

THE PORTAL

Issue 79 - Winter 2021

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Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608

FRIENDS OF THE CROMFORD CANAL

The Officers

Chairman - David Martin

1 Lawrence Park, Underwood, Nottinghamshire NG16 5QZ
Email: chair@cromfordcanal.org | **Phone:** 01773 813310

Vice Chairman - John Barker

106 Main Road, Underwood, Nottinghamshire NG16 5GN
Email: vicechair@cromfordcanal.org | **Phone:** 01773 760358

Executive Secretary - John Baylis BEM

215 Clipstone Road West, Forest Town, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG19 OHJ
Email: secretary@cromfordcanal.org | **Phone:** 01623 621208

Acting Treasurer - John Baylis BEM

Membership Secretary - Yvonne Shattower

264 Bennett Street, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 4JA
Email: membership@cromfordcanal.org | **Phone:** 01159 464479

Archivist - Hugh Potter

Bankfield, Chase Road, Ambergate, Belper DE56 2HA
Email: archivist@cromfordcanal.org | **Phone:** 01773 852009

Editor - Hugh Potter (Layout & Design - Keith Bailey)

Bankfield, Chase Road, Ambergate, Belper DE56 2HA
Email: editor@cromfordcanal.org | **Phone:** 01773 852009

FCC Sales

Weighbridge Office, Gothic Warehouse, Mill Road, Cromford, Derbyshire DE4 3RQ
Email: sales@cromfordcanal.org

Social Secretary - David Martin

1 Lawrence Park, Underwood, Nottinghamshire NG16 5QZ
Email: chair@cromfordcanal.org | **Phone:** 01773 813310

Local Authority Liaison Officer - Steve Parish

26 Leamington Close, Warrington WA5 3PY
Email: steve.parish@cromfordcanal.org | **Phone:** 07909 001399

Webmaster

Email: webmaster@cromfordcanal.org

Work Party Organiser - John Barker

106 Main Road, Underwood, Nottinghamshire NG16 5GN
Email: work@cromfordcanal.org | **Phone:** 01773 760358

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The Season of the Cranes

Front Cover

Lifting Brown's Bridge at High Peak Junction on 16th September for long-awaited repair work.

Photo: Hugh Potter

Back Cover

Lifting Birdswood out at Cromford Wharf on 9th November for her biennial out-of-water inspection on 24th, which we're delighted to report she passed.

Photo: Ann Haile

The copy date for the next issue is 18th February 2022

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

I am delighted to say that for the first time in ages, I have hardly written any of the content of this *Portal* myself! Thanks to numerous contributors, we have an issue packed with topical articles demonstrating that post-Covid, things are definitely getting back to normal. Let us just hope they stay that way; seeing the situation in mainland Europe makes me think that perhaps the UK has got something right at last. Fingers crossed.

Something Derbyshire County Council definitely got right is their support for the restoration of the historic Brown's Bridge – after all it is in a World Heritage Site visited by people from all over the world. We are delighted to be able to once again give those visitors the full heritage experience on a *Birdswood* cruise. Apart from being part of history herself, we show them the historic canal, the oldest railway workshops in the world, a 170-year-old working steam pumping engine, Jessop's spectacular aqueduct over the Derwent, and the newly restored Aqueduct Cottage.

And if we were able to progress further south, we could also show off our unique railway aqueduct and the impressive Gregory Tunnel. Well, you have to look ahead!

It's been a busy few months with work on the swing bridge, *Birdswood's* biennial inspection, Shine a Light, multiple work parties with several visiting groups, paddling events, work on Leewood Pump, book publishing, looking after TV crews, progressing the Beggarlee Extension . . . the list goes on – and you can read about all of them in this issue.

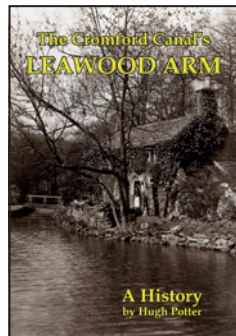
My thanks as always to Keith who has squeezed all these words in (and simultaneously managed the *Birdswood* inspection!). Getting all the words in meant 'dropping' some pictures, so there's a couple



We're back! FCC Chairman David Martin supervises Birdswood winding at Leewood Pump on 13th October, made rather difficult after two years' unchecked weed growth – but we made it!

of extras on this page. Do please drop me a line with any thoughts or comments you may have on any of the topics covered. I love getting your feedback.

Finally, all the very best for Christmas and (as they say on the cut) a 'Good Road Ahead' for the New Year. **T**



The FCC's new Leewood Arm booklet is featured later in this issue.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

How the time flies! By the time you are reading this *Portal*, Christmas will soon be here and it's been another very eventful year along the Cromford Canal. We came into this year in full Lockdown. We weren't running our trip boat *Birdswood* or carrying out any of the maintenance work parties, but we were continuing to have all our committee meetings on Zoom and so none of our planning ever stopped.

Birdswood eventually came back into use at the end of June, albeit with limited passenger numbers and a lot of extra duties and new regulations for the masters, crew and passengers alike but they have all dealt with the supposed post-Covid world remarkably well. Not surprisingly our charter trips have done exceptionally well and the end results are that this year we didn't lose any money; in fact we turned out a small profit. So it would be remiss of me not to thank all our wonderful boat volunteers who I know are dedicated and passionate about their roles; this clearly shows in all the positive feedback we continue to receive from those who visit *Birdswood* in the World Heritage Site in the Derwent Valley.

High Peak Junction Success

There has been some really great news stories for High Peak Junction this autumn. After some extremely diligent and meticulous work carried out by our engineers and a working group that we set up last autumn, we finally secured the funding for repairing Brown's Bridge with the help of Barry Lewis, Portfolio Holder for Heritage Assets on Derbyshire County Council. It really has been a successful collaboration between the charity and DCC. We would especially like to thank Beighton Construction of Chesterfield who did all of the work and on time. The bridge really is easy to operate now it has been repaired.

Immediately after we had got the bridge operational again on 11th October, we had a very famous visitor to the canal on the 13th: the TV presenter Richard Hammond who is making

a new series about some of the great rivers in Britain of which the Derwent is one. The idea behind the footage is to show the links between the river Derwent and its key role in the industrial revolution.

As it was the first time that *Birdswood* had passed through the swing bridge in around 18 months it was slow going despite all the weed clearance that had been done. I think our guest actually fell asleep at one point; he's just not used to travelling around at 2mph! Anyway, after our guests left, we literally ploughed on with the boat and eventually reached the winding hole by Leawood Pumphouse. Have you ever punted a 72ft narrow boat down a weeded up cut there and back just to turn it around? Well, I have and it's not the easiest thing in the world to do either, but we did it!

More great news comes from Ron Common and the Aqueduct Cottage project where they have secured more funding so that they can now hopefully complete the inside of what will be an exciting new visitor centre, all about the natural habitats in the area. The FCC engineers are currently looking into installing a dummy lock gate on the front of the concrete dam to make it look more aesthetically pleasing.

Also, the project has kindly donated to FCC some surplus steel girders that we will be able to adapt for use as stands for *Birdswood* next time she has to come out of the water – we have to borrow and transport the current ones from our friends at Langley Mill.

Work Party

The Work Party volunteers managed by John Barker have done some amazing work this year since they have been allowed back out to work, from repointing the bridge on the Pinxton Arm, installing benches at Codnor Park and Lower Hartshay, hedge cutting (literally hundreds of yards of it), reed pulling (around 25 tonnes and counting), all of the preparation works for Brown's Bridge, repairing fences, pollarding

trees, and even as I write this today they have been working on *Birdswood* which is out on the peninsular for her biennial Maritime & Coastguard Agency inspection; the list goes on and we couldn't manage without them.

In September at our first social event since the pandemic I did a presentation on the great work of our volunteers and it made me realise just how much they do; it's amazing, and John Guyler clocks up all their hours which amount to almost 75,000 over the last six years.

We would like to thank you all for your continued support towards these great achievements for FCC however much you do, and if you would like to contribute more and become a volunteer in any of the many wide and varied roles that we have then please do get in touch.

The Strategic Restoration Committee sadly lost its Chairman George Rogers in September; his commitments to the Chesterfield Canal are unfortunately all consuming, but we would especially like to thank George for all the time and effort he has dedicated to FCC during his time with us. He has been a great asset to us in the development of our strategic planning amongst many other things.

Looking Ahead

Going forwards our plans will be on two fronts. The main drive will obviously be to deliver the Beggarlee Extension and to that end we are now looking to employ a Project Manager to oversee that development. In the meantime, the Strategic Restoration Committee will develop the plans for the next phase from Stoney Lane up to Portland Basin. This is no small task because there is the road at Stoney Lane which will need a bridge, and then the river Erewash just beyond that which will need an aqueduct. Finally there need to be three staircase locks at Stoneyford so they can be accessed by road, and that should bring us up on a level with the existing canal at Jacksdale.

Aside from all of that, at the northern end our engineers will be looking into the stability of the canal from Derwent Aqueduct to the winding hole just beyond Gregory's Tunnel. In the past this section has overtopped during flash flooding and there are questions around the stability of the embankments along that section.

So, if you feel that you could help us in any way shape or form do get in touch, we would gladly appreciate your help because we have a lot going on!

Merry Christmas and a Happier New Year to you all. **David Martin** 🇮🇪

TRUSTEES WANTED for the FCC

Applications are being sought for the next generation of FCC Trustees

Expressions of interest are being sought for new Trustees to help the charity to accelerate its restoration and development aims. We are looking for enthusiastic and energetic individuals who can work co-operatively with existing Trustees and other volunteers and contribute to monthly meetings.

Ideally we are looking for people with a background and interest in canal restoration and preferably who have specific skills to bring to our team. We are particularly short of engineering and finance skills.

Please see our website www.cromfordcanal.org for more detail on our canal and aims. Interested parties should email secretary@cromfordcanal.org or contact the Chairman David Martin for an informal chat at chair@cromfordcanal.org

We also intend placing adverts in trade journals and other forums.

Trustee elections are held in April at our Annual General Meeting.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By Yvonne Shattower

Where does the time fly to? It seems only yesterday that I was writing the last 'Membership Matters', and here we are, looking at another edition of *Portal*, Christmas, and 2022.

With the last *Portal* you received a letter from David Martin, our Chairman, regarding Direct Debit, our new payment method, and information on 'migrating' (as they seem to call it these days) from Standing Orders to Direct Debits. I would like to thank all of you who have contacted Richard Handley and made the change. Unfortunately the letter did not give the new subscription rates, which are: Annual Single £12, Couple/Joint £20; Life Single £200, Couple/Joint £300.

We are especially anxious to reach those members who joined the Standing Order payment method in the early days, and have never amended their subscription which is not fair on those of you who comply with our necessary increases; we may have to consider dropping you from the hard *Portal* list if your payment no longer covers the costs.

Richard is contacting (by email where possible) those of you still on Standing Orders as they become due, but he is not having a lot of luck as many of the email addresses are bouncing. This means that we will have to use expensive 'snail mail' to reach these members, so please keep us up to date with your contact details. I have mentioned before that most *Portal* mailings result in one or two being returned marked 'not known', which is a great pity as unless we have another valid address we lose track of that member.

As usual, there will not be a members' meeting at Ironville in December and at the time of writing this report, we do not have any information on the speakers for January/February, but we fully intend to continue

with these events. Keep your eyes on our website and social media for information as it becomes available. We have a bar and tea/coffee available at all our meetings.

In this edition of *Portal*, you will find notification of our AGM in 2022. I know it seems ages ahead – it is in fact five months, but it is an important date in the FCC Calendar. As usual we will have some Trustees retiring, and we need some new faces to take us through the next few years. Do you have engineering, business or financial experience that we could use? If you feel that you could help us in this critical stage of our journey to restore our lovely canal, please do get in touch. If you would like to talk to our Chairman about any of the roles we have to fill, do contact him – his details are on the inside cover of this magazine.

With very best wishes for Christmas, and hoping that 2022 will be a good year for us all. ■

IMPORTANT NOTICE

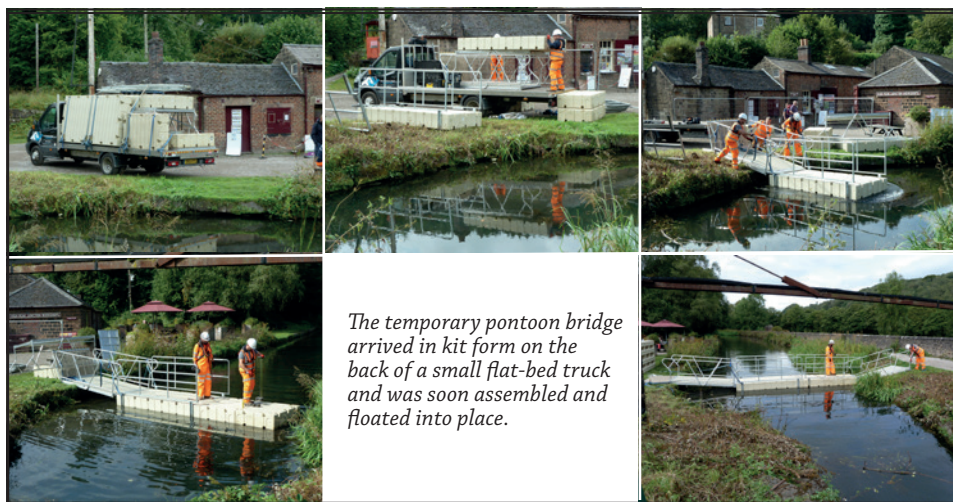
Thank you to all the Members who have agreed to pay their FCC subscription by Direct Debit. For those of you who formerly paid by Standing Order, please remember to cancel that payment with your bank; we cannot do this for you.

Will members still paying by Standing Order and not wishing to change to Direct Debit, please arrange for your payments to be increased in line with the new subscription rates as above. There are still some members who are not paying the full rate, so please check that your payment amount will be up to date.

If you have any questions, please contact the Membership Secretary.

BROWN'S BRIDGE REMEDIAL WORK

John Boucher on a major task successfully achieved



The temporary pontoon bridge arrived in kit form on the back of a small flat-bed truck and was soon assembled and floated into place.

Background

The operation of our historic trip boat *Birdswood* requires the opening of Brown's Bridge, the swing bridge within the scheduled monument site at High Peak Junction, which was part of the former Cromford & High Peak Railway works. The bridge had become increasingly difficult to operate due to wear in the 18th-century pintle-bearing coupled with distortion in the timber deck.

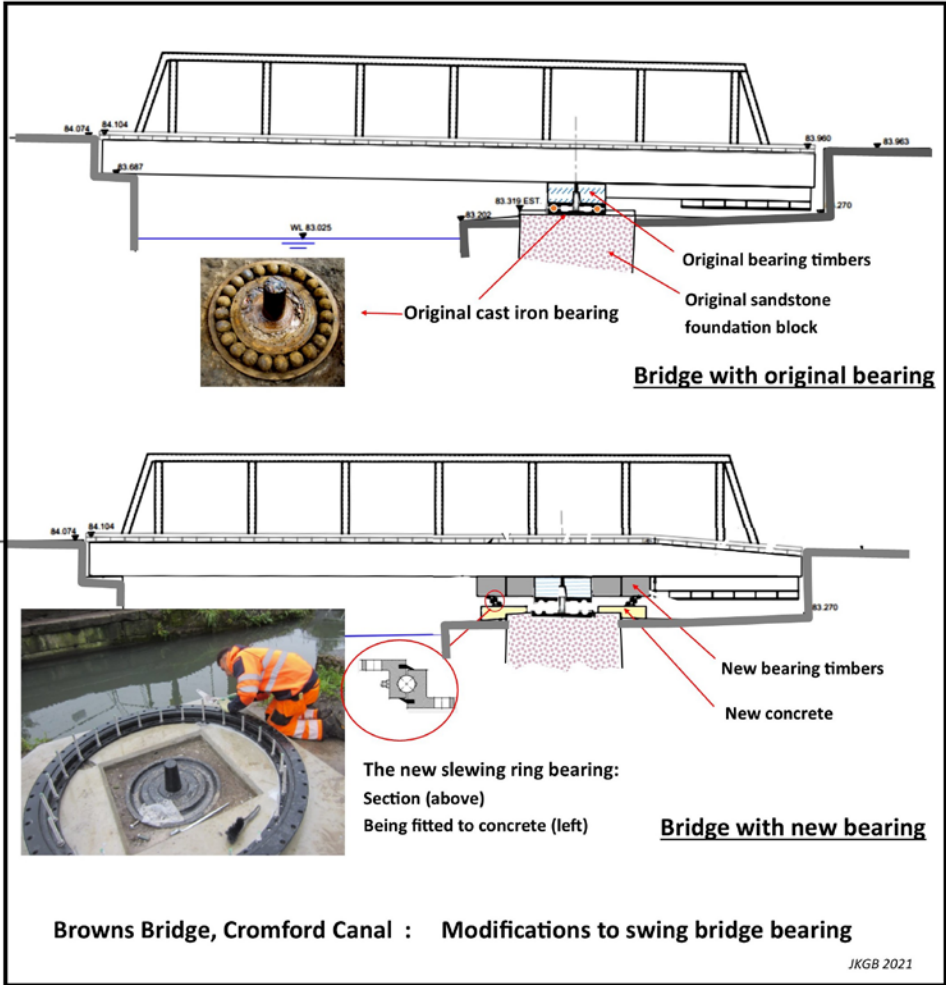
The timber deck is not original, having been renewed in 2011, but a number of design deficiencies had become apparent and areas of timber were exhibiting incipient decay. Some maintenance had been undertaken by Derbyshire County Council in 2016, but by 2020 it had become almost impossible to operate, requiring the efforts of three crew members from *Birdswood* to get it open and then closed again; this effectively terminated the operation of the boat at that point.

FCC engineers investigated the problems and devised a solution, involving the

replacement of the original pintle bearing with a modern slewing ring and undertaking remediation works on the timber deck to stiffen it up, in particular installing bracing to remove a degree of twist and to maintain its shape during use.

The original simple bearing design offered little resistance to the bridge tilting or rocking, and was considered a safety hazard. On one occasion a crew member walked onto the partly open bridge (in breach of instructions), and was thrown into the canal when the bridge tilted. Fortunately there was enough resistance within the bridge pintle to restrain the bridge from completely toppling over.

The designs were discussed with, and approved by, DCC and Historic England. Historic England required the original bearing to be retained in situ, and the existing stonework to be retained without any changes, but were relaxed about repairs to the timberwork as that was not part of the original bridge structure. ►



Although the bridge is owned by DCC they accepted the proposals of FCC to organise and manage the works, acknowledging the professional qualifications and experience of FCC's volunteer engineering team.

The Plan

The proposed works covered the replacement of the pintle bearing and remediation of the timber deck of the bridge, along with some modifications to the structure to facilitate these works. The structure utilised a timber deck, supported about one third the way along

on a single bearing, ballasted on the shorter side to maintain the correct balance. Four main longitudinal timber beams span over two transverse timbers supported directly by the main pintle and ball bearing. It is finished with a timber boarded deck, with tubular steel handrails fixed either side. A retractable operating lever is hinged to one handrail on the towpath side.

The old timber deck had a noticeable long-fall from the west (railway) end to the towpath end, of up to about 120mm. The long-fall matched the levels of the bank masonry at ►



Additional timber required to fit the large diameter of the new slewing ring was obtained from ECPDA stocks at Langley Mill, and cut to shape and preservative treated by FCC.

Photo: John Boucher

either end, and was clearly part of the original design. The difference in levels had to be incorporated into the new design.

This remedial work replaced the original bearing with a new slewing ring, which does not tilt but keeps the bridge deck level at all times and improves the ease of opening and closing operations. The new slewing ring is of a large diameter which allows the existing bearing to be retained *in situ*, and is fixed onto a new reinforced concrete base cast around the original 1200mm square stone bearing block. The design means that the bridge is now captivated, ie it can no longer be lifted off directly with a crane without having to remove some locating bolts.

As the new bearing is a little thicker than the original one the central part of the bridge deck has become slightly higher, so that most of the deck is now level, but there is a gentle ramp at the towpath side down to the level of the edge stonework.

The larger diameter of the new slewing ring required additional transverse timbers for support. Four new timbers, two either side of the original transverse bearing timbers, have been bolted to the slewing

ring. This allows the original transverse timbers to drop in between them when the bridge deck is lowered back into its working position, with the final connection being made with long horizontal tie bolts through the new and old transverse timbers.

The new captivated bearing design allows the bridge to be set with a clearance to the bearing shelf on the west side, permitting free rotation, but the design recognises that during the passage of the occasional maintenance vehicle (up to 3 tons maximum weight) the beam end will deflect sufficiently to settle on the ledge and provide extra beam support.

The scheme was planned prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, which obviously affected progress. It had been recognised early on that procurement of the new slewing ring would take a long time, especially as the two possible suppliers only manufactured overseas. In the event the ring was purchased in advance by FCC and given free issue to the contractor. It had to be imported from Spain, and slight delays in final manufacture meant that the Brexit deadline for the end of 2020 was missed. While this did not significantly affect the cost, it did mean that a number of new customs issues and permits had to be faced, making a further 2-month frustrating delay. ➤



Removing ballast prior to lifting

Arranging a Contract

The proposed works were outside the normal run of small construction contracts, and some difficulty was experienced in attracting local contractors. In the end, offers were obtained from two large national contractors and the smaller local contractor, Beighton Construction Ltd, who had previously installed the control sluice at Cromford Mills. All came in well above the budget estimates, but negotiations were undertaken with Beighton, who had submitted the best offer, with the FCC becoming more involved and taking over some of the simpler elements of the works.

A few further savings were identified, in particular the provision of a floating pontoon footbridge in place of the scaffolding originally proposed to maintain the much-used public footpath across the canal, which saved about £12,000 in the overall costs. DCC Countryside Services also assisted by providing office space and welfare facilities within the HPJ workshops. The greatly reduced contract price now came just within the grant offered by DCC, and the contract was awarded.

During the lead up to the works Covid restrictions eased, but the knock-on effects included some shortages and increases in prices of materials. This particularly affected the large section timbers needed over the new bearing, which could not be found sufficiently seasoned to meet the specification. Fortunately some suitable timber was located in the stores of the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association at Langley Mill, which FCC was able to cut to size and get preservative treated, at a considerable cost saving to the contract.

Site works

Following a preliminary site survey, and the installation of concrete 'Lego' blocks to support the bridge deck on the temporary work site on the west bank, contract work began on 13th September, with the installation of the pontoon foot crossing. FCC assisted in removal of ballast from the ►



Shuttering for the new concrete base for the slewing ring.



Pouring the concrete for the slewing ring base.



Reuben and Josh finishing the concrete base for the new slewing ring.

Photos: John Boucher



Foreman Steve using the upper template to accurately position the required drill holes. The top half of the original bearing ring is in the centre.

Photo: John Boucher

bridge, and cleaning out the ballast boxes which had become filled with wet dirt creating considerable decay in the timbers. The deck was then craned out and placed on a temporary supporting structure on the west bank to enable the necessary new bracings and new timbers to be fitted. A number of minor repairs were also undertaken.



The new timbers being fitted to the slewing ring.

Photo: Anne Haile

For the programme, the construction of the new foundations and the installation of the slewing ring on the east bank was given priority as this formed the critical time path through the project, requiring time to be allowed for the new concrete to cure and the necessary ►



The underside of the bridge deck being swung across the canal showing the new bracing bars and other stiffening works added.

Photo: John Boucher



Lifting the bridge for replacement on the slewing ring.

Photo: Anne Haile



Apprentice Josh demonstrates how easily the bridge can now be swung.

Photo: John Boucher

tests to be made. In between, work continued on the deck and when the foundations and the deck bracing were complete a second survey was undertaken to check and calculate the critical clearances required for the final assembly.

The final activity prior to the reinstallation of the bridge was to replace the ballast and balance the deck. Being a swing bridge, with one end twice the length of the other, balancing is critical; this was done by lifting the bridge slightly and supporting it on a rail across the width of the bridge placed exactly on the bearing centreline. Because the end of the bridge had to be tapered down a little to suit the new levels of the bridge there was now slightly less volume in the ballast boxes, and the arrangement of the available pieces of ballast – mainly concrete kerbs, some steel plates, and pieces of old railway line – had to be carefully modified to fit it all in. Fortunately the process worked well and in the end it was possible to stand at one end of the 5.5 ton bridge and rock it up and down with two fingers.

The crane returned on Friday 8th October and lifted the deck across the canal and dropped it onto the new bearing. Once the locking bolts were inserted the bridge could be swung and tested. There were a few adjustments to be made to end clearances and the final decking boards to be refitted, and the job was completed on schedule the following Monday. The floating footbridge was removed, and *Birdswood* was able to make its first passage for over a year on Wednesday 13th October. The crew expressed their delight that the bridge could now be easily opened by just one person. ■



The old bearing and pintle showing the swinging area for the bridge, which is being positioned on its 'Lego' blocks in the background.



At last . . . Birdswood navigates through Brown's Bridge after far too many months.

BIRDWOOD INSPECTION

By Keith Bailey (Project Manager)

Background

As almost all readers will know, *Birdswood* is the Charity's trip boat and generates significant revenue. However, as a passenger vessel she is subject to regulations imposed by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). *Birdswood* is licenced to carry up to 51 passengers and is treated by the MCA as a sea-going vessel. This means our Masters must be tested and licensed, I won't say certified, by the MCA. The vessel has to be inspected annually to maintain its operating licence. On even years, the inspection is carried out with *Birdswood* in the water. This inspection focusses more on process & procedure, but does include some structural elements as well. On odd years the boat has to come out of the water and the inspection focuses more on the structural integrity and the hull is checked on the outside as well as the inside. 2021 is an odd year, so a full out of water inspection is required.

The Process

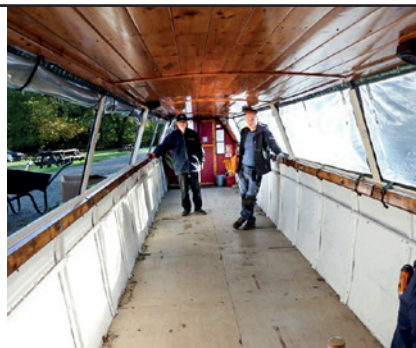
To achieve the objective of receiving the licence to continue operating *Birdswood* a detailed project plan was drawn up and the Boat Committee appointed this author as project manager. I was definitely in the wrong place as the wrong time! The project required far more time than I expected and has somewhat taken over my life during October and November.

We had to contract a boat surveyor to conduct a hull inspection and to measure the hull baseplate and side thickness which needed specialist ultrasonic measuring equipment.

As well as arranging contracts for crane hire and the hull survey I had to hurriedly find an alternative surveyor when the one we ►



Birdswood volunteers removing seats on 2nd November. Photo: Hugh Potter



Job done! All seats out. Photo: Hugh Potter



Floor plates up as well. Photo: Hugh Potter



*Repositioning the boat trestles. Boy, they were heavy!
Photo: Anne Haile*



*Lift in progress. Walker's banksman steers the hull.
Photo: Anne Haile*



*Nearly there! Mike Kelly steadies the bow.
Photo: Anne Haile*

contracted informed me that he had crushed his thumb and couldn't do the work. Method statements for the work had to be created and approved.

The cooperation and agreement of the Arkwright Society and Derbyshire County Council (DCC) were needed as well as others such as the Langley Mill Boat Yard who kindly loaned us the boat trestles to stand *Birdswood* on when she was craned out of the water. The Arkwright Society lease the peninsular on which the boat has to be placed for inspection and DCC own the canal and grant us a licence to use it. Also, the Arkwright Society had to move the quite substantial gazebo they erected during lockdown. It needed six people to dismantle it and move the canopy to the top of the peninsular. My thanks for their cooperation.

We needed help from *Birdswood's* crew to remove all the seats and to lift the heavy floor plates to expose the inside of the boat's baseplate (an MCA requirement).

John Barker's work party were heavily involved in moving the boat trestles from Langley Mill and placing them in position on the peninsular and also helping to scrape the hull to remove the loose bitumen blacking once the boat was craned out. Their help has been invaluable and I extend my thanks to them. ▶



*John Thompson pressure washes the hull.
Photo: Keith Bailey*



*Our surveyor, Adrian White, taking thickness measurements near the stern.
Photo: Keith Bailey*



*The work party hard at work scraping the hull.
Photo: Keith Bailey*



*Adrian White, checking the baseplate.
Photo: Keith Bailey*



*Carol & Brian Stevenson are about to work on the artwork on the passenger doors.
Photo: Keith Bailey*



*John Barker's work party members scraping and checking for pits in the sides.
Photo: Mike Kelley*

The boat was craned out on 9th November. The weather was perfect. It was dry and relatively warm, with almost no wind. This was

a welcome improvement on 2019 when it was cold and it rained all day!

The next day DCC ranger John Thompson came in his own time with his petrol driven high power pressure washer and blasted the accumulated scale and fouling from the hull, a process that took many volunteer hours previously. Thank you John.

On Friday 12th November the survey to measure the hull baseplate and side thickness took place. This survey found some pitting that will need to be welded after the inspection. The hull can then be painted (blacked) with bitumen paint and the boat craned back into the water.

Volunteers Carol and Brian Stevenson have been busy repainting some of the exterior decorative art work on the outside of the boat.

At the time of writing, we are awaiting the MCA inspection on 24th November. **T**

CONTINUITY

Mike Kelley expresses his serious concerns over the future of FCC (These are his personal views, not necessarily those of the trustees)

Your team of trustees have been working hard for many years towards our common aim of restoring this canal. Some on our team have been spending many hours each week for twenty or more years working toward this admirable goal. However we are not immortal and five of this team, including myself, are now in their 80s. I hold my hands up and admit we have not done enough to plan for our society's continuity. Who is to take over? Who is to shadow the key positions? As I write this, there is currently no one.

Therefore, if the FCC is to continue, we have to have more new trustees who will take up this mantle of responsibility; otherwise our organisation, that we have all worked so hard for, could decline, or even collapse. We have planted the seeds and the sapling is growing, but it now needs to be nurtured and cared for, otherwise it will wither and die.

How we go about this does not have an easy answer. We need people who have the right profile: age, capability, skills and probably above all the ability of staying power.

Yet the people are out there. We have dozens of wonderful people, who regularly turn up to work with us on our frequent work parties and boat crew. There are those who have proved themselves on our several committees, such as the Boat Committee, the Strategic Restoration Committee, the Engineering Committee, the Sales Team, as well as the Boat Maintenance Team. So the people are out there; already tried and trusted people.

Then of course there is a process to be gone through; firstly nomination and then



We can spruce up our 150-million-year-old dinosaur Stella, but we cannot spruce up our trustees – we need new blood, and we need it now says Mike Kelley (second from left).

to be voted for at AGM. Merely putting a hand up doesn't mean it's a done deal. I would strongly favour us looking actively for outsiders (as well as known insiders); from the Inland Waterways Association, Canal & River Trust, local authorities, partners such as Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, Arkwright Society, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, local landowners with canal interests etc, so that we do not to appear as an exclusive club.

We need such people now. We need at least four to step up to work with us, initially possibly as shadows, or to replace members of our aging trustees. Can you do this before the next AGM in March 2022? Remember we are not immortal, we need continuity. ■

WHY IS IT CALLED BROWN'S BRIDGE?

Based on research by Colin Goodwyn

The recent work on Brown's Bridge at High Peak Junction has caused several people to ask where the bridge's name comes from. Thanks to research by Colin Goodwyn, we now know that Brown was a local tenant and publican.

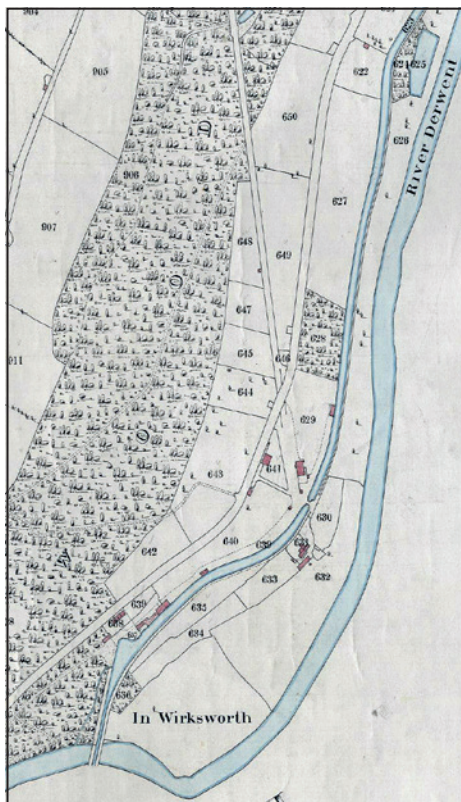
The 1841 tithe map shows that most of Arkwright's land between the canal and the river from around what are now called the 'Railway Narrows' to Derwent Aqueduct was occupied by Samuel Brown. This includes the buildings located between the canal and the original route of the Midland Railway which included the Junction Inn, of which the landlord in 1846 was Samuel Brown. The realignment of the railway in the 1880s caused these buildings to be demolished.

Up in the hillside above what is now 'High Peak Junction', lies Brown's Spring, which presumably supplied Brown's property. An agreement of 1892 between London & North Western Railway Company (who owned Cromford & High Peak Railway) and Matlock Bath UDC allowed the latter to use some of the spring's water via Birchwood (covered) reservoir.

Brown's spring issues from the hillside above Cromford Lower Incline and would have had to have been taken into account during the construction of the turnpike (now the A6) around 1816 and was probably used to supply water to the railway, the surplus disposed of almost certainly towards the Cromford Canal.

The 1892 agreement stipulated that a minimum of 20,000 gallons a day had to still be supplied to the railway and that the (unspecified) flow into the Cromford Canal should not be diminished.

South Derbyshire Water Board took over the water supply until the early 1960 when it relinquished the rights to what was then referred to as High Peak Source.



The southern part of the Cromford Tithe map of 1841. Samuel Brown occupied the areas shown as 626 and 630–634. Brown's Spring was located in the woodland adjacent to 648.

Of particular relevance to the canal's supply more recently is that water used to flow into the canal from a culvert which entered under the south-western corner of Brown's Bridge, but this has ceased in the last few years. It would be very interesting to know why, and where that water flows today. **T**

PADDLE PEAK ADVENTURE WEEKEND

A report from organiser Pete Astles



Over the 3-day August bank holiday weekend the local community group Paddle Peak took more than 250 local youngsters kayaking on the Cromford Canal at Cromford Wharf.

In addition, every lunchtime awe-inspiring paddle sports demonstrations were performed by several world leading canoeists and kayakers to show the variety of different and exciting disciplines paddle sports has to offer.

On Saturday Team GB Canoe Slalom team members Chris Bowers and Olympian Adam Burgess, just back from Tokyo 2020, showed the crowd of fascinated onlookers the ins and outs, and ups and downs of canoe slalom including a demonstration of the wiggle test, a tricky canoe slalom training routine from the 1970s.

On Sunday Viking Canoe Polo Team from Belper put on an awesome display of action and sprint kayaker Liam Heath MBE put on an amazing show by speeding past the Cromford Canal boat *Birdswood* in his carbon fibre

racing kayak, certainly the fastest craft the historic Cromford Canal has ever seen!

On Monday Great Britain Freestyle Kayak team members including World and British champions James Bebbington, Gav Barker and Rob Crowe wowed the onlookers with an impressive display of acrobatic kayaking moves. They demonstrated a menu of moves and entertained the crowd with horizontal spins, through vertical cartwheels, front flips and onto three dimensional crazy combinations such as McNasties and Godzillas with cheese! And all in the shallow and very weedy waters of Cromford Canal. Like all the other eminent visitors, they then took local boys and girls out on the water and started to teach them the tricks of the trade. Truly outstanding.

Other events also took place in the mill yard and on the canal throughout the weekend including open canoe and canal boat trips, rock climbing, orienteering and more. ■

WORK PARTY REPORT

By John Guyler



Another boatful of weeds removed from the channel at High Peak Junction, with the swing bridge on its 'Lego' blocks in the background. The lack of use by Birdswood over the last two years caused the weed to almost swamp the canal, to the detriment of both the boat and wildlife.

All's Good in the Garden!

Shirley Bullock and Carole Hartley have worked really hard this year on the Lock Keeper's Garden at Lock 4, Ironville; it always looks well cared for and tidy. For those that do not know the origins of the garden, when the scrub on the top of the chamber at Lock 4 was cleared over two or three winters, it was suggested that a garden should be created, based on what a lock keeper would have planted to sustain his family through the year.

Before Canal & River Trust were prepared to give permission for the garden, we had to put a fence along the edge of the lock chamber, all 50 yards of it. Andy Cadman and a few others took on the task to create the garden for the first couple of years and even incorporated it into lessons with the local school on planting different varieties of radishes and evaluating the results. When Andy decided to give the

garden up, Shirley and Carole, assisted at times by Shirley's husband Stephen, stepped in to run it, very successfully.

They have regular visits from interested groups and the reaction from visitors has been very positive. This year, as in previous years, the produce was donated to a food bank; Age Concern were given the produce for distribution and it was very well received. The FCC and the ladies received a thank you letter from Age Concern stating how grateful they were for the donation. Does anyone think it worth a nomination to Gardeners World for a garden/allotment in an unusual location?

Hartshay

At Hartshay, the group have put in fencing at several sections. They had to clear several trees which, when cut, were found to be in need of the attention of a saw; the work ►

parties were then able to erect the fencing. This took four work party days and is well worth a visit to see their efforts. FCC have applied to the Woodland Trust for 450 whips of hawthorn to be planted to create a new hedge, as the old hedge is in a poor state. We should know in the New Year if we have been successful. There have also been several days strimming and pulling Himalayan balsam, and a trial dig on the sunken boat to see what condition the hull is in.

Brown's Bridge

We were asked to do several jobs in preparation for the lift of Brown's Bridge. Strimming was requested for the bridge area, so John Barker went down on the Saturday before the lift with John Boucher assisting, strimming the area, resulting in fifteen barrow-loads for disposal.

We then had to clean and grease the original bearing, paint the bridge spars, and remove the ballast from the bridge. At High Peak Junction, the work parties cleared the weeds all the way along the railway wall and then tackled the stone wall along the towpath. Also cleared was the retaining wall near the picnic tables at the workshops. Himalayan balsam was pulled up at the pump house.

The de-weeding of the channel, using the work boat, started off at the temporary bridge when Brown's Bridge was being worked on, then moved on to the section the other side



Excavating the old boat at Hartshay.

of the temporary bridge and over the next four weeks moved up towards Leawood Pump. The final three work days were at Leawood Pump. Altogether, nine work days on removing weed from the channel were needed, involving 70 barrow-loads from the work boat being dumped. There is still a lot more to be brought out.

Pinxton Arm

On the Pinxton Arm Junction Bridge, there were several weeks of maintenance, chipping out the mortar and lime mortaring on the bridge and the adjacent wall. All the inside walls have now been re-pointed, leaving the outer walls, which will need a lot off scaffolding. There were also several weeks of balsam pulling in the water course; between the old Lock 1 site and Lock 2 there were big clumps and some really big stems to pull out.

At Pinxton Wharf, we tackled the vegetation along the offside edge of the weir and picked a number of bags of litter. Retrieved from the channel were two large and very heavy truck tyres, which had been thrown with a great deal of force, because they were deep in the mud; anyway we got them out, eventually. ►



Removing the ballast from Brown's Bridge.

Community Help

As part of the community's day of action some companies have volunteers who commit to working with us on the canal, and we had three companies join us on work parties. Waterspan Ltd volunteers went litter picking in September at Langley Mill and had a good day with nine bags of litter picked. AECOM of Chesterfield joined us early October, reed pulling at Lawn Bridge (see opposite) and then a fortnight later Atkins of Derby were reed pulling with us at Lawn Bridge. The amount of assistance these three groups gave us was great. All the 28 volunteers from these companies were great to work with. The FCC volunteers moved the reeds to the dump after draining. We estimate we moved 250 barrow-loads of reeds. I think we have had our fill of reed pulling and barrowing, for now!

More Fencing

Replacing fencing at Codnor Park Reservoir seems to be going on forever; all the posts have now been replaced on the angling section between the abandoned section along Coach Road at Ironville and the angling section on the reservoir, but we have had a problem with the top rails; someone seems to think they can just take them without any thought for the effort put in to put them in place. They have now been replaced, but when the work party assembled to fit them, it became apparent that the quality and lengths supplied were causing concern. So, they went to plan B, clearing fallen trees and branches on the abandoned section. In total since the beginning of the year, starting at Lock 2 all the way up to the reservoir runoff, then from near the western end of the reserve, back towards the car park. The FCC work parties have replaced just over two hundred fence posts and numerous top rails. A brilliant job.

Helping with Birdswood

Thanks to Angela, Wendy, Dennis and Keith Barton, for cleaning *Birdswood* inside and out. They started in early September and continued every fortnight until trips stopped at the end of October. I have had reports of very




Seat with new fencing to protect the drop to the Hartshay Brook at Hartshay.

positive feedback from passengers on the cleanliness and the overall look of the boat.

We were requested to bring the boat stands from Langley Mill Boat Yard's dry dock to Cromford for *Birdswood's* biennial out-of-water inspection. We are very grateful to Langley Mill Boat Yard for the use of the stands. We had to lift them up the steps of the dry dock and then to carry them to the trailer for transport to Cromford.

We also had to collect wooden supports (old railway sleepers) from Jack Brown's yard at Ironville and deliver them to Cromford. A few days later four of the work party set the stands true and level, using spirit levels and taught string to line each up the stands for *Birdswood* to rest on.

On reflection, the last 18/20 months have seen some good work parties and a remarkable amount of work done. Together we have achieved a lot. Thank you all very much. I am glad to be part of such a great group.

If you would like to join the friendly bunch on the FCC work parties, please contact John Barker at work@cromfordcanal.org. 

TEAM BONDING

After spending a day helping on the canal, AECOM published this article in their newsletter

On the 20th October, members of the AECOM Chesterfield Water team volunteered with FCC to assist in removing reeds from the Cromford Canal. AECOM is a multi-national company specialising in infrastructure projects. This was a great way to give back to



the community and have some good team bonding with the new members of the AECOM Chesterfield Water team, in a beautiful surrounding.

The team arrived at Cromford Wharf where they were given a site induction and safety briefing. In addition to this they got to meet some local volunteers from the charity. The task was then to remove the overgrown reeds with rakes that were up to 10ft long!

This was all needed to prevent the canal becoming overgrown with reeds and to enable the resident narrow boat *Birdswood* to pass along the canal safely. The reeds in the canal had not been cut in two years due to the pandemic so there was plenty of work to be done.

After a long day of manual labour, the team managed to clear many sections of the canal which had been causing issues

and restored the area. The team also got to interact with many locals on their routine walks who were very pleased with the work being undertaken.

Once the day had finished, the team got together and went for drinks in a local pub to relax and reflect on the day. ■



LEAWOOD JOTTINGS

All is returning to normal, says Ian Yates

It's a long time since we have reported from the engine house but there has been a lot going on. After a substantial delay partly due to the coded welder taking ill (not Covid), the repairs were finally completed on Boiler 43. A hydraulic test was carried out successfully and it passed. Both boilers were then stripped down for a visual inspection, and again both passed. The number of bits removed meant we took quite a long time to get everything back together, aiming for a steaming at the August Bank Holiday.

Unfortunately, a boiler inspector was not available for a steam test which meant we could only open static. A steam test was then arranged prior to the September steaming – again successfully passed – and we were able to open to the public again for the first time since November 2019. The steaming went well and the subsequent one in October saw a large number of visitors as the weather was kind.

Giving Up Smoking

We have been working to reduce the smoke emissions and have turned to Welsh Steam coal from Ffos-y-Fran, an opencast in South Wales. The results were fine; comments such as “we didn't know you were in steam as there was no smoke” were common. The coal burns much hotter, but the upside was that we actually burnt less for the same result and maintained a good pressure all day. The ash also showed the coal burnt well as there was little unburnt fuel in the ash pit.

The downside to this is twofold. The mine is due to close within the next year and the cost is also much higher, the effects of which are to be assessed. There is another company coming into the market, but their coal is imported from Russia which does nothing to aid environmental issues generally.



Leawood Pump in 1965 when it had green doors, a colour which lasted into the 1970s and is to be revived next year to replace the fading, peeling red.

The biggest problem now (with the loss of *The Duchess*) is getting the coal across the canal, which can only be done using a small tractor and trailer with the coal prepacked, but Derbyshire County Council have assisted with this and hopefully we can work together in the future. The current legislation regarding the use of coal specifically allows Heritage sites to continue to use coal as there is generally nothing else available but there are several products being trialled which have a more sustainable future.

Work on the Boilers and Engine

The lagging to all the pipes and boilers is being replaced and all being well the steel cladding can go back on after a long time. The method of fixing the sheets is being reviewed, as holding the heavy sheets in place whilst screws are inserted is not easy. It has been realised that a support is missing on the top of the crinoline which holds the sheets. This is to be replaced and the sheets can then be screwed to that one at a time instead of keeping two in place at once.

The engine itself has required little work; only a couple of strangely placed rust patches on one of the linkage arms have required attention. We cannot work out why they are there as there are definitely no leaks in the roof at that position which could cause the patches.

The sealing ring on the air pump has been replaced during the lockdown, with us making the wooden blocks ourselves as the previous supplier had gone into liquidation. We had been quoted around £1000 for the blocks but carried the work out for around £60 – a huge saving.

Early next year, when the weather improves, it is intended to repaint the doors to both the boiler house and engine house. The red fades badly in the open and peels off, leaving the place looking a bit uncared for. We have obtained permission from Historic England to repaint the doors in green, a colour which the engine house carried in the 1960s as shown on several photographs on the Picture the Past website. This will hopefully improve the

life of the paint and return the buildings to a condition actually remembered by several people – vaguely by myself as well from a visit in my very early teens. The windows are also getting in a poor state and hopefully we will be getting some prices together soon to allow DCC to decide what to do.

Our steaming and open days for next year have been agreed, including several static openings on a Thursday during the school holidays to coincide with events put on by DCC. These begin at Easter 2022 and will be published in *Portal* nearer the time.

A new sign is going to be put up at Cromford Wharf indicating that the engine house is open either static or in steam depending on the date. All being well this will encourage people to walk down, as at present there is no signage on the wharf or towpath at that point indicating whether it is open or not. People do not either read or remember posters very well so a sign should do better. This is to be made and maintained by ourselves with the relevant permissions having been gained. **T**

LEAWOOD ARM – MYSTERY AND INTRIGUE

The Cromford Canal's Leawood Arm: A History has recently been published by the Friends of the Cromford Canal, as a companion volume to *Cromford Wharf: A History*.

Archivist Hugh Potter has delved into the documents and images held in the FCC's extensive archives to compile this new booklet, fully illustrated with maps and photographs. *The Cromford Canal's Leawood Arm* summarises the fascinating and complex story of a very short arm of the canal, just a mile from its terminus at Cromford.

Opened in 1802 it was originally only 400 yards long, yet in less than 20 years it was cut in half thanks to acrimonious disputes over water rights between Peter Nightingale (Florence Nightingale's great uncle), the Cromford Canal Co and the prestigious owners of mills lower down the Derwent

Valley. It is a story of mystery and intrigue.

The iconic 'Aqueduct Cottage' at the junction of the arm with the main canal has recently undergone remarkable restoration and is shortly to open as an information centre.

Still largely intact today, the Leawood Arm offers an attractive wooded walk in the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.

Copies of *The Cromford Canal's Leawood Arm* cost just £3 (plus £1 p&p) and are available from the online shop at www.cromfordcanal.org, or you can send a cheque for £4 payable to 'Friends of the Cromford Canal' to Yvonne Shattower, 264 Bennett Street, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 4JA.

Copies of *Cromford Wharf: A History* are also still available at the same price. **T**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Butterley Standard Bridge

In reply to Alan Alford's letter (*Portal* 76) I can confirm that before the Butterley Standard Unit Bridge (BSUB) was erected the only way onto Taggs Island was by ferry. The BSUB was built from the northern bank of the Thames to Taggs Island in 1942/3. The War Department bore the total cost of the bridge so as to ease the delivery and despatch of materials up to 14 tons in weight from AC Cars Ltd who produced munitions for the duration of WW2. Two concrete abutments were made at each end of the bridge and two piers were driven into the bed of the Thames. The piers were made of six timber piles 14in by 14in suitably braced to receive the BSUB. The bridge was declared unsafe in 1965 and three days before Christmas the supports gave way and the bridge settled down onto the bed of the Thames. Once again access to the island was by boat only. The bridge was finally demolished in 1980.

In reply to John Boucher's article in that same issue, the BSUB did not lose out to the Bailey or Callender-Hamilton bridges. In 1943 the War Department thought it was prudent to consider possible alternatives. The Bailey bridge was by that time being used operationally. The Callender-Hamilton bridge had been patented by Mr A W Hamilton in 1933/4 but the War Department did not want to incur any development or manufacturing cost so suggested to Hamilton he sourced a manufacturer which was Callender Cable and Construction Co Ltd. The C-H bridge was fairly slow to build, the large spans taking days to complete. It was eventually reclassified as a semi-permanent or permanent bridge.

After the War Department exercise of 1943 the WD decided not to pursue the BSUB as the components could not be easily manhandled and fitted together, although the unit cost was lower than the Bailey bridge. There were many bridges used by the War Department: Acrow, Inglis Everall, Mabey, Briggs and Flambo to mention a few. **John W. Chambers**

More Memories

Having read your article 'It was 50 years ago today' in the last *Portal*, I thought you might be interested in my early memories of the canal.

I was born in 1946 and at a very young age visited my grandfather who was Charles Gibson, the last inspector on the Cromford Canal. He lived at the canal cottage near Lock 5. In your last article there was a picture showing Lock 6 and the canal workshop; his cottage is on the left of the photo.

He started work as a bricklayer for the canal and he had stories of travelling through Butterley Tunnel and doing work on various locks and spillways.

Later, as the canal was winding down, there were fewer people working for the canal and he became promoted to the canal inspector. When the second World War started the canal was kept open for the emergency, particularly for transport of goods for the forge at Codnor Park and as a reservoir of water for fire-fighting after bomb damage.

When the war ended there was no need for the canal and my grandfather then retired.

As a young child I remember him getting a delivery of coal which was deposited on the forge side of the canal. He used to take me in a small canal boat (it might have been an ice breaker) which was kept in the 'dry dock' as seen in the same photo, to collect the coal and take it back to his cottage. My mother was horrified at the sight of me as a toddler covered in coal dust, with grandad on the boat.

When he was the inspector, his regular tour of inspection was one day to walk the canal from Jacksdale to Cromford and back checking for any leaks or any damage to the banks and any urgent work that needed to be done.

The next day he walked from Jacksdale to the Erewash Canal, and back doing the same thing. He did this regularly until he retired when the canal closed (he was a very fit man for his age).

During my school-days we moved around the



Charles Gibson shows the workings of lock paddle gear to a group of local school children in 1971.

country with my father's job and in my late teens we were back in Nottinghamshire (where I met my future husband) and we were able to visit grandfather more regularly.

Fortunately my husband is also interested in canals and we spent many a winter's evening

sitting in grandad's cottage in the warmth of the coal fire on the range, the hiss of the gas light (he never had electricity in the cottage) listening to his stories of the canal while his cat 'skipper' sat on his lap. This cat was an expert mouser and regularly brought back mice he had killed.

When I was a young baby, my parents used to bring me to the cottage to see granny and grandad and apparently grandad used to take me for walks in the pram along the canal tow-path. He used to say it gave him an interest as he had just retired when the canal closed.

Many years earlier when grandfather was a younger man and married to granny they had a daughter (my mother) and lived at a cottage at the edge of the Nightingale estate on top of the hill at the rear of Aqueduct cottage and I believe they knew the family who lived in the cottage at that time (which must have been about 100 years ago). At that time he worked as a bricklayer for the canal company. **Susan Footitt**

HOWARD SMITH - BY MIKE KELLEY

I was very sad to hear of the passing of my good friend Howard Smith, the former Chairman of the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association. Howard worked diligently for many years to protect and develop the Erewash Canal, and was successful in obtaining grant funding for that canal. Without the preservation of the Erewash Canal, the reopening of the Cromford Canal would be virtually impossible.

It was some 21 years ago when I first wrote an email to Howard, asking who it was that was looking after the restoration of the Cromford Canal. The answer came back that no one was! Howard then invited my late wife, Valerie, and me to a dinner at his home, along with his good wife Sheila.

It was during this evening that the four of us



agreed to form a sub-committee of the ECPDA to look after the interests of the Cromford Canal, which the Erewash joins at Langley Mill. That sub-committee became the Friends of the Cromford Canal on 13th March 2002, and we went from a sub-committee of 13 members to 180 member in one week. I dived in at the deep end as the first Chairman of FCC and Howard continued with his primary role with the ECPDA. Sheila became FCC member number 1, I was number 2, with Howard and Valerie becoming numbers 3 and 4.

Howard continued to give the FCC his constant support whilst carrying on with his primary work on the Erewash Canal, until he retired from his role as Chairman. He will be deeply missed. ▀

THE POLITICS OF THE EREWASH VALLEY CANALS

By John Baylis BEM

The Erewash Valley was relatively rural agriculture up to about 1700 although there may have been some small-scale lime burning using the coal which out-cropped in the Eastwood and Ilkeston areas. From 1700 coal mining developed, probably using 'bell pits' into the top seams of coal. Most of these mines started off with a few men as private operations but over the years larger organisations developed, often as family companies. By 1775 the output was increasing and there was a requirement for a cheaper form of transport to Nottingham, Leicestershire and Derbyshire; several of these family firms joined together to promote the Erewash Canal between Langley Mill and the River Trent near Long Eaton.

The Barber, Walker and Fletcher families all had a number of small collieries along with others such as the Miller-Mundy, Dixy, Hunlok, the Duke of Newcastle and Rutland and Lord Middleton from Wollaton. The Erewash Canal was started in 1777 and opened in 1779 at a cost of less than £ 30,000 and by 1790 was paying high dividends; other canal projects were rapidly promoted as part of 'Canal Mania'. The first was the Cromford Canal which extended the Erewash northwards to Pinxton for coal and through Butterley Tunnel to the Derwent Valley for lime and lead and other goods. Very soon afterwards followed the Nottingham Canal from Langley Mill, the Derby Canal from Sandiacre and the Nutbrook Canal to the south and west of Ilkeston, which were all completed by about 1800.

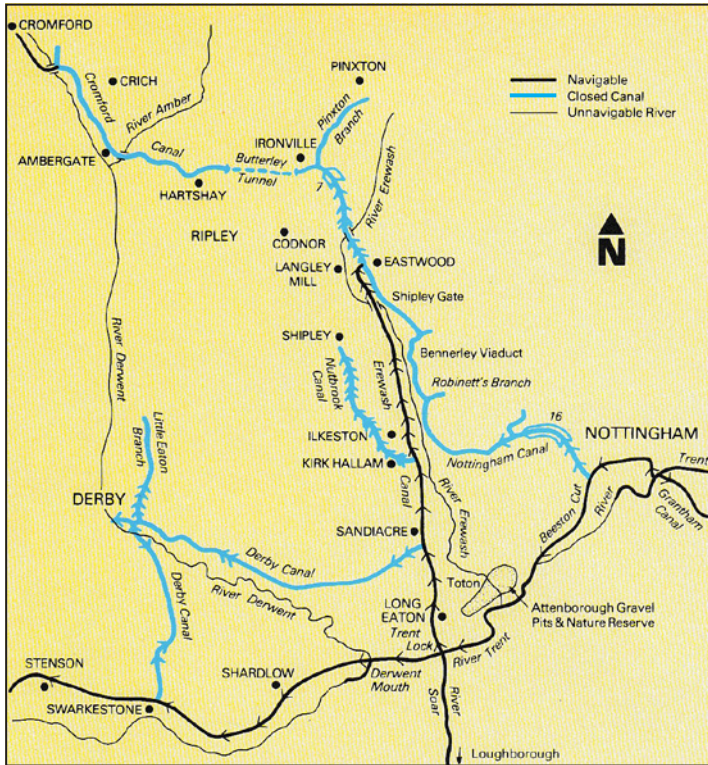
The initial intention to extend the Pinxton Branch towards Sutton in Ashfield and Mansfield was soon dropped in favour of many tramways, one of which went all the way to Mansfield pulled by horses twenty years before the start of steam driven railways in

more northern parts of the country. Eventually, this became part of the Midland Railway and is still operational as part of the Robin Hood line to Worksop. Other tramways in the Eastwood and Langley Mill areas carried coal from the many local collieries to boat loading wharves on all three canals at Langley Mill and other loading wharves down the Erewash and Nottingham Canals.

The Barbers and Walkers became a single company in 1787 and continued as a major company in the Eastwood area until taken over by the National Coal Board in 1947. The Butterley Company, initially formed as an ironworks by Jessop and Outram, builders of the Cromford Canal, was also a major employer with many small mines and railways in addition to ironworks at Butterley and Ironville. On the Erewash Canal there were ironworks at Cotmanhay, Stanton and Long Eaton; that at Stanton continued with boat traffic through the Second World War. To the west of Butterley Tunnel there was coal from Hartshay, lime burning at Ambergate, and lead and cotton at Cromford.

All these canals were profitable for about 50 years until the growing railway companies started using the canals to bring materials to build the railways and then buying them to encourage the movement of coal from boats to the railways. The Cromford was the first to go in 1852 when bought by the Midland Railway Company, this was probably to stop the purchase by another railway company, as by 1875 the Great Northern Railway Company had purchased the Nottingham Canal in order to ease the building of the Great Northern Railway extension from Nottingham to Derby, Langley Mill and Pinxton.

Despite repair works by the Midland Railway, Butterley Tunnel was closed in



the new Labour Prime minister, nationalised the railways and the profitable inland canals which came under the British Transport Commission.

Then, in 1962, the Transport Act split the canals from the railways, becoming British Railways and British Waterways Board. At about the same time the Derby Canal Company, which hadn't been nationalised, offered to sell out to Derby City Council. Derby City wanted to use the route of the canal as a walkway and, despite opposition from the Inland Waterways Association and some

1900 and the only traffic on the Derwent Valley side was coal from Hartshay Colliery to Cromford Wharf and Lea. The upper part of the Nutbrook Canal towards Shipley closed in the later 19th century due to lack of water to serve the locks to the summit; only the bottom two locks remained in the Stanton Ironworks.

The Erewash Canal was always the most profitable and remained independent until being taken over by the newly formed Grand Union Canal Company in 1932; however, railway regionalisation in 1923 meant that most of the new regions collected canals originally owned by various separate canal companies. From 1939, with the exception of the Derby Canal, all the Erewash Valley canals came under the remit of the War Transport Commissionaires and their committees, these being included with the railways and ship canals until 1947. In 1948 Clement Attlee,

locals, the canal was filled in. (Nothing further happened on the Derby Canal until 1992 when the Derby & Sandiacre Canal Trust was formed with the intention of restoring the canal to navigation; since then several structures have been repaired, some short lengths are now in water and a passenger boat is being established for use on the River Derwent in Derby).

In 1965 the new Labour Government under Harold Wilson could see that the canal system needed reorganising, if only to save money, and this was left to Barbara Castle as Minister of Transport. She decided that the worst of the derelict canals, many of which were dry, would be disposed of and those remaining were reclassified under the Transport Act 1968. The larger waterways still carrying goods were classed as Commercial, those still navigable were classed as Cruiseways, whilst ➤



An atmospheric shot of ECPDA's restoration work at Langley Bridge Lock.

Probably the main public control of the new classifications was through the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWAAC) which was empowered to consult with the public and offer advice to British Waterways on the more appropriate way to deal with the Cruiseway and Remainder waterways under its control.

A result of the 1968 Act was the proliferation of new canal societies to fight for the retention of Remainder Waterways

and the improved usability of Cruiseways. Both the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association and the original Cromford Canal Society were formed at that time; the ECPDA to campaign against the closure of the Remainder Erewash Canal and the CCS to hopefully campaign for what remained of the Cromford Canal after British

Waterways sold off about 80% of the canal line to Derbyshire County Council and private riparian owners.

The ECPDA saw the need to increase the number of boats using the canal to justify the British Waterways' spending on maintenance. IWAAC also saw that traffic on all canals should be improved and in 1971 the ECPDA invited IWAAC for a boat trip up the canal to Langley Mill. The last two or three miles of the Erewash Canal was rural but terminated behind ►

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The original BW sign at Langley Mill marking the rare junction of three canals. It has since been replaced with a replica.



There was a huge turn-out for the reopening of Langley Bridge Lock.

Council donated the top gates from Wollaton Top lock which were no longer needed on that part of the Nottingham Canal.

The first part of the Cromford Canal, Langley Bridge Lock and the Great Northern Basin were reopened over Spring Bank Holiday 1973 with nearly 100 boats and thousands of people attending. Over the last 50 years the ECPDA has established its main base and workshop in the area round this part of the canal which is now owned and managed by the Canal & River Trust. The ECPDA Golden Jubilee was rewarded by the granting of the Queens Award for Voluntary Services; this was presented by the Lord Lieutenant for Derbyshire in 2019.

Vic Hallam's factory with no facilities and little security. IWAAC suggested that if Langley Bridge Lock at the start of the Cromford Canal was restored and the first parts of the Cromford and Nottingham canals were dug out a new, safe mooring area could be built with improved security for mooring overnight or for longer periods.

The ECPDA thought this was a workable solution, set about raising the money needed to do the work and persuaded BW to allow them to do the work. In less than 18 months the money was raised and volunteers led by Mick Golds cleared out the bottom part of the Cromford Canal and the Great Northern Basin on the Nottingham Canal. Local contractors J.C. Balls and West Transport provided plant at little cost and volunteers rebuilt some of the internal walls and repaired the bottom gates of Langley Bridge Lock. The top gates were beyond repair and Nottingham City

Over the next ten years of the 1970s, £90,000 was donated by Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire county councils to BW for maintenance of the Erewash Canal which was largely spent on replacing the deteriorated lock gates and paddle gear which resulted in a great increase in the number of boats using the canal. The ECPDA was very pleased when their efforts were rewarded in the British Waterways Act 1983 by which the whole of the Erewash Canal was raised from Remainder Waterway to Cruiseway.

IWAAC was finally disbanded in 2012 and BW became the Canal & River Trust in the same year. CRT is now a registered charity so hopefully the connection of the Cromford Canal to the national inland waterways network remains safe for the foreseeable future. ■

CROMFORD CANAL IN THE US PRESS

Hugh Potter trawls the American papers



One of the more surprising results of a search of www.newspapers.com for references to our canal revealed a mass coverage of Bullbridge Aqueduct in the USA in 1936. The same dramatic photograph was printed in at least

five newspapers: *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Detroit Free Press*, *The Lancaster New Era* (Lancaster – Pennsylvania that is), *The Star Tribune* (Minneapolis) and *The Spokesman Review* (Washington).

The captions vary from paper to paper but they are all on the lines of that used in the *Baltimore Sun*. The text reads “Athwart the route of an important English railway, at Ambergate, the River Amber and the Cromford Canal lie so close that

it is necessary for the trains to go under the canal and over the river within the space of a few yards.”

The photograph is credited to Wide World, but I have never seen before – so possibly it was not published on this side of ‘the pond’.

THE CANAL INN AT BULLBRIDGE

Over the years since the formation of FCC we have lost almost all our canalside pubs. So it is heartening to learn that although the Canal Inn at Bullbridge is currently fenced off, it's future is secure.



The very enterprising owners of the nearby Hurt Arms at Ambergate have bought it and are going to open it for extra accommodation to cater for their increasing wedding trade; it is set to open Autumn 2022.

Their Facebook page says that the project will include full restoration of the historical pub with a contemporary extension to include a pre bridal suite for the bride to enjoy the night before the big day! Luxury SUVs will take them to the Hurt Arms for their ceremony (shame we could not lay on a boat!).

They will be adding six en-suite bedrooms to complement those already available at the Hurt Arms. They also plan to build a microbrewery and offer bespoke craft beer and ales. Let's hope we won't have to get married to try them! **T**

BIRDWOOD BRIEFINGS



Film Star

On 13th October 2021, FCC hosted a film crew with presenter Richard Hammond filming a four-part series for TV channel More4 to be broadcast early in 2022 called 'Britain's Great Rivers'.

Why the Cromford Canal? Well the edition is really about the River Derwent, but they are going to include a bit about the industrial

revolution/birth of the factory system etc, and how crucial and unique our canal was . . . a bit of a tenuous link to rivers, but there you are!

And anyway, our *Birdwood* is photogenic isn't she?

After the trip, Richard commented that he had not felt so relaxed in ages – that's the *Birdwood* effect!

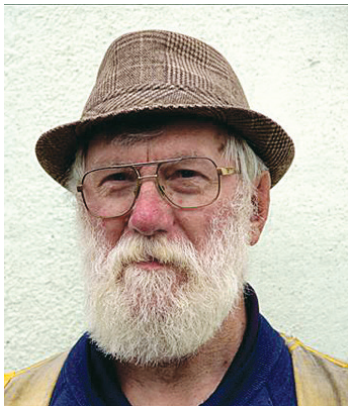
Shining a Light

At the end of October, *Birdwood* took part in the 'Shine a Light' event at Cromford Mills which also featured illuminated canoes on the canal and a very impressive audio-visual display screened onto the buildings in Arkwright's mill yard. Contrary to rumours, the bearded gent was not our new boat master . . . but it was nearly Halloween. 🍷



MEET THE TRUSTEES

Who's who in FCC



John Baylis BEM

Tell us about yourself...

I have been a member of the Inland Waterways Association for fifty years during part of which time I was a Trustee and Navigation Committee chairman. I was awarded the British Empire Medal in 2012 for service to the waterways.

How did you get involved with FCC...?

I have been involved in restoration work on the Cromford Canal since 1976 at Ironville, and opposed British Waterways' proposals to destroy the Ironville flight of locks.

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

I have been a trustee since the charity was formed, initially Executive Secretary, becoming Chairman 2014-9.

What have you brought to the party?

In 1995 I helped Groundwork Trust with the Binnie report on restoration of the canal from Langley Mill to Ironville; subsequently working to rebuild the section above Langley Mill.



Jack Brown MBE

Tell us about yourself...

My full time occupation is a haulage contractor working out of Ironville. I have also been a councillor on the Amber Valley Borough for 22 years. I was awarded an MBE in 1997 for services to the community.

How did you get involved with FCC...?

I have lived at the side of the Cromford Canal for fifty years and have always been interested in the restoration of the canal.

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

I have mowed the side of the canal as long as I have lived here and been a trustee for 5 years.

What have you brought to the party?

In 1975 we helped to clear a large section of the canal with a mobile crane loading the rubbish into lorries to be taken away. Our transport facility in Ironville has always accepted deliveries for the canal and stored them until they have been required. **T**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 25th April 2022

Notice is hereby given that the Sixth Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Cromford Canal, Charitable Incorporated Organisation Number 1164608, will be held on Monday 25th April 2022 at the Church Hall, Ironville, commencing at 7.30pm.

We may need to take account of national or local Government rules regarding the effects of Covid-19. In the case of lockdowns or social distancing the meeting will be held by Zoom at the same date and time as above. Further details could be available in time for Portal 80, but later notice will be posted on the website and social media and sent direct to all members who have supplied their email address.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Fifth Annual General Meeting held on Monday, 19nd April 2021.
3. Matters arising.
4. Report of the Chairman.
5. Report of the Treasurer and presentation of the accounts for 2021.
6. Adoption of the accounts. See Note below.
7. Appointment of Community Accounting Plus as auditors
7. Election of Trustees. See Note below.
8. Reports by Officers.
9. Any other business.

Notes

The minutes of the Fifth AGM are already posted on the website; the accounts for the year ending 31st December 2021 and the Trustees' annual report will be posted on the website before 28th March 2022. Those without access to the Internet can obtain printed copy of these documents by contacting the Executive Secretary.

As required by the Charity Commission and is recorded in the FCC Constitution as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, one third of the Trustees Elected Trustees need to retire and, if it is their intention, seek re-election. The Trustees due to retire at the April 2022 AGM are John Baylis, John Barker, Sean Dodds, Ian Hooker and Hugh Potter; all seek nomination for re-election.

Nominations for these persons, and any further nominations for election as Trustees, must be submitted in writing to the Executive Secretary before 14th February 2022. Nomination forms are available from the Executive Secretary and must be signed by the proposer, the seconder and the nominee who must all be FCC members. The full list of nominees with a short CV will be sent to all members along with the Trustees annual report and accounts.

John Baylis, BEM, Executive Secretary



www.cromfordcanal.org