

CAMP REPORT Derby Canal

Our volunteers were back at Borrowwash, putting the finishing touches on a lock chamber rebuild, getting through lots of mortar... and ice cream...

Derby Canal Camp 2019... or is it 2018? Who knows!

Saturday - The A Team: A crack team of volunteers from far and wide descended upon West Hallam (our home for the week) where we stumbled across an unexpected discovery in the 'facilities' ... last year's camp report! (sorry Martin)

The flags and bunting were out, flying high for us once again, along with a plethora of scarecrows - a couple were based upon the moon landing.

As per the norm (as normal as WRGies can be) kit was checked and prepped for the week ahead, after which we made our way to the dining room for introductions, health & safety briefings, and most importantly: the toaster toolbox talk. We visited the worksite to get the lay of the land and to see if the elusive digger had arrived - alas, it had not. We made a swift return to the accommodation in time for a superb meal, and an evening of social activities... pub?

Sunday - Mr December! We arrived on site in Borrowwash bright and early (8 something). Jess helped us kickstart the day with a morning warm up routine - something about elephants and rainbows ... and a bacon sandwich.

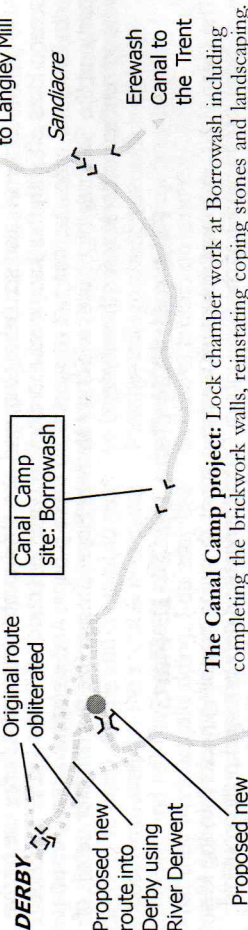
Vans were unpacked, welfare area setup and tasks allocated. Scaffolding in the lock chamber was checked, areas to be worked on were cleared and prepped ready to lay many, many blocks, bricks and coping stones.

Greg... or was it Ross? checked levels across site with assistance from Doris (the dumpy level), showing that the current height of the wash walls had to be raised considerably. Mixers (just the two today) were set up in eager anticipation of the never-ending demand for lime mortar, concrete and facing mix for cast coping stones. Much to everyone's delight, Mr December made a surprise appearance to site.

At the top of the day, one of the biggest tasks of the day was laying a ma-

FACT FILE Derby & Sandiacre Canal

Length: 14 miles Locks: 9 (on main line Swarkestone-Sandiacre) Date closed: 1964



Why? Borrowwash Lower Lock was part-restored years ago, and there's hope of possible rewatering in that area so it made sense to finish it.

The wider picture: The Derby & Sandiacre Canal Society aim to eventually reopen the through route from Sandiacre (where they've recently begun another lock restoration project) to Swarkestone plus a link to Derby on a new route via a boat lift and the River Derwent. And as an indication of what might one day happen, they plan to run a trip-boat on the river soon.

hoosie stone with a hole in it for the ground paddle mechanism, lead by Pete and Evvo.

We were also tasked with trialling "Tip" wheelbarrow handles ... they're possibly the best thing since penicillin!

After a long, hard and hot (behave!) day's graft we ambled over to the show-ers (a whole 1 minute walk from site) to clean up and cool down.

The evening was spent playing crazy golf, and replenishing one's fluids - you'll never guess where!

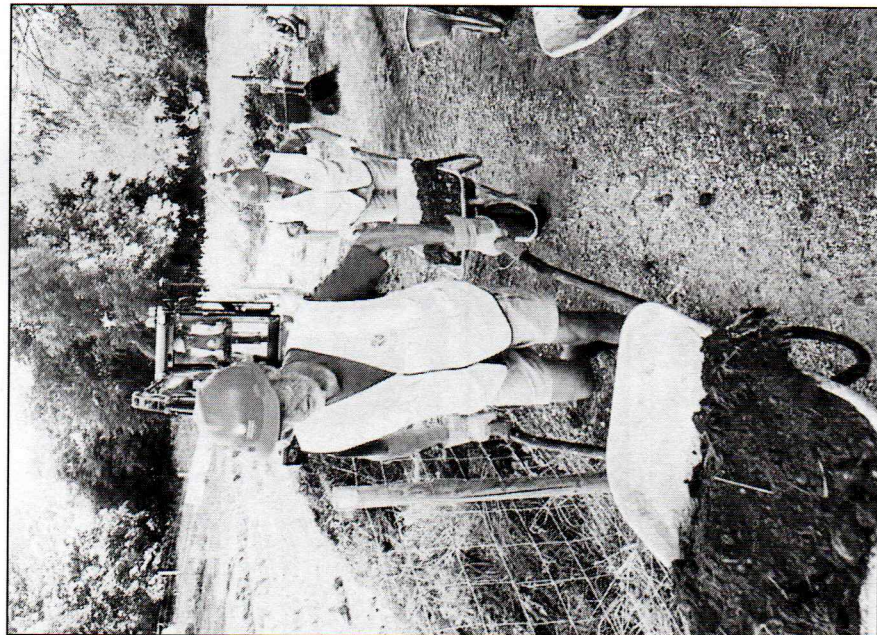
Monday: Once again, we arrived on site bright and early... I've learnt it's best not to question what time it is. The day started much the same as Sunday, although somewhat hotter. The magical mixing team were momentarily blessed with a third mixer ... until someone ripped the pulley cord out (Sorry Keith!) Thankfully, this was soon repaired and back in action in no time.

Further progress was made on Tina's wall, and

more coping stones were laid. Dave lead the charge in casting another coping stone and dressing yesterday's coper to match the existing and look like they were always there. The brand new excavator finally arrived, meaning we were able to relocate materials (sharp sand, yellow soft sand & ballast) closer to the work area, and also move some of the larger stones which were just too big and heavy to move by hand.

After a successful and productive day, we decamped to the pub for a quiz. Not that we're bitter about losing, but the team that won wrote the questions! We drowned our sorrows and eventually crawled home to bed.

Tuesday - "He caught a nail" The day was set to be hotter than yesterday... and my god, was it hot! All three mixers were set to



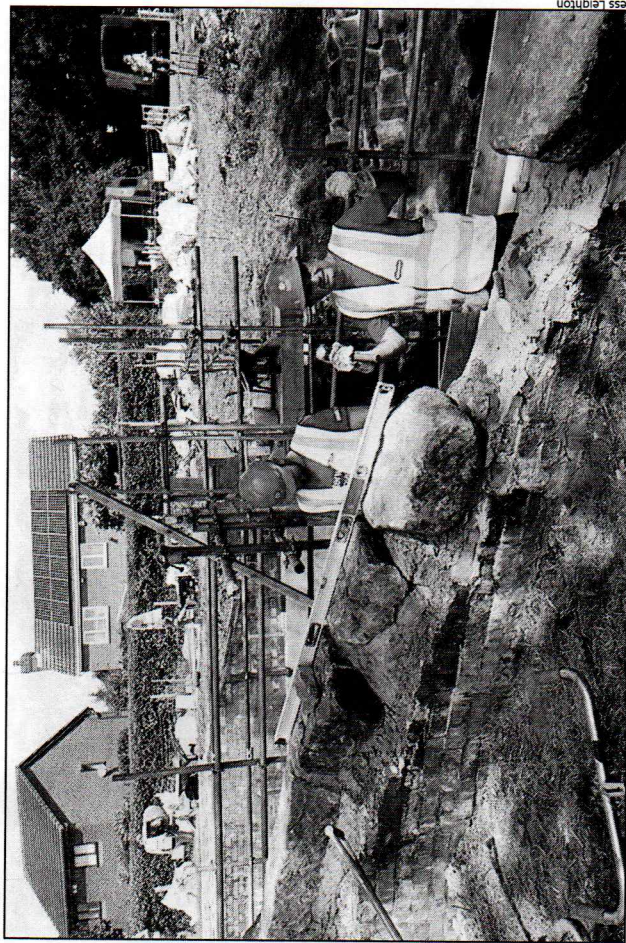
Barrowing soil for landscaping

work for another day of non-stop mixing. Further coping stones were laid, whilst the remainder of stones scattered across site were measured to create an inventory for ease of finding the right stone for the right hole. Some stones were made to measure and had to be cut to size by Jess and 'Ben Stihl-saw' throughout the week.

Work commenced on clearing and re-pointing the upper wing walls of the lock chamber.

Pete entertained us with a few of his jokes... we still don't get it!

Joyce from the Derby & Sandiacre Canal Trust treated us to ice creams, ice lollies and ice cold drinks to keep us cool, hydrated and motivated - they were greatly appreciated! For tonight's entertainment, we were invited to try our hand at bell ringing in



Reinstating coping stones on the lower wing walls...

the church located atop a hill behind the accommodation... needless to say, we were naturals! Before we got slapped with an ASBO for noise pollution, we left the bell ringing to the professionals and made our way back down the hill to relax... pub?

Wednesday - Scorchio! The weather truly was "Scorchio!" with the temperature continuing to climb toward the hottest day.

The trio of mixers were once again kept busy with high demand from the brick and stone layers - Can we have a fourth mixer?

Bricks and coping stones were laid on the offside wing-wall to the lock, whilst some oversized crazy paving was laid next to the offside paddle culvert. Vast progress continued on the great wall of Tina, bringing it ever closer to completion. A further two coping stones were cast. Joyce treated us to ice lollies and ice creams ... twice! We had ourselves a slightly earlier finish on site, and went on a rather picturesque drive through the Derbyshire countryside to Miller's Dale, where Colin had organised a very special evening activity... Abseiling from a bridge over the river Wye! It was a first for many, nerve-racking for some, but thoroughly enjoyed by all. With special thanks to Chris,

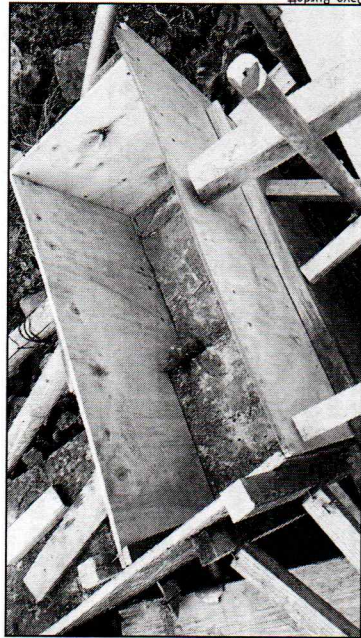
our absolutely brilliant instructor. We then went on a short drive to Darley Dale for Fish & Chips in the park.

Thursday - Welcome to Borrowash Barrowwash! It was the hottest day of the year... "too hot (hot damn!)" but that wasn't going to stop us. We were to become a human conveyor belt with wheelbarrows - with our two barrows and a further eight provided by the local canal trust we were an unstoppable machine... Just call us "The Barrowers".

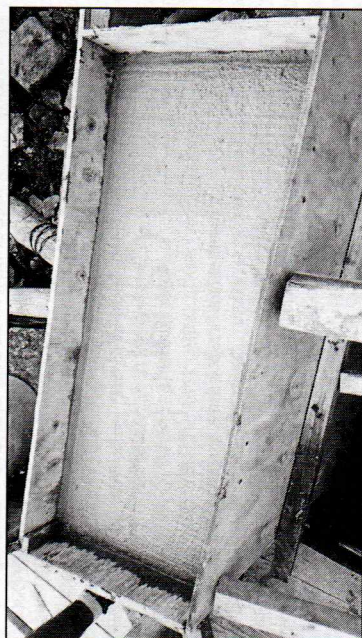
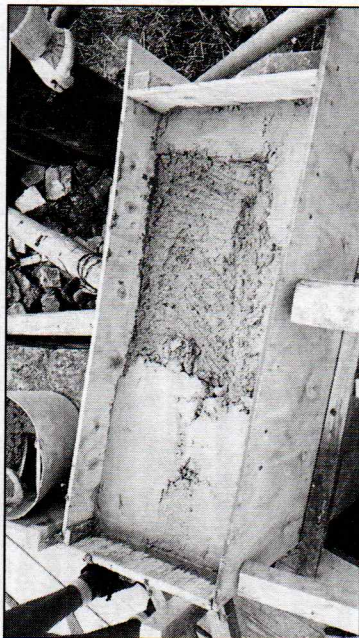
The wheelbarrows were filled with soil by the excavator, then conveyed up hill to be deposited along the lock wall to raise the ground level to that of the coping stones and towpath. Throughout the day we were kept going by frequent visits from Joyce for numerous, much needed ice cream breaks. The iTip handles were put to good use, thoroughly tested by all, and deemed to be an outstanding success.

"It's all in the wrist action - just make sure you keep it clean and use plenty of lube!"

The evening was spent watching and singing along to Bohemian Rhapsody in the



DAVE BURDITT



...and casting a concrete 'stone' in situ

frame, whilst Evvo hijacked a train. We made our way back to the pub to entertain the locals, then returned to the accom for a toast frenzy.

Although words could never do justice to how much we truly appreciate the amount of dedication and effort that goes into planning and running a camp, we'd like to say a massive thank you to our outstanding camp leader & assistant; Colin & David, and of course to our cook Ann-Marie for keeping us well fed throughout the week.

Not forgetting our crack team of volunteers; Tina, Jess, Jordan, El, Greg, X, Rex, Pete, Evvo, Steve, Dorothy, Stephen, Colin S.

With special thanks to the Derby & Sandiacre Canal Trust, West Hallam and The Punch-bowl!

WRG outdoor cinema, followed by cheese & biscuits... not forgetting the port.

Friday - WRGlastonbury

One big last push once again saw the mixers working flat out to meet demand from our pro brick and stone laying teams.

The great wall of Tina was completed, along with the upper wing walls and crazy paving on the topside of the lock. "Dressage" was performed on the two coping stones cast on Wednesday.

The afternoon was spent adding those finishing touches with finesse - the whole offside of the lock was landscaped to bring the levels up, and make it ready to be seeded. The excavator made light work of digging down to the canal bed at the bottom end of the lock, showing how it will look in the not too distant future. Kit was cleaned down and checked back in ready for the next camp.

After a well deserved shower we headed back to West Hallam for our last meal together and a night of celebrations - so as not to disturb those in need of a well deserved rest, we relocated to the local park armed with guitars and our best singing voices, which might explain why it rained so much - we sought refuge under the climbing

frame, whilst Evvo hijacked a train. We made our way back to the pub to entertain the locals, then returned to the accom for a toast frenzy.

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