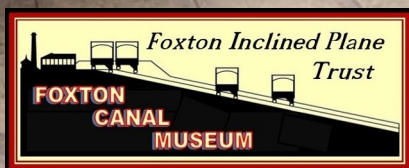


PLANE INFORMER

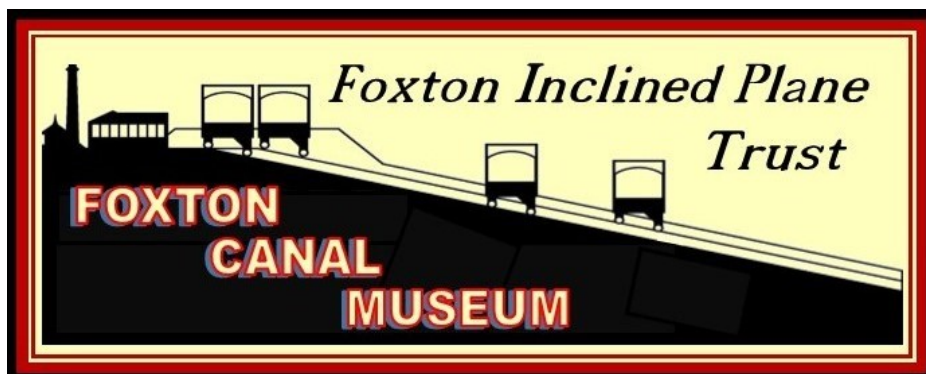
Nº 151

Foxton Inclined Plane Trust & Canal Museum



www.fipt.org.uk

foxtoncanalmuseum@fipt.org.uk



Who's who and contacts

Registered in England: Number 1654756. Registered Charity : Number 513241
Museum Accreditation 1644

At this time with the museum closed you may not get an answer very quickly and the museum phone may not be answered as sadly we may not be there. E-mail is the best way to contact FIPT someone will respond ASAP.

Tel Museum, 01162792657 - Email - info@foxtoncanalmuseum.org

Chairman:	Sean Park
Treasurer:	Giles Parsons
Membership:	Vacant (S Park) (membership@fipt.org.uk)
Site Heritage:	Mary Matts
Museum Director:	Mike Beech
Publicity:	Derek Harris
Committee members:	Matthew Knight, Penny Arcscott
Plane informer:	Mike Beech (position available to new person)

President: Stephen Bowyer **Vice President:** Trevor Towers

please visit www.fipt.org.uk

facebook.com/FoxCanalMuseum

Chair report

Sean Park

For the last few months the Museum has been able to open its doors.

Visitors of all ages have been welcomed and in some ways it feels like things are returning to "Normal" It puts a smile on our faces (and the vast majority of visitors) but we are obviously conscious that the next 3, 6 12 months etc. still holds uncertainty.

Even in these last few months with limited opening days we have welcomed more than 3,500 visitors!

Over winter we intend (as usual) remaining open at weekends with a lot of our time to be spent preparing for next year i.e. How can we ensure that by Feb/Mar we are in the best possible position for both the Museum and the Trust going forward.

As part of our plans we are delighted to welcome Dave Bellamy our new Museum Manager. Dave will tell you a little about himself and his background in this edition.

Key to the role is working with the trustees to increase the number of people actively involved in both running the trust/museum and in projects. Ideas are great, but only if you have the people to make the most of them. Understandably some of our pre-pandemic museum volunteers are not yet comfortable about returning.

Our project addressing isolation and inclusion in the community is progressing—the First short film engaging with autistic teenagers and their families has been completed and filming has begun on the second in the series of three looking at individuals and groups with either learning or physical barriers that can be encountered when visiting museums or cultural sites.

These not only serve to to raise our profile in the community but also say to people thinking about a volunteering or trustee role—we are seriously considering all of the community and what we can do. Often a small adjustment can make a large difference.

In August we were able (after a "Gap year") to hold the 38th Annual General Meeting. For the first (and hopefully last) time it was held by Zoom.

Both Giles & myself were re-elected as trustees and both Penny & Mike were elected as trustees by the membership.

The accounts for 2020 showed a small loss, primarily due to the costs associated with making the Museum Covid safe and improvements to layout/displays as highlighted in previous editions of the Informer.

MEMBERSHIP

As mentioned before there have been (unlike 2020) no small business grants available to offset running costs in 2021

As we approach the end of the year we also approach membership renewal.

The value of membership renewals and donations have never been so high.

In 2022 we will undertake a full review of the scheme—we need to ensure that it both meets the expectations of members and it the right way to not only retain members but also attract new members. For the sustainability of the trust in the years to come, better we review now.

With review the thoughts & suggestions of members is vital to this process. There will be a regular update throughout the year

Foxton Locks maintenance Works

Over the next month the CRT are removing large quantities of built up Silt from the side ponds. They hope to remove up to 300M2! How they do this? - high powered suction pumps, amphibious dredgers (being used for the first time), digger trucks and some very long piping to take silt from the Top of the locks, down the side of the locks, under a bridge, across the canal (on the canal bed), over a path into the fields!



The Big Bang

By Mike Beech.



Left, the canal at Logan Street.

Above a British Mills Bomb fragmentation grenade.

On the 1st of August the Harborough Mail reported on a hand grenade found in the canal at Harborough by magnet fisherman Aron. Most boaters carry a magnet in the hope of recovering a lost windlass or even the keys to the boat! Usually boaters get something like a sea searcher, they cost about £35. I had one and they are quite good. However there is a growing occupation where people use a very powerful magnet, Aron's apparently cost £220 each, he finds all sorts of stuff, including grenades. This was not his first, last year he found one in Leicester which the army blew up along with his magnet. In Harborough the police closed the canal and the towpath until the army arrived to blow up the grenade and another of Aron's Magnets. He sells the recovered scrap metal to a scrap merchant so

I hope he has made a profit!

Canal And River Trust do not officially allow magnet fishing because of the dangers which they list on their website, they are also concerned that people just dump the rubbish on the towpath.

The hand Grenades were most likely the British Mills Bomb designed in 1915 and used in both world wars. We have one in the museum collection (yes it is safely defused and rather rusty.)

The Museums bomb was found by a BWB employee in Saddington reservoir. But why are they in our waterways?

Gumley Hall which was next to the village church you can see from the museum was used during WWII as a base for training Dutch saboteurs to go home to Holland and cause disruption. They were transported by planes using the nearby cricket pitch as the runway. Their guards were RAF. (My uncle was a radio operator there but never talked about it.) It is believed that the bombs were acquired to use to get fish from the reservoir. Explode the bomb in the water and the stunned fish float to the surface for collection.

The Harborough Bomb may have been used in the same way however the location of the find at the top of Logan street was used by the local version of Dads Army to practice such things as crossing the river. At the time there was a wood yard at the top of the street bordering on the canal, it specialised in fence posts, fire wood and pea sticks. The ideal place to find the makings of a raft perhaps? They may even have used what were then open fields to practice throwing grenades? Or they could just have lost one on manoeuvres. If they had accidentally blown up the railway



water intake filters that fed the sidings at the railway station there would have been serious conciseness. The steel covers for the filters can still be found in the towpath. Years ago this would have been a good spot for magnet fishing as it was the place to dispose of things you didn't want or didn't want to be seen with. My grandfather admitted that when he worked at the 'aircraft factory just down the street, the canal was used to dispose of work that had gone wrong rather than letting the Foreman find it. But I would have thought that with dredging all the good stuff would have been long gone.

As for the bomb found in Leicester (and numerous other locations) we can only assume that soldiers may have acquired one for fishing, they were lost on manoeuvres or quite probably brought home as a souvenir and when their wives refused to have them in the house they were dumped in the canal rather than hand them in and risk prosecution!

Our bomb was defused presumably by the army but as the bombs being found now have been rusting away for 70 or 80 years the safer option would be to blow them up on site. You would lose less men that way as well.

At least Aron had the sense to put his find back in the canal until the army arrived.

Left, the railway water filter manholes.

Other transport

By Mike Beech

The cover picture of this edition coupled with my trip to the excellent Beamish Museum, inspired me to look at alternative transport at the time of the lift. Alternatives to canals that is.



For many years the only competition for transport was powered by the horse. Canals provided the ability to move bulk cargoes of stone to improve roads, but if there was no local source of stone it was very expensive to make long lasting improvements. Turn pike toll roads helped but away from those heavy carts just sank into the mud in winter. Often delicate pottery and similar items were damaged by the bumpy potholed and rutted lanes. Whereas canals were reliable and bulk goods could be moved in relative safety. It was the ability to move pottery that led Josiah

Wedgwood to invest in canals. Early railways were not really a threat to the canal.

The Cover picture is from an event on Harborough town square when vintage and classic cars were displayed. This Ford Model T dates from 1918 but they started building them in 1908 when the lift was still in use. They continued until 1927. it was the first car to be recognised as being for the middle class and to be in regular reliable everyday use, they sold 15 million of them. Because they are Fords they were all black. No doubt Gordon Thomas would have been familiar with them.

The British 1908 cars were still looking a bit old fashioned by comparison. You will probably never have heard of this car company,





The Seaham Harbour Engine Works, decided to have a go with this 2 cylinder model. Perhaps people didnt want a car named SHEW. They only built 2- this is the only survivor. I visited the seaside town of Seaham whilst on holiday, one of the most industrialised sea front towns of Britain and the coast was polluted with waste from glass works, blast furnaces, chemical works and coal mines. To day it has a pleasant cliff top walk, but some of the beaches still show their past. The harbour is still working.

Probably the best known and biggest threat to canals were the railways. I always think of transport history as a sort of race

with different ideas leaping ahead when new materials and ideas were brought forward. At Beamish you can have a ride behind a replica Puffing Billy. The real engine is the world's oldest surviving steam locomotive, constructed between 1813-1814 by enginewright Jonathan Forster and blacksmith Timothy Hackworth for Wylam Colliery near Newcastle upon Tyne. It was employed to haul coal chaldron wagons from the mine to the docks.

The engine had technical limitations. Running on cast-iron wagonway plates, its eight-ton weight was too heavy and broke them, encouraging opponents of locomotive traction to criticise

the innovation. This problem was alleviated by redesigning the engine with four axles so that the weight was spread more evenly. The engine was eventually rebuilt as a four-wheeler when improved edge rails track was introduced around 1830. It was not particularly fast, of no more than

A Great Northern Stirling 4-2-2. A total of 53 were built at Doncaster between 1870 and 1895.



5 mph about the same speed as the horses it replaced, the good thing as far as the owners were concerned was that it would pull a few wagons and looked after, fed coal and water didn't get tired. The real thing was never used for passengers. The replica runs on modern tracks but it is well worth visiting if you get the opportunity.

By the time the lift was in

operation railway locomotives could be recognised as being very similar to those most of you the readers, will remember even if it is only from a visit to a preserved railway. More importantly the rail itself was now made of quality steel and could stand the weight and speed of the late Victorian train. Early track was made of short cast iron sections which could and did break

under heavy load. The tracks now connected a good part of Britain. The train was faster and could pull heavier loads and lots of passengers. (not always safely) passenger travel by canal was limited, there were "fly" boats run on the lines of a stage coach which would take you from town to town in some comfort, and you could travel with some cargo boats, but most people relied on coaches if they could afford it. So it was cargo that provided profit for canals, and of

those coal was at the top of the list, but lime stone, salt and building materials, were important. It is perhaps ironic that the canals often carried the steel tracks to lay the railway competition.

It was to fight that threat that the Inclined Plane was built, it was intended to take bigger boats, with more cargo, the same horse and the same crew as a narrowboat. The railways were beginning to win the transport race.



My favourite engine at beamish is the Coffee pot, 2021 marks her 150th birthday! Built by Head Wrightson & Co for Dorking Greystone Lime Company for use at its Betchworth Quarry in Surrey.

FOXTON NEWS AUTUMN 2021

By Mary Matts.

From 19th July ('Freedom Day') all Covid restrictions were lifted, and there was a cautious sigh of relief. Boat bookings were no longer subject to reduced numbers, and pubs were able to let customers circulate more freely. However, there was still a great deal of apprehension in the air, and people were encouraged to still wear face coverings inside, and exercise common sense with social distancing etc. It seems that a lot of folk are either still wary, or have simply got out of the habit of going out. Visitor patterns are different, with more people out during the day, less in the evenings. The weather has not helped, being generally below par for most of the summer.

Restricted lock -working hours have reduced the expected boat numbers, and problems at Limekiln and Radcliffe locks to the north meant boaters were unable to do the 'Leicester Ring', a popular circular cruising route. Apparently every hire boat in the

country has been booked all season, but I have seen relatively few here, and likewise on my travels round the waterways, so I don't know where they all are?

About 150ft of new piling has been put in directly above the top lock, where there has been a slow leak for years. The path had also subsided, and the works stretched to 13 weeks, being finally completed just at the end of the holiday period. The path on the old top arm remains technically closed, as does access to the Inclined Plane. One bonus is the riot of wild flowers that have sprung up, and the site looks more like a nature reserve. Large fish enjoy the undisturbed water, and Canal & River Trust have been running some



"Let's Fish" days to encourage young people to take up the hobby.

Duke of Edinburgh Award students spent a week camping in the top field, and worked on various projects including the in-progress nature walk on the top island, vegetation clearance, and helping boats through the flight. CRT also ran a camping weekend for their volunteers from all over the country to familiarise themselves with a busy visitor site, and to test the logistics for public camping (for which there is a great demand).

Two fields came up for sale recently: one behind the top car park, the other on the offside south of Bridge 60, and were quickly sold. There have been plans mooted in the past for a small marina for residential boats in the latter, so it will be interesting to see if these resurface in the light of new relaxed planning regulations.

There is a Ministry of Justice proposal for a new category B (low risk lifers) prison for around 1,700 men south east of the existing HMP Gartree. If agreed construction would begin in 2022/23 to be completed 2025. There is continuing commercial and housing development on the old airfield between Foxton, MH and Lubenham, and we cannot envisage that a new prison would have any direct impact on the canal.

The old lock cottage at Kings Lock, Aylestone (last surviving lock cottage in Leicester) has been run as a tea room since 2004, and with the retirement of the owners has now been sold. This cottage has a chequered past, being variously home to nine lockkeepers, including George King from 1855-1900, in the ownership of Leicester City Council in the 70s, vandalised, torched, and then taken back by British Waterways to house one of their managers before being sold off. A fairly well documented history has appeared in Union in the past.

There is no official road access, it being about 200 yds up the towpath from Packhorse Bridge 105, where there is a car park. Extensive flooding of the River Soar meadows behind used to be an issue, but has not occurred for many years now.

A new phenomenon to contend with is e-scooters on the towpath. CRT have yet to properly formalise their position on these, but need to act quickly before, it becomes established use (as with cycling).

Boat names over the summer seem to have gathered in 'themes'. One day we had Mongoose, Goosemoor, and Moose tied close together. Another day Maid of Oak and Hearts of Oak (unsurprisingly, wooden boats). YKNOT was joined by Knot on Call (retired doctor) and Knot Shore

(retired seaman?). My most amusing sighting was Teg's Nose (a promontory near the Macclesfield), boldly painted on the bows, and in very small letters on the stern, Teg's Arse.



'Lucky horse shoe'



Farewell to Dave by Mike Beech

On the 7th of June this year a small party gathered on the top of the Incline to scatter Dave Goodwin's ashes. He passed away peacefully on Friday 5th of April 2020. he had not been well for a while. Over a year since he left us, the delay being caused by covid restrictions. Even in June this year

we had to limit the numbers so we just invited his close friends. We scattered him on the inclined plane next to a bit of track he had acquired from the Kennet and Avon Canal, transported in a trailer he had built just for the job, bent to fit the profile of the incline, and laid using track bolts he had made.



Above, left to right, Jean Bourn (OUCS) Mary Matts, Bob Bourne (OUCS) Bob Martin (OUCS) Gill Cook, Georgie Cook and Carl Bedford.

Left, Mike Scatters the ashes.

In Remembrance of ...

Michael Hadley by Carl Bedford

Sharing a common interest in canals, and having both done National Service with the Royal Navy, Michael learning Russian as a Radio Communications Specialist and myself in the Royal Marines, we soon became friends after coming to live in Foxton some 30 years ago.

Michael was very much involved in the life of our community being both a Foxton Parish Councillor and serving for eight years on Harborough District Council. He was also a committee member of the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust and a member of the Foxton Locks Partnership which organised the large programme of enhancement works that took place around the Millennium.

During his time as a District Councillor Michael was also involved in the designation of some of the more specialised features at

the locks, and their inclusion in the Grand Union Leicester Section Conservation Area. He was also largely responsible, as part of the planning process, for ensuring that the pedestrian swingbridge at the bottom of the locks was replaced in order to provide disabled access to the site from the Foxton towpath. This feature, although not very popular with boaters, is still much appreciated by less mobile pedestrians such as myself.

Sadly Michael had to give up all these varied activities on suffering a severe stroke some years ago and, whilst able to remain at home, in Middle Street, with his wife Sheila until quite recently, he then spent some months in a Leicester Nursing Home where he passed away on 30th September aged 87.



Remembering the past

by Mike Beech

During my most recent trip on the Norfolk Broads Mum asked how long I had been boating? The photo on the right suggests that it is around 65 years! I have always been interested in boats. My first Norfolk Broads trip was about 54 years ago when I was asked by Welland Park School to go with a party to the broads aboard sailing boats, no engine or electric, and the boats were mainly full of children, I was in charge of a boat load of kids! But I had by then owned my own sailing dingy which was used mostly on the canal.

As a child on days out any boat moving was something of a novelty. We did go to Foxton for walks, when a family member with a car offered to take us, and we walked the canal banks a lot.

The year I was born the first ever Inland Waterways Festival of Boats was held in Market Harborough. The festival was intended to campaign for the continuation of canal transport and keep the way of life afloat. I remember listening to the news on the radio saying that all of the canals could be filled in and the land put into productive use. It was against that background that my



family and I visited the rally of boats at Welford organised by the Old Union Canals society.

I was interested and a few years later joined the society at an evening meeting at Welland Park School.

Things have changed so much since then. Most of the boat rally's I attended by boat were campaigning to save the canals, mostly for leisure. I am so pleased that there were still real carrying boats at work when I started boating. Most of the lock keepers were retired boatmen, some with only one leg or arm. My first visit to Stratford I encountered lock gates where the balance beams were missing or locks that didn't want to fill up because the water was running out the other end

nearly as fast as you could put it in. there was a real sense of adventure and achievement. There was also a real camaraderie about being on the cut. It didn't matter what boat you had or what job you did, if you loved the canals you were ok. I had lovely evenings sitting on the boat of someone we had shared a lock with that day, or agreed to meet in the pub. I think some but not all of that has gone. Boats tended to be smaller and made of wood, GRP, or were converted from whatever would float. Redundant army pontoons used to build bridges were popular, fitted with a side valve engine from a car the gearbox, often with the clutch pedal sicking out of the floor. Posh meant glass fibre and an outboard motor. Bigger boats were often old wooden boats cut in half, full length was rare. Slowly new boats for hire or boats for enthusiasts were built. Early ones were built of wood but steel soon

came in to its own, Harborough become an important centre for boat building in steel. The increase in canal use for pleasure is what really saved the canals. And I spent time on work parties helping to get there.

The Foxton Inclined Plane Trust was born out of the wish to preserve the historic structures.

Steady progress was made and whilst there are several waterways campaigning for restoration and countless complaints about the state of our waterways today, I have to admit that they are in much better condition than they were when I bought my first boat.

From the OUCS Archive. The Grand Union end of the Leicester Line in the 1950s? A motorboat and 3 butties looking abandoned and blocking the canal.



New Museum Manager

By Dave Bellamy

Hi all, my name is Dave Bellamy and by way of an introduction on me joining the Trust earlier this month as Museum Manager, I thought I'd take this opportunity to tell you a little about myself.

Difficult to know though where to start really! ... Its only when I look at my CV do I realise I've spent ALL of my working life in and around Museums and the Arts!

Although I now live in Buckinghamshire and have done for the past 21 years I'm originally from Shrewsbury in Shropshire. My very first museum working experiences were gained whilst working for Shrewsbury Museums; was hooked from the very first week, subsequently the following year going onto study for a degree in Art History at Leicester.

On the very morning of my graduation, I received a letter from the British Museum offering me a fulltime role!.... never expected that.....never thought I'd be living in London either, but such an opportunity couldn't be ignored. That initial job led onto 10 wonderful years working in a few different departments, finally as Collections Manager providing a further opportunity to travel



widely, representing the Museum installing exhibitions throughout the UK, to Europe, USA, Japan, Australia and India. One of these days I've promised myself I'll write a book about my experiences!

On leaving the British Museum I've been lucky enough to be able to work in so many unique and interesting places and spaces..... it's hard to capture them all, but if you throw into the mix.... Exhibitions Coordinator at the the British Library; setting up a visitor centre at the world's first mechanised steam driven paper mill in Hemel Hempstead; managing the flag ship branch of one of the UK's premier auction houses, and setting up my own exhibition's business....I guess you could say I've built up quite a range of experiences.



Boating Bellamy

My very first real memory of canals and narrow boats was like many of us, on a geography field trip in Junior School; of course Llangollen and the Shropshire Union Canal are only a few miles from Shrewsbury. I was genuinely excited as a child the first time I visited Blists Hill & Ironbridge and it has clearly fuelled my interest in Industrial archaeology ever since... You could say everything seems to have led me to here....

Now a days I'm more likely to be out running on the network of towpaths that canals provide, or the occasional spot of fishing with my lads, if I can drag them off their phones for a few hours?

Taken from my blog... A few photos & memories from my Short Grand Union Canal trip up to Foxton Locks... in preparation for winter mooring accommodation.

What a stunning landscape to

explore, at a pace so unfamiliar these days! The weather was fab for October, So many Kingfishers!!

The sunsets were gorgeous, and the range of wildlife on offer each day was just something else! One of the many surprises on this stretch of canal is how wide and river-like it seemed, quite overgrown in places, and not the narrow industrialised waterways I had expected!

A fabulous introduction for me to the UK's canal system and to narrow boating, that I certainly hope to add to over the coming months! Just need to work on my confidence when steering a little!... surprising how difficult manoeuvring 60ft of steel can be! Anyway, nearly there now... the boat has been moored south of Bridge 60 ready to drop down through Foxton Locks tomorrow! We will see if my skills steering can be improved over the coming weeks....



So With much needed support from Mike and Chris, my new Museum colleagues; we were able to negotiate Foxton Locks,



pretty much without delay, The CRT volunteers were on hand to offer their expertise, and with my very capable companions we negotiated the staircase in a little under 50 minutes! The weather behaved itself and the short trip onto Debdale Marina flew by! My piloting skills might just have improved slightly, but not feeling confident enough to manoeuvre the boat into the marina itself, Mike continued at the helm eventually steering the boat into it's winter mooring position.

Left, Mike steering the boat through the locks, not helped by the dingy on the roof obscuring the view.

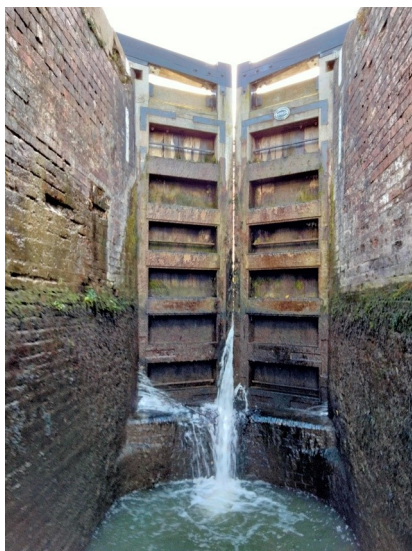
Below Chris was operating the paddles. Whilst keeping an eye on me.





Top left, exiting the bottom lock.

Top right, The gates look very big from the bottom of the locks.



Right Captain Bellamy at the helm.





Cosgrove aqueduct is a navigable cast iron trough navigable aqueduct that carries the Grand Union Canal over the River Great Ouse, on the borders between Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire at the northwest margin of Milton Keynes in England
photo David Bellamy

Who were they?

This picture from our archives must have been taken before 1927. They are scouts but that is about all we know. The lift buildings are intact but it looks as if the locks are in use so 1909 is the earliest date, but not after 1927 when the chimney was demolished.

