

THE PORTAL

Issue 78 - Autumn 2021

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Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608

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Front Cover

Aqueduct Cottage, with completed roof and windows, looking splendid after its remarkable restoration – see page 12.

Photo: Sharon Sutton

Back Cover

Two New Jewells: These two images were kindly loaned for scanning by local collector Rod Jewell.

Top: An early 20th century photograph, printed on a postcard back, of a lady sitting by Leashaw Bridge (9).

Bottom: This fine image of Grattan's Bridge, proudly displaying its Midland Railway number plate 15, comes from an album of photographs and is dated 25th August 1935. The sign prohibits unauthorised fishing.

If anyone can help identify either of the ladies, please let the Editor know.

The copy date for the next issue is 19th November 2021

The aims and objectives of the Friends of the Cromford Canal



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

EDITORIAL

By Hugh Potter

Traditionally editorials can serve two purposes. One is to broadcast erudite thoughts on current events. The second is to squeeze in those stories that have not been covered elsewhere. So let's go for the latter . . .

First, some sad news. We have lost the services of Arraslea Shires who have efficiently and professionally brought along Ted or Chelsea to pull *Birdswood* for six years. During the pandemic we could not operate horse trips, and since the end of lockdown they have become so busy with their holiday chalet business (some built during lockdown!) that they no longer have time to give up one weekend a month – they are too busy with 'staycation' bookings. Corinne and Lance (and little Billie) were a great team to work with; we shall miss them and wish them well. Meanwhile, if anyone knows any boat-trained horses . . .

Our Weighbridge shop has also been closed for lockdown, but is gradually reopening, largely thanks to two new volunteers Paul & Janet Barrass, who open up every Wednesday and have been achieving great sales. We are now

looking for more volunteers to open on other days, especially weekend.

Many of you will know that our length of canal at Hartshay contains a buried iron boat, and there has been much speculation as to how it ended up there, in the middle of what was once the channel. Our work party recently had a go at finding out more about it by strimming around it and digging out the 'contents' (largely earth!) to reach remains of the original cargo – coal. Further excavations will be carried out to see if we can learn any more about this boat.



Not pieces of eight but lumps of coal mixed in with earth. Note the heavy riveted construction of the boat. Curiously, the few photographs of boats carrying coal that we have all show wooden boats.

Photo: John Barker



Janet and Paul Barrass keenly await customers as boat/shop volunteer Stella checks out the goods.

Photo: Hugh Potter.

If you'd like to help out with any aspects of FCC, then please do get in touch with any of the people listed on page 2 – with extra help we could achieve so much more. ■

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

By David Martin

Well they said we would never get there but finally the country came out of lockdown on 19th July although I have to say, such is the versatility of the FCC's Committee system nowadays that I never really noticed the change back to the so-called new normal. I announced in the last edition of the *Portal* that we have booked Ironville Church Hall for the next three months for our social evenings and I'm really looking forwards to seeing some of you all there. All meetings start at 7.30pm.

20th September: The FCC past, present and future by David Martin.

18th October: Bennerley Viaduct by Kieran Lee.

22nd November: Agincourt by Gary Slator.

There has been a lot of to-ing and fro-ing over Brown's Bridge but in the end Cllr Barry Lewis and the administration at Derbyshire County Council have fully financially supported the FCC in their aspirations to get the swing bridge at High Peak Junction back to its former glory (see page 7). It really is an important breakthrough for everyone concerned with the canal up at Cromford in the World Heritage Site. The work being carried out by Ron Common at Aqueduct Cottage continues apace and it is of major importance that *Birdswood* can get through High Peak Junction to allow passengers to disembark to take a look at what will be the area's newest attraction. It really is good news all round for the canal and its world famous historical assets which we aspire to maintain.

The Boat Committee along with volunteer masters and crew have now been taking passengers, albeit at a reduced number, for five weeks now and they are coping really well with it all. Of course charter bookings for *Birdswood* are inevitably being taken up at an ever increasing rate. This is really good news too, and not only for the ever-increasing numbers of the returning public but also for the morale of all concerned;

nobody ever thought that *Birdswood* would ever end up being moored up for 18 months. It seemed unthinkable that this would ever have happened, but there we were and here we are back up and open for business. To help us all if you are interested in booking this great day out for you, your family, or the whole boat for a special occasion you can now very easily book a trip and pay for it all online at www.birdswood.org. We all hope you fully enjoy the experience.

Our engineers are still working away in the background on the pre-planning conditions for the Beggarlee Extension and site investigations have been in full swing over the last two weeks after we finally got the permissions to start them from all of the relevant landowners on this complex project (see page 18). By the time this *Portal* has gone to press we will also have instructed a land agent to tackle that issue too so we will just have to see how it goes because it really is early days where that subject is concerned.

So far, all of the various FCC committee meetings have continued on Zoom, but that is mainly because it has been really easy and potentially safer to keep them that way with all that appeared to be going on with Covid variants in the latter part of July and early August, but hopefully by September we shall be holding face-to-face meetings again.

Our new website is online and we are constantly adding to the facilities of the site; you can discover everything about our organisation and now even become a member online from wherever you live in the world so please do check it out at www.cromfordcanal.org. Should you feel you have an hour or two to spare as a volunteer in whichever capacity you feel you could contribute then please do not hesitate to get in touch; we would love to hear from you.

Hope to see you all soon. **T**

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By Yvonne Shattower

It is so good to see that *Birdswood* is running again, and things are slowly getting back to something approaching 'normal' on the Cromford Canal.

Unfortunately I have to tell you about an increase in the membership subscriptions for the 'Friends' and changes to the way in which we collect your money. It is some time since we raised our fees, and in that time we have had some hefty price increases in the postage rates and printing costs of the 'Portal'.

After much discussion, we have been able to arrange for Direct Debits (as opposed to Standing Orders) to be paid into our CAF bank account; using these will make it much easier for our Treasurer to regulate our membership income, but we will require your co-operation to get the best from this system. Those members who are still paying by standing order into the old HSBC account will be encouraged to switch to the new Direct Debit. Members paying by Standing Order into the CAF account will be contacted shortly before their payment is due and reminded to alter the amount of their payment. Full details will be sent to you a few weeks before your membership renewal is due, and we will, of course, adhere to the regulations regarding Direct Debits. Those members who received a yellow Membership renewal form will be unaffected by this change and will still be able to pay by cheque.

The new Membership rates are:

Single Annual £12

Single Life £180

Joint Annual £20

Joint Life £300



Your Trustees very much regret having to make these increases which will take effect from 1st October 2021 but, as mentioned above, our costs have risen greatly over the last two years, and we can no longer sustain fees at the old level and run the 'Friends'

efficiently. If you have any queries regarding your membership, please do not hesitate to contact me; my details are on the inside cover of this magazine. The Trustees greatly value your support, and sincerely hope that you will continue to support us in our efforts to restore this lovely canal.

Autumn Meetings

On a happier note, our talks at Ironville are set to resume, with the first one on Monday 20th September starting at 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall, Ironville NG16 5NN when our Chairman, David Martin, will be telling you about some of the things we have been doing during the Covid lockdown and our plans for the future.

On 18th October we will have Kieran Lee telling us about the Bennerley Viaduct, a remarkable piece of railway engineering which has been the subject of intense restoration over the last few years. Have a look at their web site (www.bennerleyviaduct.org.uk) for further information on this fascinating structure. By way of a total change, on 22nd November we will have Gary Stokes telling us about the Battle of Agincourt. We plan to have the usual tea/coffee break and raffle (donated prizes are always welcome) and hopefully a bar, so do come along and join us. Members and non-members are equally welcome at all our talks; admission for all is still £2.50. ■

BROWN'S BRIDGE – GOOD NEWS!

Richard Handley reports



During crew training in 2017, the bridge needed two people to operate it, but it has deteriorated further.

The swing bridge at High Peak Junction, locally known as Brown's Bridge, is owned by Derbyshire County Council. It is a key feature on the *Birdswood* cruises, and allows access to the Leewood end of the canal, Leewood Pump House and the winding hole for *Birdswood* to turn around. The bridge is opened and closed twice on each cruise but

has become increasingly difficult to operate. Accordingly FCC trustees declared the bridge inoperable. As a result we could no longer disembark passengers to walk across the aqueduct and see the restoration work on Aqueduct Cottage. Since we recommenced in June 2021 our cruises have therefore been somewhat curtailed, reversing backwards from Brown's Bridge.



Brown's Bridge 200 year old bearing will be replaced with a modern slewing ring bearing. This original will be conserved in place.

FCC Trustees have now come to an agreement with DCC to manage a project to completely renovate the bridge and we plan to commence work on 13th September with a five-week project window: the project is to be jointly funded by FCC and DCC, and will be managed by an FCC project team.

We are confident that when the work is completed, the bridge will be much more easily opened and we can run *Birdswood* right up to the Leewood Pump House again (weeds and silt permitting)! **T**

WORK PARTY

John Guyler reports on a very busy few months

A Positive Outcome

I make no apologies for starting with some very positive and pleasing news. Since 2017 a young man has been working with the FCC work parties on the Cromford and High Peak section. John Barker was initially approached by Derbyshire County Council Youth Services to see if the FCC could find some work for this young man who was very quiet and withdrawn. He was brought to the work parties by a member of the DCC youth team, who for the first few weeks also helped on the work parties. Gradually the young man made his own way on the bus and gave us a great deal of help.

He helped with loading reeds, which had been pulled on to the towpath, into the trailer of the DCC tractor and also using wheelbarrows to take the reeds to the dump. He helped with fitting coir rolls, filling dog-outs in the towpath, filling sandbags with clay; in fact he did every job asked of him. He started leaving the work parties at lunchtime to attend the local college on work training.

John received a phone call at the end of July this year from DCC Youth Services to say that the young man had, with the confidence and experience gained working with us, sought out and gained himself a permanent job. I am very pleased with the result of the use of FCC work parties and wish him every success for the future. Over the past few years, FCC work parties have had several volunteers on the work parties who had problems with anxiety, loneliness or depression and who had found that volunteering with us, had helped with controlling their problems.

Two more benches

The FCC work party volunteers have installed two more of the memorial benches, to go

with the first one at Codnor Park Reservoir, in memory of a young man from Underwood.

I visited the reservoir a few days later and they were in use both times that I passed. I understand the family of the young man picked the sites for the benches, which provide very good views of the reservoir and the canal.

Lime Mortar Course

The Canal & River Trust organised a lime mortar pointing up course, at Ironville, in July.

It was over two days, with volunteers and CRT workers. The site chosen was the Pinxton Arm Bridge. They set to and removed the old mortar on the inner face of one side of the bridge, then were shown how to mix and apply the lime mortar to point the stonework. Four FCC volunteers were in the group and are now approved to be able to point up old stone work.

Lime mortar is used on old stonework because modern cements have a negative effect on the stone and cause it to crumble. We may be training some more volunteers in lime mortaring later.



Chiselling out the old mortar.

Photo: CRT



Cleaning up before applying the new mortar.
Photo: CRT



Job done!
Photo: CRT

Fencing Repairs

Also at Ironville and Codnor Park Reservoir, the work party have been busy replacing the fencing. Initially the fencing was damaged at the site of the old Lock 1/Pinxton Arm Bridge at the beginning of the year. This was repaired by our work party, who discovered that a large number of fence posts were in need of replacement, so several work parties later, sixty posts and a number of top rails were replaced, going down to Lock 3. Also replaced were posts and some top rails in the fence at Lock 2 access slope from Market Place, Ironville.

Moving on from there, they have started repairing the low fence on the angling stretch between the infilled canal and the reservoir; this has also taken several weeks. Sixty posts and numerous top rails had been replaced at the time of writing; we are waiting for further supplies of timber. At one point in the proceedings there was a shortage of top clamp plates, which had long delivery times on ordering from the suppliers, so our ever-resourceful volunteers made them out scrap plate, in Malcolm's shed. ►



Working on the low fence between the infilled canal and Codnor Park Reservoir.
Photo: Chris Martin

Photo: John Guyler



*Fence rails being unloaded.
Photo: John Guyler*



*Devious means were devised to extract the old posts.
Photo: John Guyler*

Because these posts were locked in place very well, a plan of action was devised using a hydraulic car jack, a car axle stand, a piece of scaffold pole, fence top plate and some very long screws. The screws were inserted into the post through the top plate, the 7.5 ton jack was brought into play and the post drawn out. The holes were cleaned out by hand and a chamfer was planed on the bottom corners and the new posts were driven into place. They won't move.

I went down to see them at one lunch break and there were eight very hot volunteers, spaced apart, eating their lunch, watching an otter in the reservoir eating a fish. It doesn't get much better than that! Social distancing wasn't an issue either; one volunteer cleared around the posts, a second pair removed the top rails, a third pair jacked the post out, a fourth pair placed the new post and locked it into place and the last volunteer replaced the top rails and clamp.

584 hours have so far been taken on this project replacing posts and repairing fencing. All materials and parts for this project are being supplied by CRT.

Controlling Vegetation

At Poyser's Bridge near Ambergate, a group of us went balsam bashing on the far side of the canal, where there was some very serious balsam. We were working quite well until we had to leave the field we had accessed the canal from; the farmer

wanted to cut his hay, but would not do it whilst we were there, so we left and finished it off the following week. We had been asked to go down to very end of the channel at Ambergate to pull balsam, but when we got down there it had all been done by a unknown person and all the pulled plants had been taken away, which saved us a job.

At Lower Hartshay, the volunteers have, over three weeks, been strimming and cutting back the overgrown vegetation on both sides of the channel and have cleared the steps to the A610 in the CRT section as well as clearing a large amount of balsam.

There has been some strimming at Pinxton Wharf and at Ironville along Lock 4 and the Lock Keeper's Garden

At Cromford, the wharf has been cleared of weeds and some work strimming and cutting back on the peninsula has been done. The weeds which have been causing *Birdswood* some problems at High Peak Junction are being cleared by the use of the workboat and grappling hooks, but there is so much it's going to take a number of work parties to clear. Once the swing bridge is back in action some serious work needs to be done.

Coir rolls have been put in at places such as dog-outs at High Peak and have now all been used up (that's 150 in total which have been put in, from just north of Lawn Bridge to High Peak Junction). I have been asked to explain the term 'dog-outs' because it isn't a very glamorous ►


expression. It's the places on the canal towpath where dogs are allowed to go into the canal by their owners. When exiting the water, the dogs cause damage to the bank, which can over time cause problems on the towpath, so we try to build the bank up to deter dogs.

At Sawmills, the FCC assisted Gill Hirst and her group to clear some of the vegetation from Lockwood's Bridge for about 400 yards along the towpath, strimming the vegetation. The overgrown hedge was cut and the mass of ivy on the bridge was also cut back. We used two trimmers and one hedge cutter, on a very hot day.



At Langley Mill, some strimming was done as preliminary to core holes being bored for the Beggarlee extension.

Join Us!

If you feel you would like to join the work parties, please contact John Barker at work@cromfordcanal.org. 



Taking core samples in preparation for the Beggarlee Extension. The bridge is the former Barber Walker Colliery Railway bridge that the new line of the canal will pass through.

Photo: John Guyler

A NEW AQUEDUCT COTTAGE EMERGES

By Ron Common



After 15 months the scaffolding came down to reveal the completed stonework.

All photos: Ron Common.

It's been an exciting few months at Aqueduct Cottage. On 5th June, 15 months after it was installed, the scaffolding around the cottage was finally removed. The cottage emerged like a butterfly from its chrysalis and looked resplendent in the summer sunshine.



An exciting moment as the new window frames arrive.

Then, on 7th June, exactly 5 years since the mission to save Aqueduct Cottage began, one of the most exciting visual transformations of the whole restoration occurred with the fitting of the cottage's new windows and front door.

Following the addition of the new roof in March, this was the icing on the cake. It also means that the exterior of the cottage is now 90% complete. Only the pointing remains to be done, plus a repair to the lean-to pantry.

The beautiful frames were manufactured by local joiners, Brinard Joinery of Somercotes. They were made from accoya wood which has incredible durability and performance and will provide a long life. Details of the original windows were obtained to produce the replacement frames,

including the central pivot for the window openings.

PT Joinery Services completed the fitting in a day and once installed the cottage was not only water-tight but it looked absolutely stunning. Almost 5 years to the day, a new Aqueduct Cottage had emerged. The news of the amazing new look of the cottage soon spread. ►



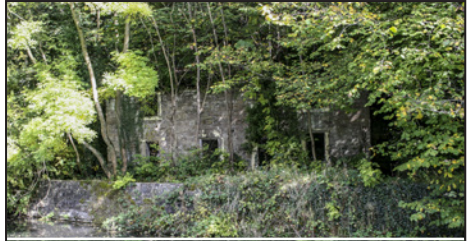
Phil Twigg (PT Joinery Services) assisting with delivery of the front door.



The kitchen window was the first to be installed.



All the units were installed in a single day.



Remember this? Aqueduct Cottage at the start of the project in 2016. These 'before' and 'after' photos had over 120,000 views on the cottage's social media page.



The south garden dry stone wall during reconstruction.



The completed wall. A beautiful new feature in the cottage grounds..



Canal visitors admiring the transformation taking place.

July saw attention turning to the gardens and one of the most beautiful features created by our volunteer 'wallers' was the repair of the dry-stone wall along the south garden. ►



The main timbers were given a rub down to remove unsightly marks.



The exposed roof structure provides great character to the first floor activity room.

The original wall was so badly damaged it had to be rebuilt from the foundations up but, over several weeks, it was rebuilt stronger and better than the original. The garden was also cleared, ready for planting.

Inside the cottage, the temporary roof felt was removed and the timbers were cleaned. The exposed beams and roof tiles provide lots of character for the first floor activity room and the view from the windows along the canal is delightful. This room will be plastered in the autumn.

It's been an exciting summer at the cottage and the end of the restoration (of the main building) is now in sight. The final stage is to fit out the interior of the cottage but more funds have to be raised to complete this work.

To this end, the Friends of Aqueduct Cottage held a successful Crowdfunder campaign in support of a grant application by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust in June. The outcome of the bid is expected in September. If successful, there's a good chance the interior works can be completed by the end of autumn and the cottage opened to the public. We're almost there! **T**

BIRDWOOD IS BACK

By Mike Kelley



*Hugh Potter
on the tiller.
Photo: Keith
Bailey*

From late July our trip boat *Birdswood* was back up and running. After the long Covid layoff it was good to see the number of passengers steadily increasing. We had been restricted to carry only five passengers until the government lifted restrictions imposed upon us. The Boat Committee voted to keep the maximum number of passengers to 25, instead of our licenced maximum of 42, because they felt people were still a little nervous of large numbers in a relatively confined space, even with the windows open.

Most bookings are from our website, although we now have the electronic wizardry to take card payments from people who have not pre-booked, assuming there is space.

The booking site is part of the *Birdswood* website (www.birdswood.org). We did have a system for electronic booking already, but Covid has shown it to be now more important to use this method. This on-line system enables us to be sure that prospective passengers have read our Commercial, Safety and other terms and conditions and it includes a secure online payment system.

This system also enables the capture of Track and Trace information should it be needed – data stored in a GDPR compliant way. On-line booking has many benefits for us, including allowing us to plan better by feeding data into our passenger manifest enabling us to load the boat better.

We are delighted that new volunteers have come along to act as crew, adding to the existing members, some of whom have been with us for several years. Also, two volunteers are in the process of qualifying for their Boat Master's Licence. Indeed, without such wonderful people we would not be able to operate.

For the rest of this year, until the end of October, we will be running three days a week, (Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday) plus charter bookings for private parties, which are still very popular. And we will only be running up to High Peak Junction, with a reduced fare accordingly. This is because the swing bridge has seized up - but happily not for long – see page 7!

If any of you know of people with a horse who could pull the boat occasionally next year, please get in touch **T**.

THE BIRTH OF THE OIL INDUSTRY - IN PYE BRIDGE

By Simon Waller

Forget J.R. Ewing and substitute J. Oakes. Instead of the Texas oil fields think of a small industrial hamlet in the Amber Valley – because that's where the oil business started in 1847.

Miners struggling to work in a torrent of salt water 250 yards underground in the Old Deeps Colliery at Pye Bridge couldn't have known they were also working in the world's first oil well.

As the water subsided, it was replaced by viscous black liquid which oozed into the shaft at a rate of 300 gallons a day. Working conditions must have been horrible – coal dust mixed with crude oil, and the only washing facilities at the end of a shift were a tin bath at home in front of the fire, filled with hot water from a kettle.

To allow mining to continue, a sump was dug to direct and collect the liquid away from the workings, then it was taken to the surface and emptied into the nearby Cromford Canal as a waste product.

Each of the locks at Codnor would use thousands of gallons of water for each boat passing through, so water pumped from local mines was usually a welcome addition. The Deeps' contribution wasn't so welcome, forming a thick rainbow scum on the surface and polluting the canal. A local brewery, which took its water from the canal, complained that the beer was starting to taste odd, and at the Pinxton Wharf, where most of the scum was blown by prevailing winds, local youths had fun setting the canal alight by dropping cinders and blazing sticks onto the slick. (Kids made their own entertainment in them days tha' knows!)

James Oakes, owner of the Deeps pit and local iron master, acknowledged there was a problem – and possibly a resource to

be exploited. Conveniently, his brother-in-law, Lyon Playfair was a chemist, and set to work on isolating anything useful from the troublesome substance.

Playfair then brought in James Young, a Scottish chemist and maker of scientific apparatus. Together they built a distillation and refining plant. Their first achievement was isolating a heavy oil suitable for lubricating machinery. At that time thousands of sperm whales were slaughtered annually, providing oil for industry. Next was a light oil, soon to be known as paraffin, ideal for any lamps using a wick. During part of the refinement process the paraffin was found to become cloudy then produce wax. Playfair, who was about to give a lecture on petroleum and its products at the Royal Institute in London, asked Young to make two candles from the wax. He held one in each hand during his talk and it was noted that they gave a bright light with no odour!

Previously, candles were usually made of animal fat and smoked and stunk as they burned. Paraffin candles were expensive in comparison and melted quickly. The perfect candle was born when paraffin wax was combined with a glycerine-free form of fat – stearin – and it became the 'standard' candle.

In 1848 the world's first oil refinery was built somewhere in the Riddings area (its location isn't known). At this point the oil was transported underground in tubs from the Old Deeps Pit sump to the New Deeps – another Oakes colliery situated on the hill between Riddings and Ironville – where it was raised up the shaft.

The Deeps' supply began to run out in 1851. 'Paraffin' Young as he was now known, realising that the supply of crude oil in the UK was limited, and noticing traces of oil in certain coals and shale, began experimenting

to 'cook' the oil from them. He patented his process, both in this country and the USA. He moved operations to West Lothian where he was partner in, then outright owner of, a commercial refinery. Things were to change forever, when in 1859 the first of many oil wells was sunk in the USA, and within two years, cheap American petroleum products flooded into the UK.

Most accounts of the start of the oil industry give Riddings as the centre of it all. This is because of James Oakes' involvement, and

the fact that he lived in and owned most of the village.

The Deeps pit was actually located in Pye Bridge, quite close to the main road between the Pinxton Arm of Cromford Canal and Oakes ironworks. Today the site lies behind the last remnant of the canal in that area – once the ironworks wharf now a wildlife 'pond' – and is covered in tyres and earth moving equipment. No trace of the world's first oil refinery remains. ■

SPRUCING UP STELLA

Hugh Potter on preserving a survivor from around the time the oil in the previous article was being formed



Nigel, Mike, Chris and Keith with a much improved Stella.

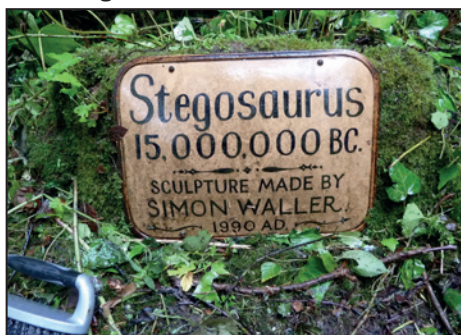
Having been much neglected during lockdown, Stella the Stegosaurus, highlight of the *Birdswood* trip for kids of all ages, was given a much needed clean up in July.

First of all our intrepid Wednesday work party braved the jungle that prevented her being seen from the canal after two years unchecked

growth. Then, with cleared access, a *Birdswood* team moved in with buckets and brushes to sweep the leaves from her and give her a much needed scrub. We even managed to reveal her head, buried in the bushes for a long time!

We have been rewarded not only by the regular 'oohs' and 'aaahs' from *Birdswood* passengers, but also many favourable comments from those passing on the towpath.

Stella is the sole survivor of a colony of dinosaurs that once inhabited the children's area of the now long-closed Cromford garden centre. We are committed to ensuring her continuing survival! ■



We also cleaned up the original plaque showing her origins, although modern research suggests an extra '0' should be added to the date.

PURCHASE OF LAND AT LANGLEY MILL

By John Baylis BEM

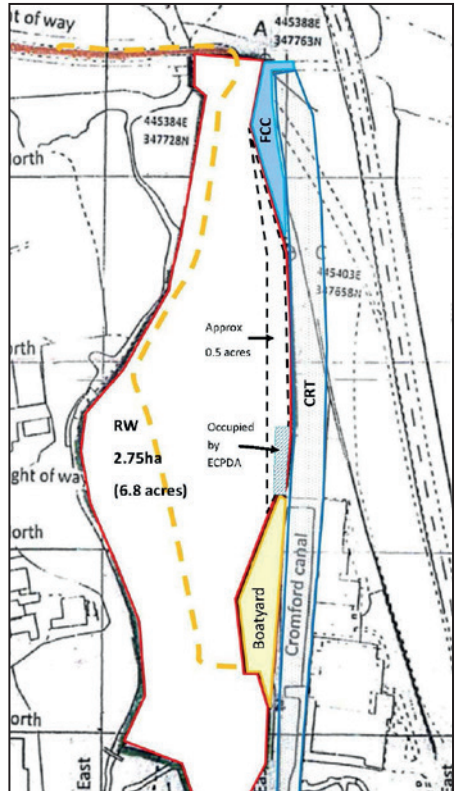
In the last *Portal* I recorded that donations for the purchase of the strip of land alongside the Cromford Canal at Langley Mill had exceeded the purchase price and we were instructing our solicitors to initiate the purchase. Unfortunately the vendors had a change of heart as possible purchasers for the remainder of the site were not interested if the Friends had already purchased the strip we intended.

The vendors came back to the FCC with a second offer to purchase the whole site at a partially reduced price. The Trustees visited the site, and felt that as flood land it was still overpriced and we should have difficulties selling off that area we didn't require. The Trustees were concerned that we should not be using charity money to purchase land not essential to restoration of the Beggarlee section as covered in the current planning approval.

I reported back to the vendors that the trustees were not interested in purchasing the whole plot at the price suggested but made a counter offer at a much lower price; that was rejected by the vendors. I reiterated our original offer to buy the strip of land we required at the originally agreed price; and the vendors requested time to consider their position. For business confidentiality I cannot publish the actual financial figures at this stage.

The FCC has now achieved the purchase price of the strip of land without using any of our funds proposed for restoration and at present there is no rush to complete the purchase. It has been suggested that the remainder of the site, for which we have no use, becomes a water habitat site; but we are unlikely to recover the purchase price of this area. In the longer term an alternative would be to ring fence the donations for a future project on the canal or purchase of plant or machinery for the

restoration. If any such plans come to fruition the donors will be asked for approval to use their donation for this purpose. **T**



The land in question at Langley Mill. The section in water currently ends alongside the top of the yellow area labelled Boatyard. North of that is the dry channel restored by ECPDA, then scrubland, owned by Canal & River Trust. The blue area labelled FCC was purchased by FCC to enable the sharp turn into the bridge under the A610. The area originally offered to FCC is bounded by the black dotted lines to the west of the canal line, but the vendors now want to sell the entire area bounded by the red line.

NEW SEATS AT LOWER HARTSHAY

By John Barker



Malc Chisnell (right) contemplating the next stage of the seat assembly.

Photos: John Barker



Installing the simple bench seat which will give views over the canal or wetland.

Two new seats have been installed by work party volunteers at Lower Hartshay. A bench seat was given to the FCC by Sally Fisher of the Friends of the Forge, as a thank you for all the work the FCC work parties have done at Jacksdale.

The second seat, with a metal frame, was given to the FCC by one of our volunteers Malcolm Chisnell, named by the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association as 'Mr Magic'. Malc found one section of the frame in a scrapyard and made

the other section himself; the timber was also provided by Malc. Great job, thank you.

The seats were installed where previously bird watchers stood to look across the wetland and canal. In July of this year, 68 different variety of birds were sighted and on one day, 22nd July, over one thousand swallows were recorded.

If you are interested in watching the different variety of birds at Lower Hartshay, there is a web site lowerhartshaybirdgroup@gmail.com. **T**



The finished metal framed seat.



Putting the finishing touches to the wooden bench.

CIRCULAR CANAL WALKS – 12 WHATSTANDWELL

Ken Brockway takes you through Shining Cliff and Kennel Wood with some great views



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Distance: 7 miles.

Start point: Choice see below.

How to get there: Train or Transpeak bus to Whatstandwell.

Parking: Limited availability at Whatstandwell canalside or station (pay), Ambergate station (pay), Holly Lane or A6 Ranch Corner.

Refreshments: Family Tree, Whatstandwell; Burger Bar, A6 lay-by; Hurt Arms, Ambergate.

I started at Whatstandwell with a gentle warm up along the canal to Ambergate. Crich Council Footbridge offers a link to the station and car park, Chase Bridge is the link for 'Ranch Corner' lay-by on the A6. Follow the canal to the very end where the water vanishes

rather overgrown in July so take care and follow a path left to a wooden hand gate into a field. Follow the hedge on the left to another gate then take the road, this crosses over the canal at Poyser's Bridge before meeting the A6. ►



Surprises in store at Holmlea Garden, Ambergate, which has occasional public open days. There is a lock too!

All photos: Ken Brockway



Welcome to Shining Cliff, owned by the Grith Pioneers since 1932.



Helpful directions from the Peak & Northern Footpaths Society.

Turn left along the A6 passing the Hurt Arms, or popping in if you wish. On your right is the low-lying and often flooded Ambergate cricket ground. Turn right into Holly Lane, taking care as there is no footway along this narrow lane. Cross the river then mill stream, then bear right onto the restricted byway. There is car parking opposite here. The inviting Woodland Trust Birches Wood is on your left, but a detour here will add to the elevation so the easy route follows the rising track which may have occasional vehicles.



Poyser's Bridge, where you continue along the canal to the end.



War memorial and sports field by Alderwasley Hall School.

Continue the gentle climb passing isolated houses on left and right. A house on the right with no name marks the end of vehicle use with a turning space; here our route continues, looking more like a footpath than track. A fading sign on the left offers information about the Grith Pioneers. There is a good mix of mature trees along the way, flowers from the sweet chestnuts covering the path in July, with their fruit abundant in Autumn.

At the next information board take a path right which drops downhill. This eventually brings you to a pond accessed by a bridge. Our route doesn't cross the bridge but turns right along a track; first it's worth a short detour over the bridge to take a look and perhaps pause on the seat in this idyllic spot. Back on the path it follows a stream on the left but then crosses it and starts to climb. At the next information board turn left, still climbing. Ignore a path right which leads to National Trust woodland. Keep left to pass the hostel dominated by a the tall cliff face. ►



Whatstandwell Bridge; a narrow footway helps keep walkers safe.

The path passes fire pits and the cliff face on the right and other wooden buildings on the left. At an area that may have parked vehicles we join the Midshires Way. Users of the hostel need to take their luggage and provisions by wheel barrow from here to the hostel. Keep to paths on the right to locate a gate by another information board and bench. Take the gate into the open field and follow the wall on your right.

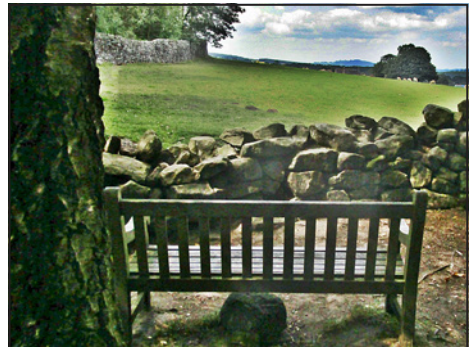


The pond in Shining Cliff.

The track is easy to follow after the wall ends and a tree stump seat offers a resting place with a great view across Alderwasley Park. The track bears left and now has a wall on the left. Pass the War Memorial before meeting the road. Follow the road and perhaps make

a detour right into Alderwasley Hall grounds to view All Saints church built by Francis Hurt in 1850; here a seat offers a resting place for weary walkers.

Almost opposite the hall drive another drive left offers a permissive path to Kennel Wood, managed by the parish council; take the path right between the wooden posts. The alternative path is along the road to the T-junction then double back along the signed path. The woodland path is level, wide, easy to follow and surrounded by bluebells in spring. It meets a road in the straggling village where you take Well Lane opposite, then the public footpath to Whatstandwell. The gap in the corner may be hidden but after that Crich Stand offers a distant landmark to head for.



Bench by the gate into open country as you leave Shining Cliff.

The field corners could be overgrown but follow the left hand edge of the fields until a squeeze stile offers escape to the left. Here a sign erected by the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society offers guidance for directions along the five paths that meet at this point. We head downhill to Whatstandwell, still with the Stand to guide us. Pass close to the right of the cottage and drop steeply towards the now noisy A6 and the bridge over the River Derwent. Cross the river and take the road to Crich (B5035) to meet the canal and complete the circuit. ■

FIXING LEAKS AT ROBIN HOOD

Hugh Potter finds history repeating itself



Work to repair a leak at Robin Hood in the 1940s.

In June, Derbyshire County Council Countryside Services repaired a leak at Robin Hood which was spotted by Steve Carver who lives opposite. They used Ground Penetrating Radar to identify a few voids, which were filled with a grout to seal them. This involved closure of the towpath for short periods whilst the work was completed.

Interestingly, it was in this same location in 1945–47 that similar repair work was needed, and a long length of canal had to be drained to carry out was presumably was a much larger repair.

This work is recorded photographically, and it is educational to see how deep the canal still was at the time, just after official closure (in 1944, although trade had stopped in 1937), and how the 'garden' to the house has changed. ■



Shallow piling sealed off the recent leak at Robin Hood whilst awaiting repair.



The location of the recent leak, opposite the house, is almost identical to that of the 1940s breach. Note how the garden has changed.

IT WAS 50 YEARS AGO TODAY . . .

Hugh Potter recalls his first experience of the canal

. . . Well, almost to the day, to borrow the iconic line from the introduction to the Beatles' 1967 *Sergeant Pepper* album. It was actually on 28th August 1971 that I first visited the Cromford Canal. Anoraks were in fashion then, and as a result I wrote a detailed log of the two walks I made along the entire length of the canal.

I had my camera with me as well, so recorded some of the scenes from half a century ago. There have been changes of course, but surprisingly little compared with what I would have seen if I had visited just a few years earlier.

Possibly the most striking change has been the rapid disappearance of the distinctive cast-iron Midland Railway bridge number plates which were so common I barely thought to photograph them. I noted a dozen still in situ; you will be hard-pushed to find the one remaining today (and no, I am not telling you where it is!).



Not only was the canopy still present on the Gothic Warehouse but there was a second canopy at a different angle over the entry door. Note the coal in the yard to the right.

As I progressed south from Cromford, I noted that Cromford Wharf was still a coal yard, the run-off paddle by Lawn Bridge 1 was still in place, and a sunken ice breaker was lying opposite Leawood Pump. The 'temporary' footbridge across the aqueduct was newly painted and bore the number 3; this replaced the then-absent swing bridge 6 by Aqueduct Cottage, which I noted was derelict, although curiously I did not photograph it – perhaps it was lost in vegetation.

Near Robin Hood was a hut made of railway sleepers by the towpath (there is a picnic bench today where it once stood) and a willow tree in the old saw mill garden. The canal was then dry as far as Whatstandwell Bridge 13, where I noted a pub with "good very cheap butties" to the left of the canal. I assumed at first that this was a mistake and I had meant the Derwent Hotel to the right, but it seems that The Wheatsheaf was still open in 1972, so that seems most likely. At the footbridge ►



The warehouse that is now Wheatcroft's wharf was alongside the coal yard.



The only bridge plate I photographed was on Brown's Bridge and, with hindsight, I wonder if this was a replica.



The western portal of Butterley Tunnel as it appeared before the A38 was built across it.

there was “theoretically” no access to the station platform to catch the “pay train”.

At Percy's Cottage (Mold's Wharf) the gas pipe was still in place across the canal (the concrete support still stands beside the cottage). There was then the long trek round the gas works and Stevenson's dye works to Bullbridge where the canal was dry. The “metal-based” swing bridge 21 was still in situ but “the aqueduct stops before the railway”. I did not realise at the time that I had come just 3 years too late!

Part Two

Two days later I returned to complete the walk. Not a lot has changed, but at Buckland Hollow was a café (now The Excavator pub), then as the canal swept right there was “a sort of scrap yard into a jungle”. At Hartshay the A610 was still on its old line up Hartshay Hill, passing The Gate Inn.

Walking over the tunnel, the famous double bridge was passed and the walk was on the Butterley Co's Toll Road, which featured a list of charges although the toll hut was closed.

At the far end was the Newlands Inn with a shop on the opposite side of the road. The Pinxton Arm junction bridge still bore its '1' plate and a wooden bollard stood close to the weir above Lock 1. A concrete dam held the water above the lock but a ground paddle was in situ on the offside, and there were no bottom gates. Ten years later this lock was removed entirely. ►



The former canal workshops and the entry to the dry dock by Lock 6, which still retained one of the top ground paddles.



The Pottery and King William St Bridge.

After the canal petered out at the old Black Bridge site, I got rather lost and did not find the canal till more or less in Langley Mill (no GPS location in those days!). I did note some flooded land which featured a heron and, bizarrely, a flamingo!

I picked the canal up again at the 'railway bridge' (presumably the old Barber Walker Colliery railway bridge across the canal, whose bridge beneath the A610 has given the chance to restore this section of canal). The canal was infilled to Langley Mill and the junction with

the Nottingham Canal and I finally hit water again below the road bridge at the head of the Erewash Canal.



The unusual double railway bridge beneath which passed the Butterley Tunnel horse path.



The ground paddle of Top Lock is in the foreground with the Pinxton Arm Junction Bridge across the decidedly overgrown, but still intact, canal.

Local Transport

I did wonder exactly how I had got back to my car at the end of the two walks, in those days of unknown train and bus service times. Digging out my dusty diary revealed that I had visited Crich Tramway Extravaganza in the morning and, finding "not very much there", after lunch I drove to Cromford to walk the canal, hitching back from Ambergate. The second day I parked at Ambergate and managed to hitch back from Langley Mill as far as Codnor from where I caught a bus to Ripley, then walked to the car. Such was local transport in 'foreign' areas before the internet! ■

The locks were all in similar condition, but at Lock 5 I noted a cottage on the right, "Limekiln Row", and the 11½ milepost. The "amazing" gable end wall of Codnor Park Forge stood below Lock 7 and the girder bridge crossed the main canal at Portland Basin.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Arrows in Stones

Lots of interesting things in the latest edition of *Portal* (77)! The arrows on the blocks of stone are definitely not OS benchmarks. These always point upwards to a horizontal line, and you'd only ever find one at a time. Here's a picture of one on a gatepost. My money's on a stonemason's mark.

All the best.

Christine Johnstone



An OS mark on an unusually shaped gatepost (at the bottom left).

Photo: Christine Johnstone

Many thanks for another interesting read with *Portal* 77. Living almost on the doorstep I should be aware of events on the Cromford but you still manage to offer news that has been missed.

Birdswood is looking very smart we can only hope that visitors will be allowed to enjoy a trip this summer (*They have been, thank goodness – Ed*). I had seen some work at Golden Valley so the picture and report was useful to confirm my assumption.

I recently walked under an old rail bridge in north Derbyshire and spotted the stone blocks all had marks. They were not all the same and we guessed them to be masons' marks.

Aqueduct Cottage is looking brilliant, I do like those stone tiles more common further north.

Fascinating report on the automated commentary system; I'm impressed and bamboozled by it all! (*Aren't we all! – Ed*)

Keep up the good work.

Ken Brockway



A variety of masons' marks.

Photo: Ken Brockway

Gardening Goodies

Last year we gave a lot of the vegetables which were grown in the Lock Keeper's Garden to Oscari of Riddings. They made food parcels up for the elderly but this year they have closed down so I decided to go to Age Concern at Eastwood and they were delighted with the gift. Thanks to Shirley and Carole who are our hard working gardeners.

By the way the Lock Keeper's Garden at Ironville at Lock 4 is really worth a trip.

John Barker

* * *

Please can you pass on our thanks to your Friends for the wonderful donation of fresh green vegetables for our lunch club here at Age Concern Eastwood. Our elderly members will be sure to benefit from them and as a charity such donations are greatly appreciated.

Joanna Parsons

Centre Coordinator, Age Concern Eastwood **T**

CHECKING WATER QUALITY AT CODNOR PARK

Marie Brown on kick sweep sampling

High Summer is a great time to check the biodiversity of the water and the volunteers have been out and about 'kick sweep sampling' in the Cromford Canal in Jacksdale.

The local canal is a nature reserve, providing a vital wildlife corridor and a place for people to enjoy. Our group of volunteers is committed to its ongoing improvement for nature and people. Additional to litter picks, keeping the area tidy and making sure the paths are not overrun with vegetation, we undertake conservation activities including wildlife surveys. Much of our work involves habitat and reed bed management to influence the waterflow, improve water quality and our overall aim is to increase biodiversity.

One way that we monitor the impact of our conservation work is to undertake regular water quality monitoring. We are part of a national programme that measures the conditions of our waterways by assessing levels of phosphates and nitrates in the water and its turbidity (cloudiness of the water). Additionally, we have recently adopted a standardised approach to assessing water quality involving species level monitoring of waterborne insects, using a method known as kick sweep sampling.

It is starting to become well accepted that our insects are in trouble. There are many campaigns to help the bees and butterflies, but less popular or less well-known species also have significant roles in supporting resilient and robust ecosystems. Waterborne insects are often overlooked but they tell us a lot about the health of the water and are essential food for many other species. Abundant waterborne insects equate to a flourishing water ecosystem.

We now know that freshwater insects are declining at an alarming rate, it is an ecosystem in distress, with 4 out of 5 rivers in England failing their ecological health targets.

There are many threats to our waterways, including excess phosphates, sediment, and damaging chemicals. These pressures act to reduce oxygen and light levels, encourage toxic compounds to accumulate, and will if unchecked, eventually choke the wildlife that depend on it.

The kick sweep sampling method is an approved technique endorsed by the River Fly Partnership for detailed investigation into the health of our aquatic ecosystem, using the presence of waterborne insects as a diagnostic test. We have chosen 3 sites along the canal at Jacksdale to collect samples and will repeat sample collection and analysis quarterly. In June we set off with nets, waders, sample collecting equipment and identification sheets and completed kick sweep samples in the canal. This involved getting into the water (safely, properly equipped and with supportive bank people around, to time the sample collection and promise not to laugh if you fall over).

The kick sweep sample takes 3 minutes, the aim is to collect 12 samples of 15 seconds each. It is followed by a 1-minute hand search, lifting rocks from the water, and brushing any invertebrates into the collecting tray. The net is placed flat against the waterbed and then you kick at the sediment or underneath any weed. Your foot needs to be about 30-60cm upstream of the net, disturbing to a depth of about 5cm, so that species are washed into the net. The contents of the net are then emptied into a collecting tray for analysis.

We had a collecting tray full of invertebrates, some whizzing around the water, others wriggling or trying to hide. The challenge then was to try to identify and count them. We started by organising them into a sorting tray, putting all similar species into compartments ►

using a teaspoon and a pipette. We used a magnifying glass and hand lens to identify each species, they are so small, and identification often involves counting how many abdominal segments or tail filaments there are and other miniscule detail. It isn't easy and our identification skills will need to improve with practice. We were intrigued by the cased caddis fly larvae that looked like a small twig but then started moving around, its legs and head emerging to see what was going on! Caddis fly larvae make cases for themselves by sticking together whatever materials are available in their watery environment, stones, sand, or leaves, using a silk like substance made in glands close to their mouth. Caddis flies prefer cleaner water and the presence of its larvae at the canal is a sign of reasonably good water quality.

Finding a cased caddis fly larva was a good sign but we only collected one and we had hoped for more. Other species identified were hog louse, midge larvae, water boatmen and many freshwater shrimps. We didn't find any dragonfly or damselfly nymphs in this sample, but we know they must be there as the canal is awash with dragonflies, damselflies, and the banded demoiselles throughout the summer months. These beautiful insects start their lives as nymphs in the water and depend on a healthy aquatic environment. We have seen dragonflies laying their eggs in the canal, they lay hundreds of them over a few days or weeks, injecting their eggs into plant stems, leaves, rotten wood, or mud close to the surface of the water. You can often see the females dipping their ovipositor (the female egg laying tubular organ) into the water as they lay their eggs, sometimes the male stays linked to the female during egg laying. The eggs hatch within 2-5 weeks and dragonflies spend most of their lives in their nymph stage, shedding its skin as it grows. This typically takes one or two years, but it can be up to five years, depending on the species and environmental conditions. They eventually climb up vegetation to emerge as the dragonflies many of us love to photograph.

We hope that our next sample collection will discover dragonfly and damselfly nymphs.

At the end of the sampling process, we completed a recording sheet which comprises a list of the species we identified and approximate numbers of each; this generates a score, and the information is then input on the national record. We returned the water sample and all its species back into the canal.

It made us think about the threats waterborne species face. All life depends on healthy aquatic ecosystems, the dragonfly may go on to provide a hearty meal for a passing Hobby but hopefully only after it has mated and laid hundreds of eggs, in a good quality watercourse, securing the next generation of dragonflies.

All in all, it was an interesting and thought-provoking day; uncovering, examining, and considering the importance of the underwater world in the context of wider environmental challenges has made us even more determined to do all we can to understand, protect and improve the water that is integral to our beautiful nature reserve and the surrounding area.

If you would like to get involved, contact us at cromfordcanalgroup@outlook.com or join us on Facebook at 'Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Res'. **T**



Dragonfly.
Photo: Marie Brown

MILESTONES

By Hugh Potter

Almost all canals had milestones to indicate the distance boats had travelled, thus enabling tolls to be calculated. Tolls were charged at so many pence per ton per mile. Some canals also had markers at half and even quarter mile intervals, but the Cromford Canal Act stated that parts of a mile were to count as a full mile.

On the Cromford Canal the surviving milestones are sited on the offside, which is not the case on most other canals where they were placed by the towpath. The only stones in their original position are at $2\frac{1}{2}$ and $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Cromford, but the $4\frac{1}{2}$ milestone is stored in the High Peak Junction workshops.



Former FCC work party organiser Dave Tinkler stands by the $2\frac{1}{2}$ /12 milestone which was revealed after some local tree and vegetation clearance in 2008.

They can be difficult to spot in the undergrowth (which may account for their survival!) but there are clues to locate them. These take the form of more recent concrete posts installed every half mile soon after nationalisation of the waterways in 1948, and found on several waterways of the East Midlands. These were sited more conventionally beside the towpath so are easier to spot!



The two faces of the $3\frac{1}{2}$ /11 milestone with the Langley face showing the repaired break and also the wedge shape of the stone when viewed from above.



The broken $4\frac{1}{2}$ /10 stone that was rescued from the canal bank at some time in the past; this has now been repaired.

The $2\frac{1}{2}$ mile posts are a short distance north of Robin Hood, whilst the $3\frac{1}{2}$ posts are about half way between Whatstandwell station footbridge 13A and Chase Bridge 14.►



The 4½ concrete post typical of those installed around 1948 photographed in 1997. These were normally placed on the side of the towpath away from the canal where several have survived (including 6 and 10 ½ further down the canal), but this one was placed at the canal edge and recent mechanical mowing has gradually destroyed it so that it is barely discernible today.

The 4½ post used to be sited opposite “Percy’s Cottage”, more correctly Mold’s Wharf, just north of Ambergate. It lay in two broken pieces in HPJ workshops for many years but the two halves have now been reunited, although I know of no plans to reinstate it in its original position. Interestingly, the 3½ stone has been similarly repaired.



Curiosities (2): Positioned alongside the Leawood Arm, although nothing to do with the canal as far as is known, this ancient stone bears the visible inscription ‘London’.

The stones show the mileage to/from Cromford on their south face and to/from ‘Langley’ on their north face. The two figures add up to 14½. Their shape is distinctive but not unique, similar shaped stones being found on the Macclesfield Canal and also on the Macclesfield to Buxton turnpike road. The faces of the stones are 15in wide and they taper in width from 11in at the back to 3in nearest the canal. They are made from local sandstone. ▀



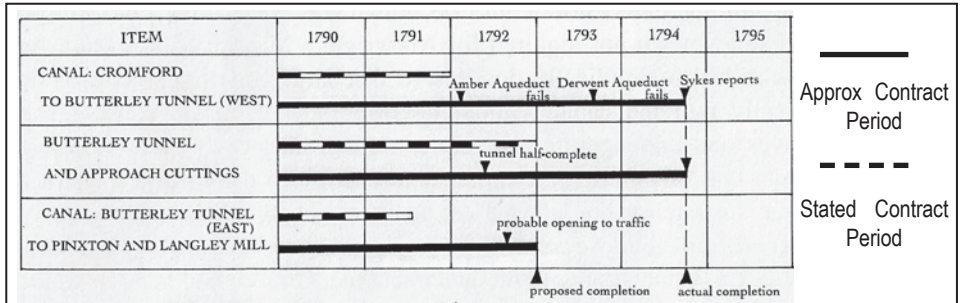
Curiosities (1): This wooden post was installed by the Cromford Canal Society around 1980.



Curiosities (3): Very similar in size and shape to the Cromford Canal stones is this one beside the road between Macclesfield and Buxton at Tegg’s Nose.

OPENING DATE(S)

Hugh Potter tries to track down when the canal opened



This table was published in Reg Schofield's book *Benjamin Outram* and shows projected and actual completion dates.

The opening date of the Cromford Canal is far from clear. Unlike the majority of canals, there was no 'grand opening'; in fact the minutes have little to say about it and the papers do not offer much more.

The opening was announced in at least three newspapers dated 22nd–24th October 1793, but then the top section was cut off because of problems with Derwent Aqueeduct. Schofield summarised it diagrammatically in his book *Benjamin Outram* (an excellent read).

Looking at the Company Minutes, on 29th May 1792 it was navigable up to Pinxton:

"The Committee have received from Mr Jessop and Mr Outram the following Statement of the Works on the Canal:

"East of the tunnel the canal navigable to Pinxton and to the deep cutting. Some coping wanted to the locks and bridges. The toll houses to finish and some work to do at the wharfs estimated to cost £219.

"The Tunnel 1354 Yards completely done. 533 Yards opened but not complete. 1081 Yards undone.

"All engines, bricks, horses, shafts &c prepared to compleat the remainder and the greatest part of this drained of water, some deep cutting is yet to do, the expence required

to compleat the whole is estimated at £5103.

"West of the tunnel the cutting nearly done, the bridges nearly completed. The three tunnels entirely compleat, the two aqueducts still require a considerable expence to compleat them which with the above is estimated to require £2140."

Then on 10th December 1793 Jessop reported:

"I have been examining the disastrous state of the Derwent Aqueeduct and I request you to communicate this letter to the Committee; the failure has happened for want of a sufficient strength in the front walls and I blame no one but myself for the consequence having often seen much profusion of expence by an unmeaning corruption of materials . . . While the work is executing the water may be brought to each end of the aqueduct and goods may be conveyed by a railway over it as there are two boats at the Cromford end to receive them, the expense of conveying, reloading and unloading will be from 4d to 6d per ton."

This confirms that there had been trade across the aqueduct before its failure.

By 29th August 1794, that aqueduct had been sorted but still all was not well, although the defects were relatively minor: ►



The large buttresses that had to be put in by Jessop to stabilise Derwent Aqueduct can be seen in this high-level view. It was the failure of this aqueduct that delayed the full opening to 1794. Leawood Pump can be seen on the left.

“Mr Sykes is not aware of any defect in the Derwent Aqueduct; and gives it as his opinion that the embankment in Lea Wood should be particularly attended to, and the lower side of the bank strengthened and the upper lightened – he recommends that great attention should be paid to the Amber Aqueduct and that it be further strengthened by increase of embankment.

“He observed a considerable leakage at Buckland Hollow and recommends it to be well lined and puddled – he thinks the tunnel is done in a workmanlike manner – he observed the wet drain through in several places but does not apprehend that any danger can arise from it – he thinks that some benching should be taken off the banks at the east end of the tunnel to prevent any slip, he observed some of the lock gates to leak which should be examined and repaired.”

Opening Date

It will probably never be possible to put an exact date on the opening, but we can say for certain that the Cromford Canal opened for a brief period in 1793, then more permanently after the major repairs in 1794. ▀



On the downstream side of Derwent Aqueduct is the optimistic date of 1792. In fact there are two such dates: the more prominent one appears to be a later addition to the earlier one carved into the stone below it. This date presumably reflected the initial completion of the structure.

MEET THE TRUSTEES

Who's who in FCC

John Barker



Tell us about yourself...

Born and bred in Nottingham I worked with Shell UK for some 35 years in petrol retail. One of my hobbies was training a mounted games team called Derbyshire and in 1980 we won the World Championship at Singleton Park in Cardiff.

How did you get involved with FCC...?

I joined FCC some 12 years ago. We had been hiring narrow boats for 30 years and during that time I decided that when I retired I would help a canal society with restoration; I met with Mike Kelley one day and the rest is history.

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

I have been a member for over 12 years and a Trustee for 7. I have had several roles from Committee member to Vice Chairman to Work Party leader and the Strategic Restoration Committee.

What have you brought to the party?

With being work party leader we have built an excellent trust relationship with Derbyshire County Council. We also have an Adoption Certificate from the Canal & River Trust for sections of canal at Ironville, Codnor Park Reservoir and Lower Hartshay, but without the support of our 20-plus work party volunteers this would not have been possible. Recent jobs are repair of Pinxton Weir and replacing 100 fencing posts at Ironville which is ongoing.

What are your aspirations for FCC ...?

I want to see the extension of the canal at Langley Mill in water. We are so close now but we really need to encourage more professional people to join us with all the groups working together.

Yvonne Shattower



Tell us about yourself...

I was born and spent the early part of my life on the south coast. My family had always been involved with boats in some way, and we had taken our first canal boating holiday in 1984. When we moved to the Midlands we bought a house which backed onto the Erewash Canal.

How did you get involved with FCC...?

I became involved through my association with the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association. My late husband and I were at the very first Friends meeting at the Newlands Inn.

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

I have been a Trustee since 2003, and am the Membership Secretary.

What have you brought to the party?

Hopefully enthusiasm and clerical skills.

What are your aspirations for FCC ...?

I am passionate about the restoration of the beautiful Cromford Canal and linking it once again to the main canal system.

A REAL LITTLE GEM

Reviewed by Angela Marsh

ON THE BOATS



*Memories of time spent on and around the
Cromford Canal
between Lower Hartshay and Cromford*
by
Les Mason

As a teenager, Les Mason worked on the boats that hauled cargo from Lower Hartshay to Lea and Cromford. In *On The Boats* he reminisces about his job and life on the canal. Les worked the canal in the early 1930s. Walking along this stretch of the canal today, we can still see some of the places that Les remembers. Maps and period photographs help us to visualise the area he describes.

On The Boats gives us snapshots of life on the canal. From an amusing incident concerning duck eggs, to details of how coal was stacked in the boats. Les even tells us about the day the horse took a swim!

Over the years, much information about the canal workers has been lost. We don't even have names for most of the people connected with the canal. Even if we do have a name, information about them is very sparse. But *On The Boats* gives us a wealth of information about Les's work and life. It's the detail about numerous everyday happenings, and a few out of the ordinary events, that makes this book so precious. It's a real little gem.

If you enjoy learning about the Cromford, you really should read it.

On The Boats is edited by Hugh Potter and published by the Friends of the Cromford Canal (paperback 32 pages, £5 or £6 Inc p&p) ISBN 978-0-9544482-2-6. It can be purchased from the Weighbridge Office, Gothic Warehouse, Mill Road Cromford DE4 3RQ or online from the FCC website www.cromfordcanal.org.

MONDAY MEETINGS

Our talks at Ironville resume this autumn. All start at 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall, NG16 5NN. Members and non-members are equally welcome. There is a tea/coffee break and raffle, and hopefully a bar. Admission remains unchanged at £2.50.

20th September

The FCC past, present and future by David Martin.

A chance to find out what has been happening during the Covid pandemic and our plans for the future.

18th October

Bennerley Viaduct by Kieran Lee.

The remarkable success story of a rare railway survivor.

22nd November

Agincourt by Gary Slator.

What happened in 1415 as part of the "Hundred Years' War".

