

# *The Packet*

*Issue 91 Autumn/Winter 2021*



Derby and Sandiacre Canal

*Suggested Donation £1*

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## Front Cover:

Boats on the Derwent at St. Mary's Bridge Real & Imagined – a Giant Step Forward

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## Chairman's/Comm Group Report

### Land Purchases

We now own all of the Spondon stretch (Wheeldon's) and a stretch between Breaston and the M1. Negotiations are taking place to purchase a further stretch from Wheeldon's to the

Spondon Bourne and between the Swarkestone Boat Club and the A50. The plan at Swarkestone is to use the original line to transfer water to the Chellaston line north of the A50. We are well aware that we have done very little to restore our north/south leg and plan to undertake forestry work in the autumn. We are looking for volunteers in this area who want to help with maintenance and in particular we need a local champion to help us develop and implement plans for this leg. Please contact [chair@derbycanal.org.uk](mailto:chair@derbycanal.org.uk) if you want to know what would be involved.

### **Ecology**

In June we welcomed Tom Harrington, who has taken on the lead for ecology for us. We had been talking with the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) about the Biodiversity Net Gain programme. This requires all developers to leave ecology better after any development. We believe we can use this to persuade developers to fund our work – we give them some ecology gain to offset the damage that houses may do. Tom's immediate plan is to identify areas where our canal can improve habitat so that we can offer the benefits to developers of nearby sites as they arise. We hope to provide some examples with IWA help, which will set us up and provide working examples for other waterways restorations around the country.

I also think he wants to find other members with a special interest in ecology to assist him.

### **AGM – 11th August**

Thanks to all those of you who attended the AGM in mid-August. Whilst it was not without technical challenges we managed to provide a combination of Zoom and face to face meeting with some success.

One of the best parts of the evening is the Kate Birtles Award to recognise the individual who has made the most impact over the last year.

This year the award was received by Derek Troughton. As Treasurer he has had to deal with the setting up of a trading subsidiary to avoid us paying tax on cottage rental income, manage the transition of the cottages to longer term finance from supporters and install a new software system providing instant info to HMRC. He's also had to deal with increasingly complex financial accounts covering significant spending on the Cottages, Draycott Canal and other matters. Thank you, Derek. He is pictured on the right receiving the award from Paul Birtles on the left.



### **Chellaston**

The continued contact with Derby City Council brought forward the opportunity to develop the Chellaston section and particularly from Swarkestone to Infinity Park Way. Many of you will know that there is a plan to build a new "Garden Village" around Sinfin. This means there will be 5,000 houses built adjacent to the Infinity Park development and alongside our canal line at Lowes Lane, Chellaston. Whilst there's a lot still to sort out we suggested a plan to move this section forward, using the farmers culvert under the A50 and deepening the channel north of the A50 to provide a leisure area together with possible drainage assistance.



At this stage it looks promising and the scheme has already had road infrastructure approved so is likely to proceed quickly. Fingers crossed! (It is deeper than usual here already as it formed a reservoir for the original Canal – Ed)

### Long Eaton Carnival – 18th September

We attended the first carnival for a long while – must be over two years now, with a view to spreading the message ahead of the long-awaited works at Sandiacre. It was a great day out with a good crowd (they estimated over 5,000) and lots of interest. Thanks to Gary for organising the day – hopefully it will be the precursor to more next year. Everyone had a good time talking about our activities and selling a bit of merchandise, so if you want to help us in future contact Gary Harding.



### Generous Donation from Borrowash Co-op

The Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust was one of three local causes chosen to benefit from the Co-op's Local Community Fund scheme for 2020-2021. Here we see Sarah Cresswell and David Savidge holding the cheque with Co-op staff in between them.

The cheque appears to have been very generously made out for 'thousands of pounds'!



### Launch of Outram – Chris Madge

At long last we have achieved the launch of the Outram. It shows the impact of deadline management. We set the date of Thursday the 14th and everyone seemed to be organised to achieve it. We had a few scares on the way. Would the transport, crane and protective matting all happen as and when they should?

Would the press turn up? Where would we find a suitable small boat to take passengers to Outram when launched (safety concerns prevented travelling on the Outram)? Would we be able to transfer safely onto Outram from the small boat? (Don't want the wrong sort of publicity!).

Most of concern was that the sonar survey of the river bottom carried out by the council





# BLACKWOOD CLARINETS

INNOVATIVE CLARINET ENSEMBLE BASED IN THE EAST MIDLANDS



Blackwood is an ensemble of clarinetists drawn from bands and orchestras of the East Midlands. The players join together to showcase this most versatile of wind instruments. Over the last five years Blackwood has developed from a small group of friends to become a true choir, from the piccolo clarinet to the booming contra bass.

Blackwood enjoys sponsorship from both Windblowers, Nottingham's specialist retailer, and, courtesy of Barnes and Mullins Ltd, Vandoren, the world renowned French reed and mouthpiece maker.

In 2019 the group left the U.K. for the first time, performing 3 concerts in the Marina Alta, Costa Blanca area of Spain.

The ensemble regularly play in support of good causes, most recently the Children's Bereavement Centre, a charity based in Newark.

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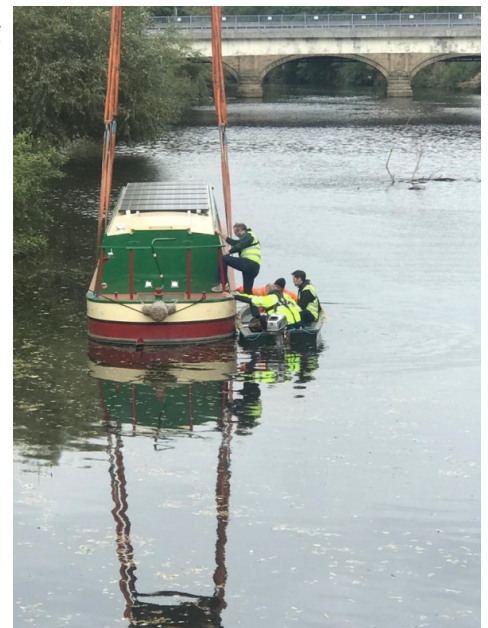
showed a number of underwater obstructions that “should be deep enough” and a bar across the river just before the mooring jetty in Darley Abbey. These hadn’t shown up on the initial testing by Midland Canoe Club three years before, so we were able to use the small boat commissioned for the launch to carry out last minute depth testing on the day.

Fortunately these showed the challenges were not as great as suggested and we were able to proceed with contingency plans. The testing at the Darley end showed that water depth was just

about enough, even in the current low water state of the Derwent. However, we are now looking at how to ensure that even lower waters don’t trap the boat on the jetty over the winter and will be undertaking work to mark the safe route through.

The cruise down the river was nerve wracking, but without incident. We followed our set route carefully and avoided the underwater obstructions, enjoying a wonderfully quiet and serene journey on the Derwent. We’re sure there’ll be many paying passengers when we start trips in the spring.

The day attracted a lot of publicity. Mike Wingfield and I were both interviewed and we received fair and complimentary reports with a lot of follow up from existing and potential members. Now we are looking at the next stages – we have to commission the new pontoon boarding platform. Current quotes indicate a cost of about £40,000 we need to find through grants.



Before that, permissions from the EA and planning authorities need to be obtained and they are now in progress. In addition, the council are expecting to install a boom, so we will work with them to ensure all is accomplished in time – and with minimal impact on the wildlife, including the fish, and particularly the salmon now finding their way up the Derwent through the new fish ladders.

We will also be undertaking a rigorous training process for our volunteer crews, so that they know the route, how our boat reacts and how to

work with the other users of the river. I’m pleased to report that early indications suggest a good working relationship with the rowing clubs so that we can avoid clashes and safety issues. At present we have a clear run for training on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and



Liz will be organising a rota so we are all ready for the spring.

### Outram Outing at Shardlow Inland Port Festival – David Savidge

Whilst we waited to launch Outram on the Derwent in Derby, we found out that Shardlow was having a water festival on the 11th & 12th September 2021. This looked like a great opportunity for us to have a few trial runs with the boat with passengers. With Outram being moored in Long Eaton with Paul Barber, who built the boat, we were already within easy reach of the festival. On contacting the organizers, they welcomed us with open arms and gave us a prime site outside the Clock Warehouse. That was it, plans were formed to sail the boat to Shardlow, find skippers and crew for the weekend and return it.

Not knowing if we would find Canal and River Trust (CRT) volunteers at the locks, to help us through, we assembled a crew of Mike Snaith, Peter Ball, Harry Tanser (and Friend) and myself to move the boat from



Long Eaton to  
Shardlow on the Friday

morning. We need not have panicked, as the lock at Trent Lock was the only lock we had to do ourselves. The trip was down the Erewash on to the River Trent and up to Sawley lock. Then past Sawley Marina and the flood lock, back onto the river and on to the Trent and Mersey canal at Derwentmouth. Overnight moorings had been arranged on the canal in Shardlow, and they kindly allowed us to connect to a power supply to recharge the batteries.

Saturday morning, we moved Outram to the Clock Warehouse at 9.00am and immediately people started asking when they could have trips. We set up a gazebo to act as a ticket office, along with banners, posters and leaflets. Skippers sorted out the boat and boiled water for coffees and teas and uncovered the cakes. This resulted in the first trip being made at 11am. The planned route was through

Shardlow, heading back towards Derwentmouth, and turning at the second Chapel Marina entrance before, returning to the Clock Warehouse. Between each trip we recharged the batteries from a power supply at the Heritage Centre.

We managed four trips on Saturday with everyone finding out how Outram handled, the best ways to turn the boat at the warehouse and the marina entrances. On Outram it is sometimes difficult to judge where the bow is from







the back of the boat, as the roof stops some three metres short of the bow for the open seating area (known as the Cratch. Ed). Various bumps and scrapes happened, but as Timothy West said on the TV “it’s a contact sport – more paint needed”!

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At the end of the day, we moved Outram back to the overnight mooring for a rest and overnight battery top up.

Sunday was a repeat of Saturday with five trips from the Clock Warehouse to Chapel Marina, with fare paying passengers and a few of our own volunteers, who came to check us out. We started at 11am again, with the trip taking 45 to 50 minutes, we ended up with an hourly service. By the 12 o'clock trip, we found that the rest of the afternoon trips were fully booked.

The trips became easier and smoother with the crews getting more used to Outram. In fact, we had one comment that a trip on Sunday afternoon was 'boring' as we had not hit anything and the turns were smooth!! Due to low power reading on the batteries after the last trip it was decided to leave Outram at the Clock Warehouse overnight to recharge the batteries properly for the return trip to Long Eaton on Monday morning.

The return trip to Long Eaton with a crew of Dave Eley, Tony Hudson and myself was a smooth experience, as we now knew what we were doing!! (Famous last words – Ed). Unfortunately, the CRT volunteers only helped us through Sawley lock, so we had to work the Derwentmouth and Trent locks. One of the CRT volunteers described Outram as a 'stealth boat' as they couldn't hear the engine.

The whole weekend was a great success. Showing the public Outram and telling them about our various projects, and the crews finding out what we should do and not do, with Outram. A great thank you for all the various volunteers who helped us during the weekend to steer the boat and Maz, Emma, Liz and Linda selling the tickets and manning the sales counter on the boat. Funds taken over the weekend will go towards the work in Derby needed for the mooring platform.

A special thanks to the people of Shardlow for inviting us to the festival, The Clock Warehouse for use of their car park, and the residents and boaters that helped us out over the weekend with overnight moorings and power supplies.

### **IWA/WRG visit to the Derby Canal in August. 2021 – David Savidge**

In 2018 & 2019, we were successful in being able to secure a Canal Camp from the Inland Waterways Association / Waterways Recovery Group (IWA/WRG) to visit the Borrowash Bottom (Shacklecross) lock to help rebuild the lock chamber, damaged during the infilling of the canal in the 1960/70s and the dig out in the 1990s.

After the 2019 visit, we arranged for a follow up visit at the end of July, 2020 but, unfortunately due to the COVID pandemic, this visit was cancelled.



As things started to ease at the beginning of 2021 plans were put in place for the same time in July. The visit to Borrowash was planned as the first Canal Camp of a limited season of camps for the 31st of July, with reduced number of volunteers. Subject to the easing of the restrictions in the 4 weekly sequences, heading towards a possible full relaxation at the beginning of July. Unfortunately this was further delayed to the 19th.

During this relaxation period, the IWA/WRG Board met frequently and put together various rules and restrictions that the accommodation and sites had to conform to before approval could be given. With the delay of the final relaxation of Government restriction, we became more concerned that if the Board delayed approval till the 19th we would not have enough time to organise materials, equipment hire and confirm the hire of the West Hallam Village Hall for



the accommodation for the week. The Board took a calculated risk and agreed that the camp should go ahead on the 13th July, with a reduced number of volunteers. Previously we had around 20 volunteers and our own volunteers could help out. This year we only had 12 WRG volunteers and our own volunteers could not help, as the WRG volunteers had created their own 'bubble' for the week.

Luckily, the Village Hall committee was fine with the late confirmation and our suppliers were able to arrange deliveries of the materials and equipment prior to the arrival of the WRGies.



The hire equipment was delivered to site on the Friday afternoon and stored in a 'heras' fencing compound we had constructed. Special lime for the mortar mixes was delivered on the Wednesday and sand, cement and gravel on the Friday morning. We were ready for them!!

They started to arrive at the Village Hall on Friday night and made themselves at home. They had to ensure that all the sleeping arrangements allowed at least two metres away from their neighbour in the hall and couple of volunteers slept outside or in their car to ensure there was no overcrowding.

They bring with them all their own plates, mugs, glasses, pots and pans and a 'Burco' for the, all important, tea and coffee on site through the week.

After site visits and H&S paperwork that the IWA/WRG need, during Saturday, work started on site at 9am on Sunday morning.

The planned work, for the reduced number of volunteers, was to complete 'Tina's' wall to the north side below the lock, complete the wing wall on the south side above the lock, repair the anchor stone to the south side top gate recess and complete the north side wing wall above the lock. While doing so create the entrance to the bywash. We also planned to re-point the south side wall below the lock. As we had hired an excavator to help move the stones around, we also planned to excavate around the weir that we had found on the north side by the access path. We also needed to enlarge the drainage ditch from the lock to the Ock Brook, where we had previously had problems getting into the ditch as it was only six inches wide at the







bottom. Colin also transferred a lot of soil from the dig out and the piles above the lock to infill behind the stone walls and landscape the top of the lock.

Given the good weather, and a supply of ice creams every day (thank you Don and Joyce), we were able to complete all the planned jobs. Our own volunteers are now finishing the landscaping and Peter Ball is planning to obtain some more grass seed.

The WRGies managed to keep themselves occupied in the evenings with a movie night in the hall and a trip to the ten-pin bowling alley in the Derbion centre. It also helped that the local pub in West Hallam was across the road from the hall!

The week, given the reduced volunteers and our own volunteers not being able to help was a great success. We had various visits from our own directors and IWA/ WRG directors during the week. Jenny Morris from the IWA/WRG office came to work on site for a day, having had withdrawal symptoms for not being able to be out on a site for over 2 years.

I would like to thank the people and companies that have supported us for this visit of the IWA/WRG to Borrowash Bottom Lock. They are: West Hallam Village Hall committee for use of the hall and West Hallam Well committee for use of the marquee. Total Hire, HSS and Brandon Tool Hire for the hire equipment. Browns Builders Merchants, Travis Perkins and Mike Wye Ltd for the sand, cement and lime. Erewash Borough Council and Breaston Junior Football club for use of their ground above the lock chamber and the toilet and shower facilities in the sports pavilion. Not forgetting the customers of the Borrowash Co-op store and the Co-op Community Fund whose generous donation this year has gone a long way to paying for the IWA/WRG visit.

The WRGies have almost completed the restoration of the lock, to a point that there is not enough work for next year on the lock. It looks like we will have to look at another site for next year?

Special thanks to Louise Bellaers, who as a professional photographer on 'holiday' with the WRGies couldn't resist taking a few pictures. Lou's pictures are the good ones and mine the plain one

## **Draycott Canal**

There was little progress on the Draycott section of canal between January and June as the funding from Network Rail was awaited. It was expected to restart in June and complete by the year end, however it appeared that the water voles were enjoying Draycott so much they were breeding fast! It was hoped that they could all be accommodated alongside the Derby Road section once complete and Eddy was busy with detailed surveys so that the relocation could be carefully planned.

By June the bulk of the monies from Network Rail had been received and the works



recommissioned to start on the 14th. Eddy and Di had been exploring the water vole burrows with our ecologists – it looked as if numbers were not as high as feared and they could be managed in the area available. It was hoped that by the end of July a section of canal would be ready and fenced to take the voles in the autumn. A substantial effort was expected to be

needed by the volunteers to create a habitat by planting up the area once the work is complete.

Good progress was made on the first phase of the canal at Draycott in June, we were over half way through the latest stage and hoping to finish in mid-July. The contractors also inserted gabion baskets (baskets made from wire mesh and strong enough to hold rocks) and concreted the moorings. It may be a while before the boats arrive, but we'll be ready for them!



We then looked at the planting of the banks, the key



being to get sufficient planting and developed to feed and provide cover for the voles in October. The contractor planted the 3,000 or so and we supplemented with transplanted vegetation from the currently undisturbed areas further east. Keen gardeners were crucial to nurture the plants ahead of an assessment at the end of summer. We certainly didn't want to have to defer the second phase until 2022.

By August the first phase of the canal build was at last completed. The paths had been opened up again and barring planting up the next step, trapping the water voles, was awaited. The contractors on site had to reconstruct the moorings when they realised the slab was not quite level, so that lost them a few days.

It was a big trial getting the vole fence in place and it took longer than expected, but it is there now. It didn't add much to the area and it will be good when we can take it down again after the work is complete. With the delay to planting there was little time left to prepare the area for water voles or, more accurately, to persuade the experts that there'll be





sufficient growth. Natural England tend not to take risks.

The impact of a delay was looked at and capture would wait until next March with the final works taking place in Spring. The major concern with this would be avoiding a repeat of last year's flood, so we looked to lower the original bunds thereby lowering the water level in the Derby Road section and blocking the Hopwell Road ditch to ensure water flows from most of the inlets are diverted straight under Derby Road.

This should mean we are ready whichever date applies. (There is a sump at the other side of the bridge with a large pipe diverting the flood water into the Derwent Ed).



The contractors finally completed the works in August by clearing the mud, repairing the footpath and planting the banks to feed the voles and provide cover for them. This was to be supplemented with transplanted vegetation from the rest of the ditch length over the coming weeks.



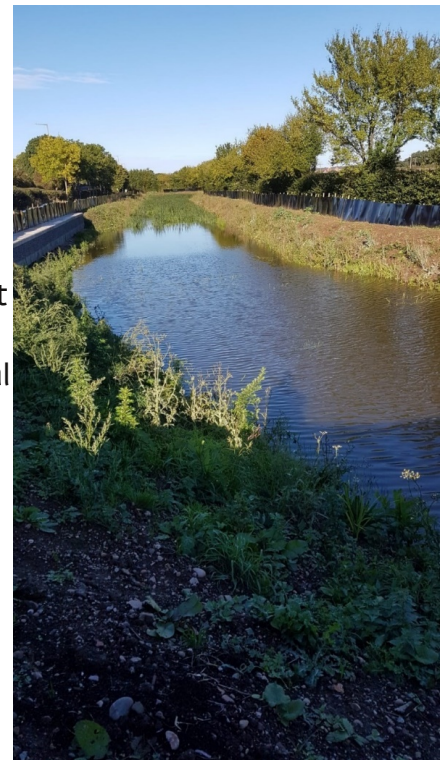
The Working Parties team then busily tidied up the working area. Additional spoil was left at the Derby Road end to top up the end bund upon completion and thereby increase the height (and depth) of water in the canal. Until then the bund was kept low so reducing the risk of flooding elsewhere. The team also completed fencing and installed some steps down to the culvert walkway as

shown.

We settled on work being delayed until next year – we had little choice as the planting was delayed still further than expected.

Now our challenge is to manage the additional funding costs caused by the original damage and the consequent delay. We are in the process of claiming extra costs from Network Rail, but this is likely to be a long process and early indications suggest this may leave a shortfall. We are already looking at how to deal with this and complete the works promptly and cost effectively.

In September and October further work was been carried out to improve the new canal stretch and to trim the remaining section of the Golden Mile. As you can see the required growth of vegetation is progressing encouraged by rain. It is hoped there will be sufficient in place ready for a relocation of voles in March.





## The Dreams Come True



2009 Vision

2021 Reality









## The Cottages

In June work continued apace at the Cottages but the co-ordination of trades and volunteers was challenging. Contractors completed the paved areas behind the buildings on two elevations. We had our painting army in action and they caught up with the plasterers. Plastering had been our nemesis in the previous month – they pulled off site with a week of work to complete. We also had a false start with screeding (final layer of concrete on the ground floors) – contractors were ready on site to lay it in all three cottages



only to find the materials supplier had no cement. Apparently HS2 was gobbling up supplies across the country. (The contracts for HS2 had been let long before – Ed).



On a more positive note Don, Derek, Brian and others replaced two floors, floorboarding was well under way, and we'd completed the slating of the outside toilets. You'll also see that external doors were being fitted so the building looked much more complete. We had lights and power throughout the first two cottages and radiators were fitted.

In July our painting teams could see the end. Now that all the cottages had been plastered we could finish the painting. Martin, Anne, Sarah and Maz were very active and must have applied more than 200 litres of paint! Martin took charge of cleaning up the beams. He discovered marks in the main beam and was trying to work out what they mean. So if anyone recognises them please let us know.



In the cottages almost all of the plumbing was



complete, with boilers, radiators and baths installed, but we were still waiting for the tiler to complete the floors. The messy trades having finished, the stairs were repaired and we started skirting. It was a hive of activity and nearing completion at last.

The café was also moved forward with floors almost complete, all the external doors fitted to the main building, and panels fitted to the external stairs. They were designed by David and they show narrowboats – as you can see.



Thanks go to all those who offered loans to support the cottages. We reached the target, which means we avoided external banks and the extra costs that would involve. Early indications were that the cottages should rent easily and generate a good monthly income to provide funding for the restoration generally.

In August we made still more progress with skirting and windowboards fitted and internal door installation started. We just needed tiling, stairs and bathrooms to be completed and kitchens installed – and snagging of course. We were very close.



You can see that the car park had moved on considerably. The base layers and sleeper walls were in place awaiting the final tarmac during August. We'd started looking at using the pile of bricks (that have moved much too frequently over the last few years) to form a path around the front of the building.

Hopefully if the weather holds we can start the process in August. Our volunteers will really miss those bricks!



In September we had a new volunteer called Gary – not membership officer Gary on the left, but our scarecrow Gary the builder. He's not done much restoration, but he did attract attention and lots of visitors to the Cottages over the bank holiday weekend. We participated in the very popular Draycott Scarecrow Festival and collected some donations to the cause and yet more compliments on the work.

We now have a completed car park, we'd also fitted internal doors and completed stairs &

balustrades and cleaned, filled, and painted most of the stuff inside. Our ongoing challenge was with tiling, but even there we now have kitchen floors in place ready for kitchen fitting. The cottages were taking longer than we'd hoped, but we were making better progress with the café, where the inside had been insulated and boarded and electric and plumbing first fix completed ready for plastering to start this month.



There was more good progress at the



cottages in October. We have found a part time tiler, just when we had gone through the YouTube videos to teach ourselves tiling. We now have the first two cottages tiled and the sanitary ware in bath-rooms are almost in place. We are now installing the kitchens through volunteers, but working closely with the plumber. Again I'd like to ask for any volunteer painters available to do final snagging.

We also had good progress with the café; plastering is almost complete and the toilet block doors close to being fitted.

We now await, with bated breath, an acoustics test to ensure resident aren't disturbed by the café activities next door (and vice versa!).

Plans for November are to close out Nos 1&2, have the final landscaping in place (block paving) and start the final fit out of cottage 3.

We are also looking to move a pile of 2,000 cleaned bricks from the site that we can't use – offers welcomed, otherwise they will be used on a future lock restoration.

### **An Investment Opportunity – The Cottages**

Over the past few months the Directors and Trustees have been reviewing the position with regard to the Canal Cottages on Hopwell Road at Draycott.

The decision has been made to retain all the properties, with a view to letting them on assured tenancies, and to acknowledge the huge amount of volunteer work that has gone into the project; it also means that we retain full control of the whole site for the benefit of the Canal. This was agreed so that the long-term rental income can support the maintenance needs of the fully restored canal and to allow the Trust to benefit from capital appreciation of the property. We will therefore need to arrange long term finance to cover the full costs of the development. It is anticipated that the total value of the completed development will be in the region of £1,200,000 and that the total borrowing to complete the restoration should not exceed £625,000.

We have been well supported by various lenders including Society members, and Trust Directors and Trustees when we needed you most and at the riskier time for the project. In order to finished the “Canal Cottages” project we need to borrow a further £100,000 and, rather than approach a commercial lender, we are offering the opportunity for members to lend funds to the Trust on the following beneficial terms:

A 5-year fixed term with early repayments only at the Trust's discretion.

Interest fixed at a rate of at least 3% p.a. over the term.

Interest to be paid annually on loans calculated to the 31st of March each year (with basic rate Income Tax deducted at source).



security offered will be in the form of a caution placed on the land title to rank after the commercial lender, which will state that there is no disposal of the properties without consent of the collective members.

The minimum amount loaned will be £5,000.

Repayment will be made on the 5th anniversary unless you agree otherwise at the time. The interest rate has been set at the current rate, which compares favourably to the market, but also provides certainty and some benefit to the Trust over commercial loans it would otherwise have to take out. However, when you receive your interest payment, you may decide to donate some or all of the interest to the Trust. If you are a UK taxpayer you can also gift aid this donation, which currently stands at 25%, so for every £100 donated we actually receive £125.

Should you wish to lend to the Trust or you need any further information, please contact either myself, Chris Madge (Chairman) or Chris Rees Fitz-Patrick (Director).

Whatever you decide please let me thank you, on behalf of the Trust, for your current and ongoing support of our work.

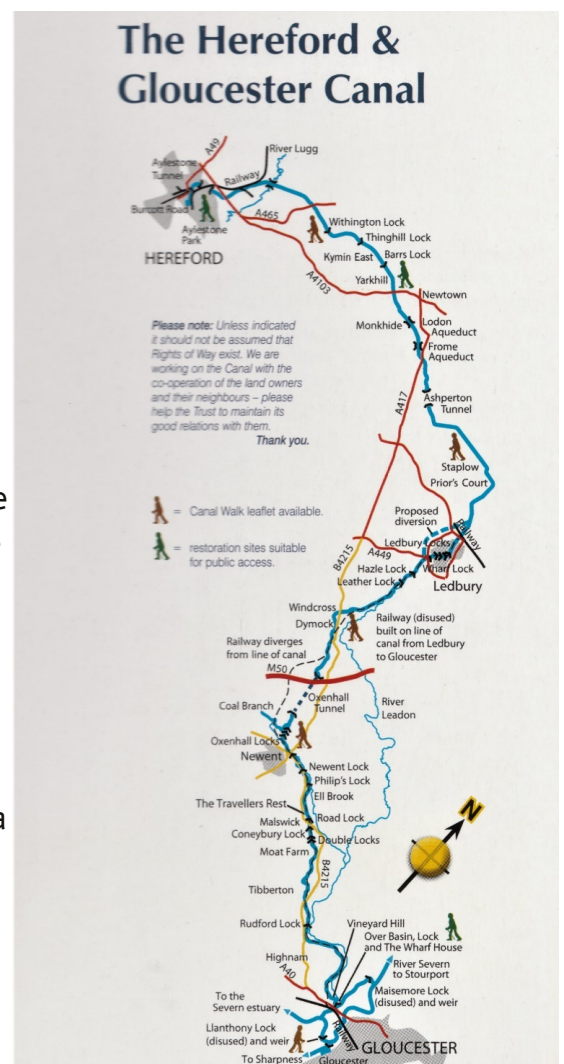
Derek Troughton, Treasurer.

## Hereford and Gloucester Canal Report – Dick Skeet

If the idea of building the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal was to make a profit for its shareholders it probably wasn't a very good one. It was conceived at the height of the Canal Mania in the late 1780s when the entrepreneurs and speculators of the day believed that any canal which carried coal was guaranteed to generate huge profits.

For hundreds of years the city of Hereford had depended up the River Wye for any sort of long distance transport but trade along the river was limited by floods in winter and insufficient water in dry summers. While there had been plans aplenty to develop the navigation, few materialised and none provided the improvements which were really necessary. Just enough coal travelled upriver from the Forest of Dean to meet the city's domestic needs so Hereford completely missed out on the Industrial Revolution and remained little more than a market town.

But these were years of great optimism and a coal canal between the Newent mines and Hereford looked an attractive investment. But expectations far exceeded





Boat Gathering in Aylestone Park,  
Hereford in 2011

reality, there was actually little decent coal to be had and construction costs far exceeded the estimates. (There's nothing new under the Sun!-Ed). Work began at Gloucester where the canal joined the River Severn and proceeded quickly towards Hereford, but a late change of route involving a long tunnel through the hills north of Newent resulted in the capital being exhausted by the time the canal reached the small market town of Ledbury in 1798. Work didn't begin on extending the canal to Hereford until 1839 and the canal was finally completed in 1845. Eight years later the first of several railway lines reached Hereford. This was the beginning of the end for

the canal. In 1881 the canal between Ledbury and Gloucester was leased to the Ledbury and Gloucester Railway as the route of their new line, thus cutting Hereford off from the Severn. Two years later traffic between Hereford and Ledbury ceased altogether and sections of this part of the canal were sold, or given away to bordering landowners.

Much of the canal simply disappeared and the Ledbury to Gloucester railway line was closed 1964, a lifespan shorter than that of the canal though the only nominally existing canal

company received £5,000 per annum from the Great Western Railway until nationalisation in 1945!

The very existence of the canal was all but forgotten for nearly 100 years until 1983, when a small group met in Hereford to form the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Society with the aim of preserving what little remained of the canal. At first there were, officially at least, no aspirations much beyond this, but this changed in 1992 When the society became a charitable trust with the intention of restoring the whole canal to full navigation.



Oxenhall Lock

The task is formidable – 34 miles of canal with at least 22 locks and three tunnels. Although less than 10 miles are in water, less than half a mile is fully navigable. On the positive side there are few major obstructions and nothing which

hasn't been done before. The route is protected by the local authorities through which it runs and the vast majority of the line runs through farmland. The Trust has demonstrated that a mile of canal can be excavated to the original puddle lining by a fortnight's work camp. Rebuilding locks and bridges takes rather longer!



Over Basin, Gloucester (Ted Beagles)

There are however some interesting engineering challenges. The lock connecting the canal basin at Gloucester with the western channel of the River Severn, tidal at



this point, will be a very deep one – probably the deepest in the country. Although two of the 'three tunnels are known to be in good condition a small section of the 1 mile Oxenhall tunnel has collapsed, almost certainly a result of the M50 being built above it in 1960-1. The builders of the motorway probably had no idea there was a canal tunnel only a few feet below them. Most of the rest of the tunnel is unlined.

Much of the landscape has changed where the canal passes the market town of Newent and the canal will have to be taken over Bridge Street rather than underneath it. We plan to use the abutments of the old railway viaduct to carry boats over the road using an inclined plane to carry boats up to the bridge level and another down the other side.

But our greatest challenge by far, is that very little of the canal is owned by the Trust. Some of it is owned by local authorities but the great majority consists of short sections owned by over 100 different landowners, some very sympathetic to our aims, others less so. A landowner once told me his stretch of the canal was for sale but when I expressed an interest he simply replied "everything is for sale". However, we are in constant negotiations with landowners and in the meantime, we have a number of groups working on different parts of the canal.

Much has been achieved through the use of Section 106 Planning Agreements but until we have been able to secure significant lengths of the canal line, we are not in a position to apply for major lottery funding. Once we have some of that, progress could be very rapid!

We are under no illusions that narrowboats will be cruising into Hereford any time soon, but the potential leisure and tourism benefits of 34 miles of rural canal through one of the most beautiful parts of England are plain to see. Time, lots of it, will tell.



Oxenhall Tunnel

### **Working Parties**

May saw a lot of progress on the ground with working parties back in force. The works at Angler's Lane were almost complete. It started as a project to clear some dangerous cracked willows, which then unearthed rubbish accumulated over many years including asbestos. Happily, the adjacent allotment group financed the removal and we have now cleared the area. Plans were made to replant with hawthorn whips in the autumn, meantime a few bug hotels were established and the team led by Chris Shaw left some minions to look after the site.

We were back at Borrowash and Draycott catching up after the lockdown. Work continued

apace at the Cottages with the final planning conditions agreed enabling the external stairs to be installed and work put in hand to complete the car park. With contractors on site to undertake other groundworks to the back of the property and the first two cottages being painted inside we were nearing completion of the cottages themselves. We hoped to complete second fix in a couple of months and were looking to appoint agents to find and manage tenants.



Attention then now turned to the café area and the roof was almost complete on the outside toilets, with work underway on the café kitchen and servery. Fire Regs meant we couldn't



keep the original floors there as hoped so there was a bit more building work to do there to install new floors. However even the café won't be long and we hope to have it ready this year. We were delighted by the interest shown by the public, not only in the work we were doing, but also from some individuals interested in occupying the cottages or running the café. It was comforting to know there's such interest. As we wouldn't be selling the cottages we raised supporters

loans and were well on our way to full funding this way so avoiding bank fees and high interest rates.

In June there was great progress again on all fronts. May had seen a lot of progress with great turnouts across a number of locations. Roger and team attacked the ivy growing on trees at Sandiacre and Keith and team, ably led by David, cut grass and trimmed back at Borrowwash, Spondon and Sandiacre. There was a renewed focus on Sandiacre as we prepared for another attack on the lock. We had a first estimate for the cost of sewer diversion – a mere £200k – so we haggled and looked to get additional funds to move it forward.

However, Severn Trent don't move quickly – they think it will take them about a year to do it. Great progress was again made in July on all fronts with an impact being felt across all sites and grass etc being gradually brought back under control. By then we were well into holiday season, so our numbers had dropped off a bit, but we hoped to get lots of people back refreshed and tanned after their well earned breaks. There was certainly to do still.

Just one potential problem was reported. Our lock had been cut off at Station Road Borrowwash and a rogue van was seen exploring the line westwards. A new lock was then fitted in place of our own. Keith and team have identified the problem and replaced the lock.



It is hoped that the potential campers have got the message, but any members in the area are asked to keep their eyes peeled and report any strange goings on.

In August there was of course lots of activity in all the usual places. The Waterway Recovery Group confirmed they would attend and so David led his teams to work in manicuring the lawns around Borrowwash bottom lock in readiness for the visit. We hoped they'd be so impressed that they worked twice as hard and fast. Whilst we needed to keep



socially distant from the team it was OK to admire them in action from a distance.

David also had a team at Spondon tidying the towpath there. It is strange that, despite the large sign, people don't seem to recognise it as a section of canal. Perhaps we need to place a boat on it to for recognition.

As planned, Waterways Recovery Group attended in the first week of August. Dave Savidge took control and with a reduced WRG team delivered the final reconstruction of the lock chamber & wing walls and started to uncover some strange brick/blockwork

around the bye wash. Dave is now trying to work out what was found in readiness for future work establishing the aqueduct across the Ock Brook.

Dave achieved the first WRG camp since lockdown and it was both Covid uneventful and so enjoyable the team are already asking what they can do next year. Thanks Dave.

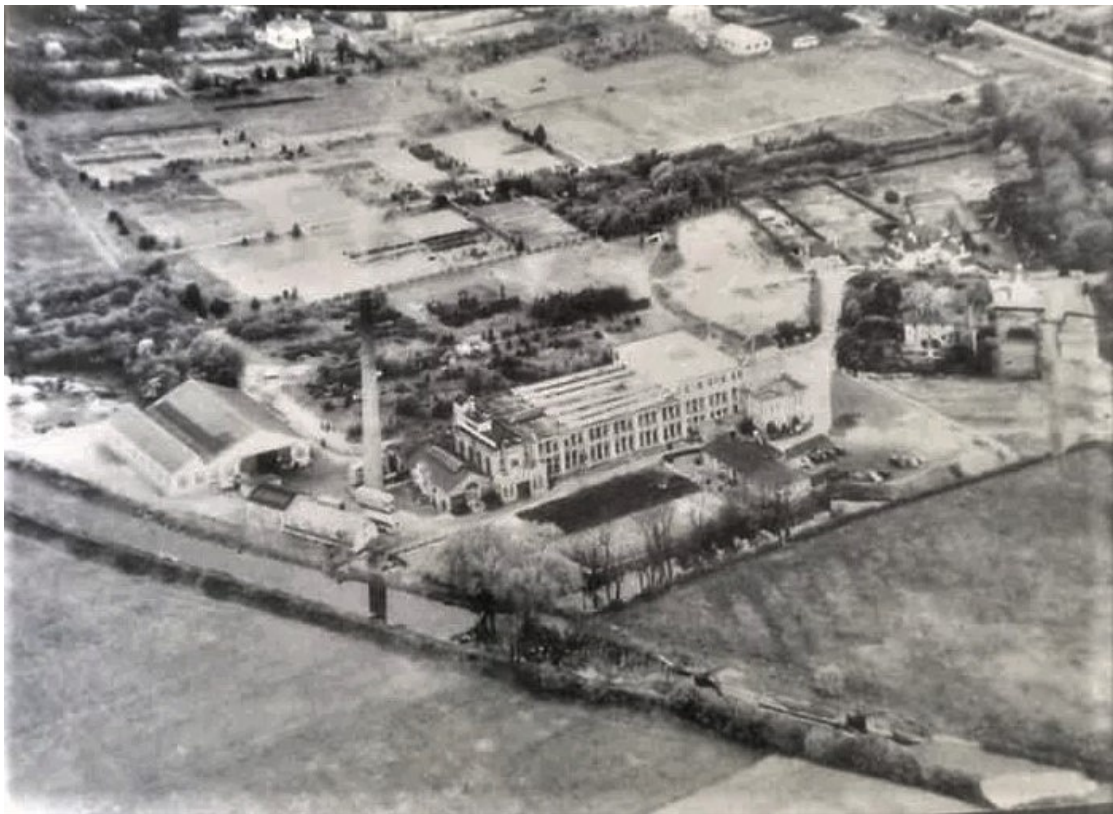




**Sandiacre Bottom Lock – one wall stone, one brick to save money**



**From the Archives**



Ariel view of Borrowash showing the Mill and Canal Arm



### **Trials and Tribulations at Borrowwash**

This time it was a tree. One of the crack willows had drooped over the boundary fence and was in danger of falling onto the tracks below. So we assessed the situation and alerted Network Rail in Derby as we couldn't deal with the overhang ourselves.

As if they didn't have enough on their plates with the floods!



#### **The Problem**

Thunderbird

Three, their emergency team was promptly despatched equipped with chain saws. In the pouring rain at Borrowwash they proceeded to lop the offending tree where it overhung the lines.

They had a couple of lads on the track in communication with the signal box so that they could do the work between trains.



To say that we are grateful is an understatement as it could have cost us a few thousand pounds – as it was, cream cakes delivered personally by Judy whilst they were drying off helped an awful lot. Finally, Network Rail cut down all the trees in the cutting.



**Always remember these guys – without them nothing may have happened.**







PROTEST CRUISE AGAINST THE CLOSING OF THE DERBY CANAL, 1961  
A plaque to commemorate the event was fixed to the lock gates at Sandiacre but was forcibly removed after a week.

## Chesterfield Canal Trust

We are just gearing up for our Santa Special cruises. Our four tripboats John Varley II, Madeline, Hugh Henshall and Seth Ellis are all taking bookings by the dozen.

We are delighted by this because it means we will be meeting lots of regulars after a 24-month gap, but also because it introduces lots of new people to the canal. They come to visit Santa, like what they see and then often return in the summer.

It is also a super earner for us. In 2019, we carried just under 2,500 passengers. We don't expect nearly so many this year, but it's just great to be back.



Our trips will not be quite as before, because of Covid. Santa will be on Madeline, because everyone sits outside. This is not compulsory – it's just much more fun. The other boats either have very small foredecks or none at all, so everyone is inside. Therefore for these





trips, Santa will be based ashore. All the children will still get their presents and the adults will still get their drink and something to eat, so we are hopeful that all will be well.

What we dread of course is another lockdown. Refunding dozens, possibly hundreds of payments takes ages and is very dispiriting.

Our other main news is that we are preparing the business case to present to the Government for our share of the Staveley Town

Deal monies. We are still not sure exactly how much this will be, but it should be £5+ million – if all goes well. This will enable us to restore the canal to the Chesterfield Borough boundary. Given that we are doing more restoration at Renishaw ourselves, we are hoping that we will have an extra 2 miles of canal by the end of 2024. I have been stunned by how complex, and how expensive, writing this document has been. Of course it will all be worth it in the end, but it's very nerve-racking because as yet nothing is signed.

Merry Christmas from everyone at the Chesterfield Canal Trust.

Rod Auton





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