

THE PORTAL



THE JOURNAL OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CROMFORD CANAL

Registered Charity Number 1100700



NUMBER 32

Free To Members £1 When Sold

NEW YEAR 2010



CONTENTS

Editorial	2
Chairman's Notes	3
Butterley Company	4
News from the North	5
The Level Pond Plod.....	6
FCC News Update	10
Forthcoming Members' Meetings.....	11
Membership Matters	12
Annual General Meeting	13
Work Party Report	17
Leawood Pump Outlet	21
World Heritage Site Discovery Days.....	22
Cromford Canal Company Seal	24
Biodiversity and Climate Change.....	26
Book Review	27
Letters to the Editor.....	28
Christmas Social.....	29



FRONT COVER: FCC Patron Julian Richards at Bullbridge about to begin the second leg of the Level Pond Plod sponsored walk. He has been joined by 'Mushy Malc', a symbol of the financial support of this event by Lockwoods Transport as well as reminding us that this company supply rather a lot of excellent mushy peas. My sympathies went to the lady who walked from Bullbridge to Pinxton, including various narrow stiles, wearing this outfit and was still waving to the crowds on arrival at the Boat Inn. See page 6.

Photo: Mike Kelley

BACK COVER: The ever-popular horse drawn boat approaching High Peak Junction during the World Heritage Site Discovery Days event. There is no doubt that the horse and boat are one of the main attractions of this weekend but their continued appearance is in doubt because the accumulated silt in the canal is making operating the boat increasingly difficult. See page 22.

Photo: Hugh Potter

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

from Mike Harrison



Welcome to *The Portal* No.32

Here we are at the beginning of another new year, indeed a new decade. We seem to be experiencing what could be the makings of a 'proper' winter, with more snow and frost than for many years. Global warming seems to be in reverse at the moment! As I write this, the landscape looking across the fields towards Crich looks more like Siberia. This is not exactly ideal for walking the canal, as Val and I must shortly be doing to research the new edition of the Walkers' Guide, which we shall hopefully be producing ready for this year's FCC sales.

The indefatigable sales team has attended a series of (mostly) successful events over the last year, large and small, both indoors and outdoors and all contributing to the much needed funds of the FCC. The Level Pond Plod sponsored walk was also particularly good financially as well as attracting attention to the cause. More help is always needed to organise and run these events.

Probably the most significant development ever for the FCC came in December. This was the formation of **The Cromford Canal Partnership**. See Pat's report opposite.

Perhaps by the end of this new decade the finances will have been secured and at least part of the canal will have been restored. Here's to a happy, peaceful and productive New Year.

Please note the press date for the Spring 2010 issue will be March 20th.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Monday, April 19th. 2010 at the Church Hall, Ironville
commencing at 7.30pm.**

Come along to hear what progress is being made towards the restoration of the Cromford Canal. Have your say about the affairs of the FCC or even better, offer your help. See the official notice on page 13.

After the formal business, FCC Archivist Hugh Potter will present a slide show of colour photographs of the Cromford Canal taken in the 1950s and '60s by industrial archaeologist Frank Nixon, author of 'Industrial Archaeology of Derbyshire'. Some of these were depicted in black & white in the Summer issue of *Portal* but you will be able to see all sixty in full colour. Most of them have been identified but one or two are still mysteries - Hugh will be hoping for input from the audience!

This is YOUR AGM - please support it!



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by Patrick Morriss



A very Happy New Year to you all!

I suppose it is customary at this time of year to look back at the highs and lows of 2009 and to look forward to what 2010 might bring. Those of you who attended the AGM last year will remember the address given to the meeting by the then Derbyshire County Council Cabinet Member for the Environment, Brian Lucas. The DCC position was that it was highly unlikely that there would be a 'Cromford Canal Partnership' as such, but that we would continue to walk together as and when we could. Well, the local elections came and went in June 2009 and the new administration had made a manifesto commitment to form such a partnership before the election. It therefore gave me great pleasure to attend the inaugural meeting of the Cromford Canal Partnership on the afternoon of the 15th December 2009. All involved also supported the need for a whole canal feasibility study covering the entire canal. This will have to answer the needs and questions of a whole range of stakeholders and will not be cheap. Such a study will have to be wide ranging and cover not just technical and engineering issues, but a whole range of environmental and ecological issues as well. The FCC do not need to fear the results of any such study, as we are confident that the canal can be restored for the benefit of all without untoward damage to the environment and ecosystems. What we may have to fear is the cost of such a study, but one thing is for sure, we have a much better chance of securing funding for the study as part of a wide ranging partnership embracing a broad base of stakeholders than we would have done acting alone.

The last year also produced a lot of media interest in the FCC with the canal being featured on BBC East Midlands 'Inside Out' series, and we got a Mention in the House of Commons – thank you Judy! I suppose I should also mention that I was appointed vice chair of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Partnership at the Partnership's September meeting [*Congratulations Pat - Ed.*] This was very much in absentia as I was on a Greek Island at the time and knew nothing of it until I received a 'phone call asking if I was in agreement to have my name put forward. All I got was 'dark looks' from my partner Freda for yet again fiddling with my mobile phone when I was supposed to be on holiday. Joking apart, the canal forms such a vital and integral part of the World Heritage Site north of Ambergate, that any representations the FCC can make can only lead to a higher profile for our efforts to restore the canal.

Several other issues still rumble on without resolution. Progress with the Smotherfly project has been painfully slow and it is only now that design work for all the groundworks and geo-technical sampling and analysis has been completed to show that we can use the materials on site and that they are suitable to use with our designs. The former Stevenson's site at Bullbridge still remains partly demolished with no planning application yet received by Amber Valley to show what the final plans actually are. We have of course been successful in getting the line of the canal protected from development



in the last set of plans released by the developer for public comment. I would like to thank BASA, the local Bullbridge and Sawmills group, who have been steadfast in their support for the canal reopening in the area, a great help in our negotiations with the Bullbridge developer and a great help with working parties and the October sponsored walk so ably organised by Mike Kelley. Any community along the line of the canal who wish to coalesce to support the canal and improve their local community would do well to follow BASA's example.

Talking of volunteers and the sponsored walk brings me to comment on the input of all our members and non-members during the year. Working parties are arranged, events attended, accounts produced, walks organised, social evenings held, lectures given, meetings attended, membership cards sent out, magazines produced etc etc. Only occasionally as at this year's National at Redhill where the FCC got the award for best non-commercial stand do these volunteers gain official recognition; without you there would be no FCC. You know who you are and what you do, often in difficult circumstances - I will not mention not being able to find tent pegs! On behalf of us all many, many thanks. If any more of you wish to be involved in 2010 please contact any member of the committee; I'm sure we can find you something to do at any level of involvement.

I see I have not mentioned the difficult economic outlook once! Perhaps a sign of the times in this respect is the fate of the **Butterley Company**:

Those of you who live in the vicinity of Ripley or travel through the area will probably be aware of the sad demise of this once proud organisation with a history stretching back as long as the Cromford Canal's. It is for this reason that the FCC have been actively engaged in lobbying the powers that be since the initial planning permission application was submitted for what turned out to be Morris Homes' 'Cromford View'. We were unable to stop that development but we were able to get actual construction moved away from the immediate vicinity of the tunnel and we were able to record the capping of various shafts in the yard, Since then of course the company went into liquidation and the site is being cleared - rapidly, as the accompanying rather desolate photograph shows.

The FCC have been talking with local authorities both county and borough, English Heritage, The Panel for Historic Engineering Work of the Institute for Civil Engineers and anyone else who will listen to us to try and get more of the buildings listed. It is a sad comment on the processes involved that the demolition teams and the developers are often able to move faster than the individuals and organisations charged with protecting our built heritage.



All I can say is that the FCC will do whatever we can to protect the canal tunnel underneath the Butterley site and its connections with the surface from irrevocable damage from any new development and the ongoing demolition. Any of you who have visited Elsecar near Barnsley or similar places will understand the opportunity that has already been lost to turn the Butterley site into a vibrant part of the community.

Patrick Morriss



NEWS FROM THE NORTH

Cromford Canal - Cromford to Ambergate

from Rick Jillings - Assistant Area Manager
Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service

Since the last edition of *The Portal*, the Cromford Canal winter work programme has begun. We have carried out some very successful work with FCC volunteers.

At Leashaw near Whatstandwell, reed had grown right across the canal stopping the water from flowing. Thanks to volunteers' hard work, lots of reed was removed and the channel and flow have now been restored. This complements work by the Countryside Service team who have been clearing back overhanging trees and removing willow branches that were taking root in the canal bed. The canal's width and heritage can once again be fully appreciated. See also picture on page 20.

At Whatstandwell, FCC volunteers have helped to cut back and clear tree growth. Trees cause damage to retaining walls, they shade the canal and their leaves choke the canal and reduce water quality. Further tree work will continue to the south of Whatstandwell this winter.

Two stretches of collapsing retaining wall have been rebuilt at Cromford Meadows by Allroads, the county highways team. The walls were rebuilt with a concrete core to support the embankment but the outer part of the wall is made from traditional dry stone.

The Derby British Trust for Conservation Volunteers group have held four project days (42 volunteer days) on the canal this winter. They cleared reed and silt from the water channel at Chase Road, Ambergate and cut back a thicket of bramble to reveal the eastern side of Poyser's Bridge. Canal wall repairs are planned around Ambergate, to the east of Chase Road, for early in the new year.

The canal towpath will be closed to the public from January 25th for up to six weeks between Whatstandwell Station footbridge and Ambergate. This is while the towpath is being resurfaced. The towpath closure is for safety as dumpers, diggers and a paving machine will be in operation on the towpath.

Please feel free to contact the Countryside Service on the number below for updates on progress and to confirm which sections of towpath are open or closed.

Scheduled Monument consent has been sought from English Heritage to allow refurbishment of the High Peak Junction swing bridge, where rotten wood needs replacing.

Scheduled Monument and planning consents are also being sought for a scheme to provide better access by constructing a ramp to Leaward Pump, near High Peak Junction. A video is being made to tell the story of Leaward Pump and this will hopefully be on show at High Peak Junction Visitor Centre in the summer.

It is hoped that a silt removal contract will be in place this winter to improve the canal at Whatstandwell. This is still subject to a number of approvals and an ecological report has highlighted the need not to disturb the canal margins where water voles are active and burrows are present.

Plans have been developed for a canal overflow to be built next to the ground paddle north of Whatstandwell. This should reduce the chance of the canal bursting its banks during bad weather.

The cast iron aqueduct carrying the canal over the railway is still drained of water. Engineering work is needed to provide extra support for the trough and the towpath. The repair work will be co-ordinated through English Heritage and Network Rail but the timescale for repair is still not known.

For further information contact Middleton Top Visitor Centre on 01629 823204



THE LEVEL POND PLOD

by Mike Kelley

On Sunday 18th October we held a sponsored walk called 'The Level Pond Plod'. The name came to me in a moment of inspiration (ok! ok!) when taking my dog for a walk along the Bullbridge section. Why level pond? Well the canal was engineered through the Derbyshire hills and dales for 14.5 miles from Cromford Wharf to Pinxton Wharf, without one lock. Truly amazing, what a great feat of engineering this was, and it was all done with a wheelbarrow, pick axe and shovel in the 1790's. Why 'pond' and not 'pound'? Technically it should be 'level pound', but to the general public I felt they would understand the word pond a lot better.

Planning for one of these walks takes many hours of work. Until you actually do such a thing, you do not realise just how much work goes into it. Publicity is the key, and getting that out to all is a large part of the work. Then there is insurance to obtain, the Saint John's Ambulance needs to be on hand, then there are the Risk Assessments to do, stop off places for 'rest' and food, and transport for the few who need it, and of course the several road crossings all have to be marshalled. The day before the walk, Eric Singleton and myself walked about eight miles putting up arrows to mark the way. All these wooden arrows had been made by Eric, so we both set off to put them all up. Then in the morning we had the 14.8 miles to walk. (Yes 14.8, we had an electronic gismo to measure it exactly). You can never be sure how many will turn up for such an event, there are so many variables that could interfere with it, not the least of which is the weather.

Our Vice Chairman Mike Kelley addressing the troops before setting off from Cromford Wharf in the fine Autumn sunshine.



Barry Allsop



On the day of the walk the weather was great, lovely autumn sunshine. Our Patron, Julian Richards was there from the start, and our Full Level Pond walk was started by Councillor Dennis Kelly, who has done so much to help our cause. Cromford Wharf was soon crowded as people gathered from all over to sign in. They came from as far afield as Edinburgh, Suffolk and Dorset. Our Patron had to get back to Dorset that same night. It was a beautiful walk, and our Archivist, Hugh Potter, opened up his garden which backs on to the canal, for tea, coffee and biscuits. A welcome rest, many thanks Hugh.



The large number of walkers were soon getting into their stride past the swing bridge at High Peak Junction, followed up by our Patron and Vice Chairman.

Barry Allsop



Barry Allsop



The walk from Hugh's house took us around the first diversion, but the views from the Hag hillside were wonderful. As we came down into Bullbridge, there were dozens already there, many signing in for the Half Pond walk. One was dressed as a giant pea called 'Mushy Malc'. It must have been hard getting through some of the narrow stiles!



Gathering support from a new friend during the break at Bullbridge.

Mike Kelley

My feet were beginning to blister as we passed over the difficult A610 road crossing. This main road was plonked over the canal, with no safe crossing over it for walkers, just a thousand steps either side! (Well it seemed like that).



The awkward crossing of the A610 at Lower Hartshay.

Pat Morriss



At Condor Park reservoir the last few walkers signed in for the 'Tiddler's Pond' walk; the last 2 miles. The grand total of walkers was an amazing 141; many thanks to all of you. We also had 2 dogs which were signed in for the walk.



'Mushy Malc' arriving at the Boat Inn at Pinxton Wharf. The landlord Nick Lowe is carrying out major rebuilding and extension works including a large new restaurant area in this old canal-side pub. We were allowed a sneak preview of what will be a very pleasant venue when completed. This type of investment in what had become a very run down location is very encouraging.

Editor

By the time I arrived at the Boat Inn at Pinxton Wharf I was ready for the pint and hot dog which the landlord Nick Lowe had put on for us there. A large crowd had gathered, many having a go on the tombola and looking at our sales stand.

From the walk alone £2,239 was raised, with more being taken by our Sales Team at Pinxton Wharf. There were a few expenses out of this, such as the Saint John's Ambulance; however this is a great total, and well done, and thank you, to all who took part, with a special thanks to the Bullbridge and Sawmills Civic Society who turned out to support us en-mass. *[And thanks to you for the organisation, Mike - Ed.]*

The FCC Sales Stand and Tombola under the gazebo and some of the early walkers enjoying their hot dogs outside the pub.



Editor



FCC NEWS UPDATE - so what *is* happening

from Mike Kelley



In order to get the Smotherfly project underway we are required to have several expensive studies in place and approved by the Council, before any work can commence. The trustees have approved the expenditure required for these studies. This period saw considerable actions in this regard; read on:-

- **Sunday 18th October** – The ‘Level Pond Plod’ sponsored walk. A great day for a walk. Our Patron, Julian Richards, walked the whole 14.8 miles for us. See page 6.

- **Monday 19th October** - Our monthly social evening had a talk delivered by our Chairman, Pat Morriss, entitled, ‘The Butterley Company’s Crich Tramway’. A great deal of local interest was shown by the good attendance.

- **Wednesday 28th October** – Pat Morriss and myself attended an Amber Valley Borough Council (AVBC) Cabinet Meeting, where Pat had submitted a question concerning the future support of the FCC from the Council. The reply was positive and encouraging.

- **Saturday 31st Oct & Sunday 1st Nov** - This was our annual part in the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site ‘Discovery Days’. The FCC sales team did a great job again as did the rope makers, Peter with his musical organ and all those who helped with the horse boat. We had a new horse this year from Mike Shardlow of Shirland Shires. He not only provided the horse for the boat, but the same horse also did a few dray rides for the children. A great success. Many thanks to all who took part. See page 22.

- **Sunday 8th November** - A Work Party was organised by David Tinkler to work on the locks at Ironville. See Dave’s report on page 17 for all work party details.

- **Monday 9th November** - Our monthly full committee meeting; held at the Poet and Castle Inn at Codnor.

- **Tuesday 10th November** - I met a representative from SLR Consulting Ltd on the Smotherfly site. They are to conduct a study for us called a ‘Method Statement’ which looks at how we will treat the wildlife on that site, and also at Pinxton Wharf during construction.

- **Sat/Sun 14th & 15th November** - A Work Party was organised by David Tinkler to work alongside Derbyshire County Council (DCC) workers at Whatstandwell.

- **Monday 16th November** - This month, for our social evening, I delivered an illustrated talk, with videos, called ‘Behind Closed Doors’. It looked at my experiences in the ‘closed’ countries of Yemen and Sudan, as well as the amazing buildings and geographical interests there. I have delivered this talk to various Women’s Institute groups around the country and it was well received by a good turnout of FCC members.

- **December** - The ‘Method Statement’ carried out by a nationally known company SLR Consulting Ltd was published. This looks at the protection of the Smotherfly and Pinxton Wharf sites’ ecology during their planned development.

The Halcrow Company produced the ‘Smotherfly Section Geotechnical Interpretive Report’. The objectives of this study are to assess the suitability of the materials found on the site for re-use in the proposed embankment and provide geotechnical advice for the design and construction of the embankment. Several deep drilling bores were carried out by Halcrow for this report.



The FCC produced the 'Management Plan for the Protection of Site Ecology During Development'. This is closely linked to, but not the same, as the Method Statement. All these studies must be in place before work can commence. (Nothing is ever simple these days in Britain!)

- **Wednesday 2nd December** - Pat Morriss attended a follow-up Cabinet Meeting with AVBC, at Ripley town hall, while I attended a meeting of the Sawmills and Bullbridge Civic Society.

- **Sat/Sun 5th & 6th December** - A Work Party was held at Sawmills, in conjunction with the Civic Society and supported by the North West Waterway Recovery Group. Work was carried out along the length of canal owned by the Lockwood Company. Again this was organised by David Tinkler.

- **Sunday 6th December** - Two events in one day. Our archivist Hugh Potter arranged a 'Pots and Pix' where display photos of the canal were on display and wares from Liz's pottery were on sale.

- **Monday 7th December** - Our monthly full committee meeting; held at the Derwent Hotel at Whatstandwell.

- **Wednesday 9th December** - I met a senior manager at the Transco site, Ambergate. This industrial site was built over the line of the canal. We are seeking a possible 'concessionary footpath' across it, but there is a long way to go with this one yet.

- **Sat/Sun 12th & 13th December** - A Work Party was organised by David Tinkler to work alongside Derbyshire County Council (DCC) workers at Whatstandwell clearing weeds from the canal channel.

- **Monday 14th December** - Our annual Christmas social at Ironville Church Hall. The Red Lion Folk Band played music for us and they tried hard to teach us a few dances!! It was a lot of fun and we all enjoyed it very much. See page 29.

- **Wednesday 16th December** - Pat Morriss, John Boucher and myself met with a UK-Coal contractor to discuss ways forward for Smotherfly.

FORTHCOMING MEMBERS' SOCIAL MEETINGS

The following are the members' meetings arranged for the first half of 2010.
All held on the **Third Monday of the Month at Ironville Church Hall at 7.30pm**

- **Jan 18th** - Andy Pollock. 'Cromford and High Peak Railway. The railway that thought it was a canal.'

- **Feb 15th** - George Jones. 'Cromford Canal – The past, not just historic - The future, could be perfect.' An imaginative look at what might have been for the canal and what could have been done next.

- **Mar 15th** - Tony Brookes. 'Be careful what you volunteer for; the story of the Royal Navy 1943 midget submarine attack on the Tirpitz.'

- **April 19th - Annual General Meeting.** See page 13.

- **May 17th** - Brian Naylor. 'The Restoration of Heage Windmill'.

- **June 21st** - Liam D'Arcy Brown. 'Grand Canal of China.' Liam is a China-watcher and travel writer. In 2006 he became the first Westerner in over 200 years to travel the entire length of the Grand Canal of China, the world's longest and oldest man-made waterway. An illustrated talk on the fabric and history of the canal and the people who live and work upon it. The book of his journey to uncover this amazing feat of engineering— *The Emperor's River; Travels to the heart of a Resurgent China* will be available for anyone who wants to learn more about it.



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

from Yvonne Shattower



A Very Happy New Year to all of our Members. I hope you had a good Christmas and are coping with this cold weather. I would mention Global Warming but.....! I wonder what 2010 will bring the Friends? Let us hope it is good progress with the projects we are currently working on.

Our new Members' list is a little shorter than usual this time; we still need your friends and families to join us and present a vibrant membership to those bodies who will be asked for support in the forthcoming months. One of the first questions often asked is 'What are your membership numbers?' If we can give a healthy answer to that one, it is always a good start.

Once again your Committee will be arranging attendance at a programme of events throughout the region, although it is unlikely that we will be able to have a stand at the IWA National Festival this year as it is to be held at Beale Park on the Thames, and it will be difficult to co-ordinate the necessary people. However, we will be concentrating on more local events, so watch out for us at Carnivals, Steam Rallies and other venues. We would also like to have a greater presence at Cromford; are you able to help in any way? We particularly need people who can help with the setting up and taking down of the stand.

Don't forget our programme of Members' Meetings at Ironville Church Hall at 7.30 on the third Monday of each month, except July and August. We have some very interesting and unusual speakers lined up for you, and hopefully, will have our own audio system in place so that those of you at the back of the hall can actually hear the talk! Do come and join us. See page 11.

My apologies go to Mr D Brunt of Mansfield, whose name was omitted from the list in the autumn magazine.

This time we give a warm welcome to the following new members who have joined us since the last edition of *The Portal*.

Mr J Hill, Nottingham
Mr C Bayliss, Swadlincote
Mr D Joyner, Belper
Mr J Wass, Derby
Mr & Mrs T Golds, Bridport
Mr J A Tilson, Nottingham

Mr & Mrs J Fleming, Stafford
Mr & Mrs D C Willoughby, Derby
The Alderson Family, Derby
Mr A G Marshall, Nottingham
Mr & Mrs P Breen, Nottingham
Mr & Mrs D N Ashton, Matlock.

Just to give us food for thought, here is a quote from William Jessop, when giving evidence to the House of Lords on 1st July 1789 in support of the Cromford Canal Bill:

"I have never known an instance of a canal of more public utility than this is likely to be"



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Notice is hereby given that the
Eighth Annual General Meeting
of the Friends of the Cromford Canal will be held on
Monday, April 19th. 2010 at the Church Hall, Ironville
commencing at 7.30pm.**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Seventh Annual General Meeting on Monday, March 30th. 2009.
3. Matters arising.
4. Report of the Chairman.
5. Report of the Treasurer and presentation of accounts for 2009.
6. Adoption of the accounts.
7. Election of Trustees.
8. Reports by Officers
9. Any other business.

Minutes of the Seventh AGM are on pages 14-16.

The accounts for the year ending December 31st. 2009 will be available at the meeting.

Election of Trustees.

The Friends of the Cromford Canal is managed by up to eleven Trustees assisted by a number of other members with about twelve meetings a year. The Trustees are responsible to the Charity Commission for the organisation of the Friends and report to the Charity Commission each year. In order to have rotation of Trustees and comply with our Constitution, Trustees are elected for a three year term. At present Yvonne Shattower, Peter Stone, David Tinkler, Tony Brookes, Christopher Jacklin, Patrick Morriss, John Baylis, Mike Kelley, Bob Bullock and Eric Singleton have served either 1 or 2 years and will continue as Trustees. This year only Valerie Roberts is retiring by rotation, however she does not wish to stand for re-election for a further term of three years.

This means that we have one vacancy for election as a Trustee. Nominations for election as Trustees must be submitted in writing to:

**John Baylis, 215 Clipstone Avenue West,
Forest Town, Mansfield, Notts, NG19 0HJ
Tel. 01623 621208**

before March 31st. The nomination must be signed by the proposer, seconder and the nominee who must all be FCC members.

Please come along and support the committee and ask any questions you may have. More active members are still needed to help progress the aims of the FCC. After the formal business there will be a display and slide presentation by archivist Hugh Potter. See page 2 for more details. The sales stall will also be in attendance.

John Baylis



Minutes of the Seventh Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Cromford Canal held at 7.30pm on Monday, March 30th 2009, at the Church Hall, Ironville.

1. Present

Patrick Morriss (Chairman), Mike Kelley, John Baylis, Val Roberts, Mike Harrison, Yvonne Shattower, Peter Stone, Bob Bullock, Tony Brookes, Chris Jacklin (Trustees), John Boucher (Honorary Consulting Engineer), Howard Smith (Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association representative), Giles Metcalf (Web Master), Val Kelley, Eric Singleton and Beryl Singleton. Jan Colombo and Meg Tarlton (minutes secretaries), and approximately 40 members.

2. Apologies for absence

Steve Parish, Hugh Potter, Dave Tinkler, Pippa Mansel, Sheila Smith, Richard Biggin, George Jones, Nick Lowe, Brian Holmes, Sue Chinchin, John and Ann Harwood.

3. Minutes of the previous AGM

The minutes of the Sixth Annual General Meeting held on April 7th 2008 had been circulated earlier. Their adoption was proposed by Alan Heeley, seconded by Peter Keating and carried unanimously.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's report: 2008 – 'The highs':

Planning permission was secured for Smotherfly from both Amber Valley Borough Council (AVBC) and Bolsover District Council. Another Pinxton Push sponsored walk helped to raise funds towards the project and encourage local community involvement. Brian Blessed, FCC President, attended and gave great support throughout this event. A developer consulted the community about a plan for housing at Stevenson's, Bullbridge that did not preserve the route of the canal. Strong representations to the developer, by FCC and local residents, seem to have secured a change of mind before a planning application is made. There have been attempts to form a 'Cromford Canal Partnership' as other canal restoration groups have found a partnership beneficial when applying for funding. The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) recommends the formation of a partnership and a whole canal feasibility study. FCC has now increased support from elected members at District and County level and Members of Parliament. FCC sales have increased because there are two sales teams to cover events. There has been increased publicity about the FCC in the press and via the website. The Golden Valley Project will assist the FCC in replacing the missing section of the canal. The planning application has been sent to AVBC.

2008 - 'The lows':

Lack of movement from UKCOAL. Another wet summer! A wet and cold Discovery Days event at Cromford reduced attendance. There has been a knock on effect of the current economic situation, for instance regarding money available for projects. Spending on the Ambergate to Cromford Section could have been more effective if FCC had had enough notice to involve volunteers and the Waterway Recovery Group. There has been a lack of cohesion in the planning for the whole length of the canal.

PM also updated the meeting about the progress to date in 2009:

There is now protection of the canal line included in Bullbridge redevelopment, which is only at outline planning permission stage. There has been a working party on the



central section, at Sawmills, for the first time. A meeting has been held to explore the possibility of a partnership. Julian Richards, FCC Patron, gave a lecture at Chesterfield Library, which was well received and raised a substantial amount towards FCC funds. The Butterley Company has gone into receivership so it will be necessary for FCC to monitor any developments, which affect the site and the tunnel.

To come in 2009:

Efforts will continue on Smotherfly. FCC hopes to commission a feasibility study for the whole canal. The outcome of the Golden Valley Project planning application and the progress of Bullbridge outline planning application. FCC will attend The IWA National Festival and Boat Show at Red Hill. Efforts will continue to form a Cromford Canal Partnership.

PM thanked various members for their hard work during 2008, including:

The 2 sales teams, who have been very active.

Mike Harrison for doing an excellent job as the editor of Portal.

Giles Metcalf for updating and improving the web site.

Dave Tinkler for organising very successful working parties.

Yvonne Shattower for her work as Membership Secretary.

Bob Bullock as Treasurer.

The Events sub-Committee for organising a full series of social events.

The administration of the FCC, which is a full Committee effort.

PM also commended all the efforts of the Trustees and Committee members and made an appeal to the membership for help and expertise. This included organising and attending events. For instance, at August Bank Holiday, there are 3 events at which FCC would like to have a presence. A volunteer is required to handle publicity. Help is also required with fundraising.

6. Treasurer's report and presentation of accounts

Printed copies of the accounts had been circulated at the start of the meeting and Bob Bullock, Treasurer, explained some details. Briefly the excess of income over expenditure was just over £7,000 in 2008 and the balance at the end of the year was £32,066. There were no questions from the floor.

7. Adoption of the accounts

Peter Stone proposed the adoption of the accounts. It was seconded by John Boucher and carried unanimously.

8. Election of Trustees

Mike Harrison was resigning as a Trustee. Patrick Morriss, Mike Kelley, John Baylis and Bob Bullock were the retiring Trustees and had been formally proposed for re-election. Eric Singleton had been proposed as a new Trustee. As there were no other nominations, Patrick Morriss suggested that all five were elected en bloc. This was proposed by Tony Brookes and seconded by Giles Metcalf and carried unanimously.

9. Membership report

Yvonne Shattower reported that it had been a very satisfactory year for membership numbers, which now stand at 714; an increase of 51 from 2008. Yvonne was very pleased that the number of members not renewing has decreased. There have been a total of 71 new members this year, so FCC has lost only 21 over the year. It was good to note that some previously lapsed members have rejoined. There are currently 78 Life Members, 7 Corporate Charity Members and one Corporate Business Member.

The problems with overpayments by standing order have, hopefully, been resolved, but this is obviously an area that needs to be monitored carefully to prevent it happening again.



Unfortunately FCC was unable to attend as many public events as it would have liked in 2008, and the attendance at public meetings was affected by the unavailability of the hall in Ironville for much of the year. It is hoped that 2009 will see a good attendance at summer events, both local and national. A stand has already been booked at the IWA National Festival and Boat Show in August, which will be held this year at Red Hill on the River Soar. This should be a very important event for FCC, as it is relatively local, and the Cromford Canal will be one of those featured by IWA throughout the Festival.

Yvonne thanked all those who help the Friends by delivering the 'Portal' and distributing leaflets, and asked any of the audience who can help, especially with the setting up and dismantling of the sales stand, to volunteer your services to any committee member.

10. Archivist's report

Hugh Potter had sent his apologies and Patrick Morriss presented his report. Hugh had led several walks on the canal for different groups, and made various site visits including Stevenson's at Bullbridge, where plans for housing include the line of the canal, Leawood Aqueduct where the diagonal trusses are causing DCC concern about structural stability and the towpath is currently closed, Mold's Wharf where the interior was measured up to assist DCC's application to English Heritage for listing and Portland Wharf Archaeological dig. Hugh reported that thanks to Bert & June Crump, the three volumes of the Cromford Canal Company minutes are in their final editing stage. This would enable them to be published, and thus made available more widely. Even in their present form they have proved useful in researching different aspects of the canal today. Hugh reported that thanks were due to several other Friends; a start has begun on transcribing almost 2,000 digital images taken in various archives. These are mainly letters and related documents from the period of ownership by the Midland Railway. Many relate to Butterley Tunnel around 1900–1920. The Archives continue to generate a small amount of revenue from use of images in books and magazines, which also publicise the canal. For example, two were used in a new book entitled 'Peeks at the Peak' by Ann Beedham. Donations to the FCC Archives have continued at a heartening rate, including 2 early maps of Portland Wharf, before and after the tramway was built, a framed map of Langley Mill showing underground coal workings, a photograph of Langley Mill showing two loaded boats and a trolley bus. Hugh requested that members keep their eyes open in their attics and family albums for anything relating to the canal.

11. Webmaster's report

Giles Metcalf said there was not really a great deal to report for the year. The Cromford Canal group on Yahoo! continues from strength to strength, with 122 members currently. The website itself is slowly expanding, with a number of new pages and sections added this year. In the near future, two new sections will be added: an Archive page containing extended historical material, and a "What's Happening around the Canal?" page offering information on events and developments taking place around the canal.

As the number of photographs on the website has become unwieldy, Giles is looking at options for including online photo album software on the site in the next couple of months. Giles wanted to thank everyone who had submitted or made available photographs and material for the website.

12 Any other business

Alan Heeley thanked the Trustees and Committee for work done during the year. Mike Harrison stated that no one had put in more time than Patrick Morriss, during a difficult period from a health point of view and everyone owed him a great debt; this was applauded by the meeting.



WORK PARTY REPORT

from Dave Tinkler



There have been a number of FCC work parties over the last three months. In October we were at Pinxton for the very first time, as reported in the last issue. There is a lot of work to be done there, so we will be returning at a later date. November saw us back to Ironville where a number of trees were cut back to protect the canal bank.

Then in December we paid our second visit to Lockwood's site at Sawmills. We had the North West Waterway Recovery Group attending and a great deal of work was done over the weekend. This length of (mostly) dry canal bed has become very overgrown with trees and will give us plenty of scope for scrub bashing and forestry-type work for many more visits. The following pictures give some idea of the task involved.

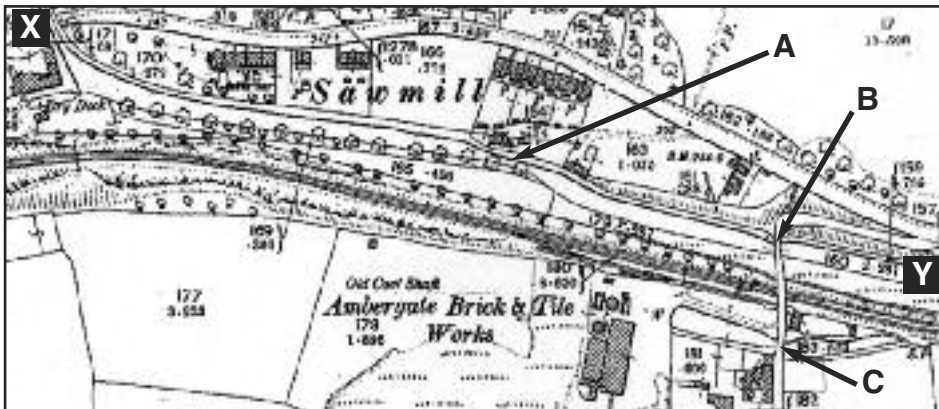


Members of Waterway Recovery Group North West getting to grips with some of the quite large trees which have become established in and around the dry canal bed at Sawmills.





[I have added this two-page editorial interruption to Dave's report - something which should be regarded as an occupational hazard for all contributors to the Portal - Ed.]



In order to clarify the location of the Lockwood's length of canal and to explain this section as it appears today, I have included above an extract from the 25 inch OS map dated 1900. The canal is shown from where it passed over the Bullbridge Aqueduct at point X, around the sharp left hand turn where the dry dock is shown and along the straight between the road and railway. The present entrance to Lockwood's is approximately at point Y and their premises occupy the site shown as a brick and tile works and the now demised railway. This part of the canal is also in the company's ownership and the FCC is working on this length by kind permission of Mr Robert Lockwood.

An interesting feature which is being uncovered as work progresses is the gauging narrows or 'stop' seen at point A on the map. This was one of the points where the boats were gauged to determine the weight of cargo carried, a very important matter to canal companies whose income was derived from charging tolls on the boats' cargo. The narrows are built in stone and are only a little wider than the boat so that the toll collector can readily measure the 'dry inches', ie the height of the boat side above the water and therefore determine the tonnage carried from tables for each boat kept in the toll office. In this case the toll collector's cottage and office were adjacent to the towpath on the north side of the 'stop' as shown on the map. Sadly this cottage has disappeared, but we have a picture of it in the FCC archives, shown on the right. Note the bay window to enable the toll collector to see along the canal if boats were approaching. The stone gate posts seen in the picture are still in place today.





Ron Amner



Ron Amner

The views above show the narrows with work in progress. This will provide an interesting future project removing the quite large tree roots and rebuilding the walls. The stone gate posts in the old view of the toll house can just be seen in the right hand picture beside the towpath. A modern bungalow now occupies the site of the toll house.

Another point of interest on this section is the three-arched stone bridge which carried a lane over the canal at point B on the map and continued over the railway. Thanks to the tree clearance work, this can now be seen more clearly as shown below.



Ron Amner

The building of the railway involved diverting the canal on this section, the original line being further south following the lie of the land. The railway effectively cut off a loop of the canal and part of this old line is shown being crossed by the lane at point C. This isolated length of now dry canal can still be seen today adjacent to Lockwood's gates.



Jan Colombo



Ron Amner

ABOVE LEFT: A well-earned break from tree felling. The bucket is not what you were thinking but contained excellent mushy peas and mint sauce kindly supplied by Lockwood's.
 RIGHT: A more conventional tea break for the WRG North West gang which also shows some of their impressive collection of tools and equipment.

Apart from these FCC work parties, we have also assisted the Derbyshire County Council Rangers on the Ambergate to Cromford section on several occasions.

We did not, however, get a very good attendance on some of the days even though the weather was good. We only had three on December 13th including myself. We need you to help us. We tend to get the same faces attending and although I appreciate all that they do, we would love to see some new ones in addition to our regulars.



Assisting the DCC rangers to remove weeds from the canal near Whatstandwell.

Ron Amner

So this year let's be seeing more of you out with us. The work is easy and you go at your own pace and I know that you will find it interesting and enjoyable. Ask anyone who has been before and they will tell you the same, that is why they return time after time. If I can get more volunteers then I can add more dates. So let's make 2010 a good year for work parties. I hope that you all had a good Christmas and I wish you a happy new year. Now to work off those extra pounds, which you added to your waist lines, can I recommend that you come on one of our work parties. The dates are:

- Sunday February 14th at Ironville.**
- Saturday/Sunday March 6/7th.**
- Saturday/Sunday March 13/14th.**

The venue for the March dates will be posted on the web site. If you are keen to attend and have not got access to the web then please phone me and I will take your number and call you when I know the venue details.

Dave Tinkler



LEAWOOD PUMP OUTLET

by Ian Yates

The end of the season with the Derwent Valley Discovery Days went a lot better this year. The Saturday was a good day with visitor numbers up but the weather again slowed things down on the Sunday, costs were just covered and this means we can cautiously proceed into the next year.



Work has now commenced on repairs to the pump sealing blocks, a job which has needed doing for a while. Unfortunately as this is written (Jan 4th) we have been stopped by the weather. The access track from the A6 is frozen snow and ice and the towpaths are the same. It's fine to arrive in the evening at 7.30 but by 10 to 10.30 the frost sets in and walking in the dark becomes interesting to say the least. As soon as the weather eases the valve will be removed and the old blocks taken out. The top is already off, this being carried out by 3 of us before Christmas, it weighs about 2 to 2.5 tonnes! A tame joiner is standing by to look at the blocks and hopefully manufacture some in a proper joiners shop so accuracy should not be a problem. These will be fitted and bedded in to give a good seal one row at a time. This way may be more successful rather than putting in both rows and then trying to form a seal. If this works

then hopefully the rear outlet can be left full of water which means that ash is not added to the canal to form a seal and also the blocks remain under water so should not rot.

We are required to run as soon as we can this year as the County want to make a video showing the pump at work for visitors who have limited access. Hopefully as soon as the pump is reassembled we will be good to go. This also gives an opportunity to test the pump before the full season starts.



Both boilers in steam for the Discovery Days Weekend attracting the crowds

Hugh Potter

LEAWOOD PUMP STEAMING WEEKENDS 2010

The engine will be in motion from noon to 5.00pm on each of the following days.

MONTH	SAT	SUN	MON	PERIOD
APRIL		4th	5th	Easter
MAY		2nd	3rd	Bank Holiday
JUNE	5th	6th		First Weekend
JULY	3rd	4th		First Weekend
AUGUST	7th	8th		First Weekend
		29th	30th	Bank Holiday
OCTOBER	2nd	3rd		First Weekend
	30th	31st		Discovery Weekend



WORLD HERITAGE SITE DISCOVERY DAYS

by Patrick Morriss

Once again the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site's Discovery Days weekend was held over the half term holiday period in the last week of October 2009. Forgive me for concentrating on the weekend of the 31st October and 1st November 2009 when events were held at the north end of the valley which of course includes the canal from Ambergate to Cromford. The weather was reasonably kind to us on the Saturday but on the Sunday the heavens opened and once again visitor numbers and takings at our FCC events suffered. Overall though attendance at all the events across the week continues to increase and this can only be a positive for the valley as a whole.



The horse drawn boat, seen here leaving Cromford Wharf, is always a major attraction. The horse was supplied this year by Shirland Shires and coped very well in spite of not having pulled a boat before.

Hugh Potter

As in previous years, we had a horse drawn boat operating between Cromford and Leawood Pump. This was using a new source of horse power supplied by Shirland Shires as we have had a few problems in past years getting the horse there for both days. A fine strong horse it was too! This brings me to a point about subsequent years events. Even allowing for the strength of the motive power, the super abundance of water due to the heavy rain and a helm who knows the canal from previous years, the build up of silt in the canal is now such that, unless there is some dredging of this stretch, it is unlikely that the FCC will be able to stage this event in 2010 and subsequent years. This would be a great pity as the horse boat is an outstanding attraction rain or shine.

The FCC and its volunteers put hundreds of hours into this event each year as it highlights the canal and what it was used for and should be used for again and also because it is a valuable showcase for our organisation and its aims. The sales stand was there in force plus paintings of the canal and its environs. The FCC would like to have a



wider range of ‘canal’ activity represented such as traditional painting techniques and perhaps rope and knot work being demonstrated. Do you know anyone who may be able to volunteer for a weekend?



Editor

The fine horse was multi-functional, giving popular dray rides around Cromford Meadows as a change from pulling the boat.

I would like to thank all those people who volunteer to make the FCC presence at this event such a success and to thank all those DCC employees who go ‘above and beyond’ their job description to make all the week’s events go ahead so successfully.



Jan Colombo

Peter Keating’s ever-popular organ music was sufficient to encourage some members into an impromptu dance routine as a useful means of keeping warm.



Editor

A different kind of horsepower. On the Friday afternoon, the DCC rangers kindly provided their tractor to tow the boat from High Peak Junction to Cromford Wharf in readiness for the weekend.

After 2009’s wet finale I know what it feels like standing forlornly waiting to host a ‘walk and talk’ in the pouring rain when everyone else had the good sense to stay away, but it was good to see the water level in the canal well up!



THE CROMFORD CANAL COMPANY SEAL

Words and Pictures by Les Allsop

In the Autumn 2007 issue of *The Portal* there was an article about the finding of the Cromford Canal Company's seal. This discovery completed the set of canal seals of all but one of the canals that joined the Erewash Canal. The missing one is the Nutbrook Canal.

Unfortunately it is a wax copy of the seal which is far from perfect, as shown on the right, but enough of it remains to make a fair guess at what it looked like. Both the Cromford and the Derby Canals were engineered by William Jessop and Benjamin Outram. They were built at roughly the same time and were opened only four years apart. If you compare the canal seals of the Erewash Canal and the Loughborough Navigation Company, they are identical apart from the names of the two companies. They were almost certainly designed by the same medallist. The same seems to be true of the Cromford



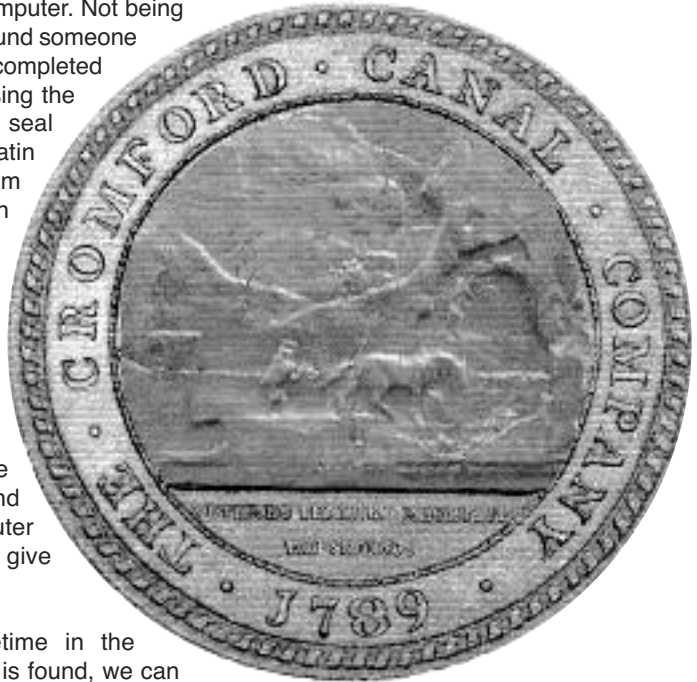
and Derby Canal seals. The lettering and embellishment of the outer rings are identical. This is not surprising as there were few medalists producing the master dies for making seals at that time.

The centre picture of the seal depicts a tunnel portal, presumably Butterley Tunnel, a horse and minder and if you look carefully at the large crack in the seal at about nine o'clock you can see what appears to be the bows of a boat with some barrels of cargo. The bows do not resemble the bows of a working narrow boat as we know them, but if you inspect the seals of the Derby, Staffs & Worcester, Stourbridge, Nottingham or the Coventry Canals none of them do. Also you will notice that the towing lines are sometimes fastened to the top of very tall masts which would be useless on a canal (although not on a river navigation). The Derby seal shows just such an arrangement and if you look carefully at the Cromford seal there is the faint straight line from the horse bridle to where the top of a mast could be on the boat. The Derby seal also shows a background of hills that may be found in the north of Derbyshire but not along the canal route from Sandiacre to Swarkestone. So it is not unreasonable to assume that a certain amount of artistic licence was used by the medalists.

Recreating the Cromford seal was a two part exercise. The first was to recreate the outer ring and then to clean up the centre section. My first attempt involved making a number of copies of the image of the Derby seal. Then by cutting out the lettering on the spare copies and sticking them on top of the legend on the original one, it was proved that the outer rings were identical but for the canal names. Then I was introduced to doing the



same thing with the computer. Not being a computer genius, I found someone who was. He not only completed that exercise but by using the letters on the Erewash seal also added the Latin legend at the bottom quite easily. He then showed me how to clean up the image of the Cromford seal itself electronically. This involved many failed attempts, but I finally managed to fill in the cracks without losing any of the important details and then combine the outer ring with the centre to give the result shown here.



Unless sometime in the future the original seal is found, we can only make an educated guess as to what the complete seal really looked like. My guess is that it would look something like the sketch on the left below. Drawn by a more skilful artist than myself it would make an interesting comparison if the original seal is ever found.

The picture below right shows the Friends of the Cromford Canal logo inserted into the centre of the Cromford Canal seal's outer ring. It would look nice on top of a finger post at the top of the Ironville flight similar to the one at the Derby/Erewash Canal junction at Sandiacre. *[We look forward to the day when you come to unveil it Les - Ed.]*





BIODIVERSITY & CLIMATE CHANGE

by Tony Brookes

As a charity, the FCC gets invitations to all sorts of meetings, some of which get reported in *The Portal*. This article is about two of the more unusual events. One such was about **Climate Change & the Built Heritage in the East Midlands**, the other about **Biodiversity in Lowland Derbyshire**. Neither event was deliberately related to the other, but I found them both together useful. This short article is my feeble attempt to explain two such huge topics in a straightforward way.

So, is climate change happening? “Yes” is the overwhelming answer from all sorts of evidence and theory. Just as the climate changed when the Ice Age started and again when it ended (which led to the creation of the North Sea and the English Channel) so it’s changing again. In living memory spring has started earlier, winter has got less severe, summer wetter and rainfall more intense. So, the climate seems to be changing before our eyes. Two issues get everyone excited. Firstly, is it us (i.e. people) causing the change and secondly what is the climate going to change to? Personally I have seen enough evidence to convince me something is happening, and the question is not if, but how much will the climate change? I am also personally comfortable that we are the cause. I disagree totally with those who say we must save the planet – no, the planet doesn’t care about us, it’ll be there long after we’ve gone as a species so we’d better save ourselves by moderating our behaviour. (After all, no one else will save us from our own folly).

The first event was focussed on Climate Change and its effect on the historical heritage in the East Midlands. The organisers tried (and succeeded in my view) to get a complex subject over clearly, and to focus the 70+ people there on thinking about what the impact would be on everything from coastal archaeological sites to canals and historic buildings. Much lively discussion took place. In the case of the Cromford Canal, it was thought that the heavier rain would lead to increased volumes of water which it will have to cope with, and also with generally higher temperatures the vegetation and animals that we’re all familiar with will change. It’ll be as if the canal had moved south by one or two hundred miles. Of course the changes won’t be exactly as the scientists think: after all living in Derbyshire who can fail to be sceptical about weather forecasts – nevertheless climate change is happening and will get “worse”

Biodiversity is the word used to cover the whole range of plants and animals in an area and how the numbers of species changed over time. Again, people’s personal experience will already have shown the reduction in (for example) butterflies and some types of common garden birds over the last few decades. As with many things in life, much of the work depends on volunteers. One such scheme seemed simple and delivered important data over many years by recording the numbers of bird species people have seen in their back garden each week. This is a simple but very effective technique when loads of people do this and the numbers are collated & published. Others record all sorts of data so a better “picture” of actual changes is gathered rather than relying on individual’s memories. More recently it seems British Waterways run something similar but for waterways. All of this activity then allows other groups to work out what measures can help reduce or reverse some of these effects in their area. Derbyshire County Council is trying to encourage these efforts via various Biodiversity partnerships.

So what can/should the FCC do?

You may remember Patrick Morriss being quoted as saying that restoring the canal is going to take 30 years. In that timescale there are lots of things we can (and are beginning to) do:



A) We are joining The Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership which will allow us to make more use of the advice available to help manage this on the canal. (We will have to do the work anyway as part of any planning permission gained in future; we are already doing this work at Smotherfly/Pinxton).

B) In the medium term, I would like to develop a similar approach to the whole canal as it exists now, with our members recording what they see on a systematic basis. This will create an evidence base to help all of us manage and plan such things on the canal.

C) Use the working parties to help shape the canal area to the best effect for Biodiversity.

D) Members need to think through what the likely impacts of climate change will be and what changes we will need to make so that the canal can cope with them.

E) All of us can try to work out what we can do in our private lives to lessen the chance of the wilder climate change ideas coming true.

I'm well aware this is a tiny pinprick on a very large topic and a personal report of two meetings. Each one was a day's length, and many books etc have been written on each topic. Let me know what you think via the letters to the editor or via secretary@cromfordcanal.org.uk and how (or just if) you want to help with this approach.

[I will be pleased to receive your views on this potentially controversial topic - Ed.]

BOOK REVIEW

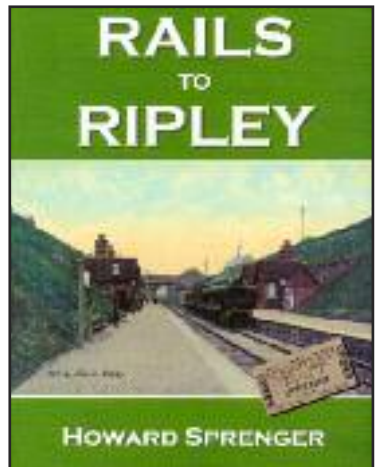
The construction of the Cromford Canal allowed the coal mines of the upper Erewash Valley to develop, often in conjunction with tramways feeding the canal from the collieries. It is no surprise then, that once railways became established as a more efficient mode of transport they should also serve the area.

Hard to believe today, but Ripley was at the centre of a network of three local railways that linked Little Eaton, Ambergate, Pye Bridge, Codnor Park and Butterley. All these lines, one built as late as 1890, served their purpose, and have now gone – with the exception of the length of the Ambergate & Pye Bridge Branch that is now the Midland Railway Centre, on top of Butterley Tunnel.

Physically the construction of the railways did not affect the canals much – an odd minor diversion, or the short extension of a tunnel – but with certain exceptions they drained the traffic away, for they served not only the collieries but the related local industries as well.

Anyone who knows the area around the canal will find much fascinating detail in FCC member Howard Sprenger's new book *Rails to Ripley* (published by Kestrel Railway Books). In 144 well produced pages he covers the story of the construction, routes, operation and demise of the railways around the canal, assisted by hundreds of well-reproduced photographs – if only we had so many of the canal!

Hugh Potter



**This book is now available from the FCC Sales Stall for £17.95
or by post (add £2.25 p&p) from Mrs. V Roberts, FCC Sales,
Beggartree Wharf, Church Lane, Horsley Woodhouse, Derbys. DE7 6BB**



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir

I refer to the letter from Mr Anthony John Sims in *The Portal* No 31.

Firstly, the farm he refers to and where indeed his ancestors lived is Coddington **Hall** Farm. Confusing as it is, Coddington Farm is about a quarter of a mile up the hill (and Coddington Farm buildings are comparatively new and have no connection with either of the other two!) My father used to talk of going out as a boy with a brush and shovel when the horses (stabled at the farm) paused for breath at the first flat bit of "Back Lane" as we knew it, now Hindersitch Lane to give it its proper title.

The Methodist chapel would benefit from the support of the Sims. The foundation stone says "Laid on behalf of J Sims Esq. October 8th 1877.

Secondly "Sims Bridge" is new to me and I've lived hereabouts all my life. I've never heard it called anything other than "t'bridge o'er cut" by the older generation, now departed. (I am one of them now, older I mean; not yet departed!).

My father was resident blacksmith for the quarries from the early 20s to the mid 30s when the quarries virtually closed and of course horses were being replaced by lorries in transporting stone.

Three of my cousins worked there as stone masons, all of whom died eventually of silicosis, as it was known then. Finally I'd say the majority of this village (Whatstandwell) and area worked in the quarries - Crich had its own!

I hope some of this is useful to the gentleman and maybe to your readers too.

Yours sincerely
Aileen N Taylor

Dear Sir

Seeing the archive pictures of Pottery Lock on pages 22 & 23 of *Portal* No. 31 set me to searching through the current batch of correspondence that I'm transcribing from around that era. The message on the post card is dated 3rd December 1908 but the picture was most probably taken before that. It was a year after the inspection by Sir William Matthews, part of which states that an FMC boat went aground below lock 4. The summers around this time were recorded as being 'very dry with boats standing idle for days at a time.'

It could be that the work was remedial as at about that time, according to a lock gate replacement list for 1907, 'lock gates 3 were not yet replaced, but were being made'. Also there is a letter of June 20th 1907, John Argyle (Engineer MR) to Mr Worthington (Engineer in Chief to Midland Railway), which mentions 'water being down 13" and investigations into an overflow grid below lock 5 and to have got 'the ground out' would have had to have the locks drained.'

They do appear to be either removing or relaying the bed. The man on the extreme right is standing on a raised platform (which could have been moved from the left for the benefit of the photo). This method of digging stuff out from one level to another was quite common if there wasn't room for a gin or there was not much to move.

On enhancing the photo a bit (good old Photoshop!), apart from there being a man crouched down taking a picture by the lock gates in the distance!, there is quite a bit of spoil on the tow path around Mitton's feet. If it were Mitton, he would have been around 37-38 years of age at that time.



Mitton, who died in 1946, was a JP, and a director of other companies besides Butterley. He was born in 1871 and prospected in the Yukon in 1891 and was the youngest white man to penetrate as far as Forty Mile Creek. He was mineral referee for all England, 1912, 1913; President, Institution Mining Engineers, 1929–30 and 1931; gold medallist of the Institution, 1934; Member Council Mining Research Association, Great Britain and many other committees associated with same. Brother Officer Order of St John of Jerusalem. He also wrote various papers on Mining in Transactions; introduced Rheolaveur system of washing coal in this country and published Treatise on the same. A busy boy!

There is not a lot of difference between the two pictures but either the pottery has sunk or there has been some serious fly tipping!

Dave Ratner

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL



Our Christmas get together at Ironville Church Hall followed similar lines to last year and was again an enjoyable interlude, although the number of members attending was perhaps rather disappointing. We were again entertained by a good turnout of the Red Lion Band whose members filled the stage and provided some pleasant tunes, including a selection of carols. Their number included a 'caller' who encouraged members to take the floor for an impromptu ceilidh as shown above.

During the interval a good supply of seasonal goodies were consumed. The FCC Sales stall also attended and there was a well-supported raffle.

Unless specifically stated any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the formal policy of the Friends of the Cromford Canal. The FCC accepts no liability for any matter printed in this newsletter nor any advertising that may be included. Reproduction of extracts from this newsletter welcomed provided that a full acknowledgment is given.

