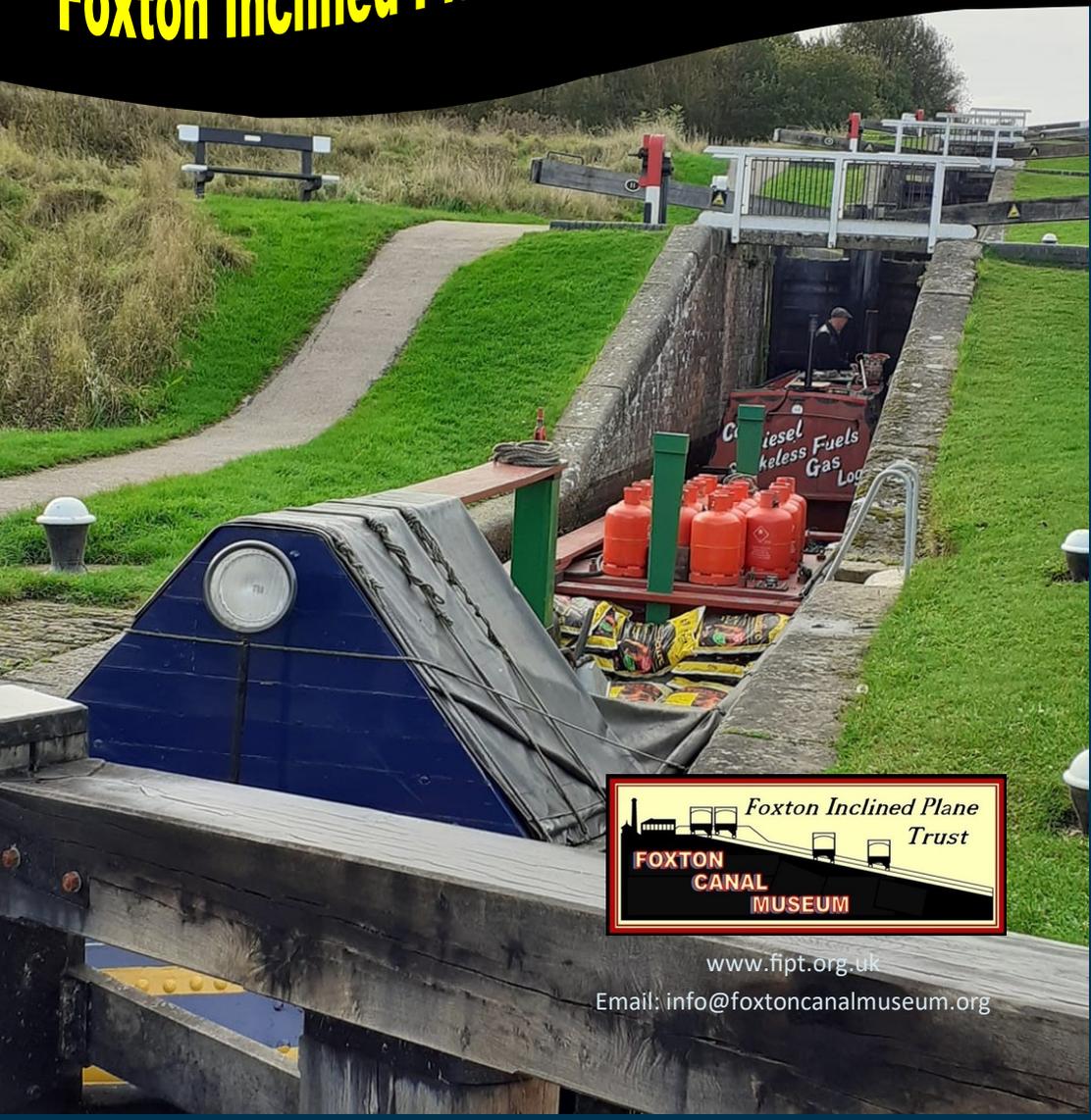


PLANE INFORMER

Nº 149

Foxton Inclined Plane Trust & Canal Museum



www.fipt.org.uk

Email: info@foxtoncanalmuseum.org

Chair report

Sean Park

Looking at the "Big Picture" the outlook in the short and medium term remain the same. In the absence of a vaccine any relaxation of socialising rules will result in an increase in infections. However, some 8 months on local and national facilities and treatments are greatly improved.

For the Trust I will address the impact in a number of areas

Finances

We not only were able to claim the small business grant of £10,000 but also support our employees from March to October through the Job Retention Scheme. We were also going to be making use of the Job retention bonus for our employees covering November to January- however just before sending this to print the scheme was cancelled and the furlough scheme extended. We will therefore continue with this and review monthly at our Zoom trustee meetings.

We do expect that the 2020 financial year will not result in a loss.

Museum

Whilst the Museum will remain closed to the public for some time the activity of a small number of volunteers (with appropriate and

effective measures) is starting to take shape.

The Re-creation of a major feature wall on the Inclined plane to greet visitors when they first go into the Museum is making progress. The original Rail track, working Boat lift model and striking images are part of the re-setting (referred to in previous Informers) to a greater and more prominent focus of the primary purpose of the Trust - there is still plenty of space to showcase all aspects of canal life, locally and beyond.

By the next Informer much of this display along with the creation of a separate exit from the museum will be completed to allow us to show you. For us it is when, not if the Museum will re-open and we have an opportunity to ensure that at Day 1 we have something rightly special for our visitors.

We are also at this time delighted to re-welcome Mike Beech as a trustee. Mike, one of the original founder members of the Trust was Museum Manager for many years and more recently employed to develop our archives (instrumental in achieving accreditation for the Museum).

All of us here wish you well over the coming winter months.

Sean

I can't escape!

By Mike Beech.

Officially retired at 65 I have continued working part time for the FIPT, specifically to work on the archives and get as much as possible into our museum database, including the knowledge I have gathered in my head. The database known as Modes contains a record of every object in the collection, most of the photographs but only a percentage of the paper records we have. We don't need the same amount of paper as we did years ago, many of the things we want to reference are now easily and accurately available on the internet so we have done some weeding. We keep all original documents but not the less relevant material.

The work has progressed but is far from finished.

However I had promised myself that I would stop receiving payment at 70 for what I hoped was a diminishing job. With this in mind I informed the committee that as from September 1st I would no longer be employed, but would still volunteer when I have the time. This has now happened. But a few days later our Chairman asked if I would consider joining the committee as a full voting member, how could I refuse?

Since then I have been very busy with all sorts of jobs. I would still love to find a new editor for informer, I would like to train more



people to use Modes and will support the training of new staff for the museum when we reopen.

I sincerely hope that you have all weathered Covid unscathed and will continue to do so. I have lost touch with some of you over the last few years, my extended summer holidays mean that I am not often at the museum on the sunny days that you visit. I have met all of you that are volunteers but may not recognise you in the street. So I hope you will all drop me a letter or postcard to update me. Many of you haven't given FIPT permission to use e-mail address outside of membership matters so I can't use those to contact you. If you want to use e-mail to contact me please use my personal mail wreckfinder@gmail.com

All other mail should go to info@foxtoncanalmuseum.org that will find me but a reply may be slow at the moment. When we are at the museum we don't always answer the phone, as we are officially closed, and when we are there we are often painting or cleaning, or out the back trying to get rid of weeds!

I look forward to next year when I hope we can all get together!

Locks, Locks and More Locks

By Elaine Shawyer. Part 2

STAIRCASE LOCKS AND FLIGHTS

Where there were differences in height in the landscape, early canal builders placed locks so that the canal channel could be constructed as easily as possible. Where there was a steep slope, it was cheaper to build staircase locks, close together, which shared gates. As canal engineering developed to include the construction of cuttings and embankments, there was more choice as to where to put locks. It was more convenient for construction and for operation to put several locks together - sometimes as many as thirty.

Among the most impressive engineering feats on the canal, staircase locks contain several locks in a row and appear like stairs in the landscape. There are no stretches of water, or pounds, in between the locks - the top gate of one lock will also be the bottom gate of the lock above.

Flights, however, will normally have pounds in between the locks.

Flights can also contain staircases - at Foxton, two adjacent five-chamber staircases form the flight of ten locks. When a hill is very steep, side ponds/pounds are often used to save and re-use the water.

SINGLE LOCKS/NARROW LOCKS AND BROAD LOCKS

Narrow locks take one narrowboat, up to 72 feet long with a 7-foot beam (width). **Broad locks**



Above: The famous 29 Caen Hill locks on the Kennet and Avon Canal; restored and re-opened in 1990. (Photo: Canal & River Trust)

may accommodate two narrowboats side by side, or one barge about 65 feet long with a 14-foot beam.

Most locks are between 6 and 10 feet deep, but some are deeper.

Single locks often have one lock gate and are the most straightforward to use. Generally, they provide the quickest and simplest way to move a boat from one height to another as well as being the most economical in using water.

DOUBLED/PAIRED/TWINNED LOCKS

To increase speed and avoid delays, lock flights were often doubled by building them side by side. This also saves water as more than one boat can go through at a time.



(Photo: Canal & River Trust)

DUPLICATE LOCKS

As canals became busier many locks created bottlenecks which slowed down boat traffic. More profitable canal companies built duplicate locks alongside the existing ones. When boats were worked in pairs, they could also pass side by side through the locks.

STOP LOCKS

Stop locks were built where canals joined, to keep the water belonging to the two canal companies separate, as water was a valuable commodity!

ROUND LOCKS

Occasionally, locks have been built to a circular plan. There are more than two exits from the lock chamber, each serving a different water level. So, the lock functions both as a way of changing levels and as a junction. The circular lock allows boats within it to rotate, to line up with the appropriate exit gate. The best-known example of this is the Agde Round Lock on the Canal du Midi in France - see picture below. It serves as a lock on the main line of the canal and allows access to the Hérault River.



Photo: Wikipedia

DROP LOCKS

A drop lock allows a short length of canal to be lowered, while boats pass under an obstruction such as a low bridge. During canal restoration, a drop lock may be used where it is impractical or too costly to remove or raise a structure that was built after the canal was closed (and where re-routeing the canal is not possible). A drop lock can consist of two conventional lock chambers leading to a sump pound, or a single long chamber incorporating the sump - although the term properly applies only to the second case. As the pounds at either end of the structure are at the same height, the lock can only be emptied either by allowing water to run to waste from the sump to a lower stream or drain, or (less wastefully) by pumping water back up to the canal. Particularly in the two-chamber type, there is a need for a bypass culvert, to allow

water to move along the interrupted pound and so supply locks further down the canal. In the case of the single-chamber type, this can be achieved by keeping the lock full and leaving the gates open while not in use. While this concept has been suggested in a few cases, the only example of a drop lock that has been constructed is at Dalmuir on the Forth and Clyde Canal in Scotland, where the canal crosses the busy A814 - shown below.



Photo: www.gentles.info

FLOOD LOCKS

A flood lock is a way of preventing a river from flooding a connected waterway. It is typically installed where a canal leaves a river. While the river is at a normal level, the lock gates are left open and the height of the canal can rise and fall with the height of the river. But if the river floods beyond a

safe limit for the canal, then the gates are closed, and an extra lock created until the river level drops again. Since this is a true lock, it enables boats to leave the canal for the flooded river despite the difference in water levels (though this is not likely to be a good idea) or, more sensibly, it allows boats caught out on the flood to gain refuge in the canal.

If the canal is simply a navigation cut connecting two stretches of the same river, the flood lock will be at the upstream end of the cut. The downstream end will have a conventional lock.

Flood locks which have been used only as flood gates are often incapable of reverting to their former purpose without refurbishment. That is, where only outer gates are ever closed (probably because a waterway is not a true commercial one, and therefore there is no financial imperative for a boat to venture out onto a flooded river) inner gates soon suffer from lack of maintenance.

A good example is on the Calder and Hebble Navigation, where structures referred to in the boating guides as 'Flood Locks' are clearly only capable of being used for flood-prevention, not for 'penning' boats to or from the river in flood.



Flood lock (Photo:
www.geograph.org.uk)

BI-DIRECTIONAL GATES AND LOCKS

Where a lock is tidal (i.e. water on one side of the lock rises and falls with the tide) or where a canal meets a river whose level may vary, the water on the tidal or river side (the 'downstream' side) may rise above the water on the normal 'upper' side. The 'upstream' pointing doors will then fail to do their job and will simply drift open. So, to prevent water flowing the wrong way through the lock, there will need to be at least one set of gates pointing in the 'wrong' direction. If it is desirable that boats can use the lock in these circumstances, then there needs to be a full set of gates pointing towards the tidal or river side. The usual method is to have gates pointing in opposite directions at both ends of the chamber. If navigation is not

required (or impossible) at one 'extreme' (e.g. allow navigation above mid-tide, but just prevent the canal emptying at low tide) then it is only necessary to have one set of bi-directional gates.

SEA LOCK

A sea lock is one that connects a canal or river directly with an estuary or ocean. All sea locks are tidal. Bude Canal sea lock, Cornwall, is pictured below.



Photo: Wikipedia

TIDAL LOCKS

A tidal lock is generally any lock that connects tidal with non-tidal water. This includes a lock between a tidal river and the non-tidal reaches, or between a tidal river and a canal, or a sea lock. However, the term usually refers specifically to a lock whose method of operation is affected by the state of the tide.

Examples:

A canal joining a river whose levels are always lower than the canal. This needs an ordinary lock, with

Some of you have shown interest in

my traveling on holiday. It was a

the gates pointing up the canal. The lock is used normally so long as the tide is high enough to float boats through the lower gates. If near low tide the lock becomes unusable, then the gates can be barred (and simply become a 'reverse flood gate', holding water in the canal). This arrangement also applies to some sea locks (e.g. Bude Canal).

A canal joining a river which is normally below it, but which can rise above it (at very high tides, or after heavy rain). One pair of gates can be made bidirectional: the inward-pointing gates would be supplemented by a pair pointing out to the river. When the river is higher than the canal, the normal gates will just drift open, but the additional pair of gates can be closed to protect the canal and prevent navigation to the river. In effect, a flood gate has been added.

As above, but where it is safe to navigate even when the river is higher than the canal. The lock will be fully bidirectional (two pairs of oppositely pointing gates at each end) to allow boats to pass at any normal river levels. At extreme low or high tides unsuitable for navigation, the appropriate sets of gates are barred to prevent passage.

This photograph shows the Thames Brentford tidal lock.



Photo: Canal and River Trust
INLET LOCKS

An inlet lock regulates water from a feeder canal or a river into the main canal. In some cases, the inlet lock may double as a lift lock to allow boats into the river.

TURF-SIDED LOCKS

The lock's chambers are lined from above the low water level with turf sloping out at 45 degrees. Below low water level the sides are planked vertically. Turf locks use a huge amount of water. Most of these have been changed into brick and wooden planked vertical locks, although two of the Kennet and Avon Canal turf-sided locks have been preserved.

VERY LARGE LOCKS

The world's largest lock was, until 2016, the Berendrecht Lock, giving access to the Port of Antwerp in Belgium. In 2016 the Kieldrechtsluis in the same port became the largest. The lock is 500 m (1,600 ft) long, and 68 m (223 ft) wide and drops 17.8 m (58 ft). It has four sliding lock gates. The size of locks cannot be compared without considering the difference in water level under which they are designed to

operate. For example, the Bollène lock on the River Rhône has a fall of at least 23 m (75 ft), the Leerstetten, Eckersmühlen and Hilpoltstein locks on the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal have a fall of 24.67 m (80.9 ft), each and the Oskemen Lock on the Irtysh River in Kazakhstan has a drop of 42 m (138 ft). The total volume of water to be considered in any lock equals the product of its length, breadth and the difference in water levels.

BALANCE LOCK

This was a type of boat lift designed by James Fussell (1748-1832). An experimental balance lock was built as part of the Dorset and Somerset Canal and work was started for four more, but the project failed for financial reasons and they were not completed.

The builders of the Dorset and Somerset Canal were faced with the need for many locks, as the branch to Frome had a change in level of 264 feet (80m). Fussell proposed the building of boat lifts to raise and lower the boats, rather than conventional locks.

There had been some precursors, for John Duncombe had invented a counterbalanced lift in 1790, while working as the engineer on the Ellesmere Canal, and Robert Wheldon was proposing to use lifts on the nearby Somerset Coal Canal. As Fussell's design was untested, an experimental boat lift was built at the top of Barrow Hill. It would be capable of handling boats weighing 10 tons and would raise them by 20 feet (6.1 m). Although similar to

those later built by James Green on the Grand Western Canal, which also used counterbalanced caissons, there were differences. Fussell's design used chains which passed round wheels attached to the caisson, the end of which was fixed to the top of the structure, whereas Green fixed his chains to a bar on the caisson. Fussell included guide rails running up the chamber, which steadied the caisson, and he used a separate chamber beneath the caisson to hold extra water, which made the top tank heavier and provided the motive power to cause the lift to operate. Fussell's design was the basis for a patent application, number 2284, which he obtained in 1798.

The trial lift was completed, and tests were carried out in September and October 1800.

The *Bath Chronicle* reported on 16 October that the lift had been operated several times, without any difficulty or problems, and that engineers had inspected it carefully and declared themselves entirely satisfied. The company intended to build five more lifts on Barrow Hill. Some excavations and stonework were begun but the company ran out of money and the project was abandoned.

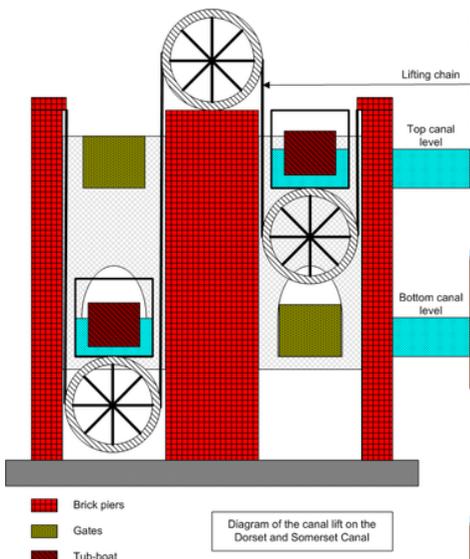


Image: Wikipedia
CAISSON LOCK

This was invented in the late 1700s, in response to the excessive water wastage that would result from using conventional locks to raise and lower canal boats through large height differences. Such locks, each of which would only raise and lower boats a few feet, would not be suitable when large height differences had to be tackled or when water was in short supply. Engineers tried floating a narrowboat into a sealed, watertight box then raising or lowering it between two different canal water levels. Designed primarily to save water, this was also an attempt to minimise construction costs. It could replace up to seven conventional locks. It also enabled the boat to ascend or descend faster over a large height

difference. But the technology of that time was not capable of cheaply achieving this kind of construction.

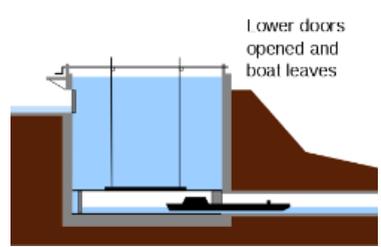
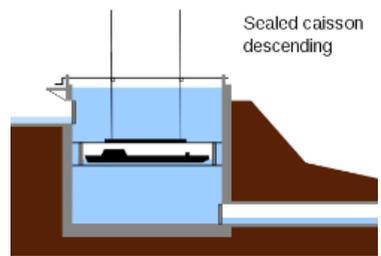
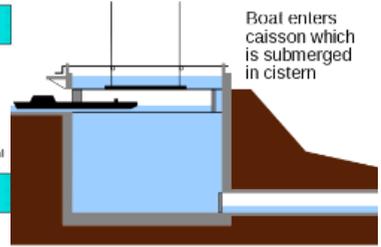
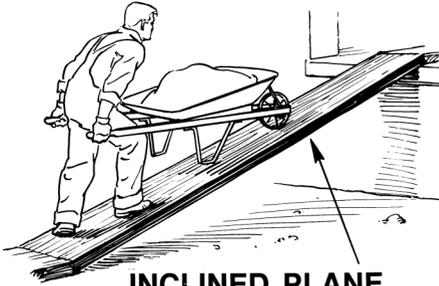


Image: Wikipedia
INCLINED PLANE

If you have visited Foxton Locks and/or are a member of the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust, you will be familiar with this term. The Trust and the Museum are here to preserve the remains of the site's inclined plane boat lift, and to tell its story. Like the balance lock, inclined planes can be used to transport heavy objects (e.g. boats) up or down a difference in height. An inclined plane, also known as a ramp, is a flat supporting surface tilted at an angle, with one end

higher than the other, used as an aid for raising or lowering a load. Inclined planes are widely used to move heavy loads over vertical obstacles; as well as a boat lift or caisson lock, examples vary from a ramp used to load goods into a truck, to a person walking up a pedestrian ramp, to a car or train climbing a hill.



INCLINED PLANE

Moving an object up an inclined plane requires less force than lifting it vertically, at the cost of an increase in the distance moved. The mechanical advantage of an inclined plane (the factor by which the force is reduced), is equal to the ratio of the length of the sloped surface to the height it spans. Due to conservation of energy, the same amount of mechanical energy (work) is required to lift a given object by a given vertical distance, disregarding losses from friction, but the inclined plane allows the

same work to be done with a smaller force exerted over a greater distance.



Above: the Foxton Inclined Plane Boat Lift

If anyone knows of any other types of lock, please let us know!

Back to the beginning part 2

By Mike Beech

This was never intended to be definitive, it is written from my head rather than detailed research. It is the story rather than the fact. Because of the lockdown I haven't visited Foxton as much as normal so some of the things I may have looked at are not at my disposal.

So why have a lift at Foxton at all? Lots of the history books claim that when railways arrived they took all of the freight and the canals closed down. We can see that that isn't true: a couple of thousand miles of waterway survived the closures, doing quite good business. Early railways couldn't pull the heavy loads we think of and they couldn't deliver bulk materials to the back door of businesses in the city set up to take advantage of canal transport. But this was changing as locomotives got better, roads improved and rail was eating into the most profitable canal trade. The biggest cargo was definitely coal but road stone, salt, bricks, and agricultural materials were important, even straw for bedding the thousands of horses in the cities.

Everyone needed coal and industry needed it to make everything. Canals had been built to the coal fields in the north and Fellows Morton and Clayton, (FMC) one of

the biggest canal carriers wanted to keep that trade. Loading boats at North Leicestershire and South Nottinghamshire coal pits for delivery to London was very important. There were two routes south, one of them and the easiest to improve included the Leicester line. Two waterways: the LNU Leicester to Harborough and the old GU Foxton to Norton Junction formed part of the route, but they were in very poor condition. Grabbing the opportunity FMC persuaded the Grand Junction Canal Company with its direct links between London and Birmingham, to acquire the old Leicester line canals and improve them.

Necessary improvements were the widening of Foxton and Watford locks. FMC wanted to use wide boats carrying twice as much cargo with the same crew and the same horse. By 1886 FMC started introducing steam powered narrow boats, but they were expensive to build and carried significantly less cargo than a horse boat. The wide boats were about 10 foot wide with barrel shaped hulls so that they could get closer to the bank and pass each other on narrow waterways.

At first the plan was simply to replace the narrow locks with wide ones. The task given to Gordon Thomas. Thomas had been

appointed to the position of chief engineer for the GJCC. Having surveyed the possibilities Thomas quickly came back with a report to say that a lack of water at the top of the locks would be a problem as they were essentially doubling the amount of water needed to get down the locks. I haven't seen evidence but I assume pumps were mentioned, back pumping of water had been used on many waterways with lots of success, but you needed the water to get your wide boats up and down the rest of the LNU to Leicester and beyond, so back pumping wouldn't work.

It just so happened that Thomas and his business partners another Thomas and a Taylor held a patent for a barge lift. It would, according to Thomas, solve lots of problems. Build one at Foxton and one at Watford: that would widen the canal and allow boats working in pairs to go through together. It would save time speeding up the traffic and eliminating holdups. It would also almost entirely remove the need to use water to get the boats up or down. The saved water could then be channelled to the main GJCC line where the bulk of the companies trade was.

The Thomas lift was intended to take the wide boats up or down the hills using a small 25hp steam engine but the work was lessened by making the lift counterbalanced. Each tank or Caisson would stay full of water with or without a boat. The weight of the two tanks is then

balanced so it doesn't need much power to move them.

I am often asked why he didn't just add more water to the top tank to make the lift move. There is no evidence of that being discussed by Thomas but one good reason would be that saving the water was of great importance. Electricity at that time still needed a generator on site as the National Grid had yet to be built. The other reason for steam, in my opinion is that this was the steam age, steam power was the modern fashion. So to power a flagship project like the lift, steam would be the only choice.

The long term plan was to build two lifts with a proposal to replace the locks and Saddington tunnel with more lifts, making it a very modern fast waterway. What a grand plan that would be. But they had to build one first!

So why start with Foxton? why not Watford? The main reasons seems to have been that the GJCC wanted the water down the main line, and Foxton's locks were in desperate need of repair.

The Boat By Mike Beech

A few volunteers have been working on a long overdue job. The maintenance boat perched at the top of the Inclined Plane has for some time been filling up with water and dead leaves. A minority of visitors have added rubbish. The CRT were concerned that if someone fell in they could drown. I was more concerned about the boat itself and the fact that it didn't look like we ever cared for it. With lockdown diminishing we started by drilling a couple of holes close to the bottom of the boat, but she is rather thick at that point. Slowly the level diminished until we could get in with wellies and start to remove the accumulated silt. I know that there are holes in the bottom, Dave Goodwin sat for ages with a hand drill and put them in but no amount of sweeping and scraping in the bottom under water had managed to find them.

Things have moved on and the modern battery electric drill has made life much easier. I had the job of drilling the holes as the drill and one and a half inch hole saw were mine, others cleared the silt watched by our Chairman in his role of safety officer. (one person has to stay outside the boat for safety.) Having got the water down to just a few inches the first hole was drilled and the water started



to go down, by the end of the day we had 3 and a half holes drilled and most of the silt removed. How do you drill half a hole? Easy you keep going and the cheap battery drill gives up and melts but we do have a small hole at that point. I could not have done this job on my own so we need a big pat on the back for the volunteers. We need to finish the job, but the suggestion is that as the leaves are starting to fall we will let most of them come down and then clear them with the last of the silt and finish the last hole. We did find Dave's main hole, blocked with leaves in the centre of the boat about 2 inches from the new hole!

In the Museum By Mike Beech



displays from time to time and everyone involved in the planning and those of us who have volunteered to do the work cant wait to see your faces when we reopen and you can all come and tell us how brilliant we are!

The first part has made a wonderful mess, we could not do it with the museum open.

It has bee strange not having the museum open. With plans to do a makeover expanding to ensure that we can open next year with a one way route around the exhibits we have finally made a start. It is no bad thing to freshen up the

Part of the museum is now a carpenters shop, walls have been cleared and prepared for a coat of paint and we have started building a cabinet for model we have had for a couple of years but never protected properly.



Mike at 70

I had plans for my 70th birthday, they included a trip on a boat with family and friends. We all know why everyone plans have changed this year, but I didn't want to sit at home twiddling my thumbs. So what to do? I still fancied a day out on a boat, possibly the only one this year. So I looked at day boats. Prices vary as do the boats. I didn't want one of the short stubby looking ones, didn't want to travel far and I never want to pay more than I have to! Searches on the internet revealed that Foxton Boat Services were in fact the cheapest, they are not the poshest but they are a nice shaped boat that from experience handle well. So I booked the boat for September the 11th a few days before my birthday on the 13th avoiding the weekend. I invited Ann Hoxley who now works with me at the Museum or would do if she wasn't furloughed. We agreed that it would be nice to take our mums. My mum isn't very good at climbing on to boats these days and Sam Matts recommended Foxy as being the easiest to get aboard. Sam runs the Foxton Boats along with his sister and Mum, for those who don't know. I opted to go off towards Kibworth, something I



hadn't done for a long time.

So we arrived and took over the boat with the appropriate anti-covid social distancing mask wearing formality. Sam knows I can handle a boat so a demonstration wasn't needed. All loaded up we set off out of the Harborough Arm and through the swing bridge that is where we saw most of the boats moving that day. It was great to get back on the water, waving at people moored near to Rainbow bridge, some of them I knew quite well and we exchanged a few pleasantries. It struck me that the fancy stone edging to the canal on this stretch wasn't wearing all that well, why did they use stone? This isn't really an area for stone. Brick, preferably blue brick would have been better, and I don't see what is

wrong with seeing the steel piling it is hiding. When we past the foot bridge (No.63) it is somewhat sad to see large blue CRT signs which add nothing to the landscape attached to the bridge.



We took our time enjoying the canal and company and wound our way to Debdale. This is always a good spot to tie up for a tea break. We had taken our own picnics but the boat is equipped with a stove and sink and comes with large bottles of water, so we brewed up and enjoyed the view. Sadly every time I visit the old wharf seems to be full of permanently moored boats so we did block the winding hole a bit (I could still easily have turned a boat there) and a boater politely with sign language tried to point this out to us. I suspect his gestures would have meant little to the normal hirer of these boats. I felt fully justified

in our choice of mooring as we were not leaving the boat and could easily have moved had someone actually wanted to turn. Perhaps CRT should place keep clear signs no mooring signs... oh no please we don't need any more bright blue signs! After the tea break we set off again past the marina which seemed to be busy. This took us past the site of the landslip that blocked the canal recently. The scars are still there to see, but greenery is growing and I am sure by next year it will be hard to spot if you don't know the history. The canal seems to be plenty deep enough at this point so the boatyard has done a good job of dredging the material from the water.

Bridge 71 for no reason other than that I liked the reflection.



This is a very picturesque waterway and looks very natural, you could almost be on a river. One particular stretch is so overgrown with reeds, on a particularly twisty bit that you can't see what's round the bend, and if you met another boat I am not at all sure that you can pass. So it must be fun if you encounter one of the increasing number of wide beam craft making their way to



Gumley Road Bridge, one of the places that live aboard boats seem to congregate.

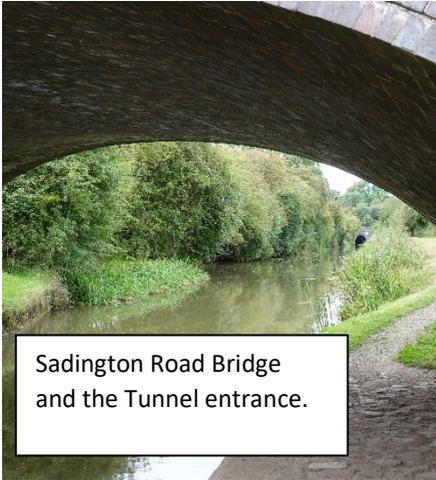
Harborough. These boats are often live aboard's with no home mooring. We spotted one at Gumley Road Bridge (No.69). An unusual craft for the canals, definitely designed for a river. She is wide but not so big that she obscures the view through the bridge or makes it difficult to get through. Not sure about the garden centre you can't see on the back of the boat but Ann was impressed with the tomatoes growing on the front of another live aboard we passed.

We did consider going on through the tunnel to Kibworth top but decided instead to stop at the Saddington bends where years ago OUCS members were invited to walk around the concrete trough being constructed to repair a serious potential breach in the canal. It all looked very raw then but the concrete has weathered and the clean hard edge is a great place to moor. The towpath edge could do with a bit of back filling but not a high priority job. We moored and consumed our picnic watching the Heron just along the bank.



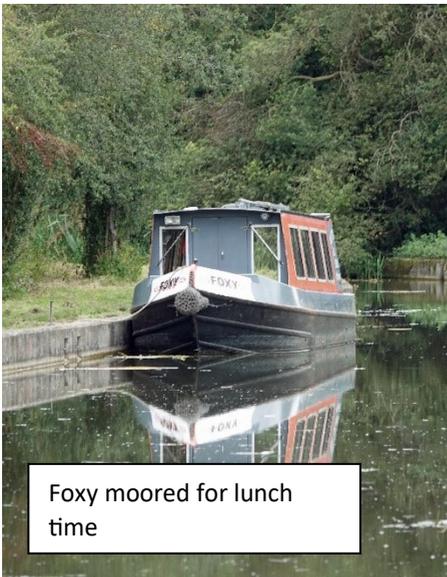
After lunch Ann and I walked along to view the tunnel entrance. Saddington Road Bridge reminded me of Dave Goodwin he loved skew bridges and this bridge has a particularly interesting near

disaster story to it but that is another story for another time.



Sadington Road Bridge and the Tunnel entrance.

one was donated by Margery and Mike (Clem) Clements. Clem was a leader in that operation arranging for the castings and helping a small team to put them in place. The grass round the plate was nicely mown, giving it a small clearing all of its own.



Foxy moored for lunch time



Our mooring was right next to mile plate 15 one of those replaced in 1996 by OUCS and the IWA. This

Whilst going through the tunnel may have been fun for us, my Mum at least would have found it a bit daunting and we were enjoying the very leisurely trip. On separate

boats Ann and I had done the tunnel and many others in the past, and I have walked the Kibworth locks several times as well as boating through them so after lunch we spun the boat round without touching the banks and set off back towards Foxton.

The trip was undramatic, but gave plenty of time to look at the landscape and the wildlife, only a few ducks, a moorhen and heron, was it the same one from lunchtime, or different I couldn't tell.



On the land above the canal I spotted a grey painted narrowboat hull traveling at speed, by the time we reached Debdale it was in the water and the lorry had gone, they have quite a good system for handling narrowboats.

It was a bit of a surprise to spot a pair of goats eating the hedge and obviously free to roam, by the time we moored at Debdale wharf for another tea break the goats had

wandered up to us. Ann spotted dog tags on their collars, which included a phone number, so she called Debdale farm. Not long after



someone came to collect them,

apparently they are regular escapees.

It seemed the day was over too quickly when we arrived back at Foxton. Ann operated the swing bridge which proved a bit of a pig, and we soon had Foxy back on her berth.

A Great Day out, something I would recommend any canal enthusiast without a boat to do. I intend doing it again as soon as I can safely invite the family and friends I missed out this time.

Watford Lock Keepers

By Mike Beech

I wish I had more time to research all of the local canal history but you can't do everything. When researching other stuff I came across the Watford weekly web site. We are talking of Watford Gap just to be clear. A very good local history web site with a canal section. It was actually a reported death that caught my eye but the list of names and information must be worth passing on.

The Lock keepers

John Bottrill was born in Watford in 1834. He married Eliza Moore (1835 - 1891) of Husbands Bosworth. By 1871 John and Eliza were living at Watford Locks Cottage and John was employed as a Lock Keeper.

The couple had six children: John (1859-1935), Sarah Ann (1861-1940), William J.H. (1864-1938), Eliza (1869-1933), George (1871-1945) and Mary Jane (b. 1873). John (senior) died in 1889 aged 56 after falling into one of the Locks and drowning. He was buried in the churchyard at St Peter & St Paul's church, Watford on the 31st of December 1889. His widow and family continued to live to live at the Lock Keepers cottage where his youngest son, George, had gained the position as the Lock

Keeper at Watford Locks following his father's death.

18-year-old George Bottrill took-over as Lock Keeper at Watford Locks following his father's death on Boxing Day 1889. In 1893 George married Catherine Annie Eames (1870-1928) of Husbands Bosworth and by 1901 they had moved to Attercliffe cum Darnall in Yorkshire where George had gained the position of House Keeper at a Rivet Works. The couple had 5 children: George Henry Bottrill (Born at Watford Locks in 1894), Winifred Ethel Bottrill (Born at Watford Locks in 1895), Thomas Leonard Bottrill (Born in Sheffield in 1902 & Died in 1978 at Sheffield), William Ernest Bottrill Born in Sheffield in January 1906 & Died on the 2nd of Sept. 1961 and buried at Tinsley Park Cemetery, Sheffield on the 7th of Sept. 1961) and John Arthur Bottrill (Born in Sheffield in 1910).

DROWNED AT WATFORD.
The County Coroner Mr. W. Sherriff held an inquest at the Royal Hotel, Watford, on Dec. 27, relative to the death of John Bottrill, "of a Gap, of Long. Street," who he never the deceased, and had been standing at his house lately. He was a strong, healthy man. He was the only son of late John and had no doubt last evening was the cause of death.—William Bottrill, a small boy, of 14 years, said the deceased was his father and was 56 years of age. He was a tall, thin and nervous-looking man, and had been in the service of the Grand Union Canal Company for over 20 years. He lived at Watford Locks. Witness was in his father's house on Thursday afternoon, when the deceased went out of his and served without his father did not return any more. He was afterwards found in the canal. The deceased was in the canal when he was in the canal, and was perfectly sober.—William Wells, assistant lock-keeper, deposed that he lived at the top lock at Watford. He has a boat, and it is in the canal on the previous day, when he was in the canal, and according to his own. He gave evidence as to nothing a man being found in the canal. He was in the canal. He was for the purpose of sending persons to cross backwards and forwards, and no one could have crossed over. He said that Bottrill was missing about seven o'clock. He changed all the locks, and found him in the morning from the canal.—The coroner, with counsel, having given evidence, a verdict of "Accidentally Drowned" was returned.

Supplement to the Northampton Mercury - Saturday Jan. 4th 1890 *Bottrill misspelt as Botterill in newspaper article.

William Webb was born in Welton in 1838 and was the eldest child of John Webb (1811-1893), who was a Farmer's Labourer, and Elizabeth Webb *nee* Oliver (1813-1893). He had lived in Welton for most of his life and was employed as an Agricultural Labourer. In about 1889 he had a change of career and became one of the Lock Keepers at Watford Locks for the Grand Junction Canal Company and moved to live with his family at Top Lock Cottage. He had married Elizabeth Albright at St Martin's Church in Welton on the 27th of December 1858 when William was age 20 and Elizabeth was aged 17. Elizabeth had been born in Blisworth and was the second child of William Albright (1805-1885) and Casandra Albright *nee* Lyman (1805-1860). Her father was an Agricultural Labourer, whilst Elizabeth herself had finished school by aged 10 and was working as a Pillow Lace Maker.

The couple had TEN children: Ann Webb (born 1860 at Welton), Arthur Webb (born 1862 at Welton), Eliza Webb (born 1865 at Welton), George Webb (born 1867 at Welton), Joshua Webb (born 31 Jan 1869 at Welton and died 1 Jul 1898 in Polesworth, Warwickshire), Alice Webb (born 1871 at Daventry and died 1875 in Welton), Rose Webb (born 1873 in Daventry and died in 1928 at Market Harborough), Herbert Webb (born 3 Dec 1875 at Welton and died 10 Oct 1961 at Market Harborough), Benjamin William



Webb (born 1879 at Welton and died Jan 1906 in Watford) and Annie Alice Webb (born 1881 in Welton).

The family lived at the Lock Keeper's cottage and William worked as the Lock Keeper until 1912. He witnessed the rebuilding of Watford Locks in 1901 (photos of which can be seen above on this page) but one of his most unpleasant and saddest tasks came on the 28th of April 1899 when he had to recover the bodies of Sarah Ellen Miller and her eight year old daughter, Dorothy Elizabeth Devereux Miller, that he discovered drowned in the canal near to the Watford Court Avenue Bridge. An extract from the inquest reads:
W.M. Webb, a Lock Keeper in the employ of the Grand Junction Canal Company, deposed that at five O'clock on Friday afternoon he was walking along the towing path, when

near the avenue bridge he noticed some clothing in the water. He went to his house close by and fetched drags, and then recovered, from the middle of the canal, the dead bodies of Mrs Miller and her daughter. The woman had the little girl clasped round the waist, her fingers being interlaced, and was holding her to her breast. Witness tried to get the bodies out onto the bank, but as he was pulling Mrs Miller her hands unlocked, and the girl slipped from her. Witness at once took the child from the canal, and then lifted the woman out. When he first saw the clothing in the water there was no movement on the surface, save the ripples made by the wind, and when he got the bodies out both were quite cold. After laying the bodies on the grass close to the hedge, witness

searched for the Parish Constable, who he found, and the bodies were then conveyed in a cart to the Henley Arms Inn.

The grave and full story of the incident can be found on the Church page at: [http://
watfordvillage.weebly.com/the-
church-of-stpeter-and-stpaul.html](http://watfordvillage.weebly.com/the-church-of-stpeter-and-stpaul.html)

Elizabeth Webb died on the 17th of August 1905 aged 65 years and their' youngest son, Benjamin, tragically died at just 27 years on the 16th of January 1906. William continued as the Lock Keeper until 1912, when he retired at age 74. He died on the 25th of February 1920, aged 82 and was buried in a joint grave with his wife and son in the churchyard of St Peter & St Paul Church, Watford .

Other lock keepers

1849 H. Ruffell. Canal Toll Collector.

1861 James Haynes (aged 32 and born in Watford) is the Lock Keeper and also a bricklayer. He lives at the Lock Keeper's cottage with his 31 year old wife, Mary (born at Crick). They have 4 children, all born at Watford: William Whitmell Haynes (aged 8), Elizabeth Ann Haynes (aged 6), Edward Haynes (aged 3) and James Haynes (aged 1).

1882 Robert Whaite. Lock Keeper

1871-1889 John Bottrill. Lock Keeper

1889-1895 George Bottrill. Lock Keeper

1891 - 1912 William Webb. Lock Keeper

1912 William Seaton. Lock Keeper

1935 Jack Seaton. Lock Keeper

2005 Terry Saul. Lock Keeper

2005 Steve ?. Volunteer Lock Keeper

2012 Bob Smart. Volunteer Lock Keeper (March-October 2012)

2013 Alison & Bill Root. Volunteer Lock Keepers

Incline in decline

Sean Park

With the current situation there are impacts on every part of our lives - there are also knock-on effects which in the scale of things may seem of low importance.

The state of the inclined plane is sadly an unwelcome consequence.

Over the last 2-3 years the cutting of the grass, trimming back the branches and bushes has for cost cutting reasons been reduced in frequency - over the last 9 months it has been non-existent.

Add to this a couple of evening alcohol fuelled gatherings and with this and evidence of loose stones and brickwork being thrown around and also a growing problem with rabbits burrowing into the ground on and to the side of the plane -

what to do about it?

The Canal & River trust are the guardians of the site including the scheduled ancient monument - the remains of the inclined Plane.

They are well advanced with approval through CRT heritage and also Historic England for a series of works including the above maintenance but also the replacement of fencing at the top of the incline, part of which gives access to the roof of the Museum - The panoramic view from the roof is undoubtedly the most impressive view of the Foxtan site.

With these works and also some repairs to an area of crumbling brickwork it is hoped that visitors will once again be able

admire the views - from the front see the locks and then turn around and walk straight onto the top of the Inclined Plane.

Without "you know what" much of this would by now have been done!





We are in regular contact with the CRT about this - The Plane is temporarily fenced off which with wetter, colder weather

expected over the next 2-3 months is probably the best thing to do for now - but, this can only be temporary. When we approach spring in 2021 there must be clear plans to ensure the Inclined Plane looks its best and is well maintained. We do have some money that could be spent and I'm sure that in conjunction with the CRT we could raise a small army of volunteers to help get everything back on track.

2021 Membership Renewal

This year we have been able to carefully control our costs with income only generated from membership fees, donations and fully utilising grant and employee support options introduced as a result of the pandemic. The support in 2021 is not yet known but it is unlikely to be as substantial. Membership and donations will especially in the first half of next year be extremely welcome.

For those who pay by standing order these will be taken early January.

Payments can also be made by cheque payable to
Foxton Inclined Plane Trust (or FIPT)

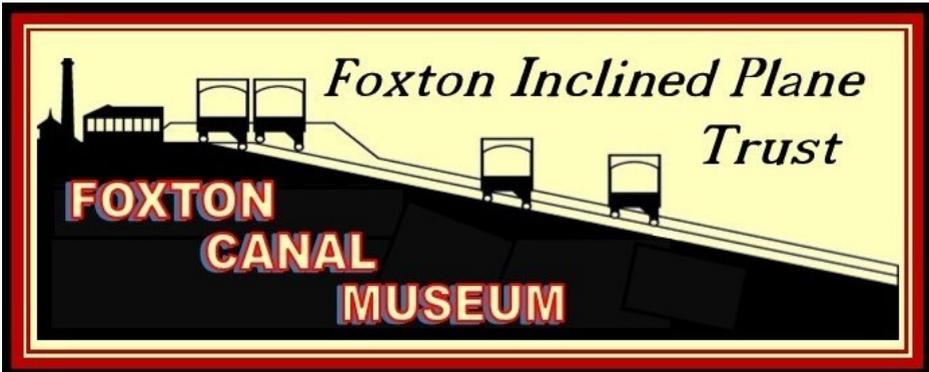
And sent to:

**Foxton Canal Museum, Middle Lock, Gumley Road, Foxton
Leicestershire LE16 7RA**

Alternatively payments can be made direct to our bank:
(Please use membership name as Reference)

**Foxton Inclined Plane trust @ HSBC Market Harborough
Sort code 40 – 32 – 04 Account No. 51059475**

Thank you from the Trustees, Employees and Volunteers



Who's who and contacts info

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	(sean.park@ntlworld.com)
Treasurer:	Giles Parsons	
Membership:	Vacant (S. Park)	membership@fipt.org.uk
Site Heritage:	Mary Matts	
Museum Director:	Mike Beech	
Publicity:	Derek Harris	
Committee member:	Matthew Knight	
Plane informer:	Mike Beech	(position available to new person)

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

We are refurbishing the web site please visit www.fipt.org.uk

facebook.com/FoxCanalMuseum



Where am I? in the next issue you will get the story of my visit to these and other interesting non Foxton waterways, but just for fun who knows where I am? Answers on a postcard to the museum please!





How to visit Foxton in style

