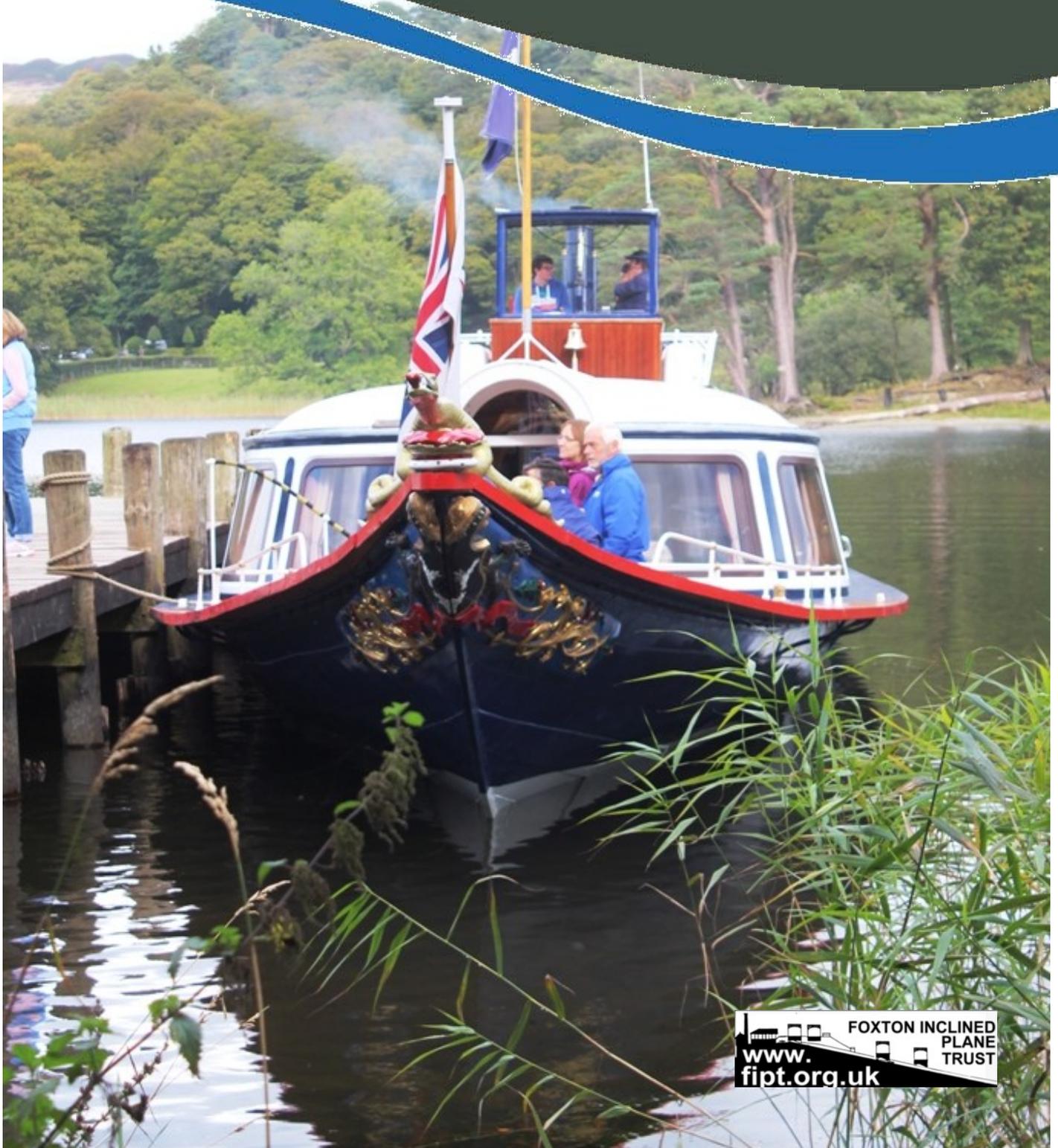


Autumn 2015 No 135

Plane

Informer



 **FOXTON INCLINED
PLANE
TRUST**
www.fipt.org.uk

Front cover: National Trust Steam Boat Gondola, one of the ways Mike got afloat on holiday.



A bit of Foxton in Cumbria. Foxton boat Services old crane was donated to the Threlkeld Vintage Excavator Trust. It had previously operated as the excavator for canal dredging in Leicester. It looks rather sad at the moment but I was assured that it will one day go to the workshop for renovation. It looks as if it would fit in the bucket of the monster 110 RB that sits in front of it. FIPT members have a fondness for this machine as we used it to put the roof on the museum. Threlkeld featured in the recent canal history programme, 'The Making of Britain', they blew up some rocks to demonstrate the difference between gun powder and dynamite.



Chairman's Notes

Cathy Fleming



I've just got back from a pleasant sunny holiday in the Turkish resort of Side and almost finished catching up on the e mails received whilst I was away.

We had a Teddy Bear's Picnic event at The BoilerHouse again this year on the late August Bank Holiday. There was a "Teddy Trail" which children followed, found answers to the various clues and received a small prize when they handed in their completed entry form. There were Teddies and other soft cuddly toys all around the locks and site to promote the event.

Also on Bank Holiday Monday we held a small "surprise" party at The BoilerHouse for Mike Beech to

celebrate his 65th birthday in early September. A number of Mike's friends came along for cake and drinks and to sing Happy Birthday backed by the folk musicians who had been playing outside collecting money for the Trust.

Mike drives a Land Rover and had indicated he would love a new one for



Below, just a small number of the bears who invade us each year.



his birthday - unfortunately this was not within our budget!

We did, however, present Mike with a gift of a model Land Rover and a Factory Tour and Jungle Track Drive at the Land Rover site at Solihull.

A lot of time has been spent recently by Penny, Mike and Ann completing entry forms to apply for an award for The BoilerHouse and Foxton Locks Festival in the Leicester and Leicestershire Excellence in Tourism category. We have been advised that we are finalists and have our fingers crossed that all their hard work has paid off! Mike has decided to take semi-retirement by working fewer days and, going forward, we need to look at who is doing what, and what skills our team have. At the moment too many things are under Mike's control and he won't be able to do as much whilst working shorter hours. Penny Arscott, who will take over responsibility for The BoilerHouse next year, is working hard to gain all of the necessary skills but she will not be able to do everything. Mike's plan is to slowly reduce his commitment so we need to prepare for the future knowing where our strengths and weaknesses lie. If you have volunteered to do something in the past or may do so in the future it would be great if you could let us know what skills you have, Please

don't worry as we are not about to dump a lot of work on you unless you have volunteered to do it, but you may be able to offer advice which could be a very big help.

We were saddened to hear that Waldy, wife of David Hastie, passed away recently. Our thoughts are with David and the family.

Mary Matts provided me with the following words.

David & Waldy met in Germany when both were in the military, but made their life in England. They have been involved with the canals for a long time, travelling extensively in their boat 'Schnucki' (German for 'darling'). David has been a FIPT director in the past, and both were heavily involved with Leicester Branch of IWA. They also did stalwart work at several Foxton Festivals, impressing everyone with their organisational skills, and pleasant manner.

We offer condolences to David and the family.



Two different sets of folk musicians supported our Teddy Bear event.

Not the best weather for the teddies - they all got rather soggy.





This is my first *Plane Informer* since my 65th birthday, and semi-retirement. So far, I seem to have a lot less time to spare than I did when I was working full time!

I have been away in Scotland and The Lake district for my holidays it took me a while to get used to being back.

This has been an odd year for me with all of the changes from the refurbishment, inventing new ways of doing things and trying to finish bits off. Penny has been a great help, The visitor results have been a little disappointing but it takes time to build a reputation, we are getting there, some fair weather would help.

Some months have broken records; others with wet weather forecasts have not been so good. Schools love the new space; we have never had as many School visits. Overall visitor numbers are down but income is slightly up.

Finding new and interesting things to say in these pages this time wasn't easy with most of the museum refurbishment completed and nothing new happening. I feel I have said it all before. But I hope this edition keeps you entertained for a while. And what of the content? We always want articles from others; otherwise it is all from me. In the past I used to put in stuff about the things I have enjoyed doing away from Foxton, including music, do you want more or less of that? Should non-Foxton material be strictly canal or do you want other things?

I have been editor for a long time now, and as I am now on part time employment is it time we had a new editor? Is this something that you could do?

I have had a great couple of weeks away in the North, one of them

on a house boat, one in a cottage; I just love exploring other places. This year I could do it mainly due to Penny putting in a lot more hours than normal. We do need volunteers to help, particularly for days off. If a volunteer runs the Museum for a day it saves on the wage bill. It is as good as making a £50 donation!

We are now working towards sorting out and disposing of our rented storage which was set up as somewhere to keep everything from the Museum during the changes. It isn't expensive as these things go but it is an expense we could live without. This means some hard choices, items which have not made it into the BoilerHouse displays will have to go unless we think they will be good for temporary displays in the future. We also have a question mark against some of the archive items in the store, which will we think be digitised. Penny has arranged for a visit from the Museums Service to give us the advise of an independent person. If anyone fancies helping with the digitisation that would be wonderful - training will be provided.

Over the winter we are only normally be open to the public at

weekends, with the help of Katie and Cathy. This allows Penny and I to concentrate on the backlog of Museum work and planning how to promote The BoilerHouse for next year.

One of the jobs we will be tackling is the replacement of the 'facilities' for us and the volunteers. Penny has been looking at the prospect of a new, possibly composting toilet, as our chemical loo is off-putting to some of the volunteers. We will also be fitting a new kitchen thanks to a second-hand one donated by Bob Hakewill. The old one was second-hand when we installed it and it is falling apart now. The BoilerHouse refurbishment didn't do it any favours. Our water heater also needs replacing, whoever thought that a steel tank would be a good idea, especially designed to leak out on to the electrics, obviously well designed obsolescence !

Ann has managed to fall off her new electric bike and badly break her arm so she will not be around as much as normal, but she is heading the next Foxtan Festival committee and as usual is looking for lots of help.

I was sad to hear that another of our old supporters and friends Waldi Hastie has passed away. I offer Her husband David our deepest sympathy. Cathy has included more in her Chairman's Notes.

One of the problems with working at the BoilerHouse is that you don't get enough exercise. Yes you can park at the bottom and walk up, but once in the building you often spend all day sitting at a computer, I tend to do this at home as well either working on *Informer* or editing photographs. I think I will have plenty of things to do in the summer, but what about the winter? So I have decided to sign up as a volunteer lock keeper, walking up and down the hill all day should get me some exercise. I seem to be back at Foxtan so there's no escape!

Retirement

By Bob

One major change has occurred at the BoilerHouse since the last edition of Plane Informer. Mike has accepted that he is now semi-retired.

Retirement is a state of mind rather than an emotion.

I retired in 2002 and took up another interest, local history! I have been looking back ever since. My long suffering wife claims that, as a pastime, it is keeping me on the streets. The other claim is that ladies never retire, they just have to put up with a bored male clogging up their house, their routine, their bank balance and shopping excursions. The largest problem of retirement is other people.

"You're retired could you give some of your valuable time to our organisation, club, society, team?"

Could you just...? Is a nightmare question for a retired person.

Whilst being a wages slave there were three times in the day - worktime 8 hrs, travel time of a variable amount and leisure time

including sleep time.

A working person normally has a weekend at some time, Mike's weekend was always Thursday & Friday, retired persons do not have a weekend unless they make one, else they work 7 days a week 24 hours a day.

Whilst I was working I noted how many colleagues worked hard but died within 6 months of retirement. I had always put it down to a lack of interests in that 65+ period, but I am now of the opinion it was the disruption of the regular routines which caused the body to shut down prematurely.

Can we suggest activities that would appeal to Mike which would steam up his glasses and keep him alive and active?

Answers on an e-mail, please.

My first Canal Trip

By Penny

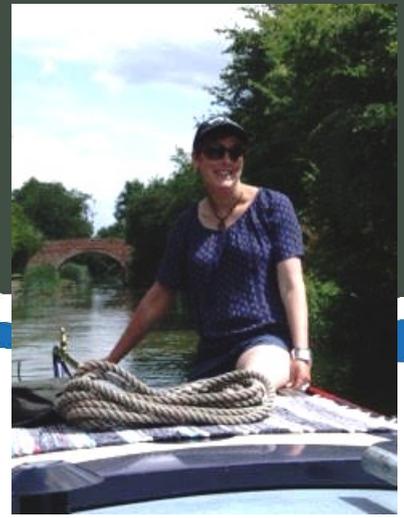
With my involvement with the BoilerHouse, being essentially a canal museum, I thought I better find out more about canals and what better way to start was to go out for the weekend on a narrow boat.

It was a short trip, Foxton to Market Harborough, during the summer. I finished work on Friday, walked out off the museum down to the bottom and jumped on to the boat. First job open the swing footbridge, ok that was easy. Next the swing bridge in Foxton village, that was hard but I got help from a young boy who was playing out. Now we're on our way! I could slowly feel all the stresses of the week and everyday life slipping away as we travelled down the canal.

I tried my hand at steering which was a bit frightening as the boat was 58ft long and you had to steer in the opposite direction to the way you were going. I'm not very good at left and rights in a car so you can imagine I wasn't that great at steering a boat so I left it in the hands of my friend whose boat it was!

While we travelled down the

canal I was able to sit back and watch the countryside



and the wildlife. Baby moorhens hiding in the reeds, damselflies gliding over the water in an array of colours, there was something quite magical about it all. I know the boat families in the 1800s wouldn't say that it was magical during their times.

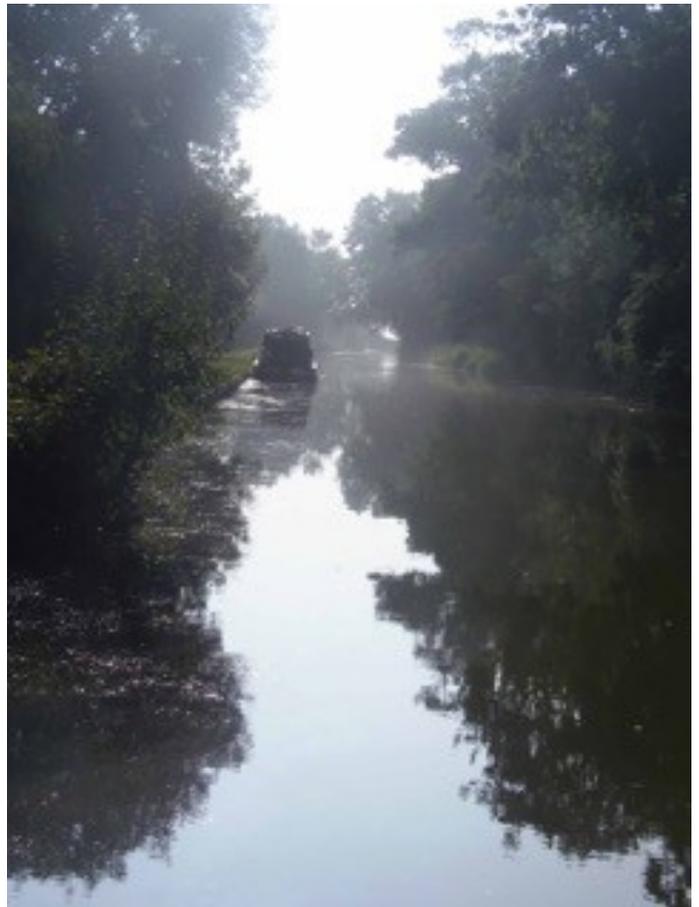
We moored up for the night on the straight between Foxton and Harborough. It felt like we were miles away from anywhere but we were actually only 10 minutes as the crow flies from Market Harborough!

I was tucked up in bed by 8, but woken by an almighty thunder and

lightening storm which seemed to go on for hours. With the rain pounding down outside I was quite glad to be on a boat!

The next day was beautiful. We continued down the canal to Market Harborough where we moored up in Union Wharf. I was very impressed how my friend maneuvered their boat into what I thought was a very tight mooring. Hopefully I'll be able to do that one day - I've just got to master steering straight on the straight and then I'll tackle turning! We had a lovely time in Harborough, wander round town, met friends and went out for dinner.

On Sunday we headed back to



Foxton via the Black Horse for Sunday lunch. I needed to build up my strength, as I was the one that would be walking up the locks opening gates and paddles! We were booked in by the lockkeeper and waited our turn, which wasn't long. Armed with my windlass we slowly made our way up the locks, red before white and you'll be alright. It certainly keeps you fit doing the locks and I had definitely worked off my Sunday roast by the time we reached the top.

I thoroughly enjoyed my first taste of boating and can't wait to go out again.

From the Archive

By Mike Beech



We know very little about these pictures from the archive. I have included them in the hope that you may be able to tell me something about them. They are both of the same boat. I can't read the name on the boat, but the engine looks interesting. Four people seem to rather overload it lifting the bow out of the water. So what do you think?



Great Northern

By Mike Beech



Just one of the old castles
I found to visit.

For my 'retirement' holiday I wanted to do something I would enjoy, I suppose I could have gone abroad, or taken a trip on a sailing boat round the coast (Mum was to come too - I can't see her clinging on to a sailing boat!) I decided that a stay somewhere special in Windermere would be the thing, I love the Lakes. I found, I thought, the ideal place to stay, a House Boat on Windermere. But I couldn't have it for the extended fortnight I had planned. I was offered a cottage in Scotland, a bit of an unknown but not too far away. So off we went, with mum asking if it had proper plumbing and a TV, well it is Scotland, and

why did we need to go so far? The cottage was wonderful, and it was very peaceful, just what I needed to relax and unwind. I always think it takes the first week to unwind so that you can really enjoy the holiday. The south west of Scotland near Kirkcudbright proved to be a beautiful place, a great place to explore, and the car parks are free! I even found a canal that I had never heard of, at Carlingwalk lock at Castle Douglas. The digging of Marl, made of millions of tiny shell fragments, and used for fertiliser, in much the same way as we were using lime. The 5 mile long canal linked the loch to the river Dee allowing barges to transport the



The view from the Houseboat

Marl. It also lowered the level of the Loch giving easy access to the Marl deposits. You can still see it today. It opened in 1765. but wasn't used for very long.

Me being me, I couldn't stay away from the water, we visited lots of it, and got soaked to the skin on one occasion.



The boat above was a wooden fishing boat at Kirkcudbright. There is still proper fishing going on in this part of the world. We also went north to Port Patrick, a lovely place, but everything seemed to be closed particularly on Sundays. But that is the price you pay for not having the mass tourism we

found in the Lake district. It was hard to find anywhere to park and thousands of people were everywhere we went. The car parks cost lots of money, and mum and I decided that we preferred Scotland, but we did like being on the houseboat, she was moored very centrally, near the ferry. In the moorings we could watch the wildlife and during the day we watched the boats go by. It came with a rowing boat so I did some waterborne exploring but you can't land in many places. There is a good walk along the bank to the shops which mum enjoyed. We visited Coniston (see front page) and the first class Motor Museum.

I think one of my favourite places was the Threlkeld Quarry and Mining Museum. If I lived in Cumbria, I might well have volunteered here and at the Steam Boat Museum on Windermere (undergoing a major rebuild). The big excavator spent from 1932 until 1980 in a flooded quarry before being restored by apprentices at Ruston Bucyrus works



in Lincoln. She was moved to Threlkeld in 2008. If I had visited the Sunday before I would have seen her working! She won't lift much as the main piston/cylinder is pitted with rust, but the American owners of Ruston Bucyrus have promised to fix it. It is the biggest working steam excavator in the world. The restored excavators are used to move rock around at open days so that they are not just big exhibits.

Right: Mum sits on the sun deck of our Houseboat. It is really a floating caravan but I can recommend it. We

would also recommend the cottage in Scotland, even Mum agreed that it was worth the long drive.

Why *Great Northern*? You must have read *Swallows and Amazons*, *Great Northern* was another book in that series, we spent some time exploring Arthur Ransom's haunts.



The Future?

By Mike Beech

So what now?

It is seven years since the lottery works were completed and some of that is looking rather sad. The bulk of the work for the Museum -The BoilerHouse - is complete. We do have a list of improvements large and small which could be desirable, but what about the site particularly the Incline? CRT and Leicestershire Promotions will be commissioning studies about Foxton's future; we need to have our responses ready.

We are committed to the idea of a digital restoration, but that has to be part of the plan for the Foxton site.

As an organisation we need to decide what we want the future to be now that full restoration can no longer be our top priority. What are we raising money for, what does FIPT do other than run a very good little museum? A digital future is one thing and we have taken good steps in that direction but in my opinion we need to do some real practical work to conserve and improve the rest of the

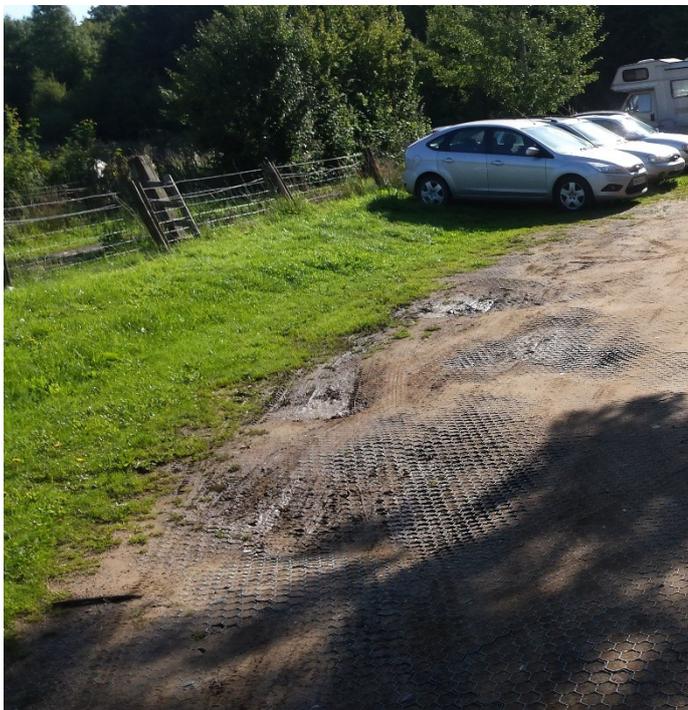
site.

We cannot let the work done as part of the original lottery project go to waste. If FIPT is going to thrive as a membership based organisation we need to get people doing things, we need to raise money for projects for the entire site. One of the aims of the Arts Council project was to widen the scope of the Museum and take it outside.

The following is an update on the state of the site and some of the suggestions put forward as a way to progress our aims. We need more suggestions and involvement from you our members. I have suggested in the last paragraph ways that I think we should consider going. Whatever we do we will be working with CRT and other partners. CRT is now a charity, a lot bigger than us but the legal status is not much different. They will always be short of money, so if we can part fund or help to get funding for Foxton projects, that has

got to be good for everyone. If we can choose the projects we wish to promote, then that has to be good for FIPT.

The list is geographical and to begin I have started in the permit holder's car park at the bottom lock, for no better reason than this is where we start work every morning.



Bottom Lock car park - Permit Holders

This is where the residents, staff of all the businesses, volunteers and CRT staff should park, they don't all, I believe that cars visible from the locks are an eyesore which should not be allowed, but I think I will lose that argument. The problem here is that the car park has turned to mud, and

is dirty and dangerous in most weathers. It just needs resurfacing with some 'mill waste' to improve it, and that will make everyone who lives and works on site happy. Part of the bottom "overflow" car park also has a mud problem which could easily be improved just by spreading some gravel. Could we find volunteers to help do this?

The main toilet block is in the car park. When we visited Twycross Zoo to see their new incomplete visitor centre, we were shown the loos under construction, they are part of the site, and farms run the length of the wall above the hand basins and one glass wall looked out on to an aviary. We can't go as far as that but we could make the walls part of the site by adding graphic panels, advertising us, CRT and the site. Good toilets make a big difference to the enjoyment of a visit to any site.

Before you leave the car park for the locks there is a replica of the lift guillotine gate, this has been allowed to go rusty and is looking very tatty, as is the pulley on display. Any volunteers to help paint it?



There are some nice seats nearby that would benefit from a good clean and the appropriate kind of finish. Some of the direction signs are not very good, some are out of date. CRT has said they will undertake a signage survey to see what is needed.

Crossing the bridge you can look down into the bottom lift dock, the water is rapidly being covered by lilies the public access path is poor and slippery. When you get to the wooden walk way at the end it looks neglected and in wet weather the warped and uneven planks are a bit dodgy to walk on. The reeds growing along the bottom edge of the lift disguise the concrete and wood running into the water. I think they should be cleared.

We don't get involved in the locks other than to push for improvements. But if you walk up the back of the side ponds you see objects which we are sort of responsible for which are rotting away. We need to decide their future. They include 2 boats, 2 tipper trucks, and a bridge pintle. The hard to read bronze interpretation plate for the trucks is for the trucks near the museum. We need to sort that out.



At the top of the path you get to the observation point for the lift where you can try out your Foxtan app and watch the lift work on site.



Following the path round to the BoilerHouse there is more scope for a



bit of interpretation, a bit of fun leading to The BoilerHouse?

Carrying on round towards the Incline we see the coal store, we have already looked at the idea of a new building in here to expand the BoilerHouse. This is a real possibility and a simple practical exercise. In the 1980's we would have rolled up our sleeves and got on with it. We may not be able to do that now but we do need to think about the idea. And we will need some money!

Round on to the top of the Incline, I think there is potential. The Museum roof could have some simple interpretation. But this is the place that the biggest project has been suggested, rebuild the Winding House. The suggestion is that this would be an extension to the Museum.

I think this needs careful study. It would be a high maintenance building, hard to connect to the main Museum and we would need public toilets for a building of that size. But if we look at these harder aspects as a challenge we could still

end up with a worthwhile addition to the site.

On the incline itself, how about (if EH would let us) build a replica of one tank? It was suggested as a wooden structure but long term it could be better in metal. EH and Heritage Lottery may be more interested in an enhanced digital model of the lift.

We have the full sized boat sitting in the entrance to the top arm, this need some tlc if it is going to survive.

Top arm: Continuing along the lift

arm restored as part of the lottery project, the arm is rapidly turning into a linear wildlife pond. If you like wildlife this could be considered a very good thing. This is what happens to canals in water which have no boat use, and as such is interesting. But could we make it much more? When the work was done the intention was that it was the first step to full restoration. Now it is a canal to nowhere. Suggestions for use are, small boat hirer, make it a boating lake, moorings for interesting boats, a floating cafe. Or deliberately



decide that it is for wildlife. The last option may be a problem if there is ever a change of mind and the lift once again becomes a real possibility, if something interesting moves into the water, it could prevent any future development. And who cleans the rubbish out of this water?

Continuing along the canal on to the main line, there is an overgrown shallow bit of water. This was a lay-by for boats waiting for orders or perhaps with crew that were unwell, boats that needed to stay at Foxton without blocking the navigation. Mary Matts is keen on the idea of getting this cleared to act as moorings for long term visitors, or for use at the festival.

I have mentioned Wildlife, the land between the lift arm and the main canal, bordered by the top side pond is commonly known as the island. CRT has designated a small amount of money to make this a wildlife site. I like the idea of making Foxton more wildlife friendly, providing it doesn't interfere with its many other uses. I think a plan for doing this on the whole site is important. We need to look at the amount of grass which is

cut; would it be better not to cut as much? Wildlife could attract more visitors all year round. Even the sides of the access road could become wildlife havens and with a bit of interpretation, add to the Foxton experience.

The Top or Gumley Road car park also needs some attention and using the walls of the top toilet block for interpretation would enhance them and could promote FIPT/CRT

I think that FIPT needs to look forward and embrace change. The idea of us becoming the Friends of Foxton has been rejected by previous meetings, but I do think that a partnership with other organisations could be the way forward. If we could build up a group of volunteers to work on site and promote a list of desirable jobs for them to do I think we could still grow. But we need the ideas and the people to organise them. So what are your suggestions? How do you think we should move on from here?



*Above: some of the
woodwork requires
attention.*

*Right: the Incline
deserves some TLC.*

*Bottom: our boat is
getting a bit overgrown.*



Miracle Escape

by Mike Beech

A lady visitor was

watching a boat ascend the locks in early August when she fell backwards into one of the lower ponds.

Bystanders including locks staff managed to rescue her before she was airlifted to hospital.

The 79 year old woman, slipped and rolled backwards into side pond by the third lock and disappeared under the surface. She was sucked through the lock paddle into the lock.

Fortunately the boat was only short so she wasn't trapped underneath.

Her son dived into the side pond in an effort to save her but it was the prompt action of Terry the lock keeper on duty who went into the lock and with the help of passers by and others rescued the lady. This really was a close thing. I only know of one other incident, and that was a long time ago, he survived because he was drunk. The lady got away with a broken arm and some nasty bruises but has been reported as doing well.

Sadly, Terry is no longer working

for CRT, he was

hard working and liked by everyone.

I have struggled to get all of the details of this incident. Some rare tales go round at the locks. Some have said that she stepped backwards to avoid a pair of dogs, which is possible. Some people had her having a meal in the pub afterwards which definitely isn't true. CRT fenced the side ponds off whilst a safety audit was conducted and decided that putting metal cades in front of the inlet would stop someone being sucked through. Whilst I hate the idea of more fences on site, I do feel that the grass should not be cut so that you have something to get hold of if you fall over, and that some bushes at the bottom of the bank should stop people falling in at all.

This incident shows how a simple fall. Could have been a disaster, and people do need to be careful near the locks.



Some of the Historic boats which have visited recently



Membership July 2015

by Val



Some of you have grumbled and said you would like a proper membership card. To save costs and time we haven't been sending them out. We are going live with membership on a web site which will send you reminders and automatically keep the records up to date. If you don't use the internet I will still be looking after you, so no need to panic. You will be able to download a membership card from the internet but for those that don't have such a thing or those who prefer not to you can now claim your card when you visit the Museum. It will make life easier if you know your membership number but there will be a list behind the counter and the person on duty will be able to write out a card. Please avoid busy times to ask for this as it may take us a few minutes to work out what to do!

We are aware that quite a lot of our members have not visited the new BoilerHouse displays, there is still time to do it this year or you could pop along to our Winter Songs event on December 6th and join in the singing.

Foxton looks fantastic at this time of year and the crowds have thinned out. Mike, Penny or Katie will be on duty at the Museum on weekends between 11 and 4. but if you find yourselves at the locks on a weekday they may be open, depending on the work plan.

Val

Membership Secretary

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Vice Presidents: Peter Cook, David Goodwin,

Roy Nichols, Trevor Towers

Membership is open to all who have sympathy with the aims and objectives of the Trust upon payment of the appropriate subscription:

£9 Single- renewable Jan 1st

£12 Family - renewable Jan 1st

£150 Individual Life

The BoilerHouse is run by the Trust and its volunteers. It holds extensive collections of artefacts, models, archives, and photographs of the Lift site and associated waterways. The Museum has won numerous awards and contains something for everyone and every age, including touch screen interactive displays, a play boat and working models, the boiler game and large screen projections. Refurbished in 2015.

Plane Informer: Nothing printed in these pages may be construed as Trust policy or an official statement unless stated otherwise. The Trust and its employees accept no liability for any item in this journal.

Press Dates - For copy to be included in the Plane Informer, it must reach the Editor, at the BoilerHouse, before these dates:

Winter: Mid-November

Spring: Mid-February

Summer: Mid-May

Autumn: Mid-August

Visit us on www.facebook.com/FoxtonCanalMuseum

top: As the summer ends and October arrives the top lift arm is a tranquil place to walk.

bottom, The Museum lit up by the afternoon sun in October.



Lock gate inspection October 13th

