

Chairman's Update

August 2026

Here we are nearing the end of holiday season and I hope you've all enjoyed the sun, especially as we now seem to be catching up with the much needed rain. It's amazing how quickly the grass has turned back to green. For the Trust August, is the month when officials tend to be on leave, so some matters have moved slowly, but hopefully will speed up next month.

Working Parties

Work has been concentrating on the Draycott section, where the grass and reeds have excelled in the moist location. As can be seen in the "before" photo the reeds and grass had reached head height. Of course any benefit will be temporary until the canal is restored, but this ditch is a major feature in draining flood water from the fields and Hopwell Road. We have already demolished a concrete ac-



commodation bridge, which had been preventing flood water flows. Given the historic speed of flood water rising we needed to make sure the water could escape reasonably quickly down the ditch.



Given the substantial rain flows in late August we completed the work (celebrated with the customary handshake as teams met in the middle) just in time. We had to finish before the ditch was in water to ensure our volunteers were safe. Of course we were careful to ensure that no nests were damaged as a result. It was a lot of heavy



work in hot temperatures, but worth it.



Having completed the track through the ditch bottom the guys were also able to trim the off bank. We'll carry on with this work now that we are out of the nesting season.

In addition we have now acquired and tested out the new mower that replaces the donated personal mower that had pretty much ex-

pired. It is a more robust machine, built to last, but at a price to match. Fortunately we have been able to fund it with a grant from East Midlands Airport. I don't feel so bad about the parking charges there, now!



At Spondon Bourne, the other team has now completed the path by surfacing with some finer dust. Whilst the council supplied the limestone free of charge it was very coarse and resulted in stony areas, which isn't great for wheels. The dust will provide a smoother path.

We've now had a meeting with the regional British Horse Society officer and a local Erewash Riders rep. It appears that the recommended dimensions can be reduced, so we could provide for horses with a more manageable bridge. Apparently horses aren't worried about the height of the bridge, but the riders will require strong railings either side. We wondered whether the riders could dismount, but were informed that 18% of riders are disabled, so this would be very limiting. From our point of view we have offered to look at the latest design suggested, but only if the BHS finds the funding and our new path isn't disrupted. The bridge would be well clear of the canal line, so wouldn't prejudice the restoration. Apparently the piers are the city council's and the bridge is the county's, but hopefully we can all cooperate to get an appropriate solution. Our thanks go to our Councillor Trustee from Pilsley for organising officers.

We've also been talking to the MP for this area, Jonathan Davies, who came to see the works there and walked the line between Spondon and Borrowash with us. He's noted the community involvement and has offered to get the STW new Chief Exec to help with the Borrowash sewer issue. Also seen in the photo were the two volunteers delivering Spondon, Tony and Don as well as Chris and myself representing the Trust (and a couple more directors, who were camera shy).



We've asked Derby City Council for modifications to the lease at Spondon, which has been positively received and we await a first draft agreement in due course.

Riverboat

We've had another problem with the motor, which we've had to deal with. On a hot Wednesday one of the two twin motors shut itself down due to the control system recognising a problem. The controller is so sophisticated it works to ensure that we cannot overtax the motors. We believe this occurred due to programmed settings combined with a very hot day. We were able to investigate before the weekend sailings and with the reduced temperatures together with extra temporary ventilation we have not seen a recurrence. However the supplier will be checking it out further after the holidays. Fortunately we avoided letting down passengers this time, but we do need to get the problem sorted out properly as summers are not expected to be any cooler in the future.

We've had good progress on moving the cable. After much delay—the work was commissioned in October—the contractor has finally completed the works during August. More good news was that no new issues occurred and the final stages were completed without further delay. Overall it looks like we have a small cost overrun on this, but it should be covered by our contingency fund.



The picture shows the new cable size—not quite the 4 inch diameter from the 1930s, but large enough. These were threaded through the installed ducting



and jointed at the front and back of the Silk Mill. Whilst the workmen were there we managed to get them to move the millstone (that had caused our overrun) into the Silk Mill for display. The Museum was doubly pleased as the works finished before a marriage reception planned at the Silk Mill.

We still await the final drawings from the pontoon suppliers to allow us to clear planning constraints. Many promises have been broken, already, so David and I have been trying to move them on by



modifying their basic drawings with detail required by the planners. At this late stage it is galling as it is now determining the date of completion. Planners are allowed 8 weeks to approve conditions, so that puts us near the end of the season. I suspect that our suppliers are extremely busy now and we are suffering from being a reasonably small job. We're looking at alternatives, but at this stage it's not going to speed things up, but it might give us more negotiating strength

We still await the grant payment from DCC, but have been promised it shortly.



Meanwhile our volunteers have continued to prepare the site. They've removed the bushes that would be in the way of the installation and taken out all the remaining balsam along the whole bank. This has been removed from site to ensure it doesn't present a fire hazard.

The site now looks quite clear and ready for the installation, when that occurs.

The MP for Derby North had intervened to get National Grid moving and came to see the works. It was timed for the Parliamentary recess, which happened to coincide with the works being completed.



It was also time to catch up on her plans for a Riverside Walkway where funding has been made available nationally. We were consulted on the section in central

Derby as the plans included an extra Riverboat stop in Darley Abbey. Given the challenge with the existing one I think I'm relieved that the bid will now be deferred until next year.



Riverside

A scheduled meeting with Council officers to compare notes was postponed, so will be looked at again in September. We have not yet been successful in attracting a project manager, and will be pushed again after the holidays.

Draycott/Breaston

We still await action from EMCCA, which is expected next month. We have asked that Peveril be added to the invite list. Meanwhile we have been nudged by the County flood officers to adjust a bund to better manage floods following a complaint from a neighbour.

We have registered to be a provider of BNG with National Grid following an update meeting and await their consultation process to reach a conclusion. This would also feed into the EMCCA process.

Sandiacre We still await a proposal from our neighbour, but have been promised we will get it in the near future. We have failed in one bid for funding, but await news of the second. In the meantime we have started the process for gaining access rights over the water by Lock Lane Bridge and expect to meet the owners in the next few weeks.

Land issues

The land purchases continue, but slowly. The Whitehead sale seems to have progressed satisfactorily, but the clearing of the caution on unregistered land has become more complicated, so will take a little longer.

Events

The last event of the year was a celebration of history at Derby Market Hall in late August. I must admit that we were wary that it might not be a good use of time, because the organisation seemed to be minimal. In the event it turned out to be the most productive event so far. It occurred over two days and the focus was on the history of the canal, hence the old black and white photos in abundance.



We were limited for volunteers, with just four of us splitting the time over the two days. We were kept very busy throughout with merchandise sales over £200—a record—and offers of help. Many of those attending wanted to know as much about the plans as the history. We generated interest in the Riverboat; we met Andy Savage, who has been recording videos of the canal line and with some clever then and now pictures and we attracted vol-

unteers offering help with botany (now teamed up with Fran), a retired strategist from the County Council, a Groundwork contact and someone ex JCB offering to do physical work. It was steady throughout and we were pleased to see visits from Trustees James Dawson (Leader EBC) and Kevin Miller as well as Nadine Peatfield, leader of Derby City.

We were also treated to a walk in Derby by two of our volunteers, David and Pauline Jennings. They are planning to offer history tours in the city and we were the guinea pigs. It was a very pleasant evening seeing remnants of the canal, the new pumping system on Bass Rec, the flood defences and finally the Smithfield pub. Thank you to them both.

IWA I attended the first Restoration Panel meeting in Droitwich. It attracted over 30 restorers from most of the canal groups across the country. An unbiased leader had been chosen, who happened to be a soon to retire professor at Southampton University. He (and his wife acting as secretary) have enjoyed boating for many years. I was able to compare Derby and Southampton Universities and found that ours is now seen as very ably led and better integrated into the city and therefore more financially stable than others. We've already been impressed by how much Derby university gets involved and supports us. It's good to know that we have an advantage in that.



For those interested the AGM for the IWA in Worcester on 19th September will be explaining the new restoration support being made available.

Meetings

We have no formal meeting in August, so our next meeting will be from **7.30pm on 22nd Sept** and is a talk at the Cottages tracing the connection of the Trent and Mersey rivers by Alastair Clarke.

Future meetings are

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| 22nd Sept | From the Trent to the Mersey by Alastair Clarke |
| 27th October | AGM |
| 24th November | Railway accidents caused by Human Error by Brian Dale |

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

Please accept my apologies for the incorrect dates shown in previous updates. Those above have been double checked with those who know!

Thanks for your support.

Chris