

Chairman's Update

September 2025

Here we are again. Summer is well and truly over and the autumn weather is with us. I managed another trip on our shareboat to find that most of the lock flights in Birmingham had been closed to preserve water. Whilst we managed to get to Stourbridge there's always the worry that you may not be able to get back if more locks are closed. With only one route open we were surprised how quiet the canals were. All this was evidenced with the increasing amount of weed even in thoroughfares like Merry Hill. But it's always good to get out on the water. And of course the drought doesn't last. As I'm writing this I'm hearing warnings of floods in the north and midlands. Definitely feast and famine.

However if we need a silver lining perhaps there might be a new significant funder for future restorations from water companies transferring water and diverting floods using canals. It's certainly a question I'll be putting to Sean McGinley the man in charge of restoration at CRT when he talks to us in a few days time.

Working Parties

We have a slightly different theme for working parties this month. The change in weather and winds has seen a few trees losing branches or worse, so as well as the normal work Roger and team have been clearing the mess. Activity has ranged from Borrowwash bottom lock, Mear Drive, Borrowwash and at Sandiacre; so all over the patch



Of course we've also continued adding "just another brick" in the Borrowwash Wall and used the flail for some hedge trimming—so much quicker than the hedge trimmers and easier on volunteers' backs.

There have been normal activities also at Draycott alongside the vole fence and by Ulliker's Bridge.



Perhaps key this month has been the presence of corporate volunteers. We entertained two groups this month from Vinci EMR (in orange) and Alstom Burton (in Yellow). Two other groups cancelled - well the weather hasn't been great.



Work took place at Derby Road, Draycott, where the road hedge was tidied both roadside and by the canal.

Alstom took on the challenge at Chellaston with impressive results and keeping the line clear. We continue to be challenged in getting the participants to keep up contact with us, but we are working on it. Of course to attract younger, working age people is important as the current work parties and others continue to approach our dotage. Many thanks to the member who has offered help with a donated trailer,



it is much appreciated by all.

At the Cottages we now have the cycle rack in place, so hopefully we will encourage more of the many cyclists who pass to stop and spend money at the café, while having their expensive bicycles properly protected. The debate on protecting the car park for residents has moved from a full blown barrier to a much cheaper alternative of a lockable chain. The tenants seem



happier, but we'll monitor its effectiveness and keep our fingers crossed that we don't need the expensive option.

The guys have also erected the original Canal Company no-Hopwell Road canal bridge on a café wall. We've moved a final step forward on the borehole works. Don and Tony eroded the concrete infill and applied mortar to fully seal everything—just waiting for the Wirksworth company to final UV failsafe system.



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The meeting with the Council to discuss work at Spondon Bourne was productive and we have agreed a basis for work to commence, although the agreement to transfer land continues to hold us up. We won't be able to consider work on the culvert there until this is sorted.

Riverboat

The riverboat continued well into September, although unfortunately the promised route through the works failed to materialise despite many assurances - even an hour before a sailing. As expected, the flood defence works were put into place, but suddenly covered the whole of Phoenix Green. They also dug a trial hole



just where the promised path would go. Whilst we have suffered disruption, and we've had to cancel a few trips on safety grounds, we now think (hope?) our negotiation allows proper access and has resulted in the work area being vastly reduced to allow us to use what is left of the path as before. Fortunately the season is winding down as the weather worsens, so this won't be a long term problem, but it does need close monitoring.

New Pontoon

Progress has been made on the planning application. The ecology survey has been completed with no adverse effects—there's no wildlife to worry about, particularly as we've designed it not to impact on the river bottom and therefore disturb fish in the river. However we had expected not to have to comply with Biodiversity Net Gain rules due to the small size of the plot, but it would appear that we now need to assess some work on compensatory wildlife improvement. We have to achieve a 10% improvement. So we are trying to gather info very quickly. Hopefully our work with the Wildlife Trust within the "Derby Nature Collective" will help us with this.

We've also met with the rowing clubs to discuss whether our works would restrict their room alongside the "island" in the middle of the river. We had a positive meeting and agreed safety processes that will help. We also agreed to mark out the space for rowers with floating markers. That was complet-



ed using Outram on a Saturday prior to sailings. We hadn't realised it would coincide with the beer festival, so we amused a few of their attendees with our antics, but at least we were able to sample a few beers

when the boat traffic was completed! Looks like it has been successful as we have one club's agreement to the proposal already. Of course they have suggested trimming the trees to increase the available river width, so there may be some ongoing maintenance, but it will benefit all parties.

We've worked through a few tweaks to the drawings in concert with the supplier and in other respects we feel we are ready to go. On this basis we have commissioned the works to move the cable. We've given up waiting for a "competitive" quote from the OCOR contractors. Given the broken promises around boat access we have lost trust in them. The work is on a five week lead time, is controlled by National Grid themselves and the work will require the excavation of the path to lay the new cable, so it will give us a chance to assess the path structure as adequate for the loadings of the pontoon in flood. We've been able to do this following receipt of a corporate donation to cover the cost. Our enquiries whether National Grid would cover the cost themselves drew a blank, although there may be scope for funding other work instead. At least they feel a little guilty and want to help.

Derby Riverside

We've made little progress on this in the last month due to our holidays, but we have had a most generous offer. Peter, our editor, has persuaded a couple of his clock enthusiast friends to repair the tower clock we have in pieces in my garage. The plan is to use it in Erasmus Gardens. We think that it would be great to show off Derby's clock heritage - and it would be nice to get my garage back!



Other Projects

Whilst we still await a meeting with STW re Sandiacre we have started bid writing to fund the £200k shortfall on sewer moving costs. We have also agreed to recognise the input by Nigel Dagley in the restoration of Borrowash Bottom lock over the years prior to and during his fight against cancer, by renaming it in his honour.

The key current project at Draycott is still the Network Rail one. We have received a rebuff from them in refusing to share the hydrology report that has now been completed. We don't know why, but suspect it is just big company rules. The electrification section of NR commissioned the report and with the government decision not to electrify the line they no longer need our involvement.

However we may have the inkling of a breakthrough with the East Midlands Mayor's office, EMCCA. We attended a meeting with two officers including the Director of Climate Resilience and Climate Growth and received a very positive response. Martin, our CE, and I outlined the opportunity for water transfer and flood protection between Spondon and Long Eaton. They felt it would meet the objectives of the mayor and wanted details to consider further. Our plan has always been that EMCCA would push NR into action, and that seems to be even more important now.

It is interesting that we had the inside track to the meeting and EMCCA personnel from another senior contact at the EA, who is part of the Derby Nature Collective. Sometimes help comes from unexpected quarters, but it is certainly true that the more we network the more we benefit, even if we can't predict where the help will arise.

IWA

The AGM takes place on 27th September at Nottingham University. We have agreed to take a short 10 minute presentation to be given by Martin Pilbin to discuss the opportunities of "Grey Water Transfer" and funding that will be made available. We will also be offering to host visitors at Draycott and tell them what we've achieved on the site. The IWA normally looks to offer a local visit at the end of AGM business and we will be sharing the honour with Cromford this year.

I've also been asked to help on a small panel to look at how the IWA organises restoration support. I'm keen to do this as I believe the next steps for funding waterways properly is convincing national government and utilities of the value of a national water infrastructure in times of regional droughts and floods. It could radically change restoration if the government invested billions of pounds in this and each individual restoration took its share of supplying the national network. This can only be driven by a national organisation like IWA.

Members' Meetings

Our Next Meeting will be held on September 23rd at the Cottages. We will have a talk about CRT by Sean McGinley, who has been a senior manager with CRT as long as I've been with DSCT. He has recently been given the responsibility for Restoration nationally. I am delighted that he has agreed to attend and again would urge you to come along to get an update from a very knowledgeable and senior engineer in CRT.

The following meeting is our Annual AGM to be held on 28th October and I urge you all to attend and get a more comprehensive view of what we are doing—and what you can do to help?

Following that is a talk on November 25th by our member, Brian Dale. Brian has previously told us of the safety regimes in the air and train industries. I look forward to the next instalment with trepidation!!

Future Meetings will be held at the Cottages as usual starting at 7.30pm.

Hope to see you soon.

Chris