

## Chairman's Update

### September 2023

I'm reminded of that Flanders and Swann song about the weather.

"August cold and dank and wet brings more rain than any yet.

Bleak September's mist and mud is enough to chill the blood."

Still we can look forward to October?

"Then October adds a gale, wind and slush and rain and hail."

Anyway, whatever the weather it could always be worse. It's just sad to see the evenings shortening so quickly.



#### Working Parties

As we get towards winter it means we move to mowing and trimming in earnest. We are now in the period when birds have finished nesting so trimming and cutting is less disruptive to wildlife. As you can see Peter and fellow volunteers are maintaining Borrowash lock surround beautifully.

Of course it's not always plain sailing and we have been



visited by a few vandals who have disrupted things in the bottom of the lock and particularly around the paddle openings. No lasting damage done other than to our morale, but everything is back in place now.

At Breaston the large grassed area close to the Navigation has had another cut with our tractor. It's looking neater now and we can keep an eye on it to prevent more fly tipping in the long grass. We



are certainly missing Paul and his farmer scale equipment that has kept this and other stretches mowed so well for so many years. Our thanks go out to him for this support over many years.

And at Borrowash west of Station Road we are seeing the blackthorn trying to establish itself in the grassland, so that also needs to be kept in check. As someone whose grandfather lost a finger to blackthorn poisoning I know how nasty it can be.





## Draycott

A great deal of effort has been expended behind the scenes by the engineering group with Martin to the fore. We now have a brief for the consultant and an outline of the works and approach required for the dig out. We've even seen the some response from the landowner, although we're not getting carried away just yet.

We've submitted a bill to Network Rail. Whilst it's not as much as we think we are due for all the consequential loss we are taking a pragmatic approach so that we can get a reasonable contribution to the works and move on to completion. We have to have an eye on the long game.

I'm pleased to say that Chris and Mike have started to identify funding sources for the estimated balance required. We are hopeful that we can apply as soon as we have firmed up costs in the next few months. It will be a relief to get the Golden Mile in place.

David is trying to work out how to keep the rushes down in Phase 1. We will need to get it cleaned up ahead of the Phase 2 works and water vole transfer in the spring.

Having taken over managing the tenants at the cottages we've had a broken slate to repair. I think using Roger's contact is much more cost effective than the previous arrangement. Can you spot the join?

We have had an interactive whiteboard and projector donated and Don and Tony have erected it in the meeting rooms. However we might need a bit of expert help to get it functioning properly. Anyone with experience please make contact.

With the canal works stalled it means we have to monitor the flood water carefully. We had a morning when it flooded the car park and was coming close to the cottages door thresholds. However it quickly dispersed and was a metre lower just a few days later. The outlet on the canal line below the cottages comes from aggregating flows from both sides of Hopwell Road and it can cause flash flooding—especially these days. We are in the process of acquiring the land across Hopwell Road from Sustrans and we plan to reinstate the old winding hole as an attenuation pound to absorb some of the excess water. Hopefully we can get that concluded quickly, although we are restricted by the needs and pace of the Sustrans Trustee Board.



## Riverboat

As I write this we have only a week more of sailings. We expect to finish on 1st October. Passenger numbers depend on the weather so we don't expect it to be viable to run into October; certainly with the current arrangement under the bridge. The replacement of the motor is well on track with our resident engineers, Simon and Mike planning the transition with Rolls Royce precision! Once the sailings finish we will be taking out the current motor, controller and throttle unit and I'll be taking it down to Honiton to be upgraded, then bringing it back ready for installation and commissioning. We plan a reasonably thorough servicing before putting Outram back into the winter moorings. We are fortunate to be able to moor her at Darley Abbey again—I just hope I don't need to paddle in the river again to achieve it this year.



As for the Pontoon we have some progress to report. We now have a structural and engineering design for the concrete anchor fixings. We are also told there will be a saving on original estimate and that the fixings can be in place before Christmas!!



So all we now need to do is to find the cash shortfall of around £100k. Mike and I have already starting approaching possible benefactors and we have a senior level meeting with a major employer in a week or so. Fingers crossed. If we can get the pontoon in place ready for April it will elevate the project because

1. We will be visible on the river, not hidden under a bridge, thereby being easier to find and attracting passing traffic;
2. We will be able to take disabled passengers
3. We won't be worried about having to move the boat when river levels rise.



We have just seen the Feste celebrations this year (see pictures above) and they have focussed some activities around Cathedral Green and the river. We had to decline hosing an activity on the boat. However, once the pontoon is in place we can be another focal point for the celebrations and gain the publicity that will promote our operation.

I'm pleased to report that we now have a planned meeting with the new leader of Derby City Council, Baggy Shanker, with a view to demonstrating our value to the city's tourism and economic prosperity. We have so far been successful in gaining support from all political views and long may that last.

### **Sandiacre**

At Sandiacre we have been making good progress at long last. The formalisation of designs seems to be moving on apace. The new contact at STW seems really keen to get the project moving. They are convinced that they can provide a solution that avoids a pumping station (and the £500k price tag) and we will be looking to get trial pits to assess whether we can work safely alongside the trees currently in place. This means we have reopened discussions with our neighbour, Dave, who has again offered for us to knock down his garage (which admittedly has already lost its roof) to allow space for the relocated sewer. It is apparent that STW contractors are not cheap, but we need to get the quote in place so we can see if we have sufficient funds already in place. Again it would be excellent to get this done so we could focus our volunteer teams on reconstructing the lock—just as they have achieved at Borrowash - but this time with the prospect of it being fully functional.

### **Shardlow**

We attended the Inland Port Festival again this year. Our thanks to David for organising it and the volunteers who manned it. We attracted a lot of attention and even sold a few



We also had some people interested in volunteering. The pitch was in a much better place this year and the weather was beautiful. There were lots of visitors and most of them wanted to know what we are doing. Overall a successful two days of spreading the word.

### **Members' Meetings**

Our next meeting will be on the evening of **September 26th** from 7.30pm at the Cottages upstairs room. We will be entertained by Geoff Pursglove talking about progress on the **Ashby Canal and Moira Furnace**. It promises to be an interesting evening so I hope you can come.

We are currently planning for the next meeting on **24th October** to be our **AGM**, but I am still awaiting completion of the accounts before I can confirm this. If not an AGM we already have a speaker lined up, so please put the date in your diaries.

### **And Finally**

David and Pauline Jennings and I were asked to present to the Freemen of Derby at the Council Chamber earlier this month. It was a mix of restoration news from me and the history of Derby from David and Pauline. They provided lots of old photos of Derby and we all received compliments from the audience. I thought you might like to see a photo taken before the demolition of the power station that used to dwarf the Silk Mill and which also shows the canal line approaching the Silk Mill wharf pre Causey Bridge days.



Thanks for your support.

Chris Madge