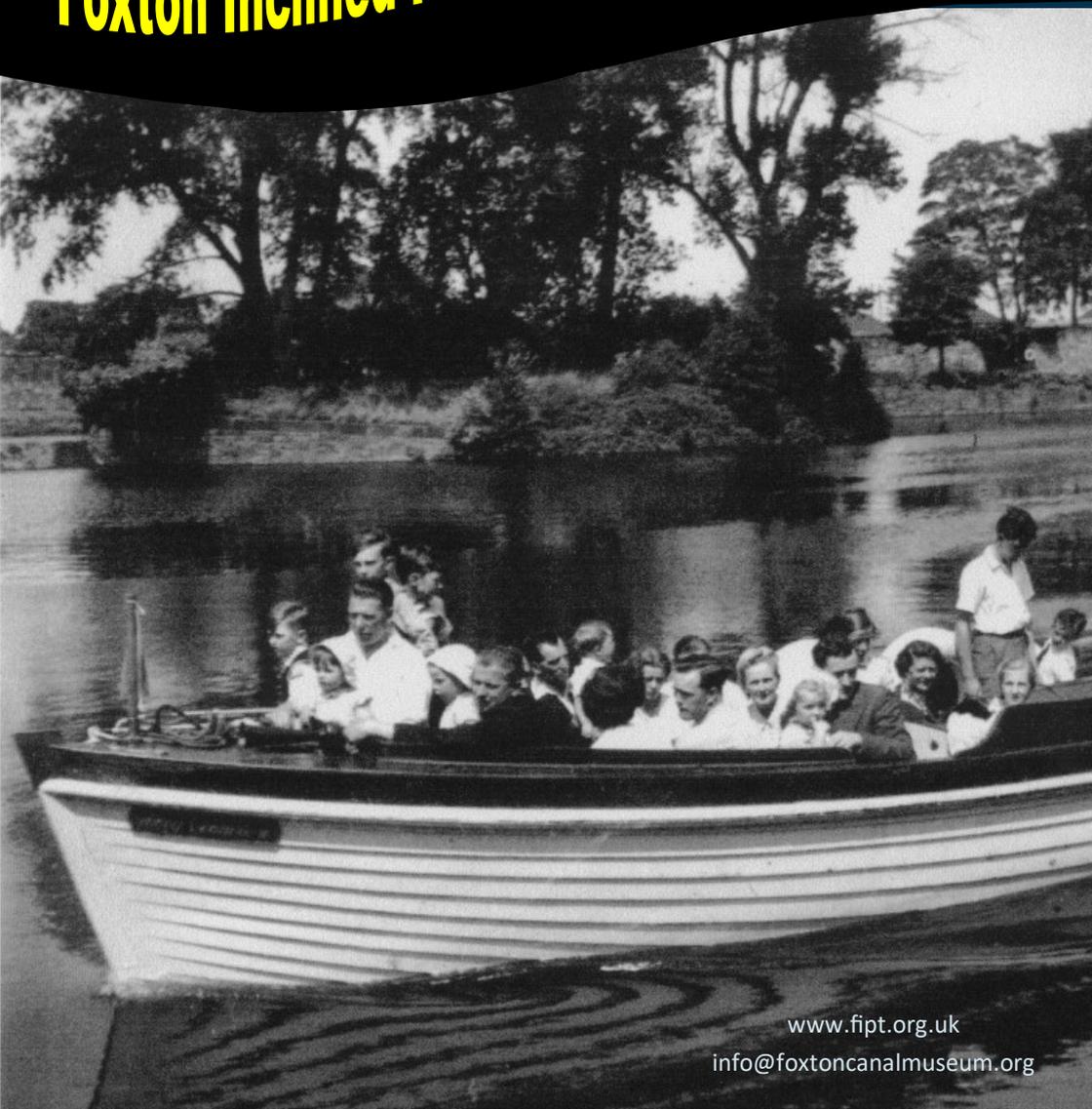


PLANE INFORMER



Nº 152

Foxton Inclined Plane Trust & Canal Museum



www.fipt.org.uk

info@foxtoncanalmuseum.org

Trip Boats By Mike Beech

With Easter and holiday weather on the way you might like to go on a boat trip. Sadly the fleet of motor boats run by W S Noakes of 17 Bartholomew Street Leicester are no longer available. I find it interesting that the address is nowhere near the river, so it must have been his house or office. The street is mainly terraced houses. The boats in the picture below would seem to make quite a big enterprise with 4 possibly 5 boats operating on the river Soar. They may have operated at various places along the River Soar? The Date looks to be between the wars when companies like Stuart Turner started developing lightweight

engines suitable to power boats and lots of other "stuff". As far as I know there are now no trip boats in operation between Foxton with Vagabond and I think the River Trent?



The picture above is the Grand Union Canal Company inspection boat Kingfisher, at Foxton Top. It seems to have been the personal boat of the directors.





Who's who and contacts

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

At this time with the museum only open at weekends you may not get an answer very quickly and the museum phone may not be answered. E-mail is the best way to contact FIPT and someone will respond ASAP.

Tel Museum, **01162 792657** - Email - info@foxtoncanalmuseum.org

Chairman:	Sean Park
Treasurer:	Giles Parsons
Membership:	membership@fipt.org.uk (Sean Park)
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

please visit www.fipt.org.uk

facebook.com/FoxCanalMuseum

Chair report – Sean Park

The Trust

We go into 2022 with more optimism that our activities can increase, not only in attracting visitors but also new volunteers, members and trustees to help with the running of the trust and the museum. It would be great if this goes well to be able to dedicate meaningful time to larger more “Adventurous” projects.

Not only are we using dedicated avenues for volunteer/trustee recruitment but also increasing presence in local media which covers key local towns and villages. For many reasons (not just Covid) many of our pre pandemic volunteers have been unable to return after the 2 year gap.

Ensuring that the museum has enough staff to both welcome visitors, deal with entry and the shop and just as importantly engage with the visitors is a big priority for particularly the next 2-3 months. If any members that live not too far from the Museum have any **free time** (especially Wednesday & weekends) it would be gratefully received.

The 29th July this year will be the **40th anniversary** of the Foxton Inclined Plane Trust. This is a great opportunity to gain considerable publicity - we need to make the most of this and whilst we are

looking at many ideas, if any member has suggestions- most welcome.

Membership review

A number of comments and suggestions have been made and there seems to be some common thoughts for going forward.

For existing members we propose **no change**.

At some date (yet to be decided) new members will be subject to a higher membership fee and Informer will be on an on-line basis.

With all members and especially with the financial impact of the last couple of years any **extra donations** would be welcomed. Many running costs have gone up whilst income has gone down.

2022 AGM

At some point we would like to revert back to a May AGM however with infection rates rising everywhere following the removal of all legal Covid restriction laws we will this year look at **August** again. Full details will be in the next edition of Informer

Are we Related?

By Mike Beech.

Clearing my desk I picked up some listings for boat inspections on the Grand Junction Canal in the Daventry district. I know that there are *Beech's* on the Cheshire canals, one even operated the Anderton Boat Lift, am I related? possibly but no firm proof. So were there *Beech's* on the Grand Junction?

The closest I came across was *Beachy* in 1906, master of the *Natal* owned by *Cahs Nelson*. On board were 2 adults and 5 children. The 'children was dirty'. Fined 10/- with 8/- costs a very substantial some in those days. This was when bread was about 1d per loaf - boatmen were paid by how much cargo they delivered. It was one of the lowest paid occupations. And what of our staff and com members?

On the board of the consulting engineers for the Panama canal was *William Barclay Parsons*.

When it comes to our Chairman there are several entries that he could be related to including:- *Fellowes Morton* and *Clayton's Nile* was inspected on 1 June 1891, her Master was a *W Parks* who appears a few times, on board were 4 adults in the back cabin and another 2 in the front.

Seems a lot but I believe they classified *Adult* at an earlier age than we would normally expect so perhaps still children, however 4 adults in a back cabin would be a bit more than cosy?

In 1897 *W Parks* appears again but this time with an *E* in the name. this time it was on *Snowdrop*, another *FMC* boat number 915. this time with only 2 adults on board. Could it be the same person, with a different boat? These registers were compiled rather like a sensuous so the clark may have just written the name as he assumed it would be.

Our CoM member *Derek Harris* who also writes canal books and sings canal songs has 7 entries that could possibly be related. In this case it is as owners *Harris Bros*. The boat is *Nettle* the master a *Thomas Cowley*.

Hydraulic Innovation

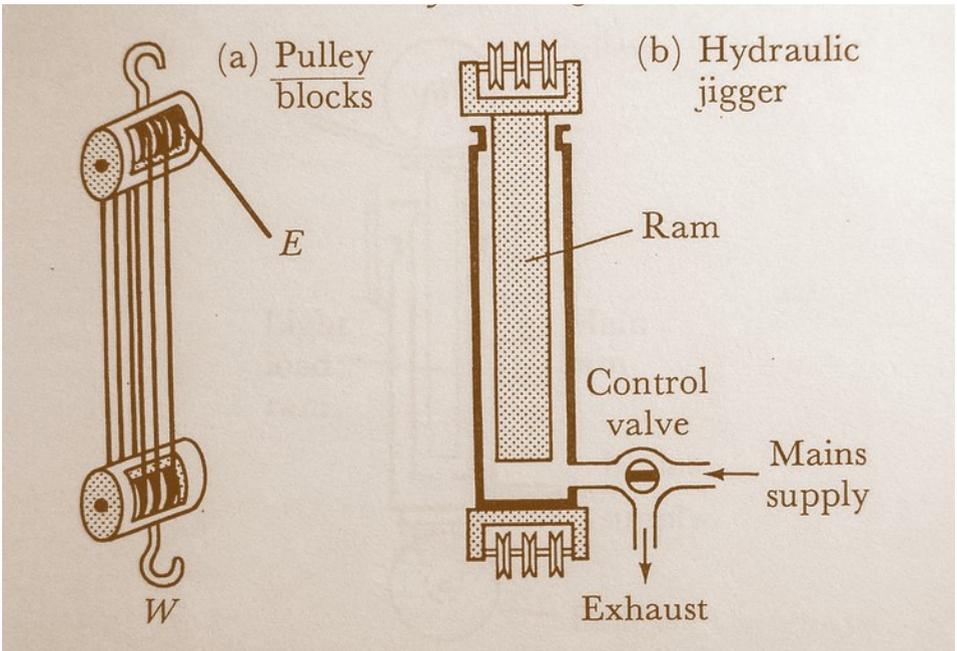
By Mike Beech.

When the construction of the lift was put out to tender Gwynne's of Hammersmith suggested an improvement to the design. They wanted to add hydraulic power to operate the gates and the rams which pushed the tanks onto the seals at the top of the lift.

This was to use a relatively new technology. Operating cranes by hydraulic power had been around since British engineer William Armstrong built the docks at Grimsby, a very tall water tower was used to provide power for lock gates and cranes. He used

simple hydraulic jiggers (essentially a block-and-tackle in reverse), with the relatively short stroke of the ram being amplified by pulleys at either end, these provided lift for the cranes or pulling power for the lock gates. In fact some of these jiggers are still in use today, but sadly now powered by oil rather than water pressure. They are nearly identical to those used on the Foxton Lift.

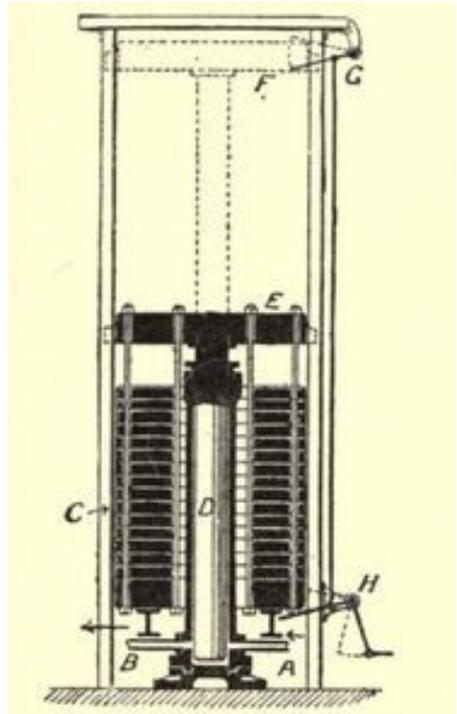
There was a problem in copying the idea on the next big dock project. The Grimsby docks used the towns water supply pumped to the top of the tall



tower, water pressure was erratic due to other uses and building tall towers was limited by height and the ability of the ground to support the tower.

Armstrong's solution was simple and brilliant. In 1851 he invented the hydraulic accumulator. This was a device which had a ram or piston exerting pressure on the water in a vertical cylinder. The piston was loaded by dead weight ballast, which generally took on the form of a cylindrical ballast container surrounding the central cylinder (image on the right). The container (image on the right) was filled with crushed rock, scrap iron or other ballast material. This system went on to provide power grids for entire towns, rather like the electricity grid. London's version was extensive powering all kinds of machinery. Hydraulic accumulators even operated Tower bridge, you can see two of them preserved in the bridges museum.

Foxton was equipped with an accumulator, it sat in the corner of the museum and extended through the roof in a fancy wooden housing. The site is still covered by its network of pipes, running underground. A steam pump forced water under the accumulators weight probably operating automatically. Hydraulic power was good at providing constant pressure for equipment only needed for short periods, and it was very smooth in operation.



The system lost very little pressure when the pipe run was long. Using water worked better than using air pumps. Water cannot be compressed so pushes very well transferring the power of the heavy wait along the pipes.

The water was mixed with anti-freeze to ensure that during the cold winter months it didn't freeze.

Records show that they got the mixture wrong on one occasion resulting in three of the connecting cylinders being cracked.

How tall was the chimney?

By Mike Beech and Sean Park.

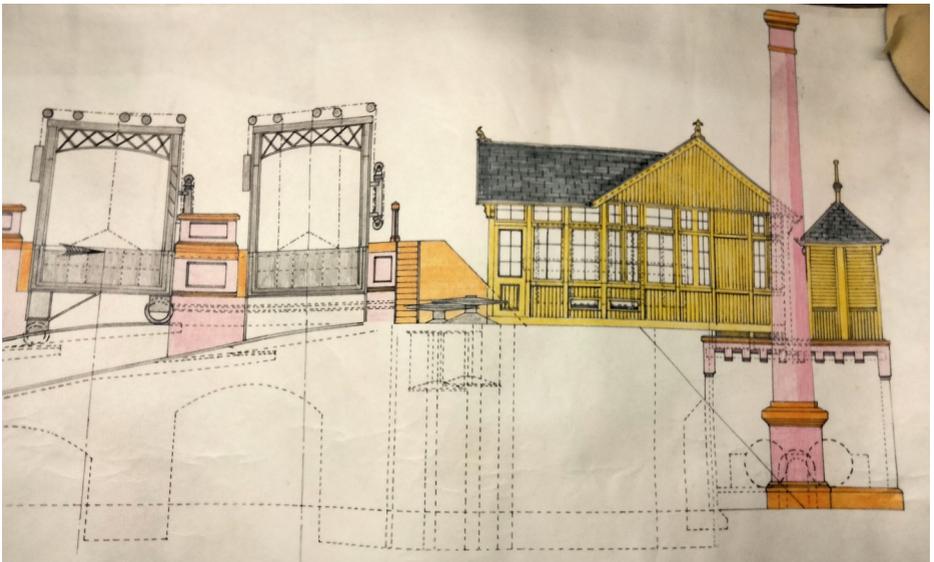
Sean has been learning the MODES software system we use to catalogue the museum collection. He has also been helping to get it sorted out after the most recent problem we had with the modes computer crashing after a windows update, everything had to be removed and restored. (Don't tell him but he is rather good at it). As an exercise I pulled out a very large drawing of the lift, a copy of one produced in 1904 we think produced for the St Louis World's fair. Sean realised that the scale drawing could answer a question he and others had asked, one that I have never found a proper answer to.

The Chimney!

Sean measured the drawing and came up with a height of 68 feet.

A small section of the drawing is copied here to get a copy of the entire thing. I will need a clean space on the floor and a high step ladder for the cameraman.

You can also see the concrete foundations under the lift and to the right of the chimney you see the top of the accumulator. The drawing includes a plan view.



Victoria v Elizabeth II

By Mike Beech.

On 9th September 2015 Queen Elizabeth II became the longest serving British Monarch. In fact the top 3 on the list of longest serving are remarkably close together. Elizabeth is now over 70 years, Victoria did over 63 and George III over 59. Our Elizabeth was the oldest at 25 when she was crowned.

And the youngest in the list, David II of Scotland who was only 5 when he was put in charge and he was king for over 44 years.

{in May 2024 Elizabeth II will become the longest serving monarch in the world overtaking Louis XIV!}

What interested me was did Victorians see such fantastic changes in technology as we have?

Like me you must all have spent most of your lives with Elizabeth II as Monarch. The house I spent the first years of my life in had no electricity until Dad and a friend installed it but even then it was only in the ground floor rooms, so it was a candle to bed. There was no central heating, bath night was once a week in the tin bath in front of the range, the water being shared progressively with each

member of the family. Radio was run by an accumulator which was charged up by a shop in the town centre. Now here I am typing this on a lap top computer in my bedroom, I can access information on the internet and there are men floating around the earth in a space station.

Victoria was crowned on 20 June 1837 and left us on 22 January 1901. the instant link is of course that our Inclined Plane opened in 1900.

Canals: - Most of the canal system was complete by the time of Victoria, the great age of canals was almost at an end. Canals opening then most people don't know of, like Glastonbury which opened in 1834 and closed in 1854. Beaumont Cut which opened in 1832, the Bentley opened in 1845, Birmingham and Warwick 1844. there was however a fight back where canal companies sought to fight the railways by adding steam powered tunnel tugs and widening canals, which is where our Inclined Plane fits in. I remember listening to the news on the radio when it was announced that large sections of canal were to be closed and possibly filled in. Elizabeth II saw the end of canal transport and the closing of many miles of waterway. However she has also witnessed the explosion of waterway Leisure.

Railways:- just one year after Victoria was crowned in 1838 Robert Stephenson's 'Invicta' pulled the first regularly scheduled passenger services in the world, linking Canterbury to the seaside town of Whitstable six miles away. 17 September 1838. The London to Birmingham line opened on 17 September 1838.

The London to Birmingham Railway was one of the largest engineering projects attempted in the world. First proposed in the early 1830s to connect the capital with the booming cities of Manchester and Liverpool, the railway became London's first rail line (with a station in Euston). The 112 miles between London Euston and Birmingham Curzon Street took a journey time of 12 hours and 30 minutes. It opened in 1838. This could not have happened without the lessons learnt in building canals.

By the 1840s Isambard Kingdom Brunel opened the Great Western Railway from Paddington



to Maidenhead. Its Broad Gauge bridge rail track was the same pattern as that used on the Foxton Incline, and the section displayed on site started life on the railway.

The first electric railway in the world opened in Briton in 1883 and it is still going.

The railways continued to expand and improve with better engines pulling heavier trains, and passengers became a regular thing. With Road improvements Elizabeth II saw our railway's almost die, with everything moving to the roads, and now they carry more passengers than ever and even take them under the channel to France. But even that feat of engineering was thought of by the Victorians, in 1888 Colonel Beaumont cut a tunnel a mile into the ground before abandoning the effort to reach France.

Roads:- In Victoria's teenage years my favourite engineer Thomas Telford had laid the foundations of our road network which had not been improved since the Romans. His Holyhead road brought the speed of stage coaches to a magnificent 10 mph! it opened in 1820. Canals transport was stuck at 4mph. In 1879 Karl Benz patented the first reliable internal combustion engine, although the technology had been in development for 100 years. Commercial production of the first vehicle began seven years later. Gordon Thomas would have been aware of the Ford Model T or Tin Lizzy but they weren't built until 1908. In Birmingham in 1895

Frederick William Lanchester, built one of the first 4 wheeled petrol motor cars, he also patented the disc brake. There would have been a few cars around in Thomas's day but they were really only toys for very rich young men. My Dad's first car was a pre war Morris 8 and he took us for a ride along the first bit of motorway because it was so fantastic. Now motorways are clogged with huge lorries carrying at least 20 tons of cargo. But how excited would you be as a Victorian to watch a Horseless Carriage charging down the road ?

Other Victorian innovations.

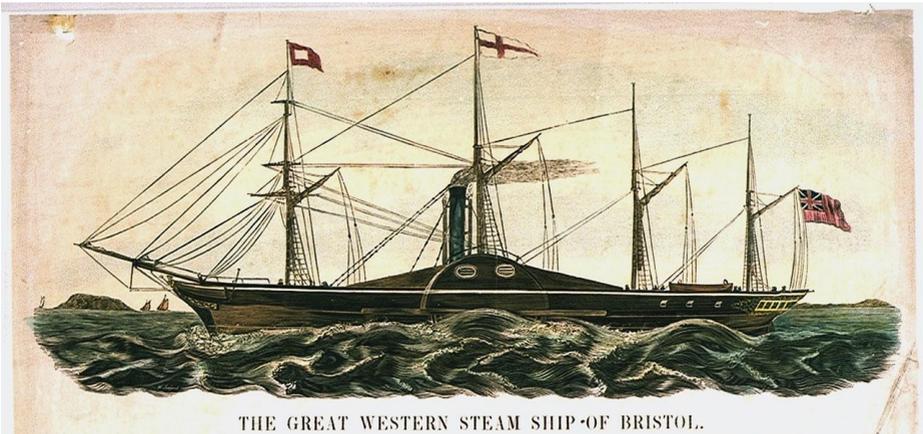
On 31 March 1838 The SS Great Western was the first ship designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806 - 1859). At the time of construction, The SS Great Western was the longest steamship in the world, built with the express purpose of crossing the Atlantic. The ship made a maiden voyage from Avonmouth in Bristol to New York in under 15 days, becoming the fastest transatlantic crossing in each direction. The 'Penny Post' was Introduced by Rowland Hill on 10 January

1840., revolutionising communications in the UK. Before the Penny Post, Letters were the main form of communication between Thomas and the Grand Junction Company, often arriving on the same day!

One of the most important thing to happen , the 1848 Public health act passed following a severe cholera outbreak across the world, killing 13,000 people. Social reformer Edwin Chadwick was commissioned to find ways of improving disease prevention and sanitary conditions in Britain. This study led to the creation of the Public Health Act of 1848, legislation that placed the supply and treatment of water and waste under single local authorities who could raise funds for improvements to tackle unsanitary conditions. 24

August 1856 saw Henry Bessemer develops a new process for manufacturing steel, without that the Foxtan Lift could not have been built.

March 1876: Alexander Graham Bell patents the telephone.



THE GREAT WESTERN STEAM SHIP-OF BRISTOL.

2 August 1880 : Education compulsory for children under 10.

Queen Victoria became the first monarch to ever be photographed, her portrait was taken along with Albert in 1844, Albert had beaten



her to it by 2 years. She was also the first Queen to appear on the cinema in 1896. Elizabeth II can claim the first Queen to have her coronation appear on TV.

The penny farthing:- was the first machine to be called a 'bicycle.' It had a very large front wheel, almost six foot tall and a much smaller back wheel. It was invented by James Starley in 1871 He was a British engineer and it was used until around 1880, when bicycles with two wheels of equal size were developed. The penny farthing was fairly dangerous due to the great height of the wheel and the fact that it had no brakes!

Sewing Machine:- Elias Howe worked for five years to develop the first sewing machine, which was patented in 1846. The machine did not get much attention in America, so he sold the patent rights in England for £250. Sewing machines were used during the industrial revolution to increase production speed.

Electric Light:-In 1880 Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, which went on to replace gaslight all over the world. As Edison was already a proficient inventor, he received \$30,000 to fund his research.

I have tried to keep this article to technology - this booklet isn't long enough to list wonderful things invented by the Victorians. Would I wish to live in Victorian England? No way even the very rich had poor lives compared to most of us. There is however one very important act of parliament that does deserve a mention:-

The **Slavery Abolition Act 1833** (3 & 4 Will. IV c. 73) provided for the immediate abolition of slavery in most parts of the British Empire. This Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom expanded the jurisdiction of the Slave Trade Act 1807 and made the purchase or ownership of slaves illegal within the British Empire, with the exception of "the Territories in the Possession of the East India Company", Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and Saint Helena.

Not an end to slavery but a good start.

Instructions to the Toll Clark

Transcribed by Dave Goodwin,
comments by Mike Beech.

Before the Grand Junction Canal Company purchased the local canals and built the inclined plane they had Toll Clarks at both Foxton and Norton Junction. The GJC did away with the Foxton Toll Office and used those at Leicester and Norton.

One Of the Foxton Clarks was John Frisbee Bentley (what a wonderful name!) he served around 1894

The following would have been pinned up in his office.

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**Instructions to the Toll Clerk in the service of the Grand Union Canal Company (That is the original GJC prior to the GJC takeover.)**

You will be furnished by the company as printed forms for keeping and returning accurate accounts of all transactions relative to the Company.

These forms are prepared upon a plan of a system by which the company conduct their business and will of themselves sufficiently



explain their respective uses.

As soon as a Boat Chargeable by the Company with Tonnage shall arrive at a lock you must if it shall happen to be the first opportunity of taking an account of the vessel and cargo require the Captain or other person who shall have charge there to make out and sign a

declaration upon and agreeably in every respect to the counterpart of the permit upon which occasion the printed Forms sent you by the company must alone be used.

In cases where merchandise or various species of goods are present you will require the Captain to produce and leave with you a written note signed by the person consigning the goods or by his clerk as agent containing an account of the weight of the different species of goods.

The declaration being thus made out and signed by you must by means of your gauging rod and by the most careful and attentive examination ascertain the weight and species of the cargo and when you shall be satisfied that this declaration is in every respect true (and not before) you must fill up and deliver to the party making the same the permit corresponding with the declaration and counterpart and signed by the Captain.

At the foot of the permit you must state where the account was charged (which it may be observed will probably in most if not all cases be where the first permits shall be made out) and you shall add such other particulars as you will perceive are intended to be notified at the starting of the journey. Immediately after you have followed up and delivered any permit you must insert in your ledger entry particulars which by the totals of the respective columns you will perceive is required.

In this ledger is to be inserted an

account of such Boats only and their cargoes in respect of which you shall grant any permit or make any charge or receive any money and this ledger must be closed and totalled and an account current exactly conformable in all respects to the Forms which will be sent to you for that purpose must be made out there from up to and upon the last day of every month and forwarded to the Company's Office in London with the quickest despatch.

Permits will be supplied to you in loose sheets and an exact account of the number will be kept at the Chief Offices. At the end of every month you will tack securely together all the counterparts of the permits which you have filled up within the month and return the same with your Accounts Current.

In receiving declarations and examining vessels different cargoes you must exert the utmost care and vigilance taking very correctly the dry inches and parts of an inch of all boats that shall have been gauged; and as well in the case of gauged Boats but more especially in respect of Boats which may not have been gauged you will use your best Skill and Endeavours and take the most effectual means in your power to ascertain the true species and weight of every cargo at the same time you will be careful not to occasion any unnecessary delay or interruption.

Whenever you shall have occasion to make any increase or surcharge upon the cargo of any boat you will not fail to notify the same explicitly on the back of the permit

and in your check sheet on tonnage register and you will enter the same separately at the foot of your Account Current or Tonnage sheet.

You are particularly ordered on no pretence whatever to give credit for tonnage to any person with special Directions from the Committee in London.

At the end of every month you must make out and transmit to the office in London an Abstract of the different Articles of Trade charged by you accompanied by a Statement shewing the amount charged to the several Traders and Carriers having Credit for their Tonnage.

You will be supplied with a Cash Book in which you must enter on the debtors side all sums of money respectively that you shall receive whilst that shall be paid to you on account of the Company and on the credit side you must insert every sum of money which you shall pay to or for any person whatever on the like account and you will carefully cash up and balance your Cash Book at the end of each Month.

You will also be supplied with printed forms for entering and keeping a Tonnage Register or cheque account of all Boats passing through your locks and upon which you may not have granted a permit.

This account will by its columns and titles sufficiently explain its use and application, and after you shall have examined the permit accompanying the Boat and taking the dry inches and parts of inches of the Boat if gauged and by all other the most proper means and the truth of the permit you will sign

your name at the back of the permit with the day and hour on which the Boat passed through your lock and you must then without delay enter the particulars thereof in the Tonnage Register always remembering that the least unnecessary delay in a posting up this Account will subject you to the severest censure. The Register sheet must be transmitted with your Tonnage Accounts and declarations of the offices in London.

You are strictly enjoined to keep your Books and Accounts legible and correct and by no means to alter obliterate or scratch out any figure, word, letter or character therein but in case of accidental mistakes you will draw your pen lightly through the error and insert the true account immediately under or over it so as the correction may be clear and distinct and the first entry legible and obvious.

As no Officer or Servant of this Company will be allowed to be concerned in trade you are required not to enter into or carry on by yourself your wife or any other person directly or indirectly any Trade Business or Calling whatever or to provide the Boatmen with Horses or Tackling or to deal in any article or be employed in the service or for the Benefit of any other than the Company.

Upon discovery of any disregard of this Caution you will be dismissed.

Lastly you will ever bear in mind that Industry Fidelity and Strict Attention to the Interest of the Company and to their order and Instructions will ensure your

continuance in office and the favourable regard of the Committee.

Margin note on page 2 reads:

Note:

All things (except Coal and Coak (their spelling) are chargeable at each end of the Summit level on passing thru' the Locks.

You will make the full charge of 2/6 - 5/- or 6/- per ton (as the case may be) on Cargoes declared to be passing thru' the Locks at each end of the Summit Level.

The job of toll collector was not an easy one but it was desirable. You had to hand over some money to the company to make sure you weren't going to rip them off. You were provided with accommodation and an office. The tools of the trade were a simple wooden staff with an angled bracket to put on the gunwale of the boat and a ruler fastened along its length. The ones in our collection have an enamel ruler marked in inches and 1/4s. You had to measure the dry side of the boat in four places, to the nearest quarter inch.

The boatmen were warned that they must not distract the Toll keeper or allow your dog harass him. I have read about boatmen's attempts to cheat the Toll Keeper, why would they? Two reasons, if you were the boat owner and had to pay the toll out of your money you would want to keep the cost down, even if it were only by a few pennies. So you would stand on the opposite side of the boat to tilt it out of the

water. Alternatively if you had sold off some of the cargo you might want to make the boat seem heavier, so you would stand on the same side as the keeper. You could also add water to the hold or throw in some rocks. Making the coal wet was a common way for everyone to get that bit extra, Coalmen would soak the bags to make them heavier.

I am sure the Toll Keeper was wise to these tricks and either put a stop to them, or if they were friends with the boat captain, he might turn a blind eye. But anyone who displeased the Keeper would be reported and all the Toll Keepers would soon know who to watch out for. I am also sure that the keepers didn't pay for all of the coal they burnt. This wasn't considered theft, more a perk of the job, wages for boatmen were low and the keepers not much better.

# Is this Thomas's Dad?

By Mike Beech



I have for a long time been researching my own family tree, and I Use Ancestry. A bit annoying at the moment as the latest census isn't on there yet. But that is getting off the point! I have also used Ancestry to look at the "Foxton Locks Family Tree".

We know that Gordon's Father was Hubert Thomas 1839- 1916 and he was the Grand Junction Company Engineer before Thomas, and went on to be Company Secretary, a post similar to todays managing director.

I have often wondered if the man in the white trousers in the photograph is Hubert, I am sure he would have attended the opening of the lift even though he was retired by then. In the photographs he stands out as being a stately older gentleman. It is only a guess and I

wish I could prove it. To his left in the picture, raincoat over his arm is Thomas Holt the local engineer based at Kilby Bridge.

They are standing on the upper dock of the lift during the grand opening.

Hubert would have been 72. the census puts him as living at The Eling, Victoria Road, Oulton Broad. At the time it would have been quite a posh street, but has gone down hill a lot since then. I cant identify the house, it may have been demolished. It was very convenient for the towns railway station and a short walk from the Broad or a short ride to the seaside and shops Lowestoft.

His Wife Georgina and Thomas's Mother had passed away in 1891.

# From The Archive

By Mike Beech



Our photographic collection is the most valuable part of our collections. When cataloguing them I have to be very disciplined in the time I take to process each record. But I do get easily distracted. I am sure I have looked at this picture many times before, it is badly faded but it grabbed my attention so I took it home to play with it. I have much better photo programs on the computer than we do in the museum so the above is the first improvement. I have also zoomed in to a couple of parts of the picture and I include those here.

The age of the picture is one of the first things I look at after the obvious content, in this case

the print is postcard sized, which is common and it has information scratched into the negative. We can see that it is Foxton but it also gives us the date July 10 1909. The first thing that grabs the attention are the people. I can't be sure but I think some of them appear in other pictures of works at the locks. Could this be a works outing? Or excitingly the official reopening of Foxton Locks for night use? Fellowes Morton and Clayton wanted to use their steam powered boats on non stop runs between London and Nottingham as well as the London Birmingham route. So the grand opening with all those involved in the restoration in their best cloths? Note the straw

boaters, a few bowler hats and cloth caps. and at least one man is sporting a large walrus moustache. They are all wearing suits and ties, most have a handkerchief sticking

speculation as to what this building was. Could it be the step house listed in one of the census returns? Or is my theory correct in that it was a night lockkeepers shelter?

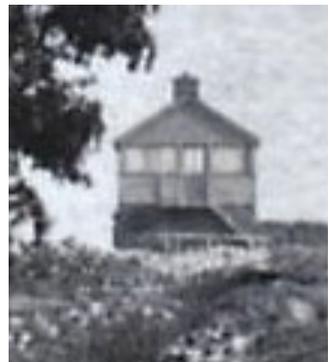


up from a top pocket. The lock bridges are very similar to what we have now. Modern day versions are wider and the rail is filled in with metal bars. Builders rubble from brickwork repairs is heaped by the lock side. Zooming in to the top of the locks shows that a shear leg crane probably used to fit new lock gates.

The workman's hut on the right is exactly that, a wooden hut, probably to store tools and cement and possibly for the men to take a break. But possibly the most important feature is the now missing building on the left.

There has always been

From up there it would give you a very good view along the top and bottom canals so that the keepers could have the locks ready for one of the steamers that came through? This picture, whilst still a bit blurred shows windows all round and an outside staircase. Just like a railway signal box!



# Was Thomas A Thief?

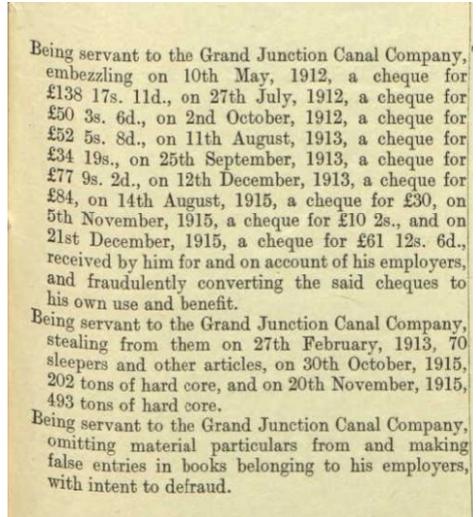
by Mike Beech.

In 1916 Thomas was accused by the Grand Junction Company of fraud and theft. This is mentioned in the books and in detail in David Carden's book *The Foxton Inclined Plane*. The above document came up recently in *Ancestry*, This is the first I remember details of the accusation being available, most of the published information is based on company minutes. The court documents record that a warrant was issued on the 1st of August 1915 and he was immediately let out on bail. At the main court hearing of 14 November 1916 he was found not guilty and the case dismissed. The Company were not happy and I am sure that Thomas wasn't happy either. Thomas proclaimed his innocence strongly and it is worth reading Carden's book if you are interested in the detail. The amounts are almost trivial when compared to 2022 wages, but would have been substantial in 1915.

His house at Leighton Buzzard alongside the canal called the Martins was a very substantial build in the Chinese style. It had, seven bedrooms with balconies, three reception rooms, a billiard room, plus kitchens, servants

From County of London,

Poisoners for Trial record.



Being servant to the Grand Junction Canal Company, embezzling on 10th May, 1912, a cheque for £138 17s. 11d., on 27th July, 1912, a cheque for £50 3s. 6d., on 2nd October, 1912, a cheque for £52 5s. 8d., on 11th August, 1913, a cheque for £34 19s., on 25th September, 1913, a cheque for £77 9s. 2d., on 12th December, 1913, a cheque for £84, on 14th August, 1915, a cheque for £30, on 5th November, 1915, a cheque for £10 2s., and on 21st December, 1915, a cheque for £61 12s. 6d., received by him for and on account of his employers, and fraudulently converting the said cheques to his own use and benefit.

Being servant to the Grand Junction Canal Company, stealing from them on 27th February, 1913, 70 sleepers and other articles, on 30th October, 1915, 202 tons of hard core, and on 20th November, 1915, 493 tons of hard core.

Being servant to the Grand Junction Canal Company, omitting material particulars from and making false entries in books belonging to his employers, with intent to defraud.

quarters etc. outside it had extensive gardens with boat house and tennis courts (sunken of course so that in winter they could be flooded for an ice rink!). He sold it in 1916 for £3,300. was it sold to pay of the GJCC?

He was said to be ill during this time, an excuse?

Did he have a case to answer? Do I care, no not really, it is his engineering that interests me!

# Vandals Damage Lift

by Mike Beech.



The headline in the January  
Harborough Mail read:-

## Unique piece of Victorian engineering at Foxton Locks has been seriously damaged by vandals

They are supposed to have  
ripped out bricks and hurled them down  
the hill at the locks.

The Lift has been fenced off  
since 2020 but the good news is that  
according to a CRT spokesman it will be  
reopened in September. I look forward  
to that!

I am not entirely convinced that  
it ever required the ugly high fence to

protect it nor am I convinced that the  
vandalism is new. Bricks have ben  
dislodged ever since we started to  
clear the lift and I am sure that some  
people have always thrown them at the  
water to see how big a splash they can  
make, this is particularly true when  
there is ice on the canal, I wont deny  
that as a child I threw stones and  
things to see if I could break the ice!  
There were drunken (drug?) fuelled  
party's on the lift during Covid, the  
fence didn't stop them. I will be  
interested to see what CRT are doing  
to remedy the problem.

Sadly the article implied that  
the site was closed, so it is a good thing  
that it came out in the worst of the  
winter weather.

To address the issues with the Incline plane the CRT are both carrying out and planning various improvement works.

Works have included removing trees and other vegetation which were damaging the structure and preventing people from seeing it. "The Trust has also worked with young people completing their Gold DofE (Duke of Edinburgh) Award to carry out further works to the Scheduled Ancient Monument, including uncovering the tracks within the slope and clearing brickwork remains of overgrowth. "There are still some remaining works to ensure that the Inclined Plane is safe before it can be re-opened for the public to enjoy and we hope

everything will be completed by September," said the spokesman.

Above the Museum we are waiting for a new fence to stop people falling off the top and the retaining wall above the museum is in desperate need of repair, we have estimates to do this but we have to wait for CRT to agree what should be done with Historic England.

Hopefully in future editions we will be able to provide photographs of the works and a date when you can all come and see what has been done.

# Local News

by Mike Beech.

Many of you will know that close to Foxton there is a high security jail, Gartree. In the local news there has been lots of discussion over a proposed extension to make it a superjail, costing £300 Million. The space outlined for it is massive. Thankfully strong protest from locals including the residents of 3 villages has at the moment seen the planning permission denied.

Out by what was the A6 where many of you will turn onto the Foxton road planning has been

applied and recommended by council officers for a substantial business park covering 33 acres.

This will see more traffic on the road but has no direct effect on the Locks but development sneaks ever closer.



A **favourite item** in our collection? The above is one of mine, to be honest it is one among hundreds. It is a rare painted cupboard door from a working boat. But not just a door, it hinges down to provide a small table and is cleverly designed so that the crumbs get tipped into the 'crumb' draw as it closes. Do you have a favourite item? If so I would love to feature it in a future Informer  
MGB



Recent visitor to the locks. The site is still one of the best places to spot wildlife. Especially if you get there early enough to catch the worm!