

Chairman's Update

August 2023

It's August and approaching the bank holiday as I write this. At last we've had a little sun to enjoy in between the showers. It's been good news for our working parties and boat passengers as you'll see below. It also looks like the Pelsall IWA festival will benefit.

As far as progress is concerned it's typically the month of holidays—not necessarily for Trust members, but certainly for other third party organisations. So it means things can slow down a bit.

Working Parties

Our volunteers have been active on most parts of the canal line during the last month. The perfect growing conditions have accelerated grass and weed growth.

As you can see we've been working at Draycott keeping the path way clear and managing the water voles receptor area. The team have been cutting back around the vole fence inside and out and



clearing the bunds.

They've been helped by the Vinci team again. It's great to have repeat attendees, partly because they are easier to manage when they know the job and partly because they are more likely to join us for the longer term.



At Breaston we have been back to tidy up land we own opposite the cemetery by Longmoor Lane.



The access from the road and fencing around our land is now clear and ready for when we look to dig out the canal in this area. Low hanging branches have been trimmed to help horse riders and other path users and the grass has been cut to the east and west sides of Breaston. Paul Turner



normally helps to mow the stretch west of the Navigation, but on the last cut he hit a number of items of discarded rubbish hidden in the long grass and caused damage to his equipment. Looks like we'll have to rely on our little tractor and more regular mowing in future. As always it is difficult to balance the wildlife benefits of less regular mowing with the practical considerations for volunteers.



We've also been busy mowing at Ulliker's Bridge, at Borrowash Lock and at Sandiacre.



Thanks to all volunteers for their efforts over the past weeks

Riverboat

The improved weather and school holidays has helped to increase the take up on the riverboat. The leaflets have proved a good way forward, but with adverts on the buses and online we are trying to cover all the channels. I think that despite the weather we've been pretty successful and welcomed our 2,000th passenger last month.

However during this month we welcomed local video company AVIT, who are supplied (without cost) by the tourist section of the City Council to provide a promotional video. On Monday 21st we assembled a crew of photogenic travellers to meet our expected audience demographic and spent a couple of hours shooting a video. There were some excellent drone shots in the sun (as you can see) and lots of shots of the passengers (and me) enjoying the trip. I hope that Andrew will be able to put it on the website and it should also start appearing on social media, etc.



At the end of July we had a volunteers

meeting on the boat to discuss how we could improve matters and had a lot of good ideas. We have a strong team now and everyone seems to enjoy the activity and want to improve it. Thanks to Liz for all the organisation and Sue for the App to manage the schedule.

At the last Board Meeting we agreed to upgrade the boat motor. This will give more power to deal with currents and allow us to contemplate operating later in the year and hopefully around Christmas. As I've mentioned before the river flow rises and falls quickly (as can be seen from the graph). In this case it rose four-fold after a day of rain. Extra power should therefore drastically reduce the likelihood of late cancellations during the summer.

On the pontoon we still wait designs, but have started to canvas funding for the pontoon, but it's early days just yet.



Other Projects

At Sandiacre we have the first of two awaited quotes, so we will be assessing the options with the Engineering team shortly and hopefully finding a practical way to achieve restoration of the lock with wildlife and tree protection.

At Draycott the plan is making good progress and we are getting ready to commission the external consultant, but we still await progress with local landowners and Network Rail.

The Derby Arm project design is being reassessed and Mike is continuing to work with the University to move the project on and has a team who are restoring the model ready for another round of displays to promote interest.

Ecology

We have commissioned a survey of ecology along the whole canal line. This will allow us to plan future projects and also assess whether we might attract funding for Biodiversity Net Gain from nearby developers. Whilst this will be undertaken by expert consultants we have at last found a volunteer, Denise, who is interested in coordinating our wildlife approach. Since Eddy Case passed away we have lost our lead on ecology and he (and his colleague Di) are sorely missed. We are looking at a training programme for Denise and getting her to work with the consultants on the survey. If we know what we have we believe that we can make the argument for funding that should enhance wildlife whilst establishing our waterway. If anyone would like to join her.....



Shardlow Festival

We are booked to attend the event at Shardlow on Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th September. We will have our marquee there with displays and a few things to sell. I understand there'll be lots of waterways interest including heritage craft and stalls. It operates from 10am until 4 pm each day, so feel free to drop in on us. Even better if you can spare an hour to chat to people and help our regular volunteers. New faces are always welcomed.

Members' Meetings

Our last meeting was a walk around **Little Eaton** and we were hosted by Bill Hutchinson, from the Little Eaton History Society. Bill provided a most informative tour, including the Clock House, where the current owners allowed us into the garden for a close up inspection. Bill also organised an inspection of one of the remaining wheels from the Gangway wagons that feature in so many photos. It was an excellent and well attended evening ending with a sociable drink in the local pub.

There are no meetings for August, but we have an update on the **Ashby Canal and Moira Furnace** from Geoff Pursglove on the evening of **September 26th** from 7.30pm at the Cottages upstairs room.

I am currently trying to organise the **AGM**, but we await the completion of the annual accounts review. I suspect the AGM will be held in October, but watch this space. Some of you may already be aware that we now have a trading subsidiary company, so there's twice the work. It has become much more onerous with a group VAT registration, extra activities in renting out premises and running the Riverboat and the requirement to maintain HMRC compliant accounting systems. Derek Troughton has dealt with it all remarkably well, but the combination of the extra work and Derek's health means he will now look to share the duties with Chris Richardson, who has recently joined the Board and also has a financial background.

Thanks as ever for everyone's support

I hope to see you soon at one of our activities.

Chris Madge

