

## Chairman's Update

### May 2025

I'm writing this update during the second bank holiday weekend and just before the school half term. Being "retired", bank holidays and half terms don't make much difference to me, but of course we do find that activity of third parties slows down and becomes more disjointed. However the sunny weather we've been having has filled my time as the bees think it's already honey season and that doesn't normally happen until July. At least we know there'll be plenty to raise funds this year at the café and boat.

#### Derby Riverboat

The sunshine has made the Riverboat more welcoming. However we've been very careful not to advertise too actively as we have been expecting the flood defences to close us down at the end of May. However we've just had news that progress on the flood defence has been delayed. This now means we should be free to operate until August. However the delay means access will then be closed until the end of 2026. So we have some more time to get our alternative in place, but failure would mean no service for a year.

The extension of time is welcome as the underwater power cables are causing a delay. National Grid have said we now need to move the cables as they don't think they are safe for navigation! As usual it is difficult to get major companies to work as quickly as we want. We have though managed to get an assessment of what is required and a quote for the replacement land based cable and jointing of £10k. We now need to find someone to dig out the new trenching in the path by the Silk Mill safely. We've asked National Grid for a quote on the basis if they do the whole job we have more certainty on costs, but getting a quote is taking time. It's not something for our volunteers to take on given the cables take 11,000 volts.

We haven't given up the possibility of avoiding the movement of cables, but that requires finding the cables accurately. So Mike has been in touch with MSDS, who provided underwater camera and diver services around the fire boat further down the Derwent and they are happy to help, so that may give us a backup solution. Also with a view to having everything ready to go we've commissioned a visit from the pontoon supplier to check the design on site. It was a productive meeting and a few improvements are being assessed. Apparently we may have an option to operate the ramp at a greater angle, which may give us more stability, but that would not meet normal Disability Act requirements. At least we'll have the option to consider. We've held off the detailed engineering assessment pending a decision on the cable movement.

The other impact of the delay in flood protection works is that we now know we have most of the season to operate in 2025. We are therefore looking to ramp up the marketing effort to make sure we maximise public support. We are getting quite a few special charters and most trips are reasonably supported, but good advertising will not only maximise revenue, but also support the need for the pontoon as we go through planning.

Our volunteers have been excellent in supporting the operation. Unfortunately we've now attracted a great deal of interest from the wildlife. Pigeons and a couple of Canada Geese have now developed a tolerance to the birds of prey calls. Mike's now found a magnetic spike to stop them getting under the front cover. Apparently one team actually found a new nest with an egg in it perched precariously on the cover before one trip.





## Working Parties

Our working parties have continued to tidy up the key areas. As you can see the wall at Borrowwash was becoming well overgrown, so the working parties have trimmed and tidied it alongside the wall. We've also mowed to maintain the paths, but also left areas for wildlife.



At the lock at Borrowwash we've noticed the tow path is constricted alongside the lock, especially for cyclists, so the guys have decided to mow around the top of the lock and move the fence to allow more room on the towpath and a space for people to stop and read our new information panel.



The team has also completed the organisation of our supply areas. Firstly the lean to has a roof in place to protect the equipment in the compound and the storage of spare stones (that are being used to restore the Borrowwash wall) have been consolidated in the compound to save space and therefore rental charges.





Unfortunately the store of bricks we had in the open at Borrowash have been rifled and the pavers have been stolen, so the team have erected Heras fencing so that no-one can doubt they are ours.



At Draycott the waste management system has been more

"noticeable" than we'd like. As a result we've brought forward the service and taken advice. The service engineer

has opened up the system and given the all clear, but we think the higher temperatures have increased the smell and the rain that would normally reduce the tank's concentration has been absent.

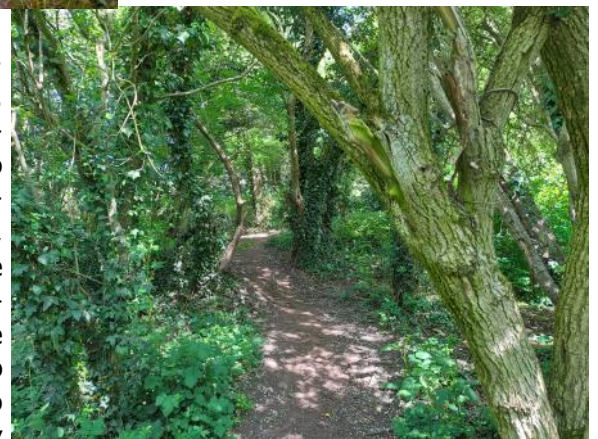


The recommendation has been to clean the area, use grease to seal around the covers and to provide venting away from customers. So our cottages team have dug in a venting pipe to take the air down the canal line.

I have to say that it has been a relief to see some rain as that should settle matters down well and of course start to recover the water table that we need to feed the borehole water supply.

We have also looked to advance our case for work to commence at Spondon Bourne.

We've met with the city council and they have agreed to get matters in hand to transfer the land there to DSCT, although this may take some time based on past performance. In the meantime we are getting together a plan to look at what we may do to improve the area. It is muddy



in the winter and as the pictures show it hasn't been maintained for a long time. We plan to consult with residents and try to get their help with the works. It would be good to get some more volunteer help and perhaps get a few people to adopt it and look at upkeep once the initial work is complete.

At Draycott we've been waiting for the water vole survey, but the company we've used before has told us that they've not scheduled in the work and are now fully committed. We aren't impressed and are now looking for an alternative survey company. Suggestions are very much welcomed. It is now likely that we will have to wait for an autumn survey, but as Network Rail still haven't commissioned the dredging it may not affect matters.

Strangely, our discussions with National Grid regarding new pylons has commissioned surveys in the same area. Unfortunately they are unlikely to suffice, but we will be checking with them.



## **Draycott/Breaston Plans**

We now await a response from the East Midlands Mayor (EMCCA) regarding the Draycott/Breaston flood management project and are chasing with the help of our Trustees.

## **Sandiacre**

We now have a new contact appointed at STW, who has promised an early response. In the meantime we have opened conversations with our neighbour on how the sewer relocation may affect his development possibilities with a view to managing the impact of new nearby sewers on his property.

## **Looms**

I'm pleased to report that a meeting with the possible developer at Looms was successful and we have agreed a compromise layout that provides for the canal route within the planned development, although this is likely to take a few years to deliver, especially with the remedial work. Apparently they have over a tonne of broken windscreen glass to dispose of.

## **Ellesmere Port**

As previously reported four directors attended the National Annual Restoration Conference at Ellesmere Port run jointly by CRT and IWA. The contacts and sessions on water transfer and volunteering were very helpful. We learnt about the plan to transfer water from Minworth to the south east via the Grand Union. We now have contacts at CRT, STW and IWA to guide us with our project.



The session on attracting younger volunteers at Lichfield was also thought provoking as it showed how they have built up a productive group of keen new blood over a number of years.

This has again raised the issue of our need to attract the next generation, especially with the sad news of the sudden death of Norman Cornwall, Chairman of the Erewash Canal Preservation and Development Canal Society, our near neighbour. Our thoughts go to his wife, family and all those at ECPDA.



## **Events**

We attended two events in May, firstly at Breaston Gala and the following week at the Ockash Trail event. As usual we attracted a good number of people interested in our project and progress, but little in terms of merchandise or memberships.

We are now trying to get more merchandise on display to brighten up the stall, so we are displaying items from the Riverboat and have a range of canalware that has



been sold so strongly by Cromford Canal Trust at their shop (as shown).

Our next events are at Long Eaton on 21st June and at Chellaston the following week on 28th June. Contact me or david.savidge@derbycanal.org.uk for details, etc. if you can help us for an hour or two at either.

## Monthly Draw

I need to make a correction on last month's item. For those who can only support us from afar the monthly draw is a good way to show your support. To encourage you all to help us out the return is even better than in my last update. It will be £100 each quarter, so an amount that is definitely worth collecting. Please support us if you can and contact Gary on [gary.harding@derbycanal.org.uk](mailto:gary.harding@derbycanal.org.uk).

We've had some support for our restoration online with an update from a canal supporter reporting on us. You can hear what he has to say online.

## Members' Meetings

Our last talk was a review of her time as Society chair by Judy Flack. Judy was famous for her direct approach to fundraising at events. I took notes and hope to bring back some of the best schemes. Judy was also in charge when the bridges at Swarkestone and Ullikers were restored and she started the Borrowash Lock rebuild, so a very successful time.

Our next meeting will be a talk on Richard Arkwright by Cliff Lea. We last heard Cliff talk to us about Brindley and it was a comprehensive and entertaining talk. Arkwright himself was involved with the Cromford Canal and was responsible for channelling the water from the river to power the water wheel so involved with canals as well as mills.

The following meeting will be a walk in Derby city, where we will look at the history of the canal with Max Craven supported by David Jennings and I'll update on the current changes in the city planned to develop the river and our plans for the pontoon. Our final meeting before the summer break will be at the Cottages from 7.30pm on 22nd July.

Thanks for your support.

Chris Madge

