



Archive Spot - The Easter Rally 1974

Taken from the Club Newsletter July 1974. It doesn't say who wrote it, probably Binky Bush or Tony Phillips

THE EREWASH CANAL AND EASTER RALLY

Seven years have elapsed since we first encountered the Erewash and momentous things have happened since then. First, the formation of the Erewash Canal Preservation and Development Association and secondly the appointment of Ike Argent as B.W. Foreman, both of which more or less

Photo: Mick Golds



Boats were packed into the Great Northern Basin Nottingham Canal Langley Mill

coincided with the announcement in the 1968 Transport Act that the canal north of Tamworth Road Bridge, which is not far from it's beginning, was to be designated as a "Remainder" waterway. This was not good enough for either the ECP&DA or Ike who has been recorded as saying that "you'd scarce float a dustbin lid on this bit of Cut when I came along", a sentiment with which we wholeheartedly agreed when we encountered its duckweed on our first

Photo: Mick Golds



Jim Macdonald on the left sitting on *Empress* Peter Thompson on the right on his then boat *Joshua Slocum* (or *Bream* or now *Dane*!) Who's that sitting in the middle?

introduction. His telepathic sense for anticipating where the next problem is to be found is legendary and was well demonstrated at Barkers Lock on our way home where the pinion on a bottom paddle had sheered. His arrival by van across a sports field was next to uncanny and the speed at which a replacement was found and fitted remarkable so no boats were unduly delayed. An autocrat who likes to have things done his way, which is usually the right way, savours no argument so the job gets done. The Erewash is indeed fortunate to have one such as he to look after its destiny and all of us have a lot for which to thank him and



his staff, not forgetting the prodigious and sustained efforts of the volunteers.

Someone must have done some inspired, yet unostentatious negotiations to achieve the amount of restoration that has been done so far. I did not actually count, but there cannot be more than three sets of gates (out of a total of fourteen) that have not been renewed and that cannot be done for peanuts however large the volunteer force may be. I believe all of them will be completed this year.

Last time, our arrival at Sandiacre was heralded by a fanfare of motor horns, but this time, we were no longer newsworthy and we tied up in the lee of the splendid Springfield Lace Mill which, alas, no longer makes lace but is leased for a conglomerate of other uses though it's ornately tipped chimney still smokes. Such brickworks must have added enormously to its cost, but our forefathers were not bedevilled by the arguments of "cost effective" experts, or whatever they are called, so

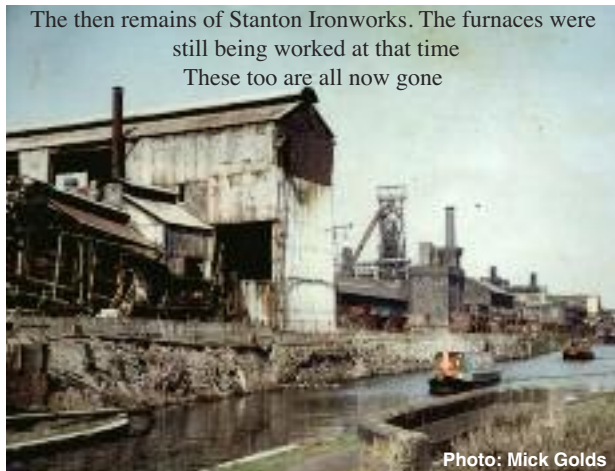
were able to pass down to us works of art of which they and we can be proud. Surely a few million spent now on buildings of which we, too, can take pride would be a small price to pay for the sake of posterity. The trouble is that no-one, least of all architects and certainly not politicians at either national or at local level seem capable of overcoming these experts and it's high time they did.

That lump under the bridge before Pastures Lock which did its best to lift the rudder off its pintle no longer exists, neither do any of the others so firmly fixed in our memories, from so long ago, but that's not to say there were none; of course there were, but no really big ones. It was no disappointment, though to have such smooth passage but rather a matter of wonderment that so much had been done in so short a time, particularly when we were shown pictures of complete dereliction in the locks and particularly the Great Northern Basin at Langley Mill, now dredged to approximately 6 feet throughout. Contrary to popular prediction, Cotmanhay Bridge, the



Photo: Val Roberts

The glorious Springfield Lace Mills in Sandiacre, now nicely converted into apartments



The then remains of Stanton Ironworks. The furnaces were still being worked at that time
These too are all now gone

Photo: Mick Golds

decapitator of many cabins, proved an ineffectual obstacle and no reports were made of damage, that's not to say it doesn't need watching. A large part of Stanton Ironworks is now closed so our brasses remained unaffected by pink smoke that once spewed from it's chimneys polluting the air for miles around and we shall no longer have to contend with their engineer who blamed us for blocking his water supply each time "His" lock was used. Things are not what they were but that's not a bad thing.



As for the Rally itself, 46 boats were counted packed so tightly and efficiently, thanks to Jim Macdonald, that it was quite possible to circumnavigate the Basin dry-shod if so inclined and it was nice to see many members at the dinner who were unable to be with us by boat. I must confess to being somewhat apprehensive when told that the best meal available within reasonable distance was the Co-op at Ilkeston, but my qualms were unnecessary for it was generally accepted to have been the best we have ever had.

As an appetite whetter the Dinner Menu will be;

- Melon Cocktail
- Spring Vegetable Soup.
- Prawn Vol-au-vent.
- Orange Sorbet.
- Breast of Chicken in Mushroom Sauce.
- New Potatoes and
- Broccoli Spears.
- Regency Gateau.
- Assorted Cheese and Biscuits.
- Fresh Fruit.
- Coffee served with Cream
- and last but not least Roll and Butter.

(I remember the dinner well – all 7 courses of it. Very good it was too) Val

On Sunday afternoon, a short consecration service of the new ECP&DA flag was held. Prior to that what looked suspiciously like a pair of "Long Johns" hung lazily from the flagstaff overlooking the basin - a reminder of the sweat and toil of the last few years.

By midday on Monday, the VIPs and local dignitaries had finished their cruise and were enjoying a drink at the Bridge Inn at Shipley while almost all other boats were at the start of their journey home.

In conclusion, our thanks should go to all members of BW and the ECP&DA for everything they did to make our visit run smoothly and enjoyably. Their efforts over the past six years should serve as an object lesson to all others who find themselves in an apparently hopeless position and as an example of what can be done provided the spirit is willing.




I recently acquired this interesting plate. It is a 6" tea plate in a nice fine china and bears the British Transport Waterways logo in blue.

Can anyone tell me anything about it.

Was it part of a tea set? Was there a whole dinner service? Waterways at one time ran an hotel boat I think - wide beam? Did it come from there?

Or was it just one of several tea plates produced for a particular occasion.

I am intrigued!

Val