

# THE PORTAL

Issue 83 - Winter 2022

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Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608

# FRIENDS OF THE CROMFORD CANAL

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## Front Cover

Chelsea poses for Andrew Ling's camera at Cromford Wharf. Sadly she has passed on to that great Stable in the Sky – see page 4.

## Back Cover

A fine photograph of Leawood Pump House, taken by stalwart volunteer John Reeve.

**The copy date for the next issue is 17th February 2023**

President – Brian Blessed

Patron – Julian Richards

## 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 very sad to have to report that our dear, delightful, docile boat horse Chelsea has passed on to that great stable in the sky. She enthusiastically pulled *Birdswood* for many years and fretted so much when her owners Arraslea Shires tried to retire her that they had to bring her back for 'light duties' to keep her happy.



She was loved by everyone who met her – young and old – and she relished their attention and that of the photographers for whom she willingly posed.

Covid brought about an end to the immensely popular horse-drawn trips, and Arraslea are now concentrating on other aspects of their business, so if anyone knows of any willing horses (with willing owners) who might like to help us to reinstate this historic mode of travel, please get in touch. When operating with Chelsea, *Birdswood* was one of less than half a dozen horse-drawn trip boats in the country.

## Where is That?

A new feature in this issue is an overall map of the canal as a centrespread, which I hope will help those of you who are not intimately acquainted with some parts of the canal to locate those that are mentioned in this issue. I hope you like this, and will be pleased to hear whether it is useful to you or not. And, indeed, if you would like any other features to be incorporated in *Portal* in future, do let me know.

## Aqueduct Cottage

This month marked the third anniversary of the first work party of the Friends of Aqueduct Cottage and, my, what a lot they have achieved in that time. The dedicated team of volunteers well deserved their anniversary celebrations in the newly opened upstairs activity room.

When they began, the cottage was little more than decaying walls with trees growing around, inside and through them, and their roots undermining them. It seemed like an impossible task, but impossible is a word that Ron Common, the instigator of the whole project, does not recognise. Having won Derbyshire Wildlife Trust round with his enthusiasm, he has driven the project forward through the worst that the weather and Covid could throw at him.

And now the opening to the public is within sight. I know it is going to be a fascinating place to visit and will attract visitors from far and wide to our wonderful canal. Their Facebook page has viewers all around the world!

## Thank You!

A personal thank you from me to those who have sent in photographs that we have been able to use in this issue – and also those who sent in photos that we have not been able to use this time. It's great to see such excellent work, so please keep them coming!

Finally, I'd like to wish you all the very best for Christmas and 'A Good Road Ahead' for the New Year. I am greatly looking forward to work 'on the ground' starting on our Beggarlee Extension. **T**



# CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

By David Martin



This year has gone by faster than I could have imagined and yet so much has happened up and down the canal. It's hard to sit here as I write this to think that, in October, we had to cancel boat trips because we didn't have enough water in the canal and now all we are getting is endless rain!

On another note, earlier this year we took some new silt core samples from the Cromford section as we try and develop our plans to dredge certain areas along it. We have three quite separate issues to deal with where we run our world-famous trip boat *Birdswood*, silt banks being only one of them. Weed growth after Brown's Bridge is another and we are currently getting quotes for its clearance.

The third issue is water leaks, which of course reduce the level of water that the canal holds so it's a fine balance to maintain and keep levels in the right place so that the boat can travel up and down it. Derbyshire County Council through their Countryside Services have recently done an up-to-date survey of the leaks along this section, so now we will be working closely with them to try and fix some of these over the next year.

Meanwhile, the Arkwright Society have assured our engineers that the new hydro-electric turbine which they are installing in the Mill Yard should not have any impact on the flow of water going into the canal, but we will obviously be keeping an eye on that because of the balance of water levels that we need to keep in the canal.

Our heartfelt thanks go to all the volunteers who ran the very successful

*Birdswood* operation this year; they have been as efficient, dedicated and friendly as ever to all our visitors taking the trip on *Birdswood*. Our special thanks also go to our trustee Richard Handley who manages the boat operation so professionally, along with much more, and to one of our long-standing active

volunteers Chris Stamford-Burrows who has managed the crew rota for the boat this year and is now stepping down from that role.

There too many volunteers to thank them all individually, but I'll mention a few more who quietly go about their work without thinking about it. Two of them are Jude Berry and Angela Marsh who do a great job taking the minutes for three of the committee meetings that we hold every month. Two others are Keith Bailey and Hugh Potter who put their skills together into compiling our much-loved *Portal* magazine four times a year, so a big thankyou goes out to them. If you think you could spare some time in the new year do get in touch, we are always on the lookout for new willing volunteers for a wide range of activities, skilled or not; there is always something to do!

Other news in the last quarter of this year is the fact that all of the pre-commencement planning conditions attached to the 18 Amber Valley planning conditions for the Beggarlee planning application have now been satisfied thanks to our honorary engineers John Boucher and Chris Broome.

Our own FCC work party, in league with some of the volunteers from the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association, have now started to clear some ►

of the overgrowth in the planned works area. The first task we must complete down there is extending and diverting some existing surface water drains which will eventually end up being beneath the new canal. Before we can do these works, we will need to get a licence from Derbyshire County Council, which is what our engineers are currently working on.

In the New Year our socials which we hold on the third Monday of the month in Ironville Church Hall will be kicking off with a two-part talk from David Amos on 16th January with 'Tracks And Tramways associated with

the Cromford Canal'. Then on 20th February it is 'New Railways in the Erewash Valley'. On 20th March our talk will be all about *Birdswood* and its volunteers, so do come along – you might even fancy signing up! Then on 17th April we shall be having our Annual General Meeting; I hope to see some of you there.

Finally it just remains for me to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Of course you can purchase some great Christmas cards and other gifts, including membership, directly from our website [www.cromfordcanal.org](http://www.cromfordcanal.org). **T**

## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By Yvonne Shattower

Hello again! It feels as if it was only a few weeks ago that I was writing the 'Membership Matters' for the Autumn edition, and here we are looking at Christmas and the end of the year.

Do you have a 'person who has everything' to buy a Christmas present for? Why not consider buying them a membership subscription? For £12 they will receive the four copies of *Portal* and be able to read all the interesting articles that Hugh manages to get, as well as supporting us in our efforts to restore this lovely canal. Just contact me if you would like to do this.

It is good to be back at Ironville for the talks again. There will not be a meeting in December (everyone is far too busy...) but we will be back there on 16th January 2023 and 20th February to hear more from David Amos, this time on 'Tracks, Tramways and Towpaths'. Admission is still only £2.50 with tea and coffee available in the interval for £1. There is also a bar for those of you who



prefer something stronger. Talks start at 7.30pm, as usual.

I was very relieved to hear that *Birdswood* passed her latest MCA inspection, and credit must go to the volunteers who look after her. I always feel it is a bit like putting the car in for an MOT test – you never know

what might be found and how much it will cost to put right. *Birdswood* is now laid up for the winter, but I know there is a lot of maintenance to be done, so if you have any skills which are appropriate please let Richard Handley know and I am sure he will find you a job.

It is only a few weeks now until Christmas but I saw Easter eggs (as well as hot cross buns) in one shop the other day, so I am not sure if I should end by wishing you a very Happy Christmas or Easter Greetings!

Perhaps I should just wish you all a Happy New Year and trust that the Friends will make some of our wishes come true. **T**

# DONATIONS AND GRANTS

## Walking Group Donation

The Jacksdale Walking Group recently donated a cheque for £886.24 to FCC. The group was formed in 2003 as the Walk On walking group. It was disbanded a few months ago, former members now walking as friends. As they don't have any further expenses they decided to donate the funds in their account equally between FCC, Cromford Canal & Codnor Park Reservoir Group and Friends of Belper Parks who own the forge site.



*John Barker receives the cheque from the Jacksdale Walking Group.*

## Garden Grant

A grant of £565 from the Mansfield Building Society will enable the Lock Keeper's Garden at Ironville Lock 4 to thrive after it is spent next spring on a 1,000-litre water container, a small cold frame, a new wheelbarrow, two spades, a fork and a cordless strimmer. Canal & River Trust, from whom FCC adopt this section, will provide an information board.

The Lock Keeper's Garden group started planting the area which is now an impressive and productive garden for all ages to visit and enjoy. The local school regularly uses the garden for lessons and to help young people learn about the importance of food and the environment. FCC has been harvesting and

giving away the produce to the local food bank and to the local Age Concern to help families in need of extra help for several years now. **T**



*FCC volunteers erected safety fencing between the garden and the lock chamber in 2017.*

# WEIGHBRIDGE SHOP

By shop volunteer Ken Brockway



*Unexpected bonus (1): this traction engine stopped to take water from the canal feeder before 'spinning round' in the car park and was snapped by Ken whilst on shop duty.*

*Unexpected bonus (2): Thanks to the enthusiasm and innovation of the sales team volunteers, over £10,000 of merchandise was sold in 2022. And that does not include boat ticket sales!*

My wife Linda enjoys a good chat, so volunteering to staff the Cromford Wharf shop was a good way for us to help the Friends with fundraising and publicity. Our mentors were the established team of Jan and Paul who had introduced a new approach, bringing the shop out to the public, setting up a table on the weighbridge. We have settled into a routine of Sundays and arrive around 10am just as the boat is moved from its mooring onto the wharf.

Once in public view *Birdswood* sells itself and if spaces are available we can be kept busy selling tickets to fill vacant seats. Bagging up duck food is another priority job and chatting with the crew to see which items of merchandise the passengers are tempted to purchase. *Birdswood* leaves the wharf at 11am and things quieten down to allow time for a coffee.

We have found it quite an eye-opener chatting to customers to discover how many

far flung tourists are attracted to Cromford. Besides telling them a bit about our canal we can offer details of other local attractions, especially if they have time to pass having booked a *Birdswood* afternoon trip. It's also good to hear passengers report a second or third return visit for a cruise along the canal.

Chatting to one premium trip passenger on his fifteenth visit to the UK from the States he reported making a trip to Matlock to fill the time. On his return in the afternoon he reported a one-way trip by train during which he had been invited into the driving cab. I was super envious. Never a dull moment, directing folk to the nearest loo or coffee shop and explaining the different car parks and payment methods available, not forgetting making a few sales to add to FCC coffers. If you would like to give it a try, pop along to see how it all works, or contact [volunteer@cromfordcanal.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@cromfordcanal.org.uk). **T**



# WORK PARTY REPORT

By John Guyler



*Dense undergrowth west of Sawmills Narrows.*

Some of the ladies from the work parties and some *Birdswood* crew have, every fortnight through the season, cleaned *Birdswood* inside and out. They have done a brilliant job, getting good reviews for *Birdswood* and showing that they really care about the appearance of the boat.



*Locals have begun using the canal bed as a tip once again.*

The work parties have recently been active on a small number of sites this quarter, because of the good growing conditions over the summer. There was a work party at High Peak Junction in the middle of August, clearing the wharf of weeds and saplings.

## **Around Sawmills**

Work also started in the middle of August on Brickyard Bridge parapet wall, described elsewhere in this issue. Whilst at Sawmills, just down from Brickyard Bridge, the gauging narrows had their annual clean-up of vegetation and for the next three weeks the vegetation on the western side of the narrows was tackled.

This is an area that we haven't been to for a long time and there were some really well-established trees and deep brambles to be removed. Over three work parties the group cleared 120 yards which is good going considering how bad it was.

One aside to the clearing of vegetation, Malc, Baz and John Britten started to dig down in the gauging narrows at a position where there were slots for stop boards. At the ►



*Excavating the base of the stop plank grooves.*



*The excavated stop plank base.*

floor of the narrows they found two wooden boards with a slot between, flag stones on the eastern side and soil on the western side; this was across the full width. Our engineer John Boucher has requested more investigation before it is all covered up for the winter.

One thing that has become very obvious at Sawmills is the dumping of rubbish and in some cases fires have been set. Some of the rubbish looks as if it is from the houses adjacent to the towpath

## **Ironville**

At Ironville, we have worked from the middle of September to November clearing vegetation and saplings from Codnor Park Reservoir to Lock 4. Earlier in the summer, we cleared the area of Himalayan Balsam and thought we had got the lot, but on return in September to the section from the overspill to Lock 2, the amount of Balsam again growing and in flower was incredible. We think it must have been all the very hot weather that had brought it on. We were ►



hoping that the cold would kill it off before the seeds formed, but the weather has remained mild, so next year could be very interesting.

The clearing of all the brambles along to Lock 4 has taken longer than expected and still needs some work. A start has been made at Lock 3 with the brambles, with some small trees against the Ironville Pottery building identified for seeing some action. Along the top edge of Lock 3 has also been cleared.

## Beggarlee

There has been some preliminary clearance work at Beggarlee around the culverts, which will be piped in once work gets underway. There has been a meeting with Dave Turner of the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association work parties to plan out how the teams can work together at Beggarlee. We expect to have FCC work parties there over most of the period working up to the New Year, clearing those areas we need for the contractors. There will be more about this in the next *Portal*.

With the building of the Beggarlee Extension getting closer, we need a Site Manager – someone who has the experience of managing contractors and keeping the job on track. If anyone has the experience and is interested, please contact chairman David Martin.

The FCC will also require suitably certificated (to Waterway Recovery Group standards) volunteers to work various pieces of machinery. The machinery will include, but is not limited to: dumpers, diggers (large and small), vibrating rollers and tea urns. We are looking at funding the instruction courses to operate the machinery, and the volunteers will then be certificated to work on projects. If enough volunteers are trained then the FCC will be able to work in areas not under the control of a contractor. This is a good chance train up on what could be a useful skill.

If you feel you would like to get certification on any of machines as above, please let myself or John Barker know at [john\\_guyler@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:john_guyler@yahoo.co.uk) or [work@cromfordcanal.org.uk](mailto:work@cromfordcanal.org.uk).

If you would like to participate in the work parties, the volunteers are a sociable bunch, they look out for each other and are great to work with – contact John Barker [work@cromfordcanal.org.uk](mailto:work@cromfordcanal.org.uk). **T**



*A close-up of the two base planks with metal fastenings between. It is thought that a third, raised, stop plank was positioned here to give a base that would be free of debris to take the other planks.*



*Break time!*

# BEGGARLEE EXTENSION

By David Martin

It's more than two years since Amber Valley and Broxtowe Borough councils gave FCC planning consent to reinstate the Cromford Canal from Langley Mill basin to Stoney Lane at Brinsley, called the Beggarlee Extension. That was the most amazing news and everyone was so thrilled at the time to get approval for this scheme. So why aren't our volunteers out there digging like mad? Why haven't we seen construction workers bringing heavy machinery onto the site?

There are at least two very good reasons why those excavators aren't on site. Firstly, conditions which were attached to the planning approval had to be discharged before we could start. Conditions are needed to make sure work doesn't start before checks on (for example) ground conditions, a local environment management plan and archaeological surveys. They ensure that difficulties and glitches are pointed out and put right before the main work starts. It has taken a while to fulfil those conditions. There are still a few other issues that we are working through but we're nearly ready to make a serious start, apart from the second reason.

The second reason is money, or rather the lack of it! The FCC has employed professional fundraisers who have been working on this one. They've had some success, but as yet they haven't raised enough to fund the whole project. It will take time, but we'll get there eventually. In the meantime, the project start is likely to be made by FCC's hard-working volunteers who have already been to the Beggarlee site making some basic preparations. In recent weeks, the work parties have started to completely clear specific areas to make way for some of the machinery. It's really

important to get all the vegetation cleared so that the mechanical diggers can get cracking next summer.

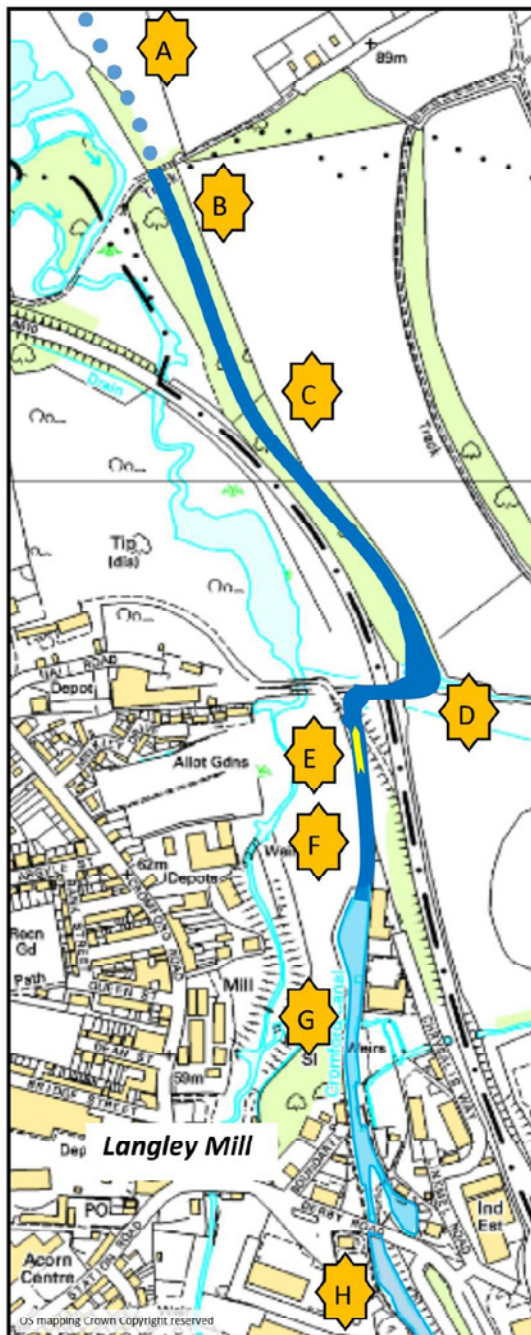
Have you ever wondered who will be operating the heavy plant? Contractors, of course, but also alongside them will be FCC volunteers. Our people have got stuck in and learned how to use the machinery that's needed to do the digging. They've been trained by workers from the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association to the same high standard that is required for the Waterway Recovery Group who do a lot of voluntary maintenance on canals around the country, and now they're just itching to get started. The first job will be digging trenches for some new drains; more than one canal has been breached by old culverts collapsing underneath it in the past.

This is a very exciting, and busy time for FCC, so if you'd like to volunteer or to help, you'd be very welcome; you can contact our work party organiser John Barker on 07860 632837 or use the 'contact us' form on our website [www.cromfordcanal.org](http://www.cromfordcanal.org).

Don't worry if you can't operate heavy machinery, there's lots to do like planting hedging, clearing brambles, fencing, repairing towpaths; the list goes on and on. And, of course, we're always short of skilled workers, so if you have appropriate skills including in a background in construction, or civil engineering, or project management then we'd be very pleased to hear from you. Currently, we're actively seeking a Project Manager.

But don't be put off by talk of skills; any help is always useful. Just get in touch and we'll do our best to find you a job that you may just enjoy. **T**

## The Beggarlee Extension planned for the Cromford Canal



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| A | Cromford Canal line continues to Ironville  |
| B | Temporary terminus at Stoney Lane   |
| C | New alignment for canal to east of A610 Road  |
| D | Canal diverted under the A610 through bridge that formerly carried a colliery railway |
| E | New locks to replace two original locks further along                                 |
| F | Section of canal reconstructed on its original line                                   |
| G | Cromford Canal Langley mill Basin — current head of navigation                        |
| H | Erewash canal linking to the River Trent  |



FRIENDS OF THE  
CROMFORD CANAL

### RESTORATION: THE NEXT STEP DIVERSION UNDER THE A610

SCALE 1:  
MAY 1982 (A3)  
DIAGRAMMATIC

DRAWING NO.  
FCC/ BE/

US mapping Crown Copyright reserved



# IT'S GETTING CLOSE NOW...HONEST!

By Ron Common



*A drone's eye view of the aqueduct and cottage.*

*Photo: Jim Bell*

How time flies when you're having fun! The restoration of Aqueduct Cottage reached its third year anniversary on 28th October 2022. On this date in 2019, our freshly recruited team of volunteers started clearing the derelict cottage. Some may remember, our team had to shift over 25 tons of debris, which was up to 3ft thick, from the inside of the roofless building.

Using just hand tools, the tree roots were removed, the fallen masonry carried out and the soil bagged and barrowed 250 yards to skips at the Wharf Shed. It took 12 weeks to get this first stage completed, but it enabled our builder, Andrew Churchman, to make a start on the stonework repairs. What followed was a long, but very rewarding, journey to save the cottage.

Three years, 170 days and 7,000 volunteer-hours later, we marked our third anniversary

with a social event for our volunteers (past and present). It was held on 5th November and the cottage's activity room was used as a social venue for the first time.

The free cake went down a treat and it was great to meet co-volunteers and their partners and to share stories about the project. It's been a highly rewarding experience for all involved.

One of the most gratifying aspects, in addition to the amazing dedication of our volunteers, has been the generosity of the public, local businesses and other organisations towards the project.

A couple of recent examples which can now be seen in all their glory is the lime plastering which was completed at the end of October.

Mike Wye Ltd donated the lime plaster (in addition to the NHL5 lime for the kitchen floor) and the labour was provided gratis by local ►



*Three coats of lime plaster make a great improvement to the appearance.*

plasterer Johnny Burton. Three coats had to be applied over a period of several weeks.

The third and final coat was completed in October and the finish is beautiful. It's made a tremendous difference to the interior of the cottage. As someone commented, it now looks like a home.



*Limecreting the floor.*

The other important job we managed to complete was laying a limecrete floor in the kitchen. Previously, this floor had a mixture of a stone flags, red and blue quarry tiles (mostly broken) plus a large patch of concrete, all laid on a soil base.

The concrete and quarry tiles were removed and the floor excavated to allow a 100mm thick limecrete base to be installed. By mid-November, this more stable breathable base was ready for the replacement quarry tiles to be fitted, as per the original kitchen floor.

Since the cottage is being re-purposed as a visitor information and activity centre, fire regulations have to be complied with and

one of the stipulations is for the ground-floor ceilings to be coated with intumescent paint.

Basically, this provides 30-minute fire protection, assuming the correct thickness is applied – in our case seven coats! (five base coats and two top coats). You can imagine the joy our volunteers had on this task, especially given the 24-hour drying time between coats, but it was essential in order to obtain the fire certificate.▶



*Applying the first of seven(!) coats of intumescent paint to the ceiling.*



*The internal space now looks so much lighter.*

Once completed, the rooms were noticeably lighter thanks to the white pigment of the top coat. When the plaster has dried on the walls, they will be painted with Earthborn 'clay white' paint which will form a good basis for the interpretation panels due to be installed in both ground floor rooms at a later date.



*The upper room sees its first use.*

Outside, the plan for the yard is to lay a stone path from the front door to the concrete footbridge. We purchased a quantity of reclaimed stone flags several months ago which is a good colour match to the existing stone on site. The issue is that the flags are all different sizes and thicknesses which makes the laying process more challenging. To overcome this, all the stones were measured and numbered and scaled-down cardboard cut-outs made. This made it possible to design the path without having to repeatedly move the heavy stones.



*A rather heavy jig-saw to test the layout of the reclaimed stone flags.*



*Work starts on the lean-to pantry.*

At the time of writing, the first few stones were laid out to test the theory and the process of laying was about to begin.

On the south end of the cottage the reconstruction of the lean-to pantry is underway. The first few courses of stonework have been laid, and very soon the timber roof frame will be added. This will provide a guide for the stonework. Once this is complete, reclaimed slate tiles will be fitted. To complete the job, a fixed window will be installed plus an internal door to provide access from the kitchen. ▶



*Close up of the new sculpture outside the cottage.*





*Erecting one of the new sculptures.*



*Laying out the tiles on the newly limecreted floor.*

The cottage will be a fitting 'gateway' to the Leawood Nature Reserve and one of the enhancements recently made is the installation of ten wildlife sculptures. One of these attractive sculptures has been attached to the fingerpost opposite the cottage. The aim is to help inform and engage the public with the wonderful wildlife in the Lower Derwent Valley. They are certainly making a

great impression with visitors.

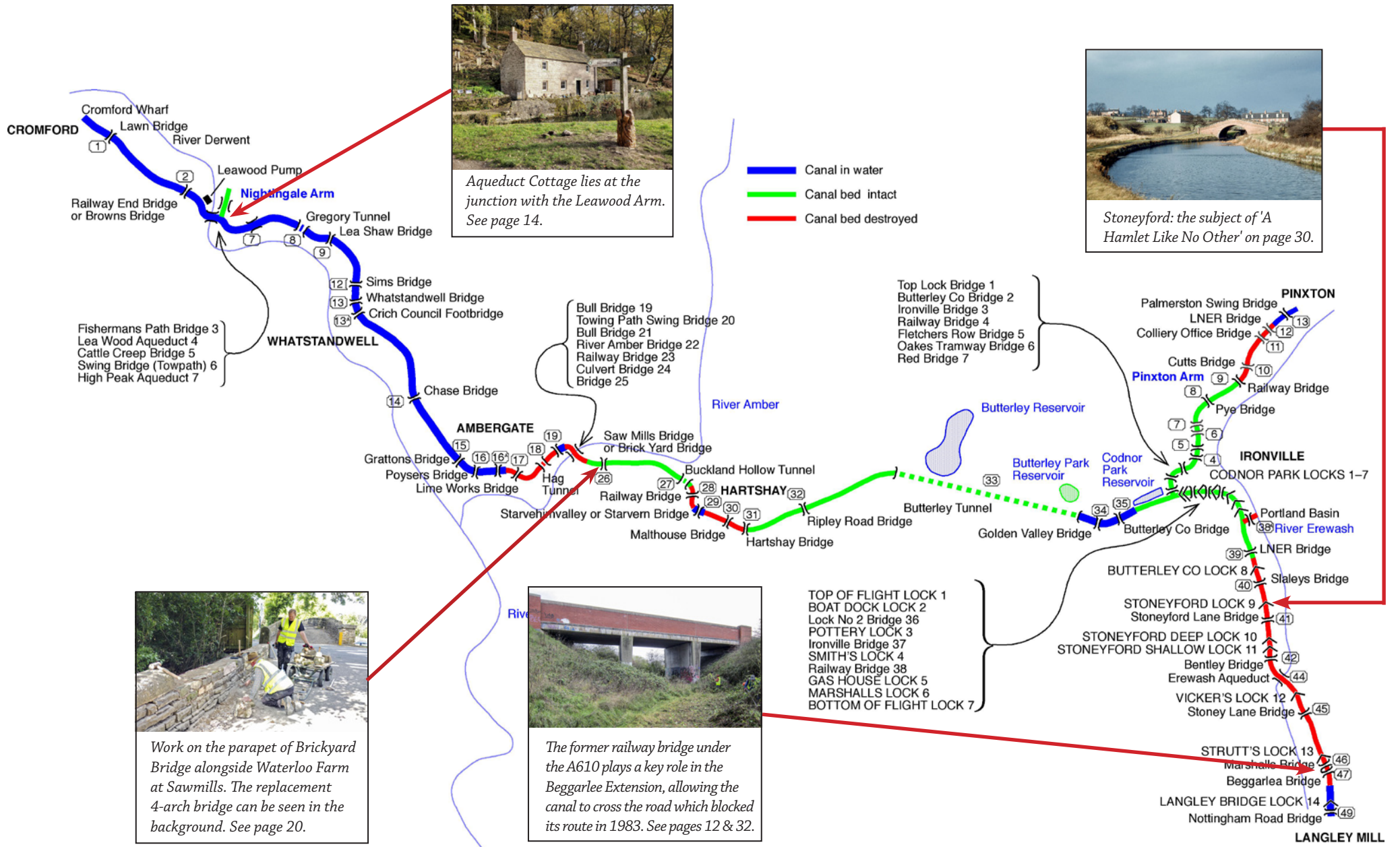
Continuing this artistic theme, some photographs with a unique perspective were posted recently on the Friends of Aqueduct Cottage Facebook page. The creators have kindly agreed for them to be shared here. They are yet another reminder of how inspirational this beautiful place is and we look forward to sharing the fruits of our labours very soon. **T**



*The cottage specially lit at night.*

*Photo: Michael Mills*

# THE CROMFORD CANAL





# BRICKYARD BRIDGE REPAIR AT WATERLOO FARM

By John Guyler

The parapet of the original Brickyard Bridge (26) over the canal at Waterloo Farm, Sawmills, had been in poor condition for some time and it was causing considerable concern as to its immediate future. At the beginning of August, FCC secured a grant of £2,000 to repair the wall and employed the services of stonemason Robert Shacklock to work on it.

A group of FCC work party volunteers, who in the summer of 2021 qualified in lime mortaring, also helped, working to a rota so that Robert always had someone to assist with sourcing the

missing stone, mixing the lime mortar and delivering to site. There were several piles of stone nearby which had been part of the canal structure in previous years. These turned out to be a valuable source of stone, particularly the coping stones, some of which had been lost from the wall.



*A rare view of the underside of the original Brickyard Bridge.*

First, the old mortar was removed from both sides of the existing wall, then the insecure wall was stripped back to the base level. The wall was rebuilt and lime mortared, all in five days. We were told that the last time any work had been done on the wall was in 1941, so it's survived very well. ►



*Work begins on the rapidly collapsing wall.*



*Progress as the bulk of the wall is rebuilt. Waterloo Farm is the brick-built building in the background.*

FCC volunteers gave 126 hours assisting Robert Shacklock.

Brickyard Bridge gets its name from the brickworks that was on the site that Lockwood's Haulage now occupy. It was one of three brick works in the area owned by the Ambergate Brickworks Company.



*Job done!*

On the other side of the bridge from Waterloo Farm, where the 4-arch bridge now stands, was a stone sawmill which gave the area its name.

The stone came from Hopton Wood quarry at Middleton, down the Cromford & High Peak Railway to what we now call High Peak Junction, to be transhipped into canal boats and brought to Sawmills to be cut and dressed. Technically, it was a white limestone, but polished to such a high finish that it was known as

'Hopton Marble'. The Hopton Stone Company was established sometime before 1846 and was run by the Wheatcroft family.

When the Pye Bridge branch of the Midland Railway was proposed in 1876, its route would have involved crossing the canal twice here at low level, necessitating two opening bridges. As the railway company owned the canal at this time, they simply diverted the canal's route to avoid both crossings. So Brickyard Bridge and the original line of the canal were abandoned, but the bridge was left in situ and part of the old canal line on both sides of the bridge remained in water for many years.

By 1908 the old canal had been infilled immediately on the eastern side of the bridge. The western side arch remains visible to this day and is in very good condition but is normally not accessible, being on private property. The wall is at the southern end of the four arched bridge adjacent to Waterloo Farm, which had previously been a public house. The four-arched bridge was itself bypassed in the mid 1970s when a road was cut through the canal embankment, allowing long vehicles to access the site, which is now Lockwood's. ■

# BIRDSWOOD'S ANNUAL MOT

By Richard Handley

*Birdswood* is the charity's trip boat that operates on the northern 2 miles of the Cromford Canal under licence from Derbyshire County Council and is the most significant revenue generator for the charity. Assiduous readers of this journal will recall that under the Merchant Shipping Acts, *Birdswood* has legally to undergo annual safety inspection by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency. These inspections are undertaken to the same standards as for a cross-channel ferry – believe it or not – and all the MCA's documentation refers to ships!

The regulations stipulate that “*the ship's bottom is to be inspected out of water annually unless prior approval for waiver is obtained from MCA*”. *Birdswood* is on a waiver for annual inspections of the outside of the ship's bottom subject to satisfactory inspection of the inside of the hull. So, this year – with the above waiver in place – we faced the in-water inspection (Issue 79 of *Portal* contained an extensive article on last year's out-of-water inspection).

Careful pre-planning work with the MCA during the summer had the objective of agreeing a specific format of inspection to be undertaken on 3rd November. Then, with just two days' notice, that date changed to 1st November with a new set of surveyors unaware of what had been agreed to be inspected. The first task on the morning of the 1st therefore was to politely and assertively negotiate with



*Birdswood's expertly painted water can was one of the few things NOT inspected by the MCA!*

*Photo: Marie Gretton*

the surveyors back to the initial inspection plan; the crew on-hand were mightily relieved that they didn't have to suddenly start removing seating and internal floor plates!

The survey took about four hours by a senior surveyor, assisted by a trainee, and took the format of inspecting as much of the inside of the hull as possible, checking our electrical safety certification and going in detail through all of our other safety manuals and records, and checking a sample of the Masters' licences.

By mid-afternoon it was apparent that we'd got the green light and that the MCA surveyors were happy enough to certify us for another 12 months. But importantly we have already agreed a detailed plan with them on what the 2023 out-of-water inspection and mid-term “Domestic Safety Management verification audit” needs to cover.

The survey and audit for 2023 need to be undertaken by no later than 9th November 2023, and are likely to take place over a two day period, including getting the boat out of the water and back in again, which is likely to cost the charity north of £6,000.

So, we're OK to cruise (as far as the MCA are concerned) in 2023, but we need a few other things to line up for us: weeds, silt, water supply and DCC licence, all of which we're working on. ▮



# NEW HI-VIZ FOR VOLUNTEERS

By John Guyler



*The work party in their shiny new Hi-Viz.*

We have again been presented with new Hi-Viz vests by Amber Valley Rotary Club. Starting in 2015, AVRC have presented the FCC work parties with three lots of Hi-Viz. This year, they have also given the crew of *Birdswood* their own Hi-Viz, green with 'Birdswood Crew' printed in yellow.

The presentation to the work parties and *Birdswood* crew was in August, when the work parties were working at Waterloo Farm and Sawmills. The presentation party then went to Cromford Wharf, at lunchtime in between

*Birdswood* trips, for the crew to receive their Hi-Viz.

This year's gift was initiated by a group of AVRC members visiting Aqueduct Cottage and noticing some FCC volunteers working in Hi-Viz that had seen a lot of use (the Hi-Viz, not the volunteers). I received an email from Chris Riggot of AVRC, suggesting that it was time for new ones, which I gratefully accepted.

I wish to thank the Amber Valley Rotary Club for their generosity and FCC has thanked them with the offer of a trip on *Birdswood*. ▀



*AVRC members hand over the new green Hi-Viz to the Birdswood team at Cromford.*



# CHARTERS

By Mike Kelley

As an integral part of our trip boat operation with *Birdswood*, we have always run charters/private hire, as a regular part of our service since we started (which is now more than nine years ago). People have 'chartered' our boat for many reasons; such as for clubs, Women's Institute, Probus, Round Table, U3A (University of the Third Age) and many more. We have had numerous birthday parties; one was even for a gentleman's 100th birthday!

We have also had hen parties; one such group even dressed me up in a pink tutu and placed a tiara on my head... Then there have been retirement events (this is when people falsely think they have finished working) or

wildlife groups who want to get up close and personal with all the wonderful wildlife along this canal.

This summer one photographic group wanted to photograph the canal at dawn, which meant getting the boat out at 5:15am. But I can tell you, seeing the canal at this time in the morning is magic, and well worth getting up for.

This year though, things have been a little different. Previously we only ran charters on days, or at times, when the scheduled public trips were not running. However, the Boat Committee decided that this year we would run charters whenever they were required and ►



*The Peaky Boaters: Martin, Mike, Al and Kevin*

*Photo: Robert Herringshaw*



*Sandra keeps an eye on "the boys".*

*Photo: Nigel Ward*

cancel the scheduled public trip(s) if there was a clash between the two. The reason for this was that we make a lot more money from charters than we do generally from scheduled trips. And it has paid off; we have made more profit this year than ever before, even

though we have carried fewer passengers. The reasons for the increased profit are that we have considerably increased the number of charters and, since Covid, we had no employee costs to pay out for.

On Monday 10th October *Birdswood* was chartered by a wonderful group from the Royal Photographic Society, with the proviso that they wanted the crew to dress in traditional boating clothes, for photographic reasons. Before Covid came along we always dressed in traditional boating clothes for days when *Birdswood* was pulled by a horse. (Sadly, since our previous horse retired, we have not been able to find a replacement.) The note of thanks we received from this group says it all:

*"Just to say a very big Thank You on behalf of the East Midlands region of the Royal Photographic Society. Your volunteers were all amazing and the way they had embraced the opportunity to dress up was wonderful. If it's not too unfair to single out two of them Mike Kelley and Sandra both went above and beyond. Hopefully, we will have plenty of photos to post on your Facebook page."*

And you can see here examples of the photographs they took. Many thanks. ■



*Mike, the Boss in the bowler.*

*Photo: Nigel Ward*

# BUTTERLEY VISIT

By Hugh Potter



*The distinctive octagonal entrance lodge is one of the listed buildings, along with the one beside it.*



*Tim (with blue bag) explains the history of the company to the group.*

At the end of September, John Barker organised a visit for volunteers to see the remains of Butterley Works, led by Tim Castledine. Tim worked on the site for many years and is one of the founders of the Butterley Ironworks Trust, which is hoping to preserve the remaining historic structures and create a heritage centre.

Founded as Benjamin Outram & Co in 1790, it became the Butterley Co after Outram's premature death in ►





*The Blast Furnace Wall, now a scheduled monument along with the Wide Hole in Butterley Tunnel beneath it.*

1805 and survived in various forms until it finally closed in 2009, having constructed the Falkirk Wheel and the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth as its finale.

After closure, much of the site was demolished but the listed structures and some of the older buildings within their curtilage remain and the whole site awaits redevelopment.

Butterley Tunnel, with its unique underground loading wharf, runs directly beneath the site and was once linked to it by various shafts, but nothing remains visible today to mark its route.

Much of the story of the site is told on the Butterley Ironworks Trust section of the Ripley & District Heritage Trust's website at [www.rdht.org.uk](http://www.rdht.org.uk). **T**



*The original date stone of 1791 on one of the furnaces is mounted below one that states 'Rebuilt 1838'.*



*In the massive machine shop, the older part of the building beyond the blue columns is planned to become a heritage centre as part of the site's redevelopment.*

# WINTER ON THE CANAL

A selection of images from winters passed



*This busy scene on the ice was taken at Gregory Wide. From the dress and the fact that it was taken from a glass plate negative suggests it was taken early in the 20th century.*



*Before the aqueduct was lined with rubber sheeting, it regularly leaked, which showed up particularly well in winter!*



*Ice skating on the canal near Codnor Park Reservoir around 1947.*





*Brenda Butlin skating with ice steward Billy Potter. Brenda recalled "Ice Skating was once fun on our local canal. When ice steward Billy Potter went on to the ice we all knew it was safe and many people joined in. Jean Bates who used to live at the bottom of Monument Lane often partnered me on the ice. Today two of Jean's grandsons are British ice dance champions . . . and it all started on our stretch of canal! The photograph was taken on the canal near the reservoir circa 1947."*



*Skating and sledging at Chase Bridge. taken from another glass negative. Note the absence of reeds along the canal bank, unlike today.*



*Two almost identically dressed girls skate by a lad playing 'ice hockey' with an improvised stick.*



# “A HAMLET LIKE NO OTHER”

By Phil Flint

When I was probably 10/12 years old, so 1960/62, the canal was a magnet for fishermen; pike, roach, tench and gudgeon were in abundance, along with ducks and swans and hosts of birds. I used to cycle from my home at Aldercar down Cromford Road then turn left to the end of Plumtree Road. Then turn right down Stoney Lane until it met the canal, at a bridge with a lock and a house.

Stoney Lane used to carry on up to Brinsley. Sometimes after heavy rain the lane and surrounding fields would be flooded and I have memories of cycling through the water trying to pick out the best route for my bike to get to the canal path that was elevated so I could fish. At the bridge I would turn right along the canal path towards Langley Mill and try and find a spot along there to fish. Sometimes it was very difficult because it was a prime length of canal and full of fishermen down to the next lock next to the train bridge that was used by the coal board to ferry coal to Langley Mill. There was a train crossing gate at Langley Mill adjacent to Canlin Castings on the main road.

Sometimes when the fields were really flooded, following the train line to the canal was another option; both ended up at the same stretch of canal. When the level of the water in the canal started to decline, so did the fishing. I along with many others were curious. With no internet or social media in those days to consult, the only way to find out what had caused this was to search. One day, instead of turning right at the lock towards Langley Mill, I turned left towards Stoneyford. My recollection is that before reaching “Stoney” piles of earth had been bulldozed into the canal to stop/reduce the flow of water. Some signage had been erected to say footpath closed.

In my naivety as a 10/12 year old I believed I could make a channel in the earth to allow the flow to continue because this was spoiling my fishing but it proved impossible and over a period of a few months the stretch of Cromford Canal to Langley Mill Basin dried up.

I live in Cornwall now but still have family in the Belper area and frequently visit them. My father was born in a row of cottages at Stoneyford. I spent many an hour fishing in the canal and skating on it in winter with him. I have been recently trying to locate the exact location. I have come across some old photos of the area and am trying to match them with my recollection of Stoneyford along with some written memories I have come across from Dad’s brother. If I make sufficient progress I may write an article to try and preserve these memories because Stoneyford was a hamlet like no other.

By the way, when the renovation work started at Langley Mill basin I remember a chap named Walter who ran the cobblers shop on North Street being very supportive of the work and I actually did some diving in the lock at the time. *Great to have your recollections, Phil. If other readers have memories of Stoneyford, I will be very happy to receive them and to pass them on to Phil – Ed. ■*



*The house and lock (12) by Stoney Lane.*

# THE LOST IRONWORKS OF HARTSHAY

By Martyn Taylor-Cockayne



*The former site of Hartshay Ironworks as shown on a map dated 1827.*

at the surface of the land of all the workable beds of coal laying within the said mineral tract . . . which is accompanied by a descriptive account of all investigations and trials by boring or sinking made upon the said mineral ground from the year 1793 to the present time.” It is interesting to note that trials by boring or sinking dated

I spent several years in the study of Codnor Castle, during which I chanced upon a remarkable reference in the Charlton Papers at the Nottingham Archives to an Ironworks at Harteshaye (Hartshay) belonging to the Zouche family of Codnor Castle and datable to the late 16th century.

My first reaction was to assume that it was the more familiar works at Morley, but research on those works soon disproved that. Just to be sure, I also investigated the Ironworks at Alderwasley, which also proved to be of a much later date (1764). Lee Wyatt (a mines and geological expert) was able to provide a map dated 1827 from the Mines Records Office at Berry Hill, Mansfield, that showed that Hartshay Mill was once an ironworks.

The map was drawn by J. A. Twigg of Chesterfield, Mineral Surveyor and Mining Engineer. In the Legend he states “From an actual survey commenced in 1817 and completed in 1827, showing the Basit or the Break Out

from 1793, which coincides very nicely with the construction of the Cromford Canal.

Sir John Zouche, of Codnor Castle, had by 1582 re-established his father’s Loscoe Ironworks, and also had an illicit lead smelter at Stoneyford by 1575. He expanded the industrial concerns of the family to include coal and ironstone mining, an ironworks at Makeney (Duffield), a wire works and the ironworks at Hartshay.

During the early 17th century the Zouche family had to sell all their concerns after incurring mounting debts; the Chancery Proceedings describe Hartshay Ironworks as “the forge hammer and fineries” (an early method of converting cast iron into wrought iron).

So Hartshay Ironworks was not a large concern, but it was a precursor to those at Alderwasley and Morley and therefore worthy of note historically. It probably finished when the Alderwasley and Morley Works came into being in 1764 and 1780 respectively. ■

# BEGGARLEE VISITS

## Clearance Begins

So, you thought nothing was happening at the Langley Mill End? I caught up with the work party on 9th November down by the A610 bridge, the one over the old Moorgreen Colliery railway line. With leader John Barker were volunteers Wendy Hollis, Denis Hewson and John Sparham.

The day's work consisted of clearing some of the scrub on the approach to the bridge to make it easier for the next stage here of removing the self-set trees and shrubs that line the top of the bank above the gully that drains water down to the River Erewash.

This is the spot where FCC will need to install pipes from the culvert outlet as the gully will have to be covered over to enable the construction of a bank to carry part of the turning area for boats going under the bridge.

I also took a look at some of the previous

work done at this point, namely the clearance of hawthorn, brambles and undergrowth from the Bailey Bridge that forms part of Hall Road. A section of this bridge deck is going to need some TLC in the form of a coat of pitch to protect it where a fire has exposed the deck plates.

Some enterprising graffiti artist has done their thing on the bridge supports, brightening up an otherwise dull grey aspect. Unfortunately the top of the pictures is about on the same level that the canal water will be. So if you are that artist, how about re-doing the pics higher up but with a canal theme?

There was no doubting the enthusiasm of these volunteers; it's hard work but they work at their own pace and the results are pretty impressive. If you want to join them in this healthy out-door activity contact John Barker at [work@cromfordcanal.org.uk](mailto:work@cromfordcanal.org.uk).

**Dave Ratner**



## Artful Bridge

When John Barker and I visited the A610 bridge at Beggarlee recently, we discovered it had become quite an art gallery. I am not usually keen on graffiti, but this seemed to me to be well done and quite attractive.

We don't know who the artists are, and unfortunately when we complete the canal

the towpath level will come almost up to the top level of the artwork. Hopefully we can encourage them next time to get their ladders out and finish it up to the top.

In the meantime, I'm wondering whether any *Portal* readers can suggest a new name for the bridge.

**John Boucher**





## ECPDA UPDATE

### An update from the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association

With the potential for work soon to begin on the Cromford Canal Beggarlee Extension, we have increased our training opportunities, using both waterway and external contacts. Three ECPDA members recently undertook a day-long chipper-training course, with another two members taking a similar course on 19th December.

We are also putting three members through training on our old but trusty Ruston Bucyrus excavator. This was used when we originally excavated the infilled canal beyond Langley Mill Boat Yard some 15 or more years ago. In the subsequent years we have not had too much use for it, neither have we had any members trained to use it, but this will soon change thanks to one of our members who is also a Waterway Recovery Group trainer.

Our Work Party Organiser, Dave Turner, is also ensuring that maintenance work on the Erewash Canal continues, with jobs allocated to our regular Friday participants, both at Langley Mill and further down the

canal. During 2022 we completed a multitude of tasks for Canal & River Trust, including gate and ground paddle/post repairs and replacement, straightening of bent spear rod steelwork, painting, rubbish clearance and towpath repairs. We recently had a member of CRT engineering staff visit us at Langley Mill, looking at our plans to improve the towpath bank above Langley Bridge Lock. Our trusty workboat *Pentland* has proved invaluable in much of the maintenance and repair work undertaken.

The Rally at the end of May 2023 looms large, with much work being done by our Rally Committee, to ensure all runs as it should. We already have a number of trading boats booked in, while bookings from private boaters arrive almost daily.

At Sandiacre Lock Cottages, we have a full programme for the Christmas period, with live music on three Sundays, plus a visit from Santa on 3rd and 10th December. Our popular tombola returns on the Sundays. **T**

## FCC MEETINGS

Illustrated talks take place on the third Monday of the month at 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall, Casson Street, NG16 5NN. Car parking at rear. Bar, tea/coffee, raffle and FCC sales table. Admission £2.50 (AGM free).

**16th January:** Tracks & Tramways of the Cromford Canal - by David Amos.

**20th February:** The First Railways in the Erewash Valley - by David Amos.

**20th March:** The Life and Times of Birdwood - Richard Handley and Mike Kelley with the story of how our trip boat is run and benefits the FCC.

**17th April:** FCC AGM.

# FCC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Monday 17th April 2023**

Notice is hereby given that the Seventh Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Cromford Canal, Charitable Incorporated Organisation Number 1164608, will be held on Monday, 17th April 2023 at the Church Hall, Casson Street, Ironville NG16 5NN commencing at 7.30pm.

## AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Sixth Annual General Meeting held on Monday, 25th April 2022.
3. Matters arising.
4. Report of the Chairman.
5. Report of the Treasurer and presentation of the accounts for 2022.
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 Sixth AGM are already posted on the website; the accounts for the year ending 31st December 2022 and the Trustees' annual report will be posted on the website before 18th March 2023. 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 2023 AGM are Jack Brown, Richard Handley, David Ratner; 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 7th February 2023. 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 made available to all members along with the Trustees annual report and accounts.

**Richard Handley, Executive Secretary**



**Friends of the**   
**Cromford Canal**  
Registered Charity 1164608    [www.cromfordcanal.org](http://www.cromfordcanal.org)

**ANNUAL GENERAL  
MEETING**

**7.30 pm Monday 17 April at  
Ironville Church Hall NG16 5NN**

**For more information**  
Members can find more details in future editions of  
Portal, in our newsletter and on our website

**[www.cromfordcanal.org](http://www.cromfordcanal.org)**



# Friends of the Cromford Canal



## **YOUR WILL COULD MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE LEGACIES MEAN FASTER PROGRESS ON CANAL PROJECTS**

Our aim is “The restoration, reconstruction, preservation and maintenance of the Cromford Canal”, but that’s an expensive business: a gift in your will could make a huge difference to the pace at which we can restore our unique canal.

### **HAVE YOU MADE YOUR WILL ?**

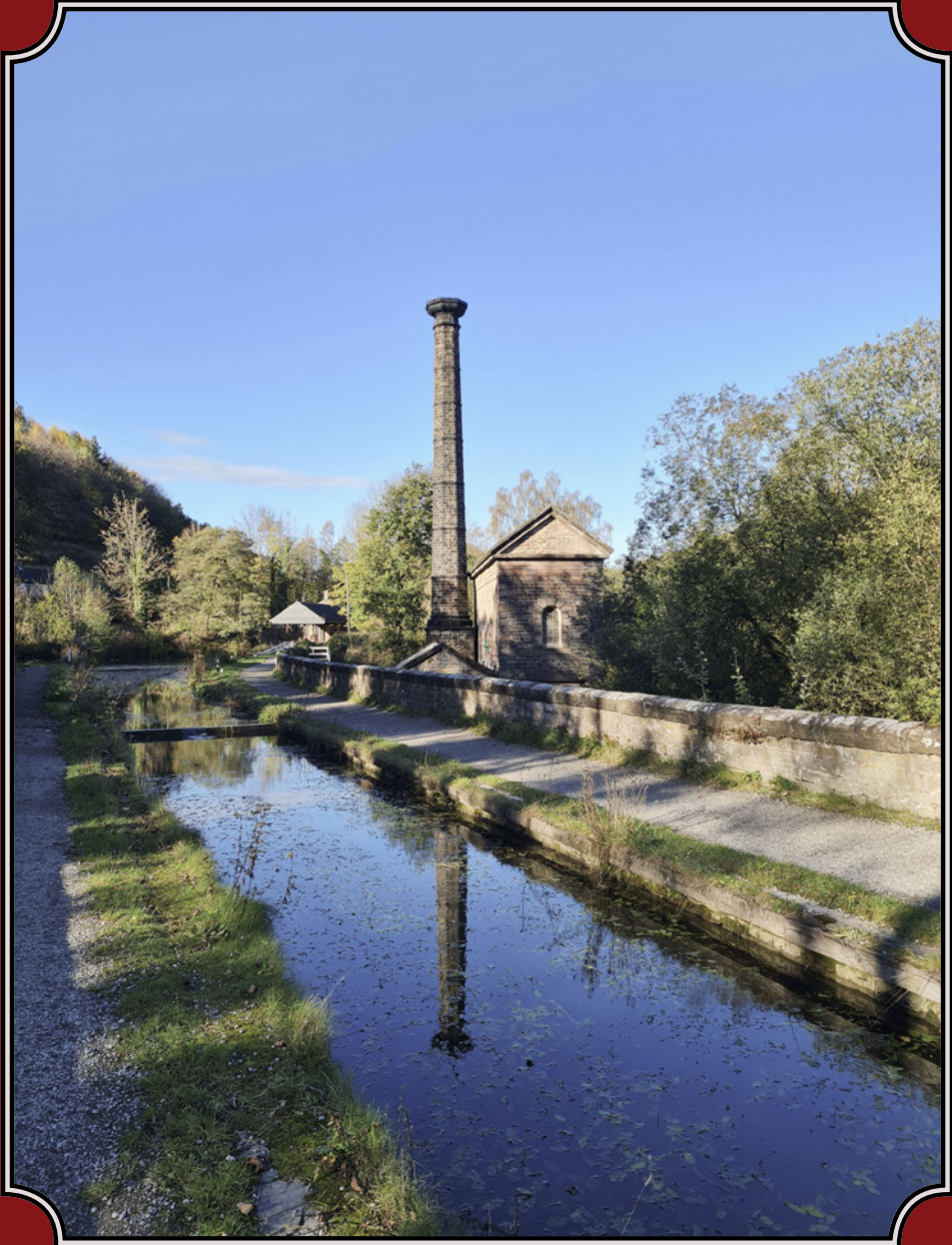
Making a will ensures that your money and property go to people and organisations you choose to support. Leaving a financial gift to the Friends of the Cromford Canal will help secure the projects that are needed to complete our canal's restoration.

If you have already made a will and would like to include FCC as a beneficiary, a simple codicil (amendment) can be added. Leaving charitable gifts in your will can help you reduce the value of your estate liable for Inheritance Tax as charitable bequests are tax-exempt – so a gift to FCC could reduce the amount to be paid to HMRC after your death.

**Please contact the FCC Executive Secretary;  
secretary@cromfordcanal.org.uk or the FCC Treasurer;  
treasurer@cromfordcanal.org.uk for a confidential discussion. We  
can also supply a blank codicil for you to complete and attach to  
your will. This can also be downloaded from our website.**

The Friends of the Cromford Canal – registered charity 1164608





[www.cromfordcanal.org](http://www.cromfordcanal.org)