

Chairman's Update

November/December 2022

Christmas is approaching and I'm guessing that we are all preparing for extra time with our families. The Trust will also be taking it a little slower and may even have a few days off from working parties and then be ready for work again back in 2023. Perhaps it's a timely reminder that if you are looking for that gift for the person who has everything consider a DSCT gift membership. You can apply online at our website at <https://www.derbycanal.org.uk/gift-membership-online-form/> It's a great way to get people involved and we promise not to hassle them when their renewals are due. Merchandise is also available either at the Café at Draycott, who sell it for us, or by sending an email to info@derbycanal.org.uk. We have calendars, mugs, boat ropes, T shirts, etc..

At the AGM I pointed to a growing concern of Directors and Trustees that we need to strengthen the team. We have many active volunteers maintaining and restoring the canal line, but we have a small group responsible for all the other Trust activities many of which are technical covering engineering, finance, planning, legal, fundraising, etc. Our large scale restoration progress is now dependent on this group and of course we are all ageing and coping with the inevitable effects on our health. More of this later.

Eddy Case

It was however with shock and great sadness that the Trust learnt that Eddy Case had passed away on 28th November at 10 am in hospital following a diagnosis of lung cancer. Our sympathies go to his wife Linda. When we have a date for his funeral it will be posted on our website. Eddy first introduced himself to me at a lock wind at Swarkestone with his favourite comment "Hi, I'm Ed Case". He had been told to "get an interest" and he did that with a vengeance. He was soon Vice Chairman to me in the Society, and he was a great support, particularly with working parties and he duly stepped up to Chairman, albeit reluctantly, when I moved to the Trust. He trained to become our expert in voles and, with Di, kept us up to date with ecology and monitored their activity. He stepped back a little following his stroke a couple of years ago, but remained the life and soul of the party throughout. He will be missed by us all.



Working Parties



More of the same this month with work again concentrated in Borrowash and Draycott. The recovered wall is progressing well and Keith's team has made good progress pulling out tree stumps along the tow path. At Draycott the bunds have been maintained to allow water to flow away quickly and the arrangement seems to be working well. It is planned to continue with this work, and make another appearance at Chellaston, over the month ahead.



Progress at Sandiacre has slowed over the last few weeks awaiting a push by the Trust to get loose ends tied up on the design. Draycott still awaits design input from consultants, who have been slowed following a death in the family of the lead consultant. We expect to get conclusions ready for costing. This has also been slowed by the lack of progress with Network Rail on the cost of repairs. The Trust has decided to moderate our claim in the expectation of a quick settlement, which will allow us to move matters on. Whilst this may mean an increased shortfall in funding, we have already contacted a fundraiser who should be able to help us access funds when we know how much we need.

Cottages



I'm sure you'll all have seen the impacts of the substantial rainfall over the last month or so. Whilst it is good to see reservoirs slowly filling up again it does cause us some concerns. Much of the canal design challenge at Draycott will be around the flow of water around the cottages. In heavy downpours there is a substantial flow built up as rainwater rushes down the Hopwell road and ditches alongside. Whilst water came up to the edge of the car park it soon dissipated. However it did affect the workings of the water supply, which had to be solved urgently as both commercial and residential

premises relied on it. Firstly the excess water shorted out the pump electricity supply. It is now resolved and redesigned to make it more robust in future. Unfortunately a couple of days later the borehole pump failed and had to be replaced. It's all good now and we have a better maintenance check regime in place. We can't disrupt the business of the café or the showers of the residents.

Around this activity Don and Tony have completed storage cupboards and constructed a large table for meetings in the same room. They are refitting an old fire surround in the main meeting room and have also pretty much completed work on the museum room. We still need to get the art work and artefacts completed, but we are nearly there!



We are still having challenges finalising the café lease - this time we have to satisfy the Charities Commission to ensure that all is above board. Whilst I understand that safeguards are needed it is sad to think of the time we need to invest and the advisors fees that have to be paid out to prove that we're doing things in the interest of the Trust.

The Derby Riverboat

The other main impact of the rain has been the rise in river levels. We have now no problem with low water. The highest level so far has been 1.4m high - a long way short of the 3.2m



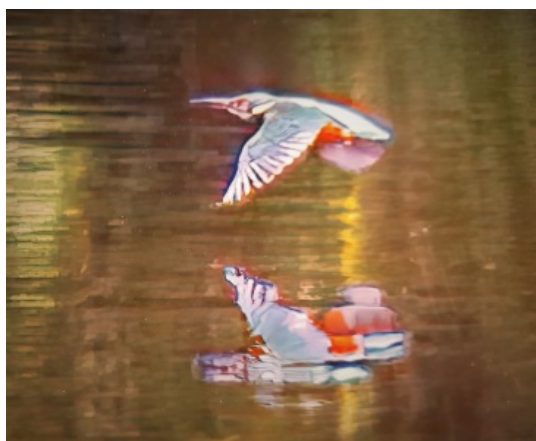
record, but there is a very noticeable impact on water speed and volume. We have now reconstructed the jetty protection - higher this year than last - and cleared away low branches to allow for the river rising substantially. Winter maintenance is also under way. We have taken



the motor down to Devon for service ready for the new year. I never realised how small it is (less than 300mm in diameter) compared to the diesel engines we are used to. It meant that we could remove it ourselves and transport it in the back of a car. Again we've learned lessons in maintenance and have amended the routines accordingly.

We have now submitted answers to all the questions posed in the planning process for the pontoon. We believe it will be discussed at the mid February Planning Committee meeting. This means it will be very tight to complete at the end of March despite a planning decision being delayed until December, so fingers crossed. This would of course mean that the water level restriction under the bridge would no longer be an issue as we could moor on the pontoon.

We have now moved the boat back to its winter mooring near Darley Abbey. There's a touch of irony that we moved it back because water levels were rising, yet still had to manhandle the boat into position around the uneven river floor by the mooring. The water was surprisingly warm! We are now working on a maintenance programme for the boat and jetty to be ready for next year and protect from flood waters that may rise by 9 feet.



Despite the challenges the operation of the Riverboat has been an unqualified success. We took a risk starting operations before everything was in place, but it's paid off. Our volunteer group has steadily built up although it has been fraught at times - sorry Ian. We have had sold out trips for over two months, we've had compliments from virtually all the passengers, we've made some money towards restoration, but most importantly we have shown people what the future could hold and found them excited.

And to cap it all we've discovered a flight of kingfishers. How about the photo taken by a very quick passenger!

Members Meetings

AGM - We held our AGM on Thurs 17th Nov. It turned out to be a bit of a marathon with some complex accounts to explain and a couple of motions from the floor dealing with priorities going forward. Thanks to all that stayed to the end and gave their views. Full minutes will be available shortly, but in essence we have set a priority for the Engineering Group to present an updated engineering plan for approval by the Trustees and Directors. The second motion calling for more regular reporting was eventually withdrawn after discussion.

November's Members' Meeting - This was a talk and entertainment by Barry Watson on running a pair of canal hotel boats. My plea for support fell on deaf ears as we had only 11 attendees, but a comment from the floor that this was the best talk for ten years perhaps indicated what the others had missed.

Meetings will continue to be held at the First Floor, Canal Cottages, Draycott DE72 3PE

For next year we have the following organised.

January 24th	Michael Thacker	Railways in World War 1
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February 28th	Clare Howard	The Derby Canal and Gangway in Little Eaton
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March 28th David Jennings The Derby Canal in Derby

April 25th Bennerley Viaduct—Restoration and into the Future

We will look to see the attendance at these before committing to future dates. It is obvious that if members do not want this activity we should save the effort of those that work hard to organise it.

Sustainability

I mentioned earlier that the Trust has concerns for its ability to perform without fresh blood. We don't want to see all the successes of the last few years lost or the pace of progress falter, but this will be the inevitable conclusion if we don't act now. With this in mind the Trust is formulating a plan to actively recruit both missing skills and fresh ideas. We have had some initial success with possible engineering recruits, but are still looking at the areas of ecology (especially now that we no longer have Eddy), fundraising and administration. Of course this activity itself detracts from our focus on restoration itself, so the sooner we can get it sorted, or at least improved, the better.

More than anything the spreading of responsibilities allows us all to be more effective. A few hours a month from someone new (particularly if they have specialist knowledge) makes such a difference. We are keen to use in house specialist skills wherever possible, because the alternative is to spend the returns from the cottages rents or trip boat on expensive consultants.

I hope to see you soon. Chris Madge



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