

Chairman's Update

April 2024

I'm writing this having spent the afternoon driving the Riverboat. It was a bit chilly, but a good day all round—especially as I could pick up the football broadcast on Radio Derby. The success of the local team does seem to have a big impact on the feelgood feeling around the place—and the sunshine helps of course.

Cottages

The planned progress reported on the Cottages last time continued on track, which meant we were able to move back the tenants from No 2 into No 1 and advertise No 2 for a new tenant a week ago. So far we've had a few viewings and are hopeful of a new tenant very soon.



All this work has meant that we've also been able to clear out the rooms above the café, which had been storing the kitchens, radiators, etc. over the last few months. It's great as we now have a meeting room back in operation for use by ourselves or our contacts. To date we've entertained a local land owner and plan to have meetings with Network Rail and others. Of course it's good to have a café on tap below.



So after more than three months of daily work we've finally finished. But what happens when you've finished, well it appears that Don and Tony are determined to move back to refining the museum room. First step is the lamp shade, then on to the visitor information display.



It's been a long grind, but we're grateful for all the effort that looks like it will generate a very healthy surplus from the insurance settlement.

And it's not all hard grind as there have been regular snack breaks of tea, bacon butties and latterly ice

cream—when the café is open. Any comparison to Last of the Summer Wine is purely coincidental.



Working Parties

The teams have been dodging the variable weather and have now started the mowing season. Borrowwash Lock has had its first cut and this has promoted an amazing show of wild flowers.

We've celebrated Easter over the last month, so a few days off. Unfortunately it looks like some people have been bored with the holiday and have resorted to damaging the great wall of Borrowwash. They've been knocking over blocks and levering them out of position. It doesn't do too much for morale, but I'm pleased to report that the volunteers were able to get them back in place quickly and with schools resuming we're hoping there won't be a repeat.

As well as repairing damage the team have been adding



to the wall and are gradually using the blocks currently stored at Breaston. It's looking really impressive.

With these works progressing David's team has been looking at tidying up the storage at Breaston. We



currently rent space with Marcus Sail, but he is looking to retire and sell up, so we need to reduce the space taken up in case we need to find an alternative.

The pile of rusting scaffold pipes from at least a decade ago have been hiding a simple crane, so it looks like we may have another restoration project.

Draycott

We are now confident that the flooding risk has reduced for the summer and believe we are much more resilient. It is apparent that our aim to get a coordinated approach to water/flood management is making progress. We've had a first meeting with the EA, Network Rail and the County Council. This was promoted by NR, strangely on the day we agreed to set up a similar meeting. We are happy to let NR make the running as they seem to be looking to fund some works—and they've even promised to clear the amount they still owe us! After a first meeting we are now set to meet monthly to push for a solution. We've agreed to meet on home soil at the Cottages meeting room. There's obviously a long way to go on this, but it is definitely looking promising. Together with the possibility of water transfer, designing the canal for flood protection gives us two options to find funding. Of course the down side is that we may look to reduce the level of the canal to aid this, but although we would need to deal with the extra spoil generated and possible lining if we go through the



original clay it may be worth it overall and ease the issues with crossings.

As part of the progress on the Draycott/Breaston area we have been in touch with Peveril Homes, who now seem to be happy to work with us. We've already had contact to mark out boundaries east of Hopwell Road (as previously reported) and are now in talks to use one of their fields as a water meadow, which might ease the water vole management and avoid the need for pumps along the Draycott stretch. It is possible that the developer can make use of Biodiversity Net Gains to make it financially viable for them and we have volunteers to establish the water meadow landscaping. Again it is early days, but a positive sign.

On the issue of water voles we have not seen evidence of voles for some months, but have seen mink trails in our monitoring stations. As a result we will now be required to set traps for mink to ensure they don't decimate other wildlife.



And finally, but perhaps most importantly we have completed on one stretch of land between Hopwell Road and Breaston. This stretch was sold to us at a very fair price by Marcus Sail, a long term supporter, who has provided storage for us on his farm for years. The sale of land is part of his retirement plan, but we know that allowing us to buy the land caused him considerable disruption as others wanted to buy it as a ransom strip. We are very grateful to Marcus for his substantial help with this. Paul and I attended his solicitors to sign the paperwork earlier this month.

We also have a completion date set for 25th April for the purchase of the Sustrans section immediately east of Hopwell Road, which includes the winding hole. We are now drawing up plans to open the winding hole as an attenuation pound. We'll also be laying hedges and installing fencing, so plenty to distract our working parties from the Borrowash wall in the future!

We are also aware that Erewash Borough Council have been allocated up to £5m from the Levelling Up Fund in the last budget for projects in the Borough. We are in the process of applying for funds to help us with the canal restoration and community assets in the area around Borrowash and Draycott. It's a very tight timetable, but with our Civil Engineering expertise we are in a good position to make a good stab at a professional application despite the short notice.

Sandiacre

We are awaiting an update from STW and contractors on the quotation and design. Unfortunately we haven't seen any progress over the last 4 weeks.

Derby Riverboat

Our Riverboat is up and running and the sunshine is helping to generate interest. Licensing has confirmed a three yearly licence renewal so we are now getting lapsed drivers back to registration—although this is proving slow due to challenges with DBS registration. We also have three new volunteers, who are looking to be licenced by the end of May. At present only Andy and I are doing the driving, but we're not yet into a full schedule. It'll be great when we are up to numbers and can spread it around a bit.

The Council have yet again failed to meet their promise on response regarding funding the pontoon base. We are preparing the way for raising additional funding, but everything waits the Council's confirmation. Inevitably we've asked our DCC Trustees to push matters on, but it is painfully slow progress.



We have been concerned about what will happen during the period of building flood defence walls near to the boat station. At a presentation in the city the Council presented their idea of their design

to key business and other city stakeholders. It was met with many complaints, and called unimaginative and not what the city wants. This has been our line for some considerable time, so it is good to know we have allies. We are now looking at getting a group together to provide input to the design and see if we can get them to improve the city centre as well as build a wall right through it. It is also good news that we are now recognised as influential and with good ideas on riverside developments. The Museum of Making looks to be a particular friend and see the Riverboat as an asset that also attracts attention to the Museum.



IWA/CRT Restoration Conference



This was held earlier in April at Northampton University. I have mentioned previously that I have been working with Chesterfield and Buckingham restoration trust directors to influence the provision of support/expertise for the increasingly complex requirements of canal restoration. I'm pleased to report that IWA Trustees have now formally backed this initiative and three of us have been tasked with assessing the need across the country and proposing how much and what type of help can be offered from the centre. This should help to reinvigorate the IWA restoration hub.

As part of this project we took over a session at the Restoration Conference to gauge views and get feedback from other restoration groups. Judging by the number of attendees who wanted to be involved there is a great deal of interest in working together to solve our joint problems more cost effectively. This can only be a benefit to our own restoration.

Events

Over May we will be attending the first of our open air shows.

- Breaston Gala on Monday 6th May from 11am until 4pm
- Elvaston Village Fete on 27th May (at the Elvaston Cricket Ground) from 10.30 until 4pm

We are looking for volunteers who can answer a few questions and encourage interest in our project. There will be old hands there, but we always need new faces even if it's only for an hour or so. Please let David Savidge know if you are interested.

Members' Meetings

Last month we had a talk by Gerald Price from The Woodland Trust. It was a very professional talk with a number of pointers in how WT might support our tree planting activities. Our next talk is by Stephen Flinders who is going to talk about the Ilkeston Tramway. I didn't know there was such a thing, but when Stephen talked to us before about Stanton he proved to be very popular as an entertaining and knowledgeable speaker.

Anne has now expanded the speaker programme and, following requests, rebooked the Friargate Line talk that we missed earlier in the year. If anyone knows of good speakers with interesting and reasonably relevant topics please let Anne know. Some of our most interesting talks have been from our own members, so don't be shy!

The Future speakers are as follows:

April 23rd	The Ilkeston Tramway	by Stephen Flinders
May 28th	The Carlisle Ship Canal	by David Ramshaw

June 25th	Either Derby City with Max Craven or (if progress justifies it) a walk between Draycott and Breaston to show plans and progress.	
July 23rd	Lichfield and Hatherton Canal by Bob Williams	
August	No meeting	
Sept 24th	Friargate Line	by Keith Blood
Oct 22nd	AGM	

Meetings will be at the Cottages in Hopwell Road, Draycott, DE72 3PE starting at 7.30pm.

Thanks for your support.

Chris Madge