under adverse conditions.

The two main competitors were the now well-known Bailey Bridge and the lesser known Callender-Hamilton Bridge. The Bailey Bridge was the winner and even to this day they are still being used worldwide. During the war, Butterley Constructional Department produced many Bailey Bridges as well as their own Standard Unit Bridge. ►



The 60ft span bridge for the Cromford Canal under a 30 ton load test on the Top Plain at Butterley.

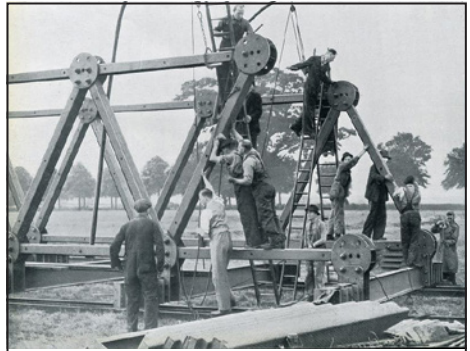


Butterley won the contract for the bridge to Tagg Island on the Thames to give better wartime access to a car factory. Earlier, in 1913, comedian Fred Karnot of Edwardian music hall fame opened his casino on the island (known as the Karsino), which subsequently became very famous, giving stage breaks to many artists including Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel of Laurel & Hardy.

The bridge over the canal at Codnor Park, erected around 1943, was one the first to be made, being marked out and plated by Ray Castledine who was the younger brother of my father, the Constructional Department's manager Stanley Castledine.

A three-section bridge was erected over the Thames at Hampton Court from a bankside position near Hampton Court Palace to Tagg Island. It is believed that the bridge was erected on the existing wooden trestles which supported the original structure. A well-known car company, AC Cars Ltd, had a small factory on the island. Because it was producing items for the war effort, the government decided that a more substantial bridge was required, Butterley winning the contract for it. The whole structure was erected by nine men and two boys in 120 working hours! It was eventually demolished in the 1970s after the wooden trestles began to rot away.

Butterley also exported their bridges, a good example being an order for several units to Portuguese West Africa (now Angola). This order weighed a total of 400 tons. ■



The structure's five basic components could be assembled by a small team of men.



Some of the 400 tons of components for bridges in Angola being loaded on the Top Plain at Butterley.

THE BOAT AT IRONVILLE

Hugh Potter spotted this interesting story on the Friends of Ironville & Codnor Park Facebook page

When the cottage at the junction of the Pinxton Arm with the main line was demolished in the late 1940s, local Brian Schofield recalled the stone being loaded into a narrow boat and hauled a short way along the arm to near Butterley Co's Bridge 2. Here it was tied up and apparently abandoned. Another local, John Stimson, recalled "that was our pirate ship in the late 1940s".

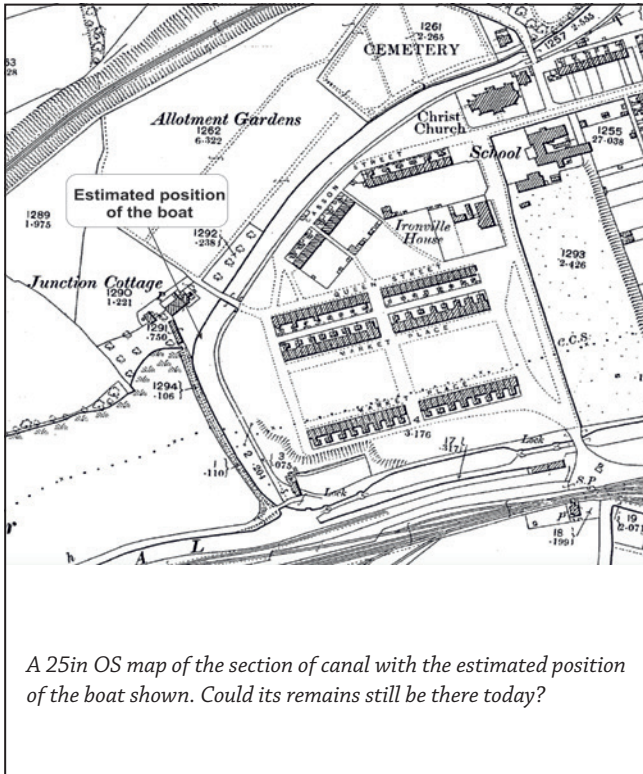
Whether or not the stone was removed is not clear, but the ►



The boat loaded with stone from the junction cottage tied up just in front of Bridge 2. It looks like it has recently arrived there as it is still at least partly loaded and there is a plank out to the bank. This would date it to the late 1940s.

By 1964 when Geoffrey Sheldon took this photograph, the boat was in the same place but somewhat decayed in the half empty canal.





A 25in OS map of the section of canal with the estimated position of the boat shown. Could its remains still be there today?

rotting remains of the hull were visible for many years – probably until this section was filled in.

In the first photograph, which appears to be from a postcard, the title is 'The Iron Bridge, Ironville', the bridge having iron plate sides, in keeping with its origins. However, in the later photographs the decking and parapets appear to have been replaced in the form of a lighter footbridge, as indeed can be seen today.

This is the bridge that you have to duck under when you walk from the junction bridge along Codnor Park Reservoir dam towards Ironville Church Bridge and the car park at the back of the hall where we have our monthly meetings. ■



You need to mind your head when passing under the bridge today.



Study of the abutments shows that they were built for a much wider deck than is currently in place. Does anyone recall when this work was done

