

The Packet

The magazine of the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Trust

Issue 99 Autumn 2025



Suggested Donation £3

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For company law purposes all directors listed above are also deemed to be trustees and also sit on the advisory committee.

Front Cover

Team from WSP Consultants who helped with winter maintenance of the canal line at Draycott in March 2025.

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From the Editor



Hello and welcome to the 99th edition of The Packet! There is, as usual, much maintenance activity on the canal line to report. There has also been a lot of effort put in to try and get a floating pontoon in place so

that the river boat doesn't have to be taken to a private mooring to overwinter, and to make the boat trips fully accessible. The plans have yet to come to fruition but hopefully they will do so in time for the resumption of boat trips in 2026.

Ann does a really good job at arranging interesting talks for the social evenings, but one that stands out for me was the presentation by several volunteers about how they got started and what they get out of it. Gaynor, one of the volunteers who took part, kindly let me have the transcript of her talk for inclusion in this issue - thank you Gaynor!

I would very much welcome similar articles from other volunteers - please don't be shy about sending them in as they might help encourage new volunteers to come forward. The Board recently held a brainstorming session to try and figure out how to attract new, younger volunteers to eventually take over the canal restoration project from them when they are too long in the tooth to carry on.

In the Autumn 2024 issue I included an article about the unsuccessful attempts over the last 25 years to find a new home for the Spondon Waterworks clock,

which eventually passed into the care of the DSCT. Whilst shopping in my local Tesco recently I just happened to bump into an ex-colleague who is a keen horologist. We got talking and as a result the clock is now going to be fully restored. There are provisional plans to install it in the Erasmus Darwin gardens, which in turn are part of the riverside developments Mike Wingfield, our Vice Chairman, has been working on.

I am regularly asked to renew the artworks on the information boards along the canal line. One such board was Borrowash Bottom Lock, which the DSCT board has given approval for renaming as Dagley's Lock in recognition of Nigel Dagley's contribution to restoring that section of the canal. Another board in planning is a new one for Borrowash Top Lock which will include information about the ancient burial mound found when the railway was built.

Finally, I thank Rod Auton for his update on the Chesterfield Canal restoration.

I end this column with a sunset photo I took from the top of the external staircase at the Cottages, at 9.20 pm, following the social meeting on 22nd July 2025.



Chairman's Report - Chris Madge

The Derby River Boat

In March we moved the riverboat from its winter mooring early. It's always a guess on the weather and hence water levels in the river. It might have meant a rush to get the boat safe again if water levels rose quickly.

The early move got the boat in place to maintain it and ensure that everything was ready for starting public sailings, weekends only at first, on April 5th. There had already been interest and enquiries.

Wintering the boat in the open and under trees resulted in birds and leaves leaving their mark. Chris Webster organised her volunteers to spring clean and they turned up with their cleaning



materials. There was enough guano on the canopy to start a fertiliser business! Some internal and all external surfaces were covered in grime. The foredeck bilges were pumped dry and the bird scarer and security camera reinstalled. After a few hours success was being celebrated with lunch at the Museum of Making.

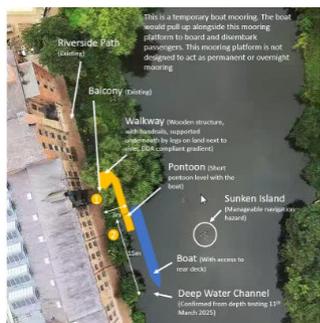


There'd been interest in volunteering and new drivers were being trained. Each does a formal RYA course as offered through the Chesterfield Canal Trust, so driving is a big commitment for volunteers and the Trust.

The early boat move supported our efforts to get a temporary mooring platform for when the flood defence work cut off access to the current boarding arrangements after May. We checked the batteries, etc. Simon reconnected the power supply (disconnected over winter to avoid components shorting out during floods). Neil provided a careful hand on the tiller while Simon and I tested the water depth. It was essential to know we could sail to the temporary platform safely - also where the boat can be moored close to shore. The original depth survey may have been disrupted by subsequent floods.

We met the Derby City Council leader and received good support for our longer-term plans for a riverside facility and, more crucially, options to allow the boat to operate after May. We suggested a temporary mooring outside the Silk Mill (and the Director of the Silk Mill supported us) and asked for release of

residual funding the Council held for the purpose. This needed some decisions and we awaited follow on meetings.



We needed clearance from EA, the Derwent Valley Heritage Site and Historic England. While waiting for that, we designed a platform that could even accommodate disabled access. The current thoughts shown here were still work in process. We expected comments, but it was important to present a clear option for discussion and a lot of careful thought went into the drawings shown. The one certain thing was that time was very short.



Our riverboat trips resumed in April. Take up, although weather-dependent, was better than last year. With two more drivers registered and a couple of cabin crew to replace them, we'd plenty of

resource to operate through the season.

The basic pontoon design had been formalised and verbally cleared by the Environmental Agency (EA). We hoped our application for a revision of our EA permit to operate in the new location would be rapidly processed. Also Historic England had deferred to DCC's decision and the World Heritage Site looked to be in favour. The DCC leader, and her Chief Planning and Major Projects Officers, had given real encouragement. They liked the design, especially as shown by the University experts in this link: https://youtu.be/_6QWFcFAQLo, and suggested that construction could start immediately. However, this would have been at our own risk as full planning permission was still needed.

We had agreement to use the remaining DCC budget of £67k for the pontoon. Given planning approval the actual cost would be reimbursed afterwards. This effectively recognised it as a permanent solution. The directors and trustees were wrestling with two issues: whether we could take the risk, and how the cash flow could be financed. Given the encouragement from DCC, we got quotes for formal design, structural assessment and installation. It appeared that the grant funding from DCC would cover most of the cost.

All was good until we discovered major power lines in the river near the proposed moorings. We were given a plan and told to locate the cables accurately and work out how to protect them from abrasion by the boat. Fortunately they were visible in part from the bank, and also from Outram,

up to the point where they disappeared under the silt. We dug a trench and used a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) to further locate them.

We then thought about getting divers in to uncover the cables. We might then have needed National Grid to test/prove the cables and to modify to the pontoon design. As always we had a long way to go in little time.



The May sun made the riverboat more welcoming but, expecting the flood defence work to close us down at the end of May, we took care not to over-advertise. Fortunately the flood defence work was delayed, freeing us to operate through to August possibly, but there would be no access to the Causey Bridge boarding point until the end of 2026. We had time to get our alternative in place, but failure would mean no service for a year.

The time extension was welcome as the underwater power cables were causing a delay. National Grid advised that they should be moved as they weren't safe for navigation! As usual it was hard to get major companies to work as quickly as we wanted. We had an assessment of what was required and a

£10k quote for a land based cable and jointing. We then needed a new trench safely dug in the path by the Silk Mill. We asked National Grid to quote as costs would be more certain if they did all the work, but that was taking time. It wasn't something for our volunteers to take on given the cables carry 11,000 volts.

For all we knew the cable move might be avoidable, but we didn't know this short of accurately locating them. MSDS, who provided underwater camera and diver services for the fire boat, were happy to help. We also commissioned the pontoon supplier to check the design on site. It was a productive meeting that yielded a few suggested improvements to assess. One was to operate the ramp at a greater angle for more stability, but that wouldn't meet normal Disability Act requirements. The detailed engineering assessment was held pending a decision on the cable movement.

The flood protection works delay meant that we could operate for most of the 2025 season, so we ramped up the marketing effort. We were getting some special charters and most trips were quite well supported, but good advertising maximised revenue and supported the planning application for the pontoon.

Whilst our volunteers excelled in their support of the operation, we attracted a lot of interest from wildlife. Pigeons and a couple of Canada Geese had become tolerant to the birds of prey calls. Mike found a magnetic spike to stop them getting under the front cover. Before one trip a new nest, with an egg in it, was found precariously perched on the cover.



The riverboat was really busy in July. With the better weather and promotion we were virtually full all month and also had a few charters.



Shown above is a friendly group from the Derby City and South Derbyshire Mental Health Carers Forum enjoying a charter trip. This is a self-help group caring for, a relative, friend or neighbour suffering from any form of mental illness. I'm pleased we were able to provide a little quiet respite on the river.

Confident of operating into October, we planned to make the most of the season. However, boat owners will be familiar with Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) tests and ours was due. Being a commercial operation we had a few extra provisions

to deal with, so we read the guidance notes, checked as much as we could and awaited the test engineer with bated breath! Fortunately we passed with flying colours, so we are all set for the next four years!

Through August the riverboat ran with full passenger lists and more charters, and our volunteers continued to get excellent reports. The full passenger lists provided income for the Trust as well as underpinning our funding claim for the new pontoon, so they were doubly important.

As expected, the flood defence works began with the closure of the footbridge over the Derwent and the nearby footpaths. The imminent demolition of the building shown was delayed by a bat in the attic! As you can see, the materials for demolition and subsequent works compound were already being assembled.



The bridge closure meant we needed another way to get passengers to the boat. We work well with the contractors helping with signage, but we needed to clear an overgrown pavement on Stuart Street.

We now meet our passengers on Exeter Bridge and escort them from there. With this arrangement any further restrictions on Phoenix Green wouldn't affect us. It meant extra work for our volunteers collecting the passengers. Some locals found their own way, so keeping track of everyone kept us on our toes! However, everyone seemed to be happy and numbers were unaffected.



As all of this will be avoided when our new pontoon is in place next season, we focused on getting planning permission in place ASAP. Such applications require many assessments, primarily on heritage, wildlife and the environment agency (flood risk), and Duncan coordinated their submission. We were most grateful to Maxwell Craven, a longtime supporter and member, who wrote our "Heritage Statement" to go with positive support from the Derwent

Valley World Heritage Site at Derbyshire CC.

We cleared the site of Himalayan Balsam in advance of the ecology survey. As you can see it had taken over the site so would certainly have prevented any effective survey taking place.



Progress with the EA was slow - we were still waiting for the permit applied for in March. Supportive local officers said it might still be a month or so away, but we kept pushing. We also needed both the council's formal agreement to occupy the land and support from neighbours such as the rowing clubs and the museum, but we thought we were nearly there.

We were still waiting for a second quote

for moving the power cable, which in turn needed some Council input. We raised funds to cover the cost assuming



Working Parties

More work was done on the Borrowash wall in March - it was looking good - and we replaced the Breaston information panel. The original had rusted through, so it was repaired and painted.



we could work with the existing quote. We asked if National Grid might cover the cost, but to complete it in time we may have to do it ourselves. We planned to do the work in March 2026 and had called on the suppliers' design engineers to vet the detail and vouch for the stability of the fixings during a flood.

With the absence of a new winter mooring we'll be back at Darley Abbey over winter. We agreed to maintain the jetty while we use it, so we'll need to replace any rotten timber ahead of winter.



The Ock Brook was cleared of fallen trees and rubbish. The team was busy at Chellaston too, clearing out the growth and fallen tree branches. Fortunately we didn't lose Garry!



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We took advantage of the sunny weather to start sorting out the storage area at Marcus' farm. A lot of accumulated rubbish was disposed of and the area both inside and outside the container organised ready for the work to come during 2025.



In April, there was another corporate visit - this time from Rolls-Royce. Working with our volunteers, they tidied up a lot of trimmings east of Hopwell Road and provided a bit more "car park" outside the café (ready for the summer rush!).



They chipped up waste cuttings and spread them around the path east of Hopwell Road to reduce the mud

patches. Our multi use tractor was certainly earning its keep.



The "storage area" on the canal bank outside the café was sorted out too. The materials were moved to the Hopwell Road "winding hole" and set in a compound. It tidied up the view of the bank from the café nicely.



At the farm storage area a start was made on building a lean-to, for protecting some of our equipment, using old scaffold poles and roofing sheets donated by a friendly supplier. We also began moving stones left from the Wards donation into the compound in order to reduce storage costs.



The weather being good, the mower was out manicuring open spaces such as that by the storage container at Borrowwash.

We also had the regular call to trim hedges by the highway in Sandiacre. The now familiar letter from the County Council asks us to trim a hedge that overhangs a path or the highway. It never says exactly where, but I'm sure it's dealt with faster than when they owned the stretch!

Our volunteers asked to do some path improvement work at the Derby side of the City Council's Spondon Bourne. We asked if they could sell or give us the strip of land, or give us approval to do the work. If the land was transferred to us, we would be responsible for its maintenance. Also, joining it to the Ullikers Bridge section we already own would create a continuous stretch - a helpful precursor to the canal reinstatement and Spondon Bourne culvert work. It would also enhance the cycle way, keep cycles off Nottingham Road and save the council maintenance costs.

During May, our working parties continued tidying key areas. The wall at Borrowwash was getting overgrown, so they trimmed and tidied around it. They also mowed the paths, leaving areas for wildlife.



By Borrowwash Bottom Lock the tow path was quite narrow, especially for cyclists. We widened the path by mowing around the top of the lock and moving the fence. This also made the information panel more accessible.



The team also finished building the lean-to and consolidating the donated stones (for the Borrowwash wall).

Unfortunately our store of bricks in the open at Borrowwash had been rifled and paving slabs stolen, so we erected Heras fencing so that no-one could doubt they are ours.



At Draycott, the waste management system had been too "noticeable", so we brought the service forward and took advice. The engineer gave the all clear, but we reasoned that the smell had increased due to higher temperatures plus increased concentration in the tank

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Blackwood

clarinets

Innovative Clarinet Ensemble in the East Midlands



Blackwood is an ensemble of clarinetists drawn from bands and orchestras of the East Midlands. The players join together to showcase this most versatile of wind instruments.

Since its formation in 2010 Blackwood has developed from a small group of friends to become a true choir, from the piccolo clarinet to the booming contra bass.

Blackwood enjoys sponsorship from Windblowers, Beeston's specialist retailer

The group perform in a variety of concerts and events and regularly play in support of good causes.

For the year 2024 to 2025 we are supporting Cancer Research UK.



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 blackwoodclarinets.co.uk

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due to lack of rain. We were advised to clean the area, seal the covers with grease and provide venting away from customers, and our Cottages team dug in a venting pipe to take the smells further down the canal line.



We met with the City Council to discuss the Spondon Bourne proposals and they agreed the land transfer, although this might take a while. In the meantime we drew up improvement plans for the area - it's muddy in the winter and has long been neglected. We decided to consult with residents and try to get their help. It would be good if some new volunteers adopted and maintained it once the initial work is complete.



At Draycott we awaited the water vole survey, but the company we previously used hadn't scheduled the work and were fully committed. We weren't impressed and looked for another survey company to do one in autumn. However,

it didn't matter as Network Rail still hadn't commissioned the dredging of the ditch. Strangely, National Grid had commissioned new pylon-related surveys in the same area. They were unlikely to suffice, but we will check them.

In June, work at Borrowwash Bottom Lock continued with the installation of a new access gate in the re-positioned fence.



Further down the line at Borrowwash the tractor made inroads into the growing weeds.



The team also worked at Draycott, both alongside the water vole fence and towards Hopwell Road. We hoped a new company would do the water vole survey. Depending on the findings, this



might allow us to modify the black fence.

Network Rail were still prevaricating about the dredging so we told them it would have to wait until the reeds die back in the autumn. As conversations about pylons (and biodiversity support) with National Grid were postponed, Martin, our Civil Engineer, set an agenda to direct their attention.

Work was also carried out at Sandiacre Bottom Lock which made a big difference. This will help with the ongoing talks with the local residents, especially as progress has been stalled for so long.

The team worked with the public on the



Breaston stretch. They installed a bench for bereaved relatives, who paid for the materials, at an agreed place that suits our future restoration.

Further along, on the land we are buying from Sustrans, a fallen tree had breached a neighbour's fence. This wasn't yet our problem - the fallen tree was still owned by Sustrans - but we did the work to ensure good relationships with both the neighbours and Sustrans who will pay us for the work we did for them.

At the Cottages the work previously done on the the waste system had much reduced the smells but the team found another job. Winds were funnelling around the toilet blocks, discouraging customers from sitting in the outside area, so they created fencing to block the draughts. This helps in that the more successful the café, the greater the income generated.



The Borough Council told us of an extra duty to monitor water supplied commercially. Their expert visited us with list of matters to look at, one of which was a formal risk and maintenance scheme. Although a pain to deal with - we've been working without issue for over three years - we aimed to meet the requirements as soon as possible. We dealt with their biggest

comment about the water filtration process within a day of it being raised.



Fortunately, our being a charity means people are happy to support us when we call on them. It will be useful to have more extensive paperwork and our insurers will welcome it too.



In July the grass was still growing despite the drought conditions, so the tractor and our working parties were still busy. A lot of work was done at the Station Road end of the Borrowash section and the public could again see the wall. Further down the track more work was done around the lock chamber.

At Draycott our team were again busy trimming the bund. As the growth in the ditch had accelerated, the team did some balsam bashing to keep the invasive weed under control.

Don and Tony made progress with the water supply issues at the Cottages. There was still work to do in the car park when the contractor was available, but the water tests had come up clear. We also needed a better bike rack providing enough support for the wheels on all bikes to reduce the number of customers resting them against the walls, etc.

The second water vole survey at Draycott was done. Polystyrene “floats” with apple pieces on them were put out to attract the voles. Fortunately we still had a supply of floats, although water levels meant they weren’t floating!! The initial result was that the voles were no longer there, but we awaited the formal report so we could consider how the engineering works were affected. At least it would clear the way for dredging the ditch.

We continued to pursue options at Spondon Bourne, even though the land transfer had not progressed. In anticipation of being able to move on, we explored the water course to see what remained of the old culvert that



took the Spondon Bourne under the canal. The invert was found under a fair bit of mud and it seemed to be in good condition.

While working there, David and the team displayed our information boards, which normally appear at shows, alongside the works. We hoped to encourage more interest and a few more volunteers.

Behind the scenes, maintenance continued on pieces of our vital equipment. It had been a long time since we provided our own very basic tools. For example, the trailer's jolly wheel was replaced, but not for the first time as the trailer gets a fair bit of use.

During August we saw to a number of extra tasks. The path and bund at Draycott was mowed together with the path to Breaston where it runs beside the cornfields. At Draycott we first had to clear the remaining rubble from the bridge demolition. The mowing disturbed a wasps nest, but fortunately there were no casualties.

At the Cottages further progress was made with the water supply enhancements. A small but persistent borehole supply leak was finally resolved by a professional who stripped and rebuilt the pipework, only the water wouldn't flow again afterwards. Getting busier, the café was keen to start up the coffee machines again! It turned out



that a valve had stuck closed and that was soon sorted.

Fortunately all was soon back to normal and the enhanced sealed and lockable manhole back in place. The water treatment system was reviewed by a company from Wirksworth who will regularly test the system for us and help write a comprehensive maintenance plan.



We purchased the bike stand and planned to fit it.

Our tenants reported cars parking after the café has closed. It was suspected that individuals were leaving their cars there and dealing drugs on the canal line. We considered installing a lockable entrance barrier to discourage unwanted visitors from parking. We certainly need to ensure that our tenants feel safe.

We made arrangements to meet with the Council in September to discuss work at Spondon Bourne, and we hoped to be starting work there soon.

We started fund-raising for a replacement trailer - if you know of one please let us know. In the meantime the quarterly draw proceeds will be put towards it. Contact gary.harding@derbycanal.org.uk if you'd like to join the monthly draw at £1 per month!

Sandiacre

At Sandiacre there had been slow progress in March - we had revised drawings of the sewer location, but still no confirmed cost. We were expecting accurate CAD drawings so we could move matters forward even if still not certain exactly how much funding we need to raise.

We were hoping to move on with the sewer pipe relocation in April, but we

were still waiting for information and had registered a complaint.

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

Draycott

In March we had a possible agreement in principle for Network Rail to fund us to dredge the channel. It was then a question of whether or not we could do the work before the reeds grew back. We also needed to work around the water voles. The second survey was due in in April but the October 2024 survey had found no trace of them. We were waiting for evidence either way so we could act accordingly.

The final push to clear vegetation east of Draycott continued in March. We were joined by a team from WSP consultants, who trimmed low hanging tree branches and cleared the grass, making it easier to mow in summer. As WSP had provided

us with some pro bono consultancy, we were keen to continue the relationship. We thought that they all enjoyed their day in the sunshine working to David's plan.



Other tasks included planting the remaining donated saplings by the old winding hole to eventually fill in the depleted hedge. Also, Don and Tony erected a higher mounting block outside the café to make it easier for horse riders to stop, dismount and buy a coffee from the café.

Unfortunately, we had to deal with some adverse publicity. A member of the public appeared to be upset by the thought of trees being removed. This





We were trying to get more merchandise on display to brighten up the stall, so we displayed items from the riverboat and have a range of the canalware that has been sold so strongly by Cromford Canal Trust at their shop (as shown).

In June we attended the Long Eaton Carnival. As always the stall looked good with enough interesting material to get people to stop and chat. Inevitably a lot of interest is in the activity of the riverboat - even for residents of Long Eaton - but anything that generates interest is a good result for us. We have

Derby Riverside

We have made some progress around the riverside development that will be



a number of supportive trustees, particularly in Erewash and Derby, so it is good to be seen promoting the cause.

In July we attended the last event of the year, which took place at Chellaston. We still struggled to make a significant impact with the public, hence the additional on-site display at Spondon Bourne (*mentioned in the working party report - Ed*). We did however get a lot of interest in the riverboat and offers from a number of would-be volunteers. However, our experience is that promises at events rarely convert to volunteers on site.



put in place when the office blocks are demolished, probably in 2027. Working with the Council-appointed designer and the university expert, we've made further progress on enhancing the bare design.

So that we can properly interpret "Erasmus Darwin's Garden" we've been researching his background. There's currently a museum at his initial residence in Lichfield, which has lots of information about his life. He was a doctor to key people of the time

including Brindley, Joseph wright, Whitehurst (clocks) and Watt (Steam Engines). He was the founder of the Lunar Society in the Midlands, maintained a botanical garden in both Lichfield and later in Derby to support medicinal needs and dabbled in all sorts of discoveries and inventions including a speech machine, a water closet, a handwriting duplicating machine and, most relevant to us, a canal boat lift. The

Trustees

Our quarterly trustees meeting was held in April. We get good support from the trustees, who are appointed by the Local Authorities. They help put our case and gain Local Authority support, whether that's from the County, the City or the Borough. We met with the Erewash Borough leader to explain how much the canal can deliver to the residents in the form of flood defence and amenity. Our new MP Trustee, Adam Thompson, has also joined the Parliamentary representation for the Inland Waterways, which shows a level of commitment to our cause.

Focus Meeting

During May the directors brainstormed to check how we are organised and our priorities. We are an ageing group and need to bring in younger people at all levels. We concluded that we should focus our activity on fewer key projects and delegate more authority to specific directors to move things on and spread the load more evenly. Also, we will progress the work at Spondon Bourne, using this as a concerted effort to connect with local residents. If successful, more volunteers should be encouraged to come forward.

Lichfield museum has his notebook as well as a model of the boat lift. He moved to Derby with his second wife and lived on Full Street, setting up his second "Physics" Garden on the site to be recreated as his Gardens across the river. He also lived for a period at Breadsall Priory and is buried in the village.

So we have lots of material to fill the area, showing his amazing capacity.

The only fly in the ointment is that the plans to reorganise local authorities would see turmoil as Erewash and South Derbyshire are amalgamated into larger authorities with an estimated timescale of two years for the change to take place.

After the May elections we now have a Reform councillor, so we look forward to understanding his views and how they might support our project.

This is ready to go as soon as we get assurances on legality from DCC. Hopefully new volunteers will gradually work their way up through the organisation. If this succeeds we can consider doing the same elsewhere. It is certain that making a difference on the canal path (and meeting the public on the riverboat) is a way to sell our project. With that in mind we have made a commitment to push harder in Sandiacre, Draycott and Derby city centre, which should provide visible improvements.

Members may have noticed recent publicity about the East Midlands Mayor having a devolved sum of around £2 billion to create better communications within the East Midlands, and particularly between Derby and Nottingham. The press have again raised the possibility of a tram extension to Derby. This is a potential problem for us as the canal route has previously been suggested as a very handy stretch of land to use. Since this was last raised we have improved our position by putting two

stretches into water and acquiring a lot of land on the line. As we have already reported, we are pushing for the East Midlands Combined Authority to promote and support the canal as a flood defence and water transfer option, so this would preclude a tram. So the news is good in that it provides money to the region, but a potential issue if it is provided for competing interests. All the more reason to keep close to the authority. And on that subject... [*see the next section - Ed*].

Derby

In June Mike lead discussions about development of the riverside in Derby. Our Trust leads a group comprising senior university personnel, a museum director, designers, Down to Earth Derby (attached to the Eden Project), Marketing Derby and the local MP. The steadily advancing ideas for the development were to be reviewed by local officers and the council leader. A large part of the design will be promoting Derby as a river destination for canal boats. This could lead on to a significant pull to complete a canal to Derby, thereby achieving our objective. This contact with key thinkers in the city will also enable us to input on the use of funding described above.

Part of the demonstration of this is our "Phase 1", the new pontoon for our riverboat. Developments on the high voltage cable in the river saw sudden progress after a 5-week stall. We now have a quote for all the works to move the cable AND a potential alternative

supplier, who suggested they could better that quote. The other supplier is the contractor for the Flood works (OCOR) and we also hoped that they might provide access for passengers to the boat well into the autumn. However we awaited a site meeting to firm up on possibilities. If this came to pass we could get works in train, so that we continue operation from Causey Bridge until October and install the new pontoon ready for next season. We weren't counting chickens, but it was looking a lot more positive. We will still needed to find some funding to cover the electric cable, but we were already working on that issue.

With the improving access Mike successfully pushed the marketing of riverboat trips and had already seen a marked upturn in interest and charter sailings. As ever thanks go to all our volunteers who keep the passengers happy and recommending us to their friends.

Meetings

At our meeting on 5th February we heard Andy Scott, who also doubles as one of our riverboat drivers, give a report on progress and activities at the Cotswolds Canal Trust. It was an excellent talk despite the IT issues of an online presentation and it was an eye opener to find out some of their income sources and the level and extent of membership/volunteering they have generated. More food for thought!

On 25th March, a number of our volunteers gave short presentations about volunteering on the canal. It was clear that there's a heap of commitment and passion and I think everyone showed there was a lot of pleasure generated from the camaraderie.

On April 22nd Judy Flack reviewed her time as Society Chair. She 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 she had a very successful time.

On 25th May, Cliff Lea gave us a talk on Richard Arkwright. It was a comprehensive and entertaining talk with a number of canal references added for our benefit. Arkwright was involved with the Cromford Canal and was responsible for channelling the water from the river to power the water wheel for his mill.

On 24th June we enjoyed a walk in Derby city, looking at the history of the canal with Max Craven, supported by David Jennings. I gave an update on the changes in the city planned by the council to develop the river and our own plans for the pontoon.

On 27th July, our final meeting before the summer break was held at the Cottages where Robert Mee treated us to a well received presentation about the Derwent Valley Heritage Way.

Our meetings take place on the fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7.30pm at the Draycott Cottages unless specified otherwise.

Volunteering on Outram - Gaynor Dewar

Gaynor was one of the volunteer presenters at the DSCT meeting on 25th March 2025
-Ed

I retired from my NHS job of 38 yrs in January 2020. During the months leading up to that momentous date I was thinking about what I might do with

my retirement. Travel, both at home and abroad, was high on the to do list, along with gardening and seeing friends and family more often, especially those living in Wales. But I also knew that I would like to do some volunteer work. I had no real ideas or specifics in mind other than I wanted an outdoor element.



I liked the idea of being part of a team and I enjoy meeting people and socialising.

In December 2019 I received a Christmas card from a retired work colleague with the message “don't volunteer for anything in the first 2 years - just enjoy the freedom”. Okay I thought, that's good advice from an experienced person, but it turned out to be quite the message of mixed meaning. With the arrival of 2020 and my retirement came

Covid 19 and lockdowns, which altered everyone's plans be they working, retired or just hopeful volunteers like myself. So in a way I did end up taking my friend's advice - I had no option due to the lockdowns - and it was 2023 before I eventually became a volunteer.

My connection with canals goes back to a very young age. The Llangollen canal and world famous Pontcysyllte Aqueduct are very close to my childhood home. It was a regular place to visit for walks and boat trips with family and friends. Even now when we visit Wales it is still something we like to do. Whether you are walking or sailing across the aqueduct it is quite the experience, although not enjoyed by everyone. The aqueduct makes an excellent talking point with passengers on the riverboat. I find it's great for getting a conversation started as anyone who is interested in canals will usually have heard of the amazing Pontcysyllte aqueduct. Incidentally, it is not one of the seven wonders of Wales but is one of The Seven Wonders of the Waterway as listed by IWA 1955, and it now features in the most recent Wallace and Gromit film!!

Living as we do in nearby Chellaston there is nothing to quite compare with Pontcysyllte, but Ian and I still enjoy exploring the many lovely walks along various local canal towpaths, and if there's a cafe nearby, then even better! Back in 2022 we heard about the IWA weekend summer festival being held at Burton upon Trent and thought we would go as it sounded like an interesting day out. How right we were! We had a very enjoyable time that concluded with us becoming paid up members of the DSCT. We'd spotted

their marquee and went over for a chat with members and volunteers and we were drawn in!! We soon began attending the monthly meetings, and during one of those I heard about the riverboat which was starting it's second year of trips on the Derwent. Always up for trying something new, and to support the riverboat, Ian and I decided to book a trip and see what it was all about. It was a lovely experience and through talking with the crew that day I was persuaded that this could be the opportunity I had been looking for. I can honestly say it has been everything I wanted from volunteering. The first two seasons I did had been great and I couldn't wait for the next to start.

Having volunteered, in June 2023 I was introduced to Outram and some of the crew, for a day's training session with Liz Gordon who was then in charge of managing the riverboat and the volunteers. At the end of the three trips that day she turned to me and said - "Fine, I'll put you on the rota from next month", and I was given my crew T shirt!! I was a little nervous when it came around to my first day as crew but I needn't have worried as the other volunteers on board were so supportive, as they continue to be, especially when the contactless card reader decides it's not going to work for me - it really is all about team work!!

A few weeks prior to the start of each new season the volunteers rally to the call for the annual spring cleaning of Outram - and about seven of us met up armed with rubber gloves, brushes, buckets and more, all ready to tackle the many cleaning jobs. This included the removal of significant amounts of

pigeon poo, particularly on the tarpaulin cover. This time Anne gets the award for tackling that rather unpleasant job.

It was a really chilly day but seeing the other volunteers again and catching up with them was definitely uplifting and at the end of our cleaning session, feeling rather pleased with ourselves, we headed over to the Museum of Making's cafe for coffee and scones. A very good reward!! I soon forgot how cold my hands were!

The riverboat trips are so enjoyable for passengers of all ages, but at the moment some limitations of access to the boat remain until the pontoon is finally in place. Our passengers are treated to a gentle and relaxing journey of almost an hour in total. We travel from our mooring at Causey Bridge to be within view of Darley Weir, before the captain of the day skilfully turns Outram around for the return journey. On board we can offer our passengers light refreshments, hot and cold drinks, biscuits, crisps and even ice cream in the summer. We also sell, mugs, T shirts, water bottles, postcards and Christmas cards and we have jars of local honey for sale too!

I find you can never determine in advance how a riverboat trip might play out. Some of the passengers will just enjoy the serenity and calmness of the trip, watching the world go by, enjoying some refreshments maybe, and listening to the commentary that plays. Others will take the opportunity to fully engage with the crew, and there can be lots of questions about Outram, Derby, the DSC and anything else in between. It can be quite the test at times!

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I try to do my best to answer questions - deflecting some to the more experienced crew members, especially if it's anything even slightly technical!! But, as time progresses I am slowly learning more about DSCT, it's work, ambitions and progress - by coming to the evening meetings, reading the Chairman's Monthly Update, and the twice yearly publication - The Packet. Hopefully I was prepared for this season's batch of questions.

A good number of our passengers are often young children and during the trip we can offer various activities for them to enjoy. My favourite has to be the box of Lego and I have enjoyed re-acquainting myself with the long lost skill of Lego building - and reproducing Outram seems to be the favourite build project enjoyed by the children on board.

From my point of view every trip is a voyage of discovery from the people I meet to the wildlife sightings along the river. One of the outstanding things for me since being on the riverboat has been the number of kingfisher sightings - it has definitely been a tick off my bucket list. In fact during the 2023 season I lost count of how many times I saw kingfishers. It's amazing to see how just the mention of possible kingfisher sightings raises the passengers expectations and out come the cameras as well. I have still to get a decent photograph of a kingfisher however - that's a challenge maybe for the upcoming season! Other wildlife of note for me, has been a little egret, and a family of mergansers.

In addition to our regular trips we are always open to requests for charter trips and we have seen the popularity of these increase over the last season. These trips are negotiated for a day and time when volunteers are available and have been booked by a wide range of people from schools and special interest groups, to friends and families all looking for something different to do, maybe for a celebration or special event - often bringing birthday cakes and picnics along with them. So, if anyone likes the idea of a private charter, please get in touch with Chris Madge or Chris Webster and we will do our very best to make it happen for you.

Without exception I will leave the riverboat relaxed and tired - but always a good tiredness, and also happy that we will have provided our passengers with an enjoyable experience, possibly despite the weather (!) and a greater appreciation of Derby. The many positive comments on social media from our passengers seem to back this up and maybe some of the passengers might even decide to volunteer, as I did. For me, all this makes the effort all the more worthwhile. I also find it very satisfying going home knowing that I have contributed to this community project.

At the end of each season a social gathering is arranged for the volunteers by way of thanking them for their hard work, support and commitment to the riverboat. A very pleasant evening at a local hostelry with refreshments provided - it's an excellent opportunity for the volunteers to catch up with each other and for the exchange of stories and experiences from the season.

Ancient Burial Site at Borrowash Top lock

The following is taken from *The Derbyshire County Council's Historic Environment Record - Monument record MDR5560 - Inhumation cemetery (site of), Borrowash, Ockbrook.*

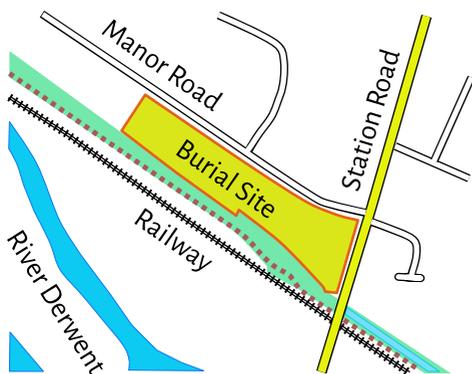
About eighty inhumations and a quantity of burnt bones were found about two feet down when excavating through an elevated piece of ground near Borrowash, for the Midland Counties Railway, a few hundred yards from the River Derwent. There were no surface indications. Nine of the skeletons lay east-west and one was in a crude vault covered with stones. A flint arrowhead was found inside one of the skulls. Underneath one skeleton was a twin ridged Beaker battle axe, found in 1841. At a later period a box containing amulets, a blue bead and an Anglo-Saxon ornament was found. In another part of the ground a small vase containing bird bones and a coin of Constantine was found. Burnt animal bones were found in abundance. Briggs suggested the name Borrowash referred to a barrow here but E.P.N.S. (*English Place Name Society? Ed*) derives the first element from 'burh'.

At Borrowash the canal had to be diverted to make way for the railway, and it was during this work in 1838 that the discoveries were made. The Midland Railway, Derby to Nottingham, was built in 1838 and opened in 1839. No further work was done for 37 years and reports of finds after that date are wrongly dated.

The original plans of this cutting show it in an area SK 41403430. The elevated ground referred to by Briggs was probably at SK 41453429. The axe hammer is in Western Park Museum, Sheffield, Acc. J. 93-8 (G.36), as is the Anglo Saxon ornament and a contemporary bronze ring and fragments of another - Acc. J.93-716 (H.186). The Museum's Director had no knowledge of other finds from this site.

SK 4134 Borrowash. The perforated stone battle-axe (Db. 123) 'found with unburnt burial' is of dolerite and is of Neolithic date.

Borrowash Anglo-Saxon s cemetery. Listed in surveys.



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.

New volunteers to support existing “experts” in all fields, except ecology where we are looking for a volunteer to take the lead as detailed below, will always be warmly welcomed.

If you know someone with building or site management skills who have perhaps recently retired, why not suggest they get in touch with us as we will need those skills for projects such as Sandiacre Bottom Lock restoration, the Spondon Bourne culvert and the canal rebuild generally.

Some specific areas where we would to strengthen our teams are:

Engineering: We now have expertise to cover most of our civil engineering needs, but we would still welcome anybody with engineering skills who would like to join our new, enlarged, engineering team.

Ecology: We require a volunteer to take the lead on ecology. We would also welcome anyone who would like to work with the lead, 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: We have a volunteer who has been heavily involved in developing our river boat volunteer allocations on line, but would welcome anyone who would like to work with her.

Fundraising: We have access to a

fundraiser on a paid basis, but if you have fundraising expertise, please join our team.

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.



Update from Chesterfield Canal Trust - Rod Auton

At last the final phase of the restoration works at Staveley has started. There have been months of delays because of land issues, but the big yellow machines are running again.



The first job will be to move thousands of tons of muck away from the canal line and to move some of the clay that has been donated to us. This will be stored in a field next to Bellhouse Basin until it is needed.



After Severn Trent have finished refurbishing their pipes, we will build a section of canal to Bellhouse Basin, a new pumping system will be installed and the new Keith Ayling Lock will be built.

We will also be constructing much of the towpath to Renishaw but cannot do the

final section because of another land issue. We will therefore be reinstating the towpath along the disused Norbriggs Arm. This will certainly prove very useful but is not what was intended. The simple fact is that we are running out of time because the work is being paid for by the Staveley Town Deal, a levelling up fund, and the money has to be spent by next summer.

The handover date for all the completed works is 14th July next year.

Our Work Party has made a start on the long awaited restoration at Renishaw. It is in the early stages - setting up the compound etc. - but it's good to see something happening on the ground.



We have just installed a new information panel at Shireoaks celebrating Dawn Rose which is moored there. This is the only Cuckoo boat, unique to the Chesterfield Canal, in the world. The last one rotted away many years ago, so some of our volunteers spent four years building a new one by hand. It is exactly the same as the old ones, using the same wood and techniques - only hand tools! In summer you can see it demonstrating horseboating being towed by Tilly.



Finally, our Santa Special cruises went on sale on 1st October, and the bookings are mounting up remarkably quickly. We run them from Chesterfield, Hollingwood Hub, Shireoaks and Ranby. We expect to carry about 1,800 passengers in all.



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