

Chairman's Update

May 2026

I'm writing this in the expectation of a heat wave - possibly breaking records for May and on a Bank Holiday weekend too. We cancelled a working party earlier this month ahead of a storm forecast, so perhaps it's back to the normal uncertainty. At least we always have something to talk about in England. As I'm planning some time on our shareboat in June I'm relieved to see this year they aren't expecting water shortage closures— not yet anyway.

Working Parties



There's been plenty of activity around grass cutting this month and most of that has been focussed at Borrowash. The newly named Dagley's Lock has had a major haircut and looks wonderful.



Between Station Road and the lock the far bank ("the Borrowash wall") of recently installed stones has been cleared again ready for more extensive work later in the summer.



The path from the lock to the Ock Brook had been washed away by successive rain showers so steps have been rebuilt there to aid passage along the path.

On the stretch approaching



Breaston the tractor has been busy moving alongside the footpath on the land we are in the process of buying. We've left plenty of growth for the birds and pollinators to use. You can see the extensive wild flowers remaining.

The path improvements beside Spondon Bourne

have also been completed —for now.

Across the Spondon Bourne our project to improve the



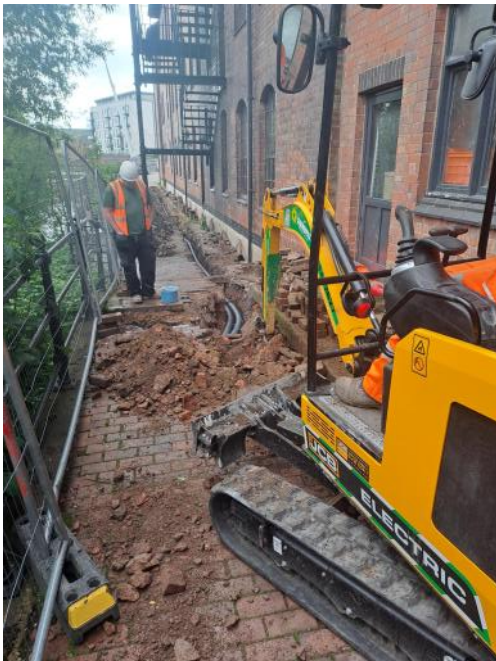
Footpath has progressed further. What started as an uneven and sloping soil path was attacked by a mini digger and driver under Don's supervision and ended as a level path with mounds and slopes removed and the soil surface rolled. We also tidied up some tree branches that were obstructing the way and took out a steep incline shown in the before and after photos.



Tony has secured the free issue of limestone and he's looking at raising the remaining few hundred pounds from a grant. That will allow completion of the surfacing with local residents during the summer —hopefully!

Riverboat

As expected the work on the cable movement started on 14th May with trial holes being dug into the path. We have been waiting to see how it is the constructed so that the contract engineer can assess the strength of the path and what is required to hold the platform in place during flood. I was able to inspect and photograph the holes and send for the engineer to assess. I'm pleased to say that we didn't need a visit and the early indications are that the structure will be adequate to hold the boat without special reinforcement. We await a final report, so we can reflect any recommendations in the design and complete the drawings to submit for clearance of the planning conditions.



Meanwhile the explorations discovered a large concrete slab in the way of the pipes, which thanks to help from a DCC engineer was allowed to be removed to make way for the buried cable. All proceeded on a friendly and effective path until almost a week into the dig when they discovered unexpected brick footings, shown circled. These were near the surface and have been described as the base for an old water wheel and of heritage significance. The result is that as I type this we are waiting for clearance and instructions on how to proceed.

We're grateful for advice from a member, who has a very good understanding of the



building and its history, but are left hoping there's a solution acceptable to all.

We were already expecting to be late for early June, but it's become clear that we are reliant on many others and can't predict the opening date, so when the Riverboat clean up team discussed progress in April we agreed to look at a fall back to get trips running again.

As a result we have reassessed the “back access” and after a conversation with the Council are getting trips operating again. We had been holding off as having no alternative sometimes focusses the mind of all concerned, but I think we are close enough now that it won’t make any difference.

So we’ve reassessed how to make the slope from St Mary’s Bridge safe and selected a non slippery route and erected a handrail for support. We’ll escort passengers to keep them safe. Whilst it’s not ideal it does at least allow us to keep in the public eye as I’m sure many visitors decide to come after seeing us on the river. Thanks to Chris W, who has been organising volunteers and getting us on the ticket website again.

Of course with the decision to run again made we also had to complete the maintenance quickly. This means the repainting of the boat (and the handrail) took a five hour marathon session to complete. Thanks Roger and



Dave, it’s no wonder you look proud of your efforts!

While the boat has been out of action Mike and Simon have been looking again at the GPS commentary. Mike’s idea has been to provide alternative themed commentaries to freshen up the experience. When we are operating from the new pontoon we plan to extend the type of cruise offered and perhaps also make it available over a longer season. I haven’t heard the new versions yet, so I await a run through with interest. Those of you experiencing a trip will know that Mike’s jokes are the cause of many comments! Of course this change of plan has put pressure on Simon to reconfigure the programming—sorry Simon—but I’m sure it’ll be worth it.

Riverside

Mike has pushed on with the developing of ideas for Erasmus Darwin’s gardens and the larger flood protection project from the city downstream to Spondon and has now involved experts in hydrology and Ecology from the University of Derby. They can help develop ideas and undertake student led surveys of wildlife and water levels. This will set us up for a presentation to the city businesses in the autumn.

Draycott/Breaston

We continue to see progress with the main project plan. We’ve now had notice that a study has been commissioned by Network Rail on the value of flood prevention created by ground works up-hill. This will include our canal as well as other natural flood management measures like dams and ditches. We are sure this will reinforce our case when it reports.

We’ve also made progress with the developer, who is very keen to work with us to deliver houses and canal. We are impressed that they see the canal as a very positive element to the development. This could replicate the success with Wheeldon Bros in the Spondon development.

And finally we now have a meeting with ECCA planned in June to take the main project forward.

At **Sandiacre** Lock we have a meeting with the neighbour organised for the end of May and hope this will move matters on. Mike Snaith is moving on with grant applications as previously reported.

Land issues

Lawyers continue to work on the "Sustrans" transaction at Breaston and say they are close to completing.

We have negotiated a price for the other small section at Breaston. Our offer for 3 small parcels of land still held by the Borough Council have not been accepted, but we have been encouraged and will be negotiating the next steps in a few days time.

We have had dialogue with an owner near Swarkestone, and understood better the issues involved with the sale to us of the section between the A50 and Swarkestone. Probate is still ongoing, but we are hopeful that we can get an agreed price ready for when the land becomes available for sale.

Cottages

You may have seen that the new Renters Rights Act has come into force on May 1st. This means that our domestic rentals have amended contracts. They have a right to 2 months notice and we cannot evict unless we have a real reason. Practically it shouldn't make much difference, but we have needed to notify them of their new rights. It does mean that we also have a right to increase the rent annually, but to a proven market value. We are therefore reviewing the current market rents to see if we need/can modify the monthly rents. Coincidentally one of our tenants tendered notice during the month, but after a conversation I'm pleased to say that she will remain in situ at least until October.

We are lucky that we have the income stream from these rentals as it has provided us with the funds to buy the land such as that described above, so we are aware we need to keep the properties full and the tenants happy.

Events

I'm pleased to confirm that we had a good volunteer turn out at both Breaston Gala and the Cranfleet Cut events. Breaston was much the same as usual, but we were able to talk to people about the benefit of the canal to protect the village against flooding.

The Nottingham Yacht Club event at Cranfleet Cut was something of a surprise. We had a late invite and haven't attended before to my knowledge. In the end it was a very small affair, but focussed around the lock. It meant that we met people who were already interested in boats and canals, so we ended up getting more interest and more sales. We had a great surprise at the end when the club gave us the proceeds of a bottle collection for us that had been on the bar for a couple of years—a benefit of £45.



Future events to come this year are

Long Eaton Carnival Saturday 20th June

Derby Market Hall 22nd and 23rd August

Please contact David Savidge or me if you can help on any of these upcoming dates.

Meetings

Our last meeting was a full house to hear about Erasmus Darwin, which was well received and added a context for the Gardens we are planning in the city centre.

The next meeting will be on the topic of "Life as a Mill Worker in the Derwent Valley" presented in full period costume by Mary Wilson and colleagues. This has been organised through the team operating Strutts North Mill in Belper. Things might not be great at present, but I suspect we'll learn it's better now than then.

The meeting following this is the outside walk on 23rd June. We've had it confirmed that the trip around the works at Raynesway is organised. We'll meet at 7pm for a tour and talk at Megalough-ton Lane, where there's a car park. More details next month.

Future meetings are

26th May	Life as a Mill Worker in the Derwent Valley presented by Mary Wilson
23rd June	A walk around the Severn Trent Water Raynesway plant and a presentation on the water transfer scheme on the Grand Union.
28th July	Finding treasure as a detectorist by Tim Mellor
23rd Sept	From the Trent to the Mersey by Alastair Clarke
26th October	AGM

Meetings will be held **at the Cottages as usual starting at 7.30pm** for all but the June meeting.

Thankyou for as always and have a good holiday season.

Chris