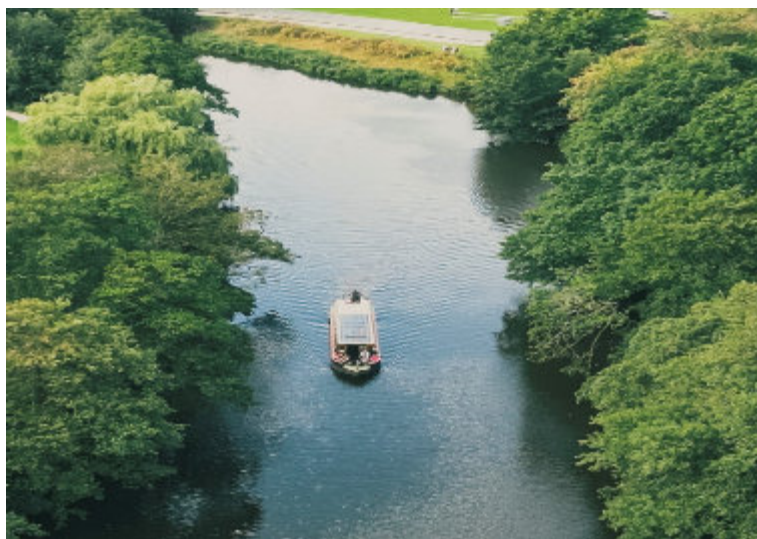


The Packet

Issue 95 Autumn 2023



Suggested Donation £1

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Front Cover

Drone's Eye View of Outram on the River Derwent (by courtesy of AVIT)

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From the Editor



Welcome to Issue 95! The last six months has seen the first full season of river boat trips. Sadly, the floating pontoon has yet to materialise, but hopefully will in time for the next river boat season.

One thing that is not yet well known is that gift vouchers are available for our river boat trips - they can be purchased from Liz Gordon. The person who receives the gift then contacts her and she will book their trip. As far as I know, only four such vouchers have been purchased to date and I bought two of them! Once I had paid her, Liz sent me the vouchers as an email attachment which opened in PowerPoint and I was able to print them off at home. The instructions for redeeming the vouchers, and the T's & C's, were printed on the vouchers themselves and they are valid to the end of the following calendar year from the date of purchase. With Christmas looming it could perhaps be a perfect gift solution... For vouchers email liz.gordon@derbycanal.org.uk

Preparations are being made to restore the Draycott section next year following a fund raising appeal in 2019. Indeed there are many canal restorations in progress all over the UK. However, there is news that many of the canals already restored and in the care of the IWA are under threat from government funding cuts. This issue carries an advertorial from the Chief Executive Officer of the IWA, appealing for people to help by joining the IWA.

My thanks to our two new contributors, Simon Knott and David Hatherly. Simon is a DSCT member and as well as attending working parties, helps with the river boat. He has provided an article about the new GPS based commentary system he developed and installed. David is not a DSCT member but he has strong interests in canals, heritage railways and music (we are both members of the Nottingham Chamber Singers). David's article is about volunteer lock keeping at Trent Lock.

Finally, I have included an extract from Clare Howard's article on the Clock House at Little Eaton as a follow up from the Annual walk back in July which was hosted by Bill Hutchinson from the local historical society.



A scene from the three day Langley Mill Boat Rally which we attended in May

Chairman/Communications Report

The Derby River Boat

In March the river boat was floated out of its winter mooring at Darley Abbey. It was eased clear of the river bank, then backed into deeper water, after which it was plain sailing down to the boarding platform. It was a relief to be moored up in the right place to prepare the boat for our first sailing.

That blissful state signalled a snowfall and when that melted, a few days later, the river rose rapidly. At one stage the ominous levels forecast made it seem sensible to stay overnight on the boat, but we rode out the surge quite happily.

The boat was maintained in the last week of March but the motor supplier's check on our set up was deferred to April because covid intervened. After six months moored under trees and within range of wildlife, a major clean up was needed. The solar panel fixings had

leaked so we removed the panels, cleaned and painted the roof, then refitted the panels making sure all fixings were leakproof. The new GPS regulated commentary system, which Simon worked on over the winter, was also installed [Simon's article is on page 24 - Ed].

March 2023 was officially the wettest for years - April wasn't looking much better - making boat trips difficult to plan. However, we had a couple of successful weekends afloat in April despite the river levels staying quite high. However, it was wonderful when the sun came out.



Advertising boards had been made to fit over the windows while Outram is moored up. It was hoped that both these and the organised leaflet drops would help increase interest.

The transformation on the roof of the boat was considerable. The biggest challenge was painting under Causey Bridge was the pigeons. It was off-putting hearing the cooing as you cleaned the paintwork again, hoping the paint would dry fast enough to prevent damage after you've gone.



Simon hard at work on the roof of the river boat



Planning for the pontoon continued with the Council who, despite having quotes in place, were inevitably challenged with the budget. However, we were assured the funds would be found ASAP.

In May the weather was much improved. The river fell to almost normal summer levels and a day's rain no longer resulted in cancelled trips. As the sun came out, more people were about to see the boat on the river, and the take up on trips increased.

We ran three trips each Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, all nearly full. On other days the boat was available for charter allowing different preferences and timings to be accommodated. We entertained a WI group who greatly enjoyed themselves.



Our volunteer team entertained a film crew and actresses who were producing a promotional video for use in digital marketing. As you can see from the photo our driver Bob hated every moment!



We took the Silk Mill (Museum of Making) staff on a free trip in the hope that they could recommend us! It was useful to get to know them and discover ways we could work together to develop interest in the boat trips.

After the local elections, the Council was still unsure of having the funds for the pontoon. Whilst this was more than upsetting, it gave us a chance to increase our influence in its design and commissioning. The installation date looked to be moving beyond June. The Council had at least confirmed their commitment to the scheme, subject to any impact of a change of political control.

By June we were filling all available slots on the river boat. We also ran a few specials, the last of which was a walking group who came with high expectations and left promising to return.

We tried to work more closely with other attractions in the city. On Midsummer



day we participated in the “Furthest from the Sea” activities. We agreed the use of the boat and crew for the day and trips on a pirate theme were operated. Actors played out scenes on board the boat and Phoenix Green was taken over by musicians and catering tents. Since then we have had several enquiries about using the boat in a more creative way. We gained good coverage and great publicity that will stand us in good stead.



In the winter we used a jetty owned by a lady in Folly Road which had suffered over time, so Simon and I spent a few hours repairing it. We could not have managed without her help and may need to ask for it again [We did! Ed].



The schedule continued to run smoothly in July. Take up was good but at one point we feared that three trips might have to be cancelled as the river levels were threatening to increase dramatically. This was a short lived impact of the rainy July. I was on duty when it rained and the passengers stayed inside - a great pity as it was a special trip for the twinning committee from Osnabruck in Germany. They had an interpreter on board, but for some reason she didn't seem to pass on Mike's carefully crafted jokes, particularly the passage about WW2 bombers targeting Rolls-Royce!



We took part in the “Take a peak” promotion of many attractions in Derby and environs and were delighted to see us on the side of a bus [see the yellow circle above - Ed]. The city's tourism department had promoted group tours and we hoped that more visitors would use us.

We were increasingly questioned about

the floating pontoon - some of the older passengers were finding it difficult to descend the steps - but little progress had been made. It looked as if it would be 2024 before we are fully operational!



In August the improved weather and school holidays helped increase the take up on river boat trips. Our leaflets had been effective, but we were trying to cover all channels with adverts both on the buses and online. Despite the weather we'd been pretty successful and

Working Parties

In March our container was broken into. Security seemed to be very strong but David noticed that the lock was damaged. Unfortunately the damage meant that we couldn't get in. Whilst we were organising a fix, the culprits came



had welcomed our 2,000th passenger. During August we welcomed local video company AVIT, who were supplied (free of charge) by the City Council's tourist section to produce a promotional video. On Monday 21st August we assembled a bunch of photogenic travellers meeting our expected audience demographic and spent a couple of hours filming. There were some excellent drone shots in the sun (*see front cover - Ed*) and many of the passengers enjoying the trip.

At the last Board Meeting it was agreed to upgrade the boat motor. This will give more power to deal with currents and allow us to consider operating later in the year, hopefully around Christmas. The river flow rises and falls quickly. Extra power should greatly reduce the likelihood of late cancellations during the summer.

Although still awaiting designs for the pontoon, we started to canvas funding for it, but it was early days...



back the next night with an angle grinder and finished the job - we lost all our maintenance equipment. David and Derek put in an insurance claim and we repaired and enhanced the cabin security. Two locks with thicker welded protection to prevent angle grinders should do the trick. Thanks go to our specialist volunteers (and family!).

The teams also fenced an area of our land in Breaston by Longmoor Lane, so that our boundaries are clear when we look to restore the section.



Further progress was made on the 'Great wall of Borrowwash', which was joined by work on a couple of 'great ditches' - the Ockbrook culvert and the channel that drains the Borrowwash Lock into the Ockbrook.



Progress on the wall continued and it was getting closer to Borrowwash lock chamber.



We were called to cut back overhanging branches along Longmoor Road by Cockayne's Bridge and got it looking much tidier.



In April the insurance claim for equipment replacement was agreed. The team cut the grass at Borrowwash and it looked pristine as you can see.



At Draycott the 'canal' had filled up with accumulating vegetation, so the team cleared it all yet again and allowed the water level to fall back to normal. In order to reduce maintenance, they enhanced the 'gate' to allow a better flow through and easier clearance.



The teams also planted saplings on top of the 'Great Wall of Borrowwash'.



On the other side of Station Road a space was cleared to allow for digger driver training for several volunteers who put themselves forward for future



excavation works. David organised the special event via the Waterways Recovery Group (WRG) and talked to them about a further WRG visit to Borrowwash later in the summer. This could fit well with a project within the IWA being undertaken by Chesterfield, Buckingham and myself on behalf of Derby to expand the provision of central help for restoration projects.

A little further up the canal line by Ullikers Bridge we had some sad news from local farmers, the Meynalls, that one of the horses grazing by the canal line had been poisoned by sycamore shoots. It is a pretty gruesome death and the remaining animals had been removed from possible harm, but we looked at how we could map out the various trees between Spondon Bourne and Station Road, Borrowwash, to see which to encourage and which were in the way and non-native. This could later be combined with the farmer's research at Ullikers.

We had proof that we are a proper canal - our first shopping trolleys dumped in the Spondon section. They were removed reasonably quickly, but



In May our working parties were again busy. The focus was on Anglers Lane, where the vegetation was cut back and the area tidied up again. It had been pretty much overgrown after the original efforts to clear the area a couple of years ago.



Work on the Borrowwash wall continued with mortar being applied to bed in the stones.



At Draycott further work was done to manage the vegetation growth, but we discovered that vandals had destroyed the steps, built a few years ago, where the canal goes under Derby Road in Borrowwash. The timber frames had been pulled up and thrown across the canal. We looked at options to make longer lasting repairs.

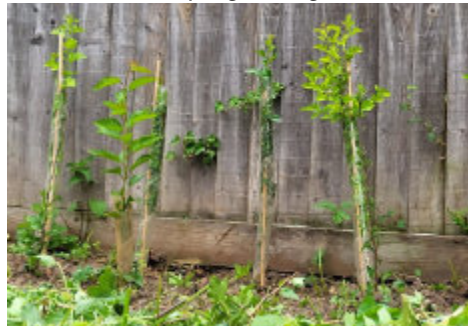
The highlight of May was the digger driver training after which there were three more qualified drivers waiting for an opportunity to dig holes in the canal line - perhaps at Draycott winding hole?

In June we saw a real increase in companies offering volunteer support. Pictured are volunteers from Vinci Construction, who joined us for a few weeks.



It was a great chance to build relationships with supportive companies, although needing a fair bit of organisation and safety checking. They all seem to enjoy it and it really helped spread the message. We hoped that some of the volunteers would also continue to support us privately.

It was more of the same with our volunteer working parties. The grass looked good at Borrowwash and by Station Road; work had also been undertaken at Sandiacre and Spondon. The planted whips at Borrowwash had taken and were progressing well.



The most important achievement was

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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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the installation of Eddy's bench at Draycott. It was a real team effort and the opening was undertaken by Eddy's widow, Linda, and all their friends.



There was also some activity at Chellaston. We continued to have a regular and positive dialogue with the developers of land alongside the canal at Chellaston. Development there is a slow process, but it is important to be in at the start rather than arguing changes when plans have been drawn up. In preparation for this we undertook a Ground Penetrating Radar survey on the field south of the A50 to determine the location of major gas pipes and utilities.



Early results (to be confirmed) suggested they will be lower than any marina. With this we could look again at options for development of the connection to the Trent and Mersey at Swarkestone Lock and formulate a plan to work with both the farmer and the developer across the A50.

We pushed on with the sewer relocation at Sandiacre Lock. After further meetings with Severn Trent and residents on site we thought we had a plan, but would be looking at further exploratory groundworks.

At Draycott we had refined the quotes for works and visited the Lichfield and Hatherton Canal to see one of the bidders in action. They were installing a length of lined canal close to the A38. Our thanks particularly to Bob Williams and engineer Derek Lord for giving us their time and expertise. Taking their advice we looked to employ a managing engineer to specify and control the works and would be talking to a possible candidate in late June.



Whilst managing the bids was important, we were also trying to agree the drainage of nearby fields with the aim of providing additional water for the canal and preventing wet patches. The

first meeting with the owner seemed to be positive.

In July the working parties were very active (between showers). There was a push to tidy up at Chellaston. We had been asked to sort out a fallen tree and took the opportunity to install an interpretation panel.



At Anglers Lane the areas alongside the path were overgrown and we had a team there bringing it back under control. We also dealt with a couple of trees that were threatening to drop branches.



We have a couple of people able to operate a MEWP (Mobile Elevated Working Platform) and so were able to take down the offending trees without damaging the telephone wires and buildings. So we met our safety obligations and saved money by not hiring a contractor.

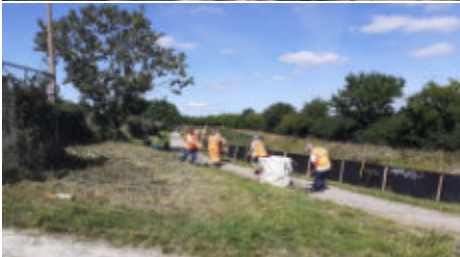


We also kept an eye on the ash tree outside the Cottages to see if the ash die back treatment had worked or if it would need to be taken down as well.

We were pleased to have a CSR party of Rolls-Royce managers at the Cottages who extended the paving around the bench, did some grass cutting and railing painting, which they seemed to enjoy, and had an afternoon management meeting in the Cottages rooms. They seemed impressed with the project overall and we are hopeful of further support from them and other R-R staff.



During August our volunteers were active on most parts of the canal line - the perfect growing conditions had accelerated grass and weed growth. At Draycott we worked to keep the pathway clear and manage the water voles receptor area. The team cut back around the vole fence, both inside and out, and cleared the bunds. They were again helped by the Vinci team. It's great to have repeat attendees - they are easier to manage once they know the job and 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 has mown the stretch west of the Navigation Inn for many years but on the last cut his equipment was damaged by rubbish hidden in the long grass. His efforts have always been much appreciated, but it seems we'll have to use our little tractor and mow more often in future. As always it is difficult to balance the wildlife benefits of less regular mowing with the practical considerations for volunteers.



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

Thanks to all volunteers for their efforts.

Cottages

In April, Brian Allen installed a memorial bench on behalf of past Erewash Riders members. Made of recycled plastic, it is bolted into concrete blocks to make sure it isn't moved. The installation is temporary pending the construction of the Hopwell Road Crossing when I'm sure we can relocate it.



We were making steady progress with the negotiation to buy the winding hole east of Hopwell Road together with the section of canal path running towards Breaston. When concluded this would allow further plans for water and tree management to be made.



In the Cottage Café, Don and Tony added finishing touches to the décor in the Museum room. They found a wool rug, a mirror and other furniture, and even got the look-alike gas mantle operating. It's now an added feature as café visitors can take afternoon tea in there.

We received a donation of an unfinished model narrow boat. If anyone would like to take the matter on and add the finishing touches we would have a fine model to display to the public. Please let me know if you are interested.



The Trust decided to take over management of the lettings of the Cottages as it was dealing with all the issues itself - there was little point in paying out fees without good reason.

Our thanks to the kind donors of artefacts for the Café Museum - we received a tin bath, hurricane lamp and a few other items. We now have an updated information panel describing the restoration and some of the history. Visitors are fascinated by the restoration story and it helps the café's business and our support.

Events

We attended Breaston Gala on May 1st and had a brilliant day. We took both pop-up marquees together with the new information boards that Peter and I had developed and generated a great deal of interest. We signed a few members and gave away a lot of leaflets. Great interest was shown in the river boat and café. In the picture are Chris, Maz, Anne, Peter, Charlie and David, but we also had support from other members during the day.



In June there was quite a bit of event activity. Not just the Chesterfield Canal Festival at Staveley, where they had all four of their trip boats at the basin and plying their trade, but also at Langley Mill Basin and Chellaston.

Langley Mill was a traditional canal



based event, which is put on by the Erewash Canal Preservation and Development Association every five years to celebrate bringing the Basin back to life. It was held over the three days of the Whitsunday bank holiday. We had lots of boats, lots of canal people and some magnificent fly pasts. It was a time for catching up with fellow enthusiasts and comparing notes and even testing out the beer tent. It was very enjoyable and generated a good level of interest and support.



The Spirit of Chellaston took place three weeks later. As a local public event our objective was to inform and engage with locals. We continue our dialogue with local developers and want to ensure the public there know what we are doing and have every chance to support us. Unfortunately it was a reasonably quiet event.

We are still doing the reckoning at Chesterfield, but the event was prefaced with a run down for 'dignitaries' of what they were doing. I was invited and found it useful to see the landscape ready for their next push and of course catch up with CRT and IWA senior people and

remind them what we are doing.

We decided not to attend the National IWA at Pelsell - it was too far away to be likely to generate interest in Derby and a

Conference Networking

On 18th March David Savidge and I attended the annual National Restoration Conference held in Chesterfield and organised by CRT and the IWA. We heard about the success of Chesterfield Canal Trust in attracting funding and working with the County Council Countryside department. We hoped to enhance our relationship with DCC Countryside and gain assistance for the more rural areas of Derbyshire that we are already working in.

Members' Meetings

We had a well attended meeting on February 28th - Clare Howard and Sue Stone from Little Eaton talked about the canal in that area and the work to improve what's left of it.

Many thanks to David and Pauline Jennings who gave a talk about the Derby Canal in the city on March 28th. At the meeting copies of large photos were handed to the audience to look through and rarely has there been so much interest as everyone reminisced and compared notes.

On April 25th, we had an enjoyable and well supported evening listening to a talk by one of their civil engineers on how the Bennerley Viaduct restoration has progressed. *[I ran an article about that in Packet 92 - Ed]*

Rod Auton from the Chesterfield Canal Trust gave a talk about the restoration of

long way for volunteers to travel for a three day event. However, we planned to attend again at Shardlow over the weekend of 9th/10th of September.



their canal on May 23rd. They have 46 miles of canal of which 37 are now navigable and a section of only 9 miles, which includes the partially collapsed Norwood Tunnel, awaits restoration. The plan is to complete the full restoration by 2027, the 250th anniversary of the canal's opening. Rod bought with him an impressive rack of publications which we envied. He in turn envied the facilities we have at the Cottages!

On June 27th, we were treated to an entertaining talk about the Sandiacre Lock Cottages, which embraced quite a lot of the history of the Erewash Canal, the Nutbrook Canal and the Stanton Ironworks. *[When closure of the Erewash Canal was proposed in 1965, locals who had seen what had happened to the Derby Canal took action to save their canal and so the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association was born - Ed]*

The final members' meeting before the summer break was a walk around Little Eaton on July 25th. It covered areas of interest to the Derby Canal plus a few

other aspects and was hosted by Bill Hutchinson, who runs the local historical society.

Other Projects

In July there was limited progress to report as holidays were starting to have an impact.

We still awaited a revised quote for Sandiacre from Severn Trent, but were focusing on gaining expertise for Draycott. Our new Civil Engineer, Martin, had reviewed the programme and was producing a list of extra matters to be considered. We had a quote from an independent project manager (as used by Litchfield and Hatherton Canal Trust) to take control of the contracting and delivery of Draycott. We still needed feedback from local landowners so we could finalise the project specification. Our MP Trustee had intervened with Network Rail and we were hoping to make some progress.

We also entertained 30 engineers from the Institute of Engineering and Technology at the Draycott meeting room - again aiming to encourage expert volunteers and pro bono assistance. They seemed very interested in the

project and walked the line to see what the engineering issues were. It remained to be seen if there was any continued interest to strengthen the team further. I was also delighted to meet the new Labour leader of Erewash Borough Council who attended the meeting and was very supportive.

In August we received the first of two quotes relating to Sandiacre, and were about to assess the options with the Engineering team and hopefully find a practical way to achieve lock restoration with wildlife and tree protection.

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

The Derby Arm project design was being reassessed and Mike was continuing to work with the University and had a team 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 were 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...

Borrowwash Top Lock in 1905 - William Dyche



'Derby Museums Collection 2023'

William Dyche was born in Borrowwash in 1863 and spent the first 7 years of his life there. He painted a series of 11 watercolours of Borrowwash and Ockbrook which were exhibited in Borrowwash library in 1997. The paintings are currently held by Derby museum;

William gifted them in 1936. A print of this painting can be seen upstairs at the Cottages.

[I went to the Derby Museums to view this collection in the flesh and they were stunning - Ed]

The Clock House - Clare Howard

The following is an extract from Clare Howard's article 'The Clock House: Life and work on the Canal 1795 to the present day':

The Clock House was built in 1795 by the Derby Canal Company to house the canal agents and their families. For almost 150 years it was one of Little Eaton's most iconic buildings, standing prominently at the head of the canal, acting as the villagers' timepiece and becoming home to scores of families who worked on the canal, the railway, the mills and the quarries.

In the 1970s and 1980s it slowly became hidden from view by industrial buildings, and many of Little Eaton's current residents are not even aware it exists, let alone the details of its rich history.

This painting, now hanging inside the Clock House, shows how important a landmark it used to be for the village. It is a reproduction of one of the most famous photographs, taken in 1908 of the house and the last load of coal to be



transported on the canal to Derby, having been brought to the village by the 'gang' of horses and wagons from the pits at Denby.

The Derby Canal was first advocated by James Brindley in 1771 as the transport system in the town was poor, coal was expensive, the roads were inadequate and the river Derwent was prone to flooding. Twenty years later, in September 1791, a meeting was held by a committee of businessmen at the Bell Inn in Derby to discuss the cutting of a canal - several such meetings were held, and the committee commissioned Benjamin Outram to survey and estimate for a broad canal to run from Swarkestone to Denby in the Bottle Brook Valley north of Derby, with a branch to Sandiacre on the Erewash Canal. Because of the high cost which would have been involved in cutting the steeply graded section from Little Eaton to Denby, it was decided that this northern part should be a tramroad up to the Denby collieries.

The cost of the construction was £60,000 - around £60 million in today's money.

This plan was accepted and the petition to parliament was presented on the 2nd of February, 1793, with Royal Assent being given on the 7th of May, 1793. The

canal mainly carried coal - also stone, corn and cement.

The Little Eaton Gangway, or tramroad, ran from the end of the canal in Little Eaton to the collieries at Denby. Under the direction of Benjamin Outram, the gangway took two years to build from 1793 to 1795. Wagons loaded with coals were pulled by horses up and down the line, which was single track with passing places. The tramroad was laid with L-section, cast-iron rails, so that the wagon's wheels fitted inside the rails, rather than the usual method used in railway tracks. The rails were 3 feet long and they weighed 28lb.

A unique feature of the tramroad was that the top of the wagons were detachable boxes, which were lifted from the wheelsets and placed directly in the waiting narrowboats, and when they arrived in Derby they were lifted out and placed on carts for haulage around the city - probably the first form of containerisation in the world.

The wagons themselves hardly changed in over 100 years of use on the gangway. They were horse drawn and held 2 tons of coal each (48cwt).

The gangway itself became a feature of the village, with horses and wagons travelling up from the canal, behind the Queen's Head, along what is now Alfreton Road, under Jack O'Darley's bridge and on to Denby.

On completion of the Little Eaton line of the canal and the tramroad, the first coals were delivered to Derby in May

1795. It took three hours for the coal to travel the four miles from Little Eaton to Derby. William Drury Lowe, the owner of the pits at Denby, ordered that the first boatload of coal be distributed for the benefit of the poor.

The Clock House was completed after the opening of the canal and became the home of the first Canal Agent within a year. The building was three stories at the front and two at the back. It was split into three smaller houses, with a fourth added 40 years later in about

1840. The two houses at the front, overlooking the canal, consisted of a small kitchen/living room and two bedrooms, spread over three floors. The two houses at the back were two storeys, and laid out in the traditional 2 up / 2 down manner.

For further reading see:

<https://www.lelhs.org.uk/topics/places/clock-house>

Volunteer Lock Keeping - Dave Hatherly

The East Midlands has a network of canals, mostly with broad locks. If you venture east, passing through Nottingham, you will eventually find yourself on the River Trent, close to Trent Bridge and opposite the Forest football ground. The Trent Navigation then gives you the opportunity to cruise through to Newark and on to the tidal river, eventually into the Humber Estuary.



Travelling downstream, after 2.5 miles, Holme Sluice appears. This was constructed in 1955 to regulate river levels through Nottingham and avoid

flooding in the Colwick area. To the right of this, alongside the Canoe Slalom and the Water Sports Centre, is Holme Lock, lock no. 8. This is the deepest of the river locks with a fall of 13 feet.



If you are used to the broad locks in our area, with a width of 14 feet and length 72 feet, Holme Lock is huge in comparison! It was built for vessels which would transport goods from the ports in the Humber Estuary to the centre of Nottingham. The width is 30 feet and length 170 feet. It is big enough to take eight full size (72 feet) narrowboats and still have spare room.



Each of these locks is usually manned by Volunteer Lock Keepers (VLKs) from 0900-1700 hrs throughout the boating season, (Easter to the end of October) with Holme Lock given priority because of it's depth. The role of the VLKs is to assist the safe passage of boats along the river and through the locks.

Each lock has traffic lights and when travelling downstream (or upstream), you will be met with either red - stop, red/green - lock being prepared, or green - proceed with care. You can contact each VLK either by VHF radio or mobile phone, to let them know of your presence. These numbers are available on a small card at each lock.

Travelling downstream is the easiest passage. You will be shown where to position the boat and where to tie the

ropes. At regular intervals, along the side of the lock, there are risers, vertical cables, where you can loop your ropes and then descend gracefully. The emptying takes around 10 minutes, the bottom gates then open and you are able to continue your journey. On your departure the VLK will then contact the next VLK downstream, either using a mobile phone or VHF radio, giving the details of your craft and the estimated time of your arrival. This does two things; the VLKs will be looking out for you as you proceed on your journey and the next lock may well be ready for you to enter on arrival.

Travelling upstream is more daunting. You may well have confirmed your presence to the VLK and with a green traffic light, you are able to proceed into the lock chamber. The VLK will be standing above you on the lockside, giving you clear instructions where to



position your boat and which of the risers to use for your ropes. This will be towards the rear of the lock, keeping a good distance from the top gates and the turbulence from the opening gate paddles.

As you look ahead you will see the cil

and top gates rising up in front of you, making you and your craft feel very small. On closing the bottom gates, the VLK will confirm that you are happy to proceed and then partially open the gate paddle on the same side as your boat. Due the angle of the gate, this sends a stream of water into the chamber, bouncing off the opposite side, eventually gently pushing the bow of your boat into the lock side. As the levels rise, both gate paddles will be opened a little at a time. You will see the VLK standing at the lock side, leaning against a railing, just watching your boat, but ready to act if problems arise. After a gentle ascent of about 25 minutes, the top gates will open and you will be on your way, with a wave from the VLK.

The pleasant and important part of being a VLK is chatting with boaters. Many VLKs are boaters themselves and are there to give advice; general, mooring locations downstream or on local amenities. Unfortunately there are no shops near to Holme Lock, but one of my colleagues, on realising that a boat and crew were very short on supplies, at 1700 hrs, when he was off duty, used his car to take a member of the crew for a quick shop in West Bridgford!

Most boaters (99%?) are a delight, but men of a certain age can be problematic. They have been boating for over 50 years and do not want to be told what to do! Unfortunately their skills are not what they were.

On one occasion, with a boat travelling upstream and me standing indicating which riser to use for the bow rope, the boat entered the lock at high speed. The lady at the bow made a grab for the riser

I was pointing at and, with the boat still at speed, tried to slow the boat, which is never a wise move. She was nearly pulled overboard, but fortunately let go. The next riser was missed and eventually the boat came to a standstill.

As the boat was much further forward than I would like, I requested that the boat move back. This was met with complaints, but this movement, with much revving, caused the stern to float away from the lock side and further issues! It took some time for the boat to be tied forward and aft. I kept my distance as the boat rose in the lock.

The lady, from the bow, called to me "he's hard of hearing and won't be told". This didn't surprise me at all. An experienced boater will enter the lock at a gentle speed, follow the instructions from me, watch the person at the bow, and slow to a halt. Then the boat is secured with the minimum of effort.

Another story comes to mind. I was at Stoke Lock, opposite Radcliffe on Trent and a lady appeared at my side. I wasn't aware of any boats I upstream at that time, so it took me by surprise. I was told that she and a friend had just collected the boat (not sure where from) and this was their first lock ever. I opened the bottom gates, the boat came in and stopped alongside the lock chamber.

The lady at the tiller was not sure what should happen next and, after discussion, was not happy about accessing and tying the bow rope to the riser. I made a quick decision - I placed the mobile phone and VHF handset on the ground and, with my life jacket on, climbed down the lockside ladder on to



who becomes your mentor. As we use a VHF Marine frequency, each VLK is required to undertake a day's training to obtain a VHF radio licence. After several training sessions, when it is agreed that you are ready, an independent member of the Canal and River Trust will come and assess you. Most of the assessment is watching you work, but also a lot of "what do you do when" and "what if" questions. So much of it is common sense.

the roof of the boat. Securing bow and aft ropes, I then climbed back up the ladder and then proceeded opening the gate paddles. I advised the two ladies that they both stay on the boat at the next lock, with one at the bow and follow the instructions given. On departure, I called the VLK at Holme Lock (the next lock upstream) and explained that the crew would need some extra assistance, I assume that there was no need to use the lock ladder a second time.

When you start, there is "hands on", training given by an experienced VLK

Being a VLK is certainly an enjoyable and rewarding pastime. Days can be quiet or busy, four boats or 24. The most number of boats I have had in Holme Lock at the same time was five, two narrowboats, two small cruisers and large cruiser (Gin Palace) where the owner looks down on you from on high. Just chatting to boaters really is the best part, there are some lovely people about and your role is appreciated. It's a pleasure working as a team to ensure the safe passage of boats on the River Trent. I do hope that you weren't that boater of a certain age!

Outram Automatic Commentary System - Simon Knott

Back in 2022, before the trip boat Outram began operating, an audio commentary was produced which was to be played as the boat went up and down the river from the Silk Mill to Darley Abbey and back. This commentary highlighted aspects of the history of the Derby canal, the river and the Derwent valley. The commentary was narrated by David Suchet and had been broken down into tracks that were intended to be played as the boat approached key landmarks along the way. The

commentary was intended to be started by the crew before departure and run continuously during the trip. However, during the 2022 trips we discovered there was too much variation in boat speed and other factors that meant the timing was out. This then required correction by the crew, and this was taking up too much time and distracting them from other duties.

We started discussing having a system based on Global Positioning System

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(GPS) which would automatically detect the boat's location and play the appropriate track. A chance discussion with one of the drivers, who also worked on the Birdswood trip boat on the Cromford Canal, revealed the information that Birdswood had such a system. This was known as the Birdswood Automatic Commentary System (BACS) and had been developed by one of the Cromford volunteers. After some conversations backwards and forwards between the two organisations Cromford generously agreed to provide us with the details of their system along with a copy of the controlling software written in a programming language called Python.

BACS was based on a Raspberry Pi microcomputer with a small display and an attached GPS receiver. The resulting device looks a little like a small tablet computer. Due to an over-hasty confession that I had just acquired a Raspberry Pi and had recently taught myself Python to help my son learn it, a volunteer to adapt the system for our use was identified.

Following a visit to Birdswood to see BACS in use and a good, detailed discussion with the Cromford developer I set about creating the Outram Automatic Commentary System (OACS) and getting it up and running by the time we started operating again in 2023. Mike Wingfield managed to acquire a spare Raspberry Pi that could be used on the project, and we quickly acquired the other necessary components.

Once OACS had reached the stage of being ready to test (no software engineer would ever use the word "finished") there was a slight issue in

that Outram was stuck at its winter mooring and wasn't due to be available for a few weeks. Even then there would be little time for testing before the trips started in April. The solution was a small adaption to the power supply and, assisted by my wife Philippa at the wheel, we installed OACS in her car with the GPS receiver on the roof. We then drove around our village and recorded the GPS locations of some local points of interest (pubs mostly!). Having crafted this into an appropriate trip file with associated soundtracks (again provided by Philippa) we drove around again and - nothing! A little investigation showed that going too fast failed to trigger the commentary. After small adjustments to the software and our speed, we tried again - success, OACS told us all about the delights of our village!

Once Outram moved to Causey Bridge in March, Mike and I set about installing the system. A new panel was introduced in the cupboard to mount OACS on. We also needed to find a location for the GPS receiver as it doesn't function if it's inside a metal boat. We didn't want to make holes in the roof for water to get through but a location near the hatch which is always open when underway appears to work well. A picture of OACS in operation is below.



During our test trips in late March 2023 a wrinkle appeared that probably doesn't affect BACS in the same way. GPS data is briefly lost when Outram passes under a bridge. This is particularly an issue as we are currently operating from a boarding point under Causey Bridge and needed some adjustments to the location data.

At the time of writing we have only had

Update from Chesterfield Canal Trust - Rod Auton

We have had a very busy time with Festivals recently. We took our promotional trailer, James Brindley (JB), and our ex-BW workboat, Python, to the Erewash Rally at the end of May. The Python bookstall did a roaring trade over all three days, and we were constantly busy on JB. We had lots of enquiries about our restoration scheme, our Festival and a hundred and one other questions about cycling, walking, history etc.

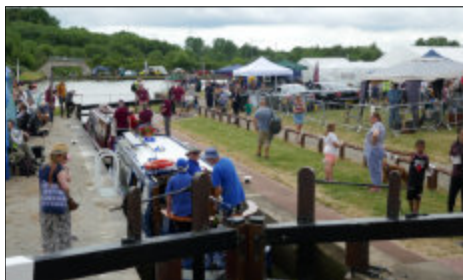


At the end of June, we had our own Festival at Staveley Town Basin. This will probably be the last one to be held on the site because Derbyshire County Council will start to develop it next year. We had a very successful Business Event on the Friday to which came many decision makers. There were politicians, local authority officers, waterways organisations, business people and journalists who heard about the work of

a few trips but the system appears to be working and is reducing the crew workload. Once the new boarding platform becomes available, we will need to make some further adjustments and if plans progress for other types of trip, then we will need to set up the system for those too.

[The system has been running successfully for many months now - Ed]

the Chesterfield Canal Partnership and the plans for spending the total of £7.5m of levelling up money for further restoration awarded to us and to DCC as part of the Staveley Town Deal.



The Festival itself over the weekend was very well-attended and featured a very wide range of attractions and entertainment. The only downer was that the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight was grounded over the weekend, so we missed out on the Spitfire and Hurricane flypasts.

We are just gearing up for the Tapton Lock Festival which is a superb family event run by the DCC Countryside Service in September.

As I write this in August, we are in the middle of the very busy period for our

tripboats with all four in operation several days a week on either public trips or charters.

Thank goodness we have had some rain. Last summer the Derbyshire section was closed for virtually the whole of August because of a 'Hands off flow' notice from the Environment Agency, meaning we could not get water from the River Rother which feeds the canal in Chesterfield.

Believe it or not, at the time of writing

Would you like to help the Derby Canal Restoration?

We would like to thank those who have already come forward to offer their help with the restoration.

Engineering: We now have a tunnel expert (Steve), a company providing CE consultancy, and a Civil Engineer (Martin) with specific expertise on roads and canals. This covers most of the gap, but we would still welcome anybody with engineering skills who would like to join our new, enlarged, engineering team.

Ecology: We now have a volunteer (Denise) who is taking the lead on ecology and will be undergoing training in key areas, such as water voles. She has been involved in the latest ecological survey of the canal path, but we welcome anyone who wants to work with her, whatever their past experience. So if you can get involved with surveys and monitoring, or want to help rejuvenate the biodiversity of the canal route, please join the team.

IT: Thanks to Sue who has been heavily involved in developing our river boat volunteer allocations on line.

we were already preparing for our Santa Specials with bookings opening on 1st October!

Finally, we have got an artist's impression of the new Trans-Pennine Trail bridge at Staveley that will be built early in the New Year.



Fundraising: We now have access to a fundraiser on a paid basis, but a volunteer is still needed to work with her.

Marketing: We have a good team dealing with our existing website, social media and the Packet, but we need to keep up with new trends and to stimulate interest in new groups of the public. If you have up to date social media nous or want to write articles about our activities please join our team.

In all the above cases experience and knowledge is very helpful, but the key criteria is a desire to change our communities for the better. The amount of time spent will be set by your availability, but the salary is non-existent! The reward comes from achieving progress and working with other passionate people.

If you are interested, then please contact Chris Madge on 07827 946444 or by email at

chris.madge@derbycanal.org.uk to discuss further.

STANDFIRST - CEO, IWA

The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) is the only independent, national charity dedicated to supporting and regenerating Britain's navigable rivers and canals as places for leisure, living and business.

IWA was formed to protect our inland waterways in 1946 at a time when they were under threat. As a result of IWA's work many navigations that would have closed remained open. Appreciation of the value of our waterways began to grow and restoration schemes got under way. We can now say proudly that since IWA was formed 500 miles of waterways have been restored and another 500 miles are under restoration.



Dee Lock in its present state

But, gravely, the clock is starting to turn backwards. The government has announced it's cutting its grant to Canal and River Trust, putting the network's future in peril. IWA is very concerned that without adequate funding our waterways will again face closures and the millions of hours of volunteer time spent restoring and protecting waterways will be lost.

We launched the "Protect Our Waterways" campaign in March 2023 and, by joining IWA, you will strengthen

our voice.



Entrance to Old Bedford River 2

Your society is doing a sterling job of restoring your stretch of the navigation and IWA is proud to support the work of societies across the country. Our support includes:

- Educating politicians about the many and varied benefits of our waterways
- Access to expertise to guide your projects through the planning system
- Engineering and heritage expertise to call upon
- Practical Restoration Handbook - the 'go to resource' for all volunteers involved in waterways restoration
- Help with construction costing and planning
- Help with construction projects through WRG camps and weekends
- Sharing knowledge and ideas through the Restoration Hub

- Technical expertise – engineering, planning and heritage etc.
- Provision of cost-effective insurance for restoration projects

Only IWA provides this range of support to the waterways family, but now we need every member of this society to help to reverse this damaging decision. Restoration projects will become untenable. You know better than anyone that it is far more costly to repair and restore than to prevent decline in the first place. Here is how you can - and should - support our campaign:

- As well as being an individual society member, please join IWA. You will have access to all the benefits above and more. Your membership will help strengthen our voice to protect the network and ensure another 500 miles are restored.
- Make a one-off or regular donation to IWA towards our campaign costs.

- Sign up for our mailing list where you'll find links to our petition and how to write to your MP.
- Spread the word - please use your communication channels to engage as many of your local waterways users as possible and direct them to our website. It will only take you a few minutes via our website www.waterways.org.uk, but could put the waterways on the right path for years ahead.



Canal Old Tram Bridge, Preston

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