

# THE QUINTET

## Four Circular Walks Plus a local Canal Walk & more

*Exploring the Rich Heritage  
in and around Ironville*

### *The Walks*

*Around Ironville - Page 2*

*Riddings - Page 9*

*Swanwick Junction & Golden Valley - page 15*

*Canal Walk - Page 23*

*Exploring the Pinxton Branch - Page 32*

*Cover photograph - Aerial view of Ironville from 1947*

# A CIRCULAR WALK AROUND IRONVILLE (THREE WALKS IN ONE)

## visiting an historic model village and a medieval castle

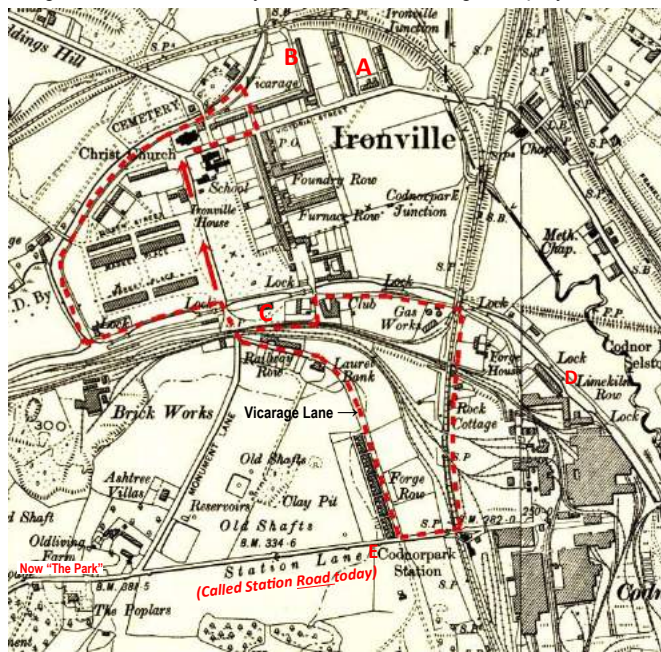
First a short “**potted**” history of the area (red numbers in the text link with walk directions, red letters are on the map below):

Ironville is possibly Derbyshire’s best example of a mid-nineteenth century model village. The village itself was mainly created between 1834 and 1860 by the Butterley Company to house its iron workers. The model village won much national acclaim, with its large gardens, a rural setting well away from the ironworks and the overall spacious layout compared with other industrial villages. The physical and spiritual welfare of the employees of the Company was reflected not only in the provision of a church and a school by the Company, but also with the provision of a complete range of public services for the village. These included its own gas and water works, a Mechanics' Institute (now Butterley Court and labelled “Club” on the map below) containing an artisans' library and swimming bath.

The village in the nineteenth century boasted its very own brewery, a pottery and a brick works. In the twentieth century there was for a time, an oil well producing 400 gallons of oil per day (1921).

Much of this model village has now gone, replaced by council terraces in the 1970’s as a result of decisions taken in the late 1960s, when the old Butterley Company folded and the then local authority took over the village. If this had happened in 1978, instead of 1968, the chances are that the model village would have been conserved in some form as happened so happily at nearby Golden Valley.

There was little in the King William (1) Street of the 1950s to betray the fact that one was in the twentieth century: gas lights, the Co-op’s horse-drawn milk floats, the original shop fronts in uniform green, the humped-back canal bridge and the original cast-iron street signs together combined to give an air of timelessness. Those who take this walk today will have to decide what to make of a village that is now very much, a combination of de-chimneyed, pebble-dashed Victorian terraces, and stereotyped 1970’s style council housing. A walk around the village, and the old Forge site, in the present day inevitably involves a great deal of what was rather than what is, but it nevertheless remains a place full of interest and whatever changes may have occurred to the fabric, the community spirit that developed in a model village where almost everyone worked for a single employer remains.



Map from 1900 (left) showing the Short and medium walks, (see page 5). Although many buildings have disappeared and new ones added, the actual route has changed little in over one hundred years. We hope from this map that you will spot the many changes that have taken place over the past fifty years.



Furnace Row (now long demolished)

The axial street of the original village, King William Street, was built in 1834. It has now disappeared completely but the name has been perpetuated in the re-aligned street of the 1970's development. The houses followed the basic pattern already established in Furnace and Foundry Rows (now long demolished) and were built by local builders at a cost of around £40 each. The bricks were supplied from the Butterley Company's own brick works which were scattered over its property at this date.

The original cast-iron street signs "4" - made, of course, by the Butterley Company - were rescued at the time of demolition and were reinstated after the rebuild to provide at least one real link with the past.

The building of the other rows of the original model village followed shortly. Victoria Street "2", as its name implies, was added in 1837 and the three rows at right-angles to it, Albert Street, Tank Street and Meadow Street, had been completed by 1842. The original village was completed by the building of the distinctive 'Big Six', a row of three storey houses between Tank and Meadow Street. The 'Big Six' ("A" on map) and the oddly named Tank Street ("B" on map) were demolished as part of the 1970s improvement scheme but Albert, Victoria and Meadow Street were retained. Although trimmed of their chimneys and pebble-dashed, they remain recognisably Butterley houses and the Elizabeth Park "3" development with which they were integrated, was designed to harmonise with them.



The Big Six - A on map (demolished)

A public house, appropriately called the King William IV, was an integral part of the original street. It initially survived the 1970's rebuild but has since been demolished.

In the 1850s and 1860s the houses around the Market Place - never used as such - were added, but this was the last significant change for a century, for, as mentioned earlier, the village remained an unaltered, if battered, monument to the Industrial Revolution until the late 1960s

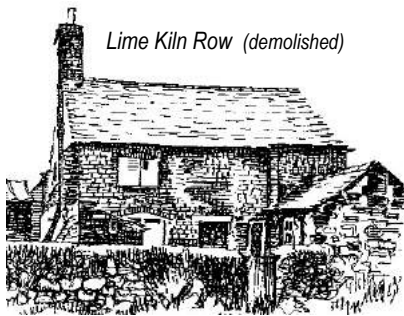
So what is still here? The much-altered remains of the model village we have already mentioned. The school and church are still there in their original form. Ironville House a grade 2 listed former doctor's surgery. A grand house built of slag lump circa 1860, remains, as does the first vicarage, the former Mechanics Institute (now Butterley Court) and the tiny canal-side pottery (1820 - 1865 and "C" on map).

Nearby, but still within the parish of Ironville is Codnor Park formally an ancient Deer Park. At the historically renowned Codnor Park Iron Works (demolished in the 1970's, opencast, landscaped and now a nature reserve, *bottom right on the 1900 map*), cannonballs were made for Waterloo, armour plate & deck beams were made for the very first iron-hulled warships such as The Warrior & The Black Prince (circa 1861). During World War II the works also produced sterns for 57 "Loch" class frigates, and 51 large bridges, each with a 150-foot span, which were used for crossing the Rhine and Italian rivers. In addition, the company manufactured tracks for Churchill and Cromwell tanks as well as many other important products for the war effort.

The first houses in Codnor Park actually built by the Butterley Company in 1802 for workers at the newly built Lime Works. The row of houses was originally called Measham Row, later Lime Kiln Row, and now long demolished. This row was situated near to present day lock 6 - "D" on 1900 map.

The ironworks at Codnor Park formed part of the famous Butterley Company. During the 19th century the Company became a thriving success. In 1862 there were seven furnaces at Butterley and Codnor Park which produced one-fifth of the total output of iron in Derbyshire. Later in the 19th century the production of ironstone declined locally, but the Company still remained a

major force in the iron industry. It was heavily involved in the expansion of the railway industry, by the manufacture of track and wagons at its foundry and engineering works, and the Butterley Company was famously used for the huge arched roof of St Pancras Station in London, one of the wonders of Victorian engineering. Throughout its history the Company was heavily involved with the production of bridges, heavy structural steelwork, mining equipment and machinery, presses, castings and overhead cranes.



Lime Kiln Row (demolished)

In the past a walk through the Forge was a spectacular sight with sparks flying when the puddling forge was in full operation. Now only a tiny part of the outer wall bordering the canal remains. A whole series of sidings of the Butterley Company's private railway formerly crisscrossed this area.

The keys to the development of Codnor Park were the formation of the Butterley Company, and the opening two years later of the Cromford Canal of which William Jessop was chief engineer. The company began their activities in Codnor Park in 1795 when they leased all the coal rights on the Codnor Park estate from the Rev. Legh Hoskins Master, the absentee owner of the estate.



One of the last puddlers at the local Forge.

Before the Codnor Park iron works had been constructed, coal and iron stone had been mined in the area for hundreds of years. Records go back to the De Grey family having coal mines in the area in the fifteenth century. In 1599 Thomas Shorter married Elizabeth Bradway, in Heanor Parish Church. Thomas's address was given as living "at Codnor Park by the Furnace." Before Ironville Parish Church was constructed Codnor Park was an 'extra parochial liberty' referring to the fact that the area did not at that time come under any parish. Couples in those days had to travel as far as Heanor, Eastwood and Alfreton to get married. Codnor Park was once part of the Manor and Castle of Codnor and was mentioned in Domesday Book.



Castle in 1727

Close to the village is one of only two medieval castles retaining its original medieval architecture in the whole of the county of Derbyshire. The only other being Peveril Castle in the Peak District. Codnor Castle has a very rich history and the castle site dates back to the 11th century.

The castle was the home and power base for one of medieval England's most powerful families for 300 years - the De Grey family, also known as the Baron's Grey of Codnor. This medieval fortress was once grand enough to play host to royal visits including that of King Edward II in 1342. The Castle is open to the Public every second Sunday of the month throughout the year. When Channel 4's Time Team visited they quite literally struck gold. Excavations at Codnor Castle in Derbyshire unearthed a gold coin which presenter Tony Robinson said was one of the most valuable single items ever found on Time Team. Their discoveries revealed far more than anyone ever expected. In the bottom of Codnor Castle's moat they found a Gold Noble coin which dates back to the time of Henry V and the Battle of Agincourt. Their excavations also uncovered the remains of a massive round tower and one of the first drawbridges ever discovered in the programme's 15 year history.

Near to the castle are two well-known local landmarks - the Jessop Memorial & Hall. The monument was built in 1854 by public subscription by Butterley workers as a monument to William Jessop II, son of the founder, who developed the company after the death of his father in 1814. The monument and grounds once upon a time proved to be a popular attraction for Galas, and Sunday school outings and picnics. Whit Monday Band of Hope Fetes were also held there, with local Bands marching through the villages before finally ending up at the monument. The Monument Hall in later years was used as a Rola-Rena. *(Look out for the Jessop Memorial, marked "Monument" on the OS map as you pass the castle on the walk)*

Codnor Park Reservoir **5**, built originally to top up the canal is a popular spot for walking and fishing, with good access for disabled anglers, also a haven for a variety of birdlife. The full length of the Canal in Ironville is rich in wildlife including protected species like the white clawed crayfish and the water vole. Less than two miles to the west of the reservoir is Swanwick Junction, part of the Midland Railway Trust which commemorates one of the major railway companies of its time. It has a superb collection of steam and diesel locomotives which may be seen powering trains on the line or on display in the museum. The Golden Valley Light Railway (GVLR) and Butterley Park Miniature Railway are based here too. Well worth a visit but not featured on the walks that follow.

## THREE HISTORIC WALKS AROUND IRONVILLE & SURROUNDING AREA

(1, 2 or 4 miles fit in with time available, physical ability or individual interests)

As you take the short and medium walks look at the map and text on pages 2 - 4.

**Start point:** War Memorial (grade two listed and made from Cornish granite), Ironville Church, Casson Street, Ironville (car park to rear of church).

From the church use the dropped kerb to cross Casson Street, named after the village's first vicar.

Continue with the school on your right onto Victoria Street, cross King William Street (1) then cross Victoria Street (2) again using dropped kerbs double back to the telephone box.

Take the wide footpath to Elizabeth Park (3) and continue to meet the infilled Pinxton Arm of the Cromford canal. Turn left to pass under the low bridge and pass the church on your left. Our route goes through a car park then continues on a well walked path under a foot bridge.

At Codnor Park Reservoir (5) the path turns left. The line of the infilled canal is to the left and was cleared of vegetation in 2018. At the stone bridge which carried the towpath of the Cromford canal over the Pinxton arm turn left. Follow this path for a short distance to Boat Dock Lock. Do not pass under the bridge, take the path up to the road cross the road and turn right onto the footbridge.

**Short walk - 1 mile (do not continue across the bridge, see all walks finish below)**

### Middle and Long walks

Continue across the bridge, (looking left as you cross to see the former Pottery C), ignore Parkside Drive then bear left along Vicarage Lane (note the old toll gate post on the right on Coach Road), passing the Crossings Club and Railway Row to Station Road at the far end of Forge Row (6).

### Middle Walk - 2 miles

Turn left through a gap to the right of the gates (Information about Forge site can be seen to your right just before you pass through the gap), cross the railway bridge then turn immediately left over the metal barrier to follow the rail line on your left. Note the site of the former station from the map, (page 2) "E".

Pass the site of the long demolished Forge Manager's House down a slope through the wood, then turn left to pass under a rail bridge. Follow the track passing the Lock Keeper's garden and turn left at Lock Cottage, onto Adelaide Walk. **See from Butterley Court on next page.**

*N.B. Some short parts of the middle walk are not official public footpaths however, the public are normally permitted to use them.*

**REMEMBER: Always take care when crossing roads.**



## Long Walk - 4 miles *(N.B. You can adapt or start the walks from a point to suit your needs)*

Turn right up Station Road which becomes Monument Lane a public bridleway but private road. At the junction look left (Sharon's corner) to see an information cabinet displaying information about the village.

The climb finally ends at Castle Hill by Codnor No 2 reservoir. Take the track ahead passing a cottage on the left. Views are now to the left into Nottinghamshire, Ratcliffe on Soar power station is straight ahead, a landmark but for how much longer?

Eventually well surfaced track comes in from the right, continue for a few yards then take the stile in the left hedge and walk over to the stone ruins. This is Codnor Castle (see page 4).

Ready to move on? With the castle and Castle Farm (the 16th century farm cottage was built with stone from the castle), behind you head north east dropping down the field to a metal gate, turn right down the track, or follow down the field further where a stile also leads onto the track. Follow the track down hill into the valley with a wood on the left, (site of the former Codnor park Colliery that closed 1853). A gate then leads into scrubby woodland, take the fork right, follow the well walked path to locate a footbridge, use this to cross the railway line. After the bridge it is often a bit messy (muddy). At the foot of the bridge take the left fork then left at the next junction then right to arrive at the canal.

Turn left along the towpath with the reed covered canal on the left and open fields on the right, eventually coming to a newly restored stone bridge. Notice the two Information displays (wildlife & history) to the side before crossing, afterwards as you continue look to the other side of the canal to occasionally see segments of brickwork - this is all that remains today of the original ironworks buildings (see page 3 & 4).

The path sweeps gently left. Before passing under a rail bridge, notice the wildlife interpretation board and continue to lock 4 Smiths which has the Lock Keepers garden. At the same time take look at the interpretation board by the wall giving an illustrated history of the local canal. At the next stone bridge leave the canal and cross the bridge this is Adelaide Walk and Butterley Court. (At the main entrance on pillars facing the road, see the information cabinets displaying the history of Codnor Park Ironworks and Butterley Court).

### From Butterley Court

Walk up the side of Butterley Court on your left then turn right into Parkside Drive with Pottery Cottages on your right, (a "nod" to the past). Turn right again onto the footbridge over the canal.

*The area around Butterley Court is where an early settlement was established in Codnor Park circa 1800, consisting of stables (now Leyland House) , a brewery (where Butterley Court now stands), a Pottery (stone bottle factory), operating 1820 to 1865 and a small group of cottages known as the Pottery Yard. Note the former Pottery "C" through the metal gates just past the end of Pottery Cottages.*

### All walks finish

From the footbridge take the tree lined avenue, Cinder Bank back to the church passing Ironville House, (See page 3).



Forge Row 6 - The first 13 cottages were built in 1809 by the Butterley Company but almost completely rebuilt in 1863. They were built from a waste slag product as can be seen in a number of examples around the village, with the houses on Forge Row being an extant example.



On your walk look out for the original cast iron street signs, 4. This one can be found on the side of number 1 in the present day King William Street.

*With thanks to Ken Brockway who put this walk together in association with Andy Cadman. The original idea for this walk came from "Local History Trails - No 17 Ironville" published by the Arkwright society in 1975, who have given their kind consent to reproduce the line drawings. Also "Canal Circular Walks - 3 Ironville" published in "Portal" issue 69 (Summer 2019), the journal of Friends of Cromford Canal. Another important source was "Ironville" by Dudley Fowkes ( published in 1984).*

## IRONVILLE HOUSE - A VERY SPECIAL LOCAL BUILDING

Exactly when Ironville House was built is unknown. The county trade directories make no mention of it during the early and middle 19th century. In 1857 John Beresford, a surgeon and one of the village's principal residents, lived in Albert Street. This situation was improved when the Butterley Company annexed land for a purpose built doctor's residence and surgery, on Cinder Bank, forming a cluster of village amenities with the church and school.

Ironville House was the former doctor's house and surgery for the village.



The site of Ironville house was originally open space, and was associated with the third phase of the model village's plan. Ironville House was built by Francis Wright the then owner of the Butterley Company, as a purpose built doctor's house with attached surgery.

The 1871 Census first records Ironville House in association with William Legge, a surgeon, together with his wife, seven children and three servants. Legge's children were born in Somerset but their youngest was born in Ironville suggesting the family moved to Ironville and probably Ironville House, between 1865 and 1869. This provides an approximate date for the house's construction, after the model village had been completed. It is first depicted on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1881. (The JACHS time line gives a date of 1840 - "*A pair of Doctors Houses built on the Cinderbank at Ironville*".)

Information from Derbyshire trade directories reveals that in 1887 Hubert S Reynolds L.R.C.P.EDIN., lived at Ironville House and by 1895 it was occupied by Edward Haycock. Haycock's full title was, the medical officer for Codnor Park district of the Basford Union, Surgeon to Codnor Park Ironworks and Oakes Colliery. This alludes to the prestigious nature of Ironville House's medical role within the local community.

Ironville House today represents a grand mid Victorian (c.1860) detached residence with a range of surviving features. It was a multi-functional building which incorporated the doctor's house and surgery, and associated service accommodation including the stable and store rooms. The house was built from slag, a waste product of the iron furnaces, and survives largely intact. Ironville House represented a unique purpose built facility for the provision of local medical care for the benefit of the local community. The house and associated buildings were laid out in a single phase with internal divisions according to function. The house was in two parts; the private doctor's residence at the southern end and the public consulting room and service accommodation within the three storey northern end. To the rear of the house was the 'L' shaped private garden with formal walkways and what appears to be a detached conservatory, forming the largest section of the site. The service buildings, stables and outhouses occupied the remaining part of the site.

Ironville House is a grade II Listed Building. The main construction material is randomly laid slag lump from the nearby former Codnor Park ironworks. It is essential that this local landmark is carefully looked after both inside and out for everyone to appreciate now and in the future.

## LOCAL WILDLIFE ON THE EREWASH NATURE RESERVE by Maggie Campbell

The canal area of the Erewash Nature Reserve is alive with a huge variety of wildlife. We are very lucky to have a healthy population of Water Voles as they are a species in decline. It is rare to walk down the canal and not see at least one Water Vole or at the very least hear that tell-tale “plop”. Quite a few people I meet tell me they never see any. Try looking for a patch of reeds that have been chewed or a stone or patch of mud containing droppings. If you are quiet and don't make any sudden movements there is a good chance a Water Vole will appear. They are such beguiling creatures and guaranteed to make you smile.

I have also been lucky enough to see and photograph a Green Woodpecker. More often they are heard calling (or laughing at you). It is certainly a challenge to see one close up but all the more worthwhile when you do.

One of the most beautiful birds to be seen is the Kingfisher. We are privileged to have them both at Golden Valley and also on the lower section of the canal. Early morning is the best time to see them before too many people are about. Their iridescent colours are stunning and it is a joy to watch them fishing.

There are a huge variety of birds on the reserve including several species of Warblers, Barn Owl, Little Owl, Kestrel, Common Buzzard, Lapwings, Egret and many more.

Although Otter sightings are rare, we have seen Otter spraint (droppings) at a number of locations along the canal. They are beautiful mammals although not a friend of the fisherman.

While strolling along you may spot a Grass Snake swimming in the canal or basking in a sheltered spot warming itself up for a days hunting.

I can't leave out the vast amount of insects to be seen both on the canal and The Forge. There are a good variety of dragonflies and damselflies not to mention butterflies. This year on The Forge we have had a Marbled White and good numbers of Painted Lady butterflies. Last year we had the pleasure of the beautiful Clouded Yellow butterfly. Also on The Forge I have seen hares and pheasants. Others have been lucky enough to spot a fox - in the middle of the day!

I always find that a walk along the canal or on The Forge lifts my spirits. It is just so good for the soul. If you see some idiot walking alone with a smile on her face, it is probably me.

I cannot recommend this area highly enough for its huge variety of wildlife. I only discovered it a little more than three years ago and within 2 months relocated to live here. What more can I say?





*RIDDINGS*

# A Circular Walk

*Approx. 3 miles*

**From Ironville**



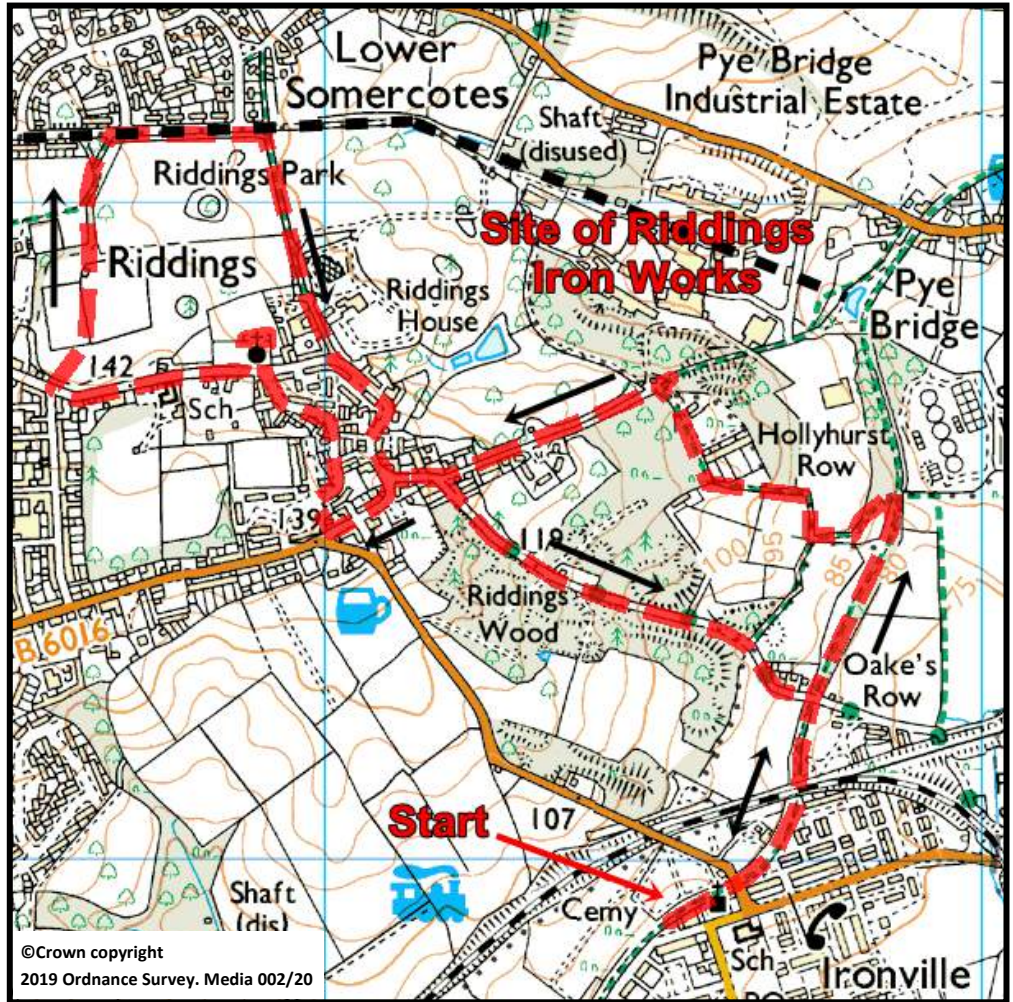
**WESLEYAN  
A.D. 1838**

**Exploring a  
Rich Heritage**



*With thanks to Ken Brockway who put this walk together in association with Andy Cadman*

## Main Route for the Walk *(Just over three miles, allow just over two hours)*



Hollyhurst Row built by the Oakes Family circa 1860 near to the Ironworks also known as the "Dog Kennels." The second picture (above) shows "Dog kennel's" coal pickers in 1921 just forward of the terrace. Today these houses have recently been demolished and as you will see on the walk have been replaced by modern housing in Hollyhurst Court. Just imagine what this area looked like all those years ago.

## A Circular Walk Around Riddings Starting from Ironville

1809 James Oakes took control and ownership of Riddings Iron Works. By 1818 he had amassed sufficient wealth to purchase the whole Riddings Estate from Lancelot Rolleston of Watnall. On part of the Estate he built Riddings House and laid out the park of nearly 300 acres. In addition he built much of the village, as we shall see on this walk.

From the car park at the rear of Ironville church hall take the Pinxton canal path passing behind the church. Keep to this path crossing over Nottingham Lane then after another 300 metres look for a hand gate into the field on the right, don't take this. Turn left here, but wait. Consider a short there and back extension straight on to Pye Bridge Pond, it's a little disappointing but it was the site of the canal wharf used by Riddings Iron Works. Now take the path between trees and at a T junction ignore the stile left, turn right.

Follow the enclosed path. A clinker wall on the right was constructed to hold back the spoil tipped from the works. A row of houses on the right appears rather out of place but they stand on the site of Hollyhurst Row built for the workers. A little further on in front of you stands a moss covered cottage, this was a lodge for Riddings House, it's not difficult to imagine important guests arriving at this gate. To the right a footpath drops down and would have passed through the works. Note the remains of a bridge which carried a tramway to the spoil tip.

Turn left and walk uphill, this is Spring Road. At the top on the left are two impressive cottages which stand either side of the entrance to the stables beyond, all built by James Oakes. Opposite the stables two cottages are provided with long gardens so that the occupants might be virtually self-sufficient in vegetables, and also perhaps have less free time to spend in the pubs. Next, Nottingham Lane goes off to your left, this is the return route to Ironville. This lane was the main road until Bullock Lane was made a through route in about 1850.

Next on the right the former Wesleyan Chapel, note the huge cast iron name plaque, (see front page - 8). At the top of Spring Road is Market Place, turn left. The road bends right onto High Street, where this meets the main road turn right between the concrete bollards. Walk to the cross roads and turn right into Bradshaw Avenue, a section is also known as Vicarage Gardens. Follow this road through the new houses built by the Guinness Housing Trust which renovated and modernised nearly 200 of the older properties and built many new ones in the late 1970's.



The remains of the bridge which carried a tramway to the spoil tip.



*Sadly the thatched roof has now been lost!*

At Church Street turn left but a look first at St James' Church built in 1833 to a design by London architect Francis Bedford. The fine spire, not included in the original plans, was added a year or two later at the request of James Oakes, who paid for its stone. The churchyard also offers a view of the farm house, an impressive residence now the Community of the Prince of Peace, Baptist Monastery. While in that area note the stone pinnacles which may have been taken off the original tower when the spire was added.

Continue up Church Street. The national school built in 1844, was attended by children of all ages until 1883 when the infants were moved to a new school in West Street. Three years later the original building was enlarged to take 400 boys and 400 girls in what became separate schools. In the 1930's it became a single mixed primary school. You may have spotted in the churchyard the grave of a former mistress of the girls school. Opposite the school is another former lodge to Riddings House.

The Congregational Church and Sunday School (1875), are now converted for residential use. Note the green men on the front wall of number 5. Opposite George Street enter Riddings Park. The Community Centre was built entirely by the people of Riddings with their own hands. It was opened by Diana Princess of Wales in 1992. Follow the metalled path from the corner of the car park across the park, passing the changing rooms then fork right along the narrow path. When the Oakes family left Riddings in 1981 they gave this park to the local authority.

Leave the park onto Park Side and turn right. In 1835 there was a tramway along the route of this road. It linked pits on Greenhill Lane to the canal wharf, passing through the iron works on the way. This provided the transport for raw materials and finished goods before the railway arrived. At the gate into a field turn right along the metalled path, pass another lodge cottage before arriving at Riddings House. Built for James Oakes in 1818-19 in a late-Georgian style. A service wing, surmounted by a gabled clock tower, was grafted on in 1860. Most is now difficult to see, being well screened by trees and a high stone wall.



Riddings House



Park Mews is the new name for the residential conversion of farm buildings at the former Riddings Farm.

A little further along on the right is the entrance to Park Mews, as it has been since 1984. Before that it was the farmyard of Riddings Farm, a model farm built about 1880. The most unusual feature is the octagonal granary in the centre. Note the fragment of narrow-gauge tramline between the first two buildings, along this track one man could push, or one horse could pull, a wagon containing straw or animal food between and through the buildings, thus saving labour. The farmhouse set at higher level can now be viewed from the other side.

Continue past the Mews then turn left into Church Street. The long row of cottages opposite were built by the Oakes's for their estate workers, probably at about the same time as the farm. One of these cottages was formerly the Church Institute.

You are now approaching the oldest part of the village. The Seven Stars, below road level on the left, has been an inn since 1702. It stands, the plaque on the wall says, on the foundations of the former chapel of St Mary Magdalene. The Moulders Arms, a few yards up the road on the opposite side, looks even older, its name implies that it was built to slake the thirst of workers in the new foundry. Church

Walk, a little further on, was the Estate Yard. The big, rambling, Georgian House, over the wall from Church Walk, was the vicarage from 1841 to 1983. The first vicar of Riddings, the Rev T M Barwick, bought it as a private residence for himself and his mother in 1833. It was subsequently bought by the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty as the official parsonage house for the parish.

Back in Market Place keep to the left hand pavement and retrace a few steps along Spring Road before bearing right into Nottingham Lane. Usually a quiet stroll but if you wish there are paths on the right through Riddings Wood. Don't be put off but this was another spoil heap with humps and hollows but long disused and now full of mature trees. After passing through houses just before Oake's Row turn right to re-join the canal path to follow the outward route back to the car park.



The Old Vicarage, Market Place

Thank you to John Hales of SLHS for his help in providing some of the historic photographs that appear on these pages.

## RIDDINGS & its History - *A little background reading*

*(Adapted from an original piece by Roy Christian)*

Riddings is a product of the Industrial Revolution. Before 1800 it was a tiny hamlet in the parish of Alfreton, about half a mile east of an ancient trackway known as Greenhill Lane. Its few inhabitants, living around what is now called Market Place, earned a living from agriculture or from the extraction of coal or ironstone from small, shallow pits.

The presence of these minerals in the area attracted three Derby men to establish an ironworks which they called Alfreton Ironworks, (it was sometimes known locally by other names). But as Riddings grew, becoming a parish in its own right in 1835, this became the generally accepted name.

Of the three founders of the works Saxelbye, Edwards and Forester, only Saxelbye seems to have had previous experience of the iron trade. Although a pharmacist by profession, Saxelbye was also owner - or part owner of St Peter's Foundry in St Peter's Street, Derby.

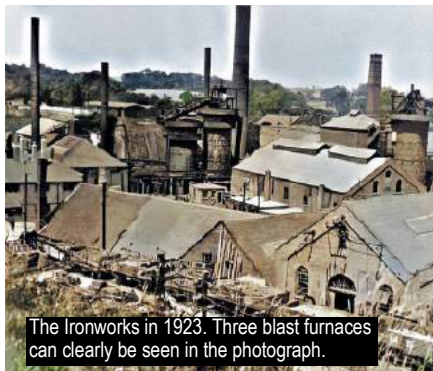
The exact date when the works went into production is uncertain. It seems to have been operating at least two years and perhaps as much as four years, when David Mushet, the newly appointed manager of the Ironworks then aged 33, arrived at Riddings from Scotland. He had been managing the Calder Ironworks and building up a considerable reputation for experimental work which he was to pursue after leaving Riddings for the Forest of Dean. Before that he achieved at Riddings, in 1806, the highest rate of production of pig-iron in Derbyshire. From his one furnace came 1,450 tons in the year. Even Butterley its closest rival – in production as well as geographically - only averaged 883 tons from each of its two furnaces in that year. However, very little is known of the early years of Riddings Ironworks, and there is not much in print about even more recent times.

What seems certain is that the primary product of Riddings Ironworks in its initial years was to supply iron shot for use in the war against Napoleon's France. After the war its main output was in cast- iron pipes, which were required in increasing quantities to meet the growing needs of the new water-works and gas works that were springing up around the country and for other public works.

By then the ironworks had come into the ownership of James Oakes, His family came from Derby, where in the 18th century they were innkeepers with interests in what we would today call the haulage industry. Living in a town of 10,000 inhabitants they could hardly not have known the three partners in the ironworks, especially when young James Oakes married Sarah, daughter of Alderman Thomas Haden, a surgeon who had twice been Mayor of Derby. It seems likely, though evidence is lacking, that James may have been employed at Riddings to learn the work with a view to taking over eventually as manager or even as owner. This is what actually happened in 1809, when David Mushet, who previously bought the shares from Saxelbye and Edwards, then sold them to Oakes on leaving Riddings.

Oakes, who may already have bought Forester's shares, was now in complete control of the works, and when in 1818 he bought the Riddings estate from Lancelot Rolleston of Watnall, the whole village was his. He built Riddings House and laid out the park of nearly 300 acres, which remains virtually intact today, giving to the eastern side of the village rural charm. This is most unexpected in what was once a mainly industrial parish containing at least four coal mines belonging to James Oakes & Co, as well as the ironworks and various ancillary industries, including for a brief period, an oil industry.

It was in 1847 that a black, treacly substance began to seep into the maze of underground workings of the Old and New Deeps Pit between Hollyhurst Terrace and Pye Bridge, making life more uncomfortable for the miners. Not recognising the substance, Oakes sent a sample to his brother-in law, Sir Lyon (later Lord) Playfair. He was a research chemist in Edinburgh, who identified it as petroleum, for which there was then no known use, and also showed a specimen to a fellow chemist named James Young. Young took a lease on the petroleum spring from Oakes, erected a small refinery, which must have been the world's first oil refinery, within Riddings Ironworks, and after various experiments produced two oils from the petroleum. *Factoid: This oil was sold by the barrel -hence the reason why today oil is sold by the barrel.*



The Ironworks in 1923. Three blast furnaces can clearly be seen in the photograph.

One proved to be a good lubricant for textile machinery and came to be extensively used in the Lancashire cotton industry in place of sperm oil. The other was sold for burning in lamps, and after further experiments produced the paraffin oil which made for Young a fortune and the nickname of "Paraffin Young". By then, however, he was using shale oil from the Scottish Lowlands, the Riddings supply having greatly diminished after two years, though it continued to trickle into the coal workings for at least another 40 years.

If James Oakes & Co benefited only marginally from England's first oil strike, their industrial empire in and around Riddings expanded rapidly and the village grew with it, becoming in 1835 a separate parish. Perhaps because of its over-rapid growth, it acquired a reputation for being a rough, tough place. In the churchyard of St James' Parish Church is a memorial to "William Shawcroft (died 1831) a humble cottager, who, assisted by fellow labourers did his best to keep religion and virtue alive among the benighted inhabitants of the hamlet." Around 1800 this framework knitter ran a Sunday School in his cottage on Greenhill Common, and shortly afterwards (in 1806) the Baptists founded a chapel on what is now High Street.

The present parish church was built in 1832-33 on land in Cross Croft given by James Oakes. Two-thirds of its building cost was provided by grant from the Church Building Commissioners and the remainder raised by public subscription. (*Further information can be found in the walk notes*).

The eastern and south-eastern part of Riddings parish are particularly rich in trees, most must have been planted by the Oakes family to preserve their privacy, and to screen from the village any sign of heavy industry in and above the Erewash Valley.

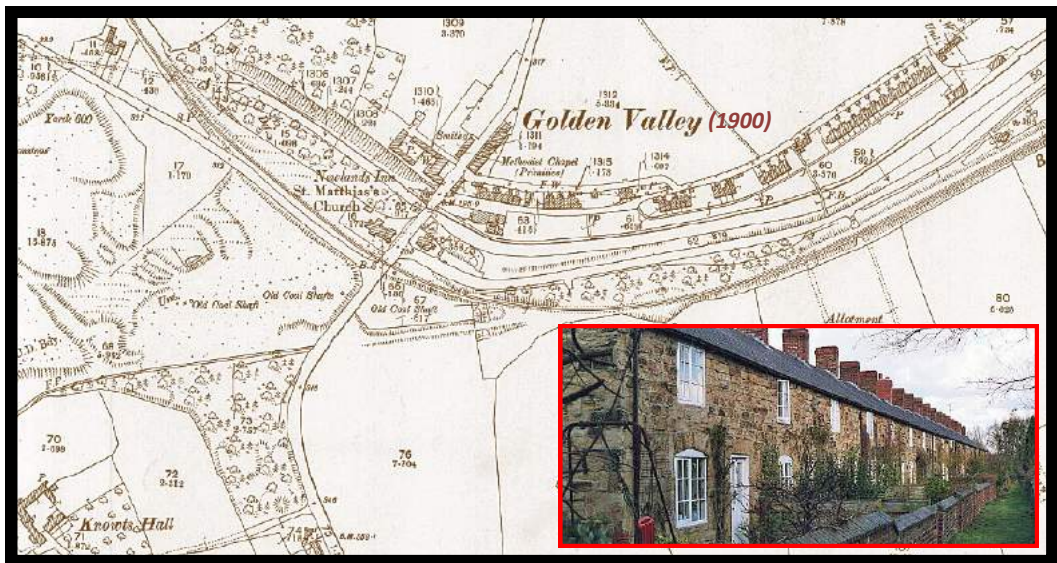
The Oakes' laid out the village on a grid pattern, as you see it today. West Lane became West Street and Church Street. Nether West Lane changed into South and High Streets, and a new street called George Street was cut across the fairly new enclosed fields, on what had previously been Greenhill Common, to link the two sides of the village and to become the main shopping street. The ribbon of new dwellings along Greenhill Lane extended into Newlands Road (named after land cultivated and enclosed in medieval times).

Many of these changes took place between 1850 and 1880. Little has changed physically since then, apart from the cutting of Bradshaw Avenue since the last war and some infilling. Many of the houses have been modernised, especially in the older part of the village by the Guinness Housing Trust in the late 1970's and some recent new housing being built in the area where Hollyhurst Row once stood. (*Further information can be found in the walk notes*).

Socially and economically there have been fundamental changes; most notably with the departure of heavy industry. Riddings Ironworks merged with Stanton at the end of the First World War, became part of the larger Stanton and Staveley group and finally closed down in 1969. The last of the Riddings pits closed before the First World War. Pye Hill, the last of what before nationalisation were Oakes' pits, hauled up its last ton of coal in the 1985. Riddings is still a mainly industrial village, but its industries are lighter, more varied and less obtrusive than in the past, and there are no working coal mines in the vicinity.

The Oakes family left Riddings in 1981, but not before giving the old-established football and cricket grounds and the site of a new community centre, all within Riddings parks, to the local authority. The eastern half of Riddings, including the park, are now within a Conservation area.





## **A HERITAGE WALK FROM IRONVILLE TO SWANWICK JUNCTION**

**via Codnor Park Reservoir and Golden Valley**

passing through wildlife havens, one of Derbyshire's oldest examples of company housing and visiting a railway museum with much to explore and enjoy



## A HERITAGE WALK FROM IRONVILLE TO SWANWICK JUNCTION

*via Codnor Park Reservoir and Golden Valley, passing through wildlife havens, visiting possibly Derbyshire's oldest example of company housing and exploring an historic railway centre with much to explore and enjoy*

First a little background information and history to help with your understanding of the area as you take the walk, (*red numbers in the text link with walk directions*):

**Barlow's Bridge** - The location of the old "Lock House" "was on the north side of the humped back bridge, which used to span the old Pinxton Canal at the Cromford and Pinxton junction. The junction is situated at the east end of the reservoir, below *Cinder Bank*. This particular stone building, which has long since disappeared, was built for a Mr and Mrs Barlow. From all accounts the land was acquired from Lancelot Rolleston of Watnall. Mr and Mrs Barlow chose to educate the local people. Their lessons' were composed of reading writing, arithmetic and general studies. The charge for the lessons was the princely sum of an old penny an hour.



On the death of the Barlows, the Cromford Canal Company purchased it and the name remained the same. The "Lock House" was never demolished. It fell into disrepair; it went bit by bit until it was gone. Take a look today and just imagine.

**Codnor Park Reservoir (2)** - The ten acre Codnor Park Reservoir was built as a water supply for the canal in 1794 but was retained as a nature reserve after the canal closed in 1944. Today it is an area very rich in wildlife. Take a look at the two information boards on the car park. Also on the car park is a Burger bar, here Drinks, hot and cold food are available. (see page 20). Fears of flooding in the 1980s led to the restructuring of the weir, the lowering of the water level by six feet, demolition of the top lock. This will need to be reinstated should there be a restoration of the canal.

Here is what it looked like at the turn of the twentieth century. On the walk take a look and compare with what the area looks like today. Have the changes been for the better?



With thanks to Martyn Taylor Cockayne

## A Potted history of Golden Valley *(Main source: publications by Doris Una Ball)*

The hamlet of Golden Valley nestling alongside the Cromford Canal is aptly named, the derivation of the name said to be because of the great mineral wealth in the area. The first cottages built by Benjamin Outram and Company, in 1795 were for the workmen in the new industries, coal, iron foundries and canal workers on the Cromford Canal.

Fast forward to years 1977 to 1978, this became both the end of an era and a way of life for the hamlet when the inhabitants received notice to quit their homes. This came as a bombshell to the old established families some of whom were descended from the original canal workers. Once all the people had been moved out of Golden Valley, the Local Authority (who acquired the hamlet in 1968) put an assortment of tenants into the cottages whilst they decided what to do with the hamlet. Suggestions were made that the whole be flattened and replaced with old people's housing. However, the Derbyshire Archaeological Society heard of the demolition plans and applied to get the Stone Row listed, because it, dating from about 1795, was one of the earliest examples of "Company Housing" in the county and therefore worthy of being saved.

The hamlet was re-modelled by the Trust, tastefully enhancing the existing properties; the properties were then sold individually. The transformation began and the new Golden Valley took shape. You can see the results of this transformation as you walk by today.

The oldest buildings in the village, commencing in the reign of King Charles II in the year 1665; Knowts Hall Farm and cottage (to the south of Golden Valley Caravan Park and not part of today's walk), which were partly built from stone taken from the ruins of Codnor Castle. The cottage stands at the end of the driveway to the hall. These buildings were built long before Golden Valley came into existence. The through road then was called Greenway.

Moving along down the hill on the main road to the crossroads, on the left stands what was once St. Mathias church **3**, built in 1876, which was a combined church and infant's school. The railway from Britain Colliery emerged from the back of two houses further up the Coach Road and passed by St. Mathias and across the main road and along the Coach Road to Codnor Park coal wharf and on to the ironworks.

The church was closed in 1973 and sold privately. It became a residence and is now called 'The Old School House'. The church spire as you will see still remains intact today.

Directly across from the church at the corner of the Coach Road were two cottages. They too are now combined to form one modernised house with garages.

A little further down the main road on the opposite side of the road and the other side of the canal once stood the 'Newlands Inn' **4**, which was most certainly built before the hamlet around 1759. It was probably an old coaching inn. The inn burnt down in 2011 and is about to become a mini housing estate. Recently approved plans will see the pub building; (grade II listed) restored and turned into five apartments. Added to the properties being built in its grounds, the whole development should deliver a total of 19 dwellings. (The development is likely to have been completed by the time you take this walk). The photo above shows the Inn before 1934. Landlord Abraham Briddon sold meat in the front extended room, the slaughter house was at the rear.



Newlands Row (nicknamed Scordy Row), which was demolished in 1978, consisted of seven cottages, one of which was the village shop.

A primitive Methodist Chapel built in 1905, which boasted a prize-winning choir, was situated alongside these cottages, and this was also demolished at the same time as its neighbours. New properties now stand in the place of the old row and chapel. One house built in 1902 situated above the chapel remains intact.

The railway was once a passenger and goods line (the L.M.S) which ended when government minister Dr. Beeching closed many lines and railway stations. Goods were subsequently transported by road. The line through the Valley is owned by 'The Midland Railway Centre' and is still in use for pleasure trips on restored steam engines from the old Butterley Station to Codnor Park. The railway bridge across the main road known as the Navvie Bridge has been re-styled and strengthened.

A new narrow gauge railway line has been laid by the Midland Railway Centre which leads from the old site of Britain Colliery, Butterley Park along the old railway track from which only the coal trucks used to run. The track then veers off by the two houses on the Coach Road, across the site of the old (now drained) Butterley Park top reservoir. Finally, the line runs alongside the canal, ending at the back of The Newlands Inn.

Going across the main road to the stone building situated at the top of the hamlet alongside the canal was once a shop with adjoining stone house on one side and an adjoining brick cottage on the other. The shop eventually became a branch of the Ripley Co-operative Society until it closed in the early 1960s. The shop and stone house is now all one residence and named 'Valley Hall'. The modernised brick house is now called 'Valley Cottage'. The road, which was immediately in front of the whole building, is now a garden area and provides car access to the two residences.

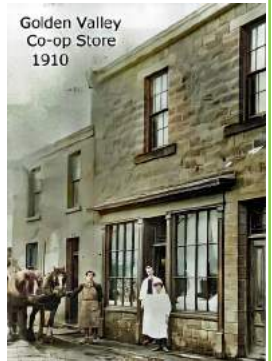
Opposite the Newlands Inn there were once two roads, running either side of the Top Yard Building, the Institute and cottages numbered from 1 to 14 which then converged into one road beginning at number 15. The properties

up to number 15, were demolished and replaced by four sets of terraced cottages which were built over the original front road making the earlier back road into a single, broader road. The fronts of the new cottages face in the direction of Riddings. The former cottages, which were built in the early 1820's, were in reverse with the fronts facing the direction of Codnor.

Cottages from number 15 to the last cottage in Golden Valley, including the Stone Row which were the original buildings built in 1795, have now been re-modelled. All along the Row, two cottages have been merged into one house, with the exception of the first and last cottages of the Stone Row. The outside lavatories, coal houses, ash pits and part of the back yards were demolished and the road widened. The cottages have been beautifully modernised to present day standards.

The children's recreation ground, which was situated at the beginning of the Stone Row, has been redeveloped as a pleasant community garden. Here you will see an information board relating to the hamlet.

Before all the new development began, Golden Valley had become neglected and partly derelict. The improvement and enhancement of the Hamlet is remarkable, as you will see as and when you take this walk.



*Photograph showing a barge on the canal in the late 1800's to early 1900's. Behind the large building in the front is No. 50 which is the last house in Stone Row.*

## Swanwick Junction (6)

On operational days there is so much to see and do at the Swanwick Junction Museum Complex, (admission is free; however check on opening times before your visit):

The Matthew Kirtley Building is the main exhibition hall for the Midland Railway Trust's unique museum collection of historic locomotives, carriages and wagons.

The West Shed is the home of two LMS Stanier Pacific locomotives, "Princess Margaret Rose" and the "Duchess of Sutherland" built in the 1930s. Here you will also find other locomotives and much more.

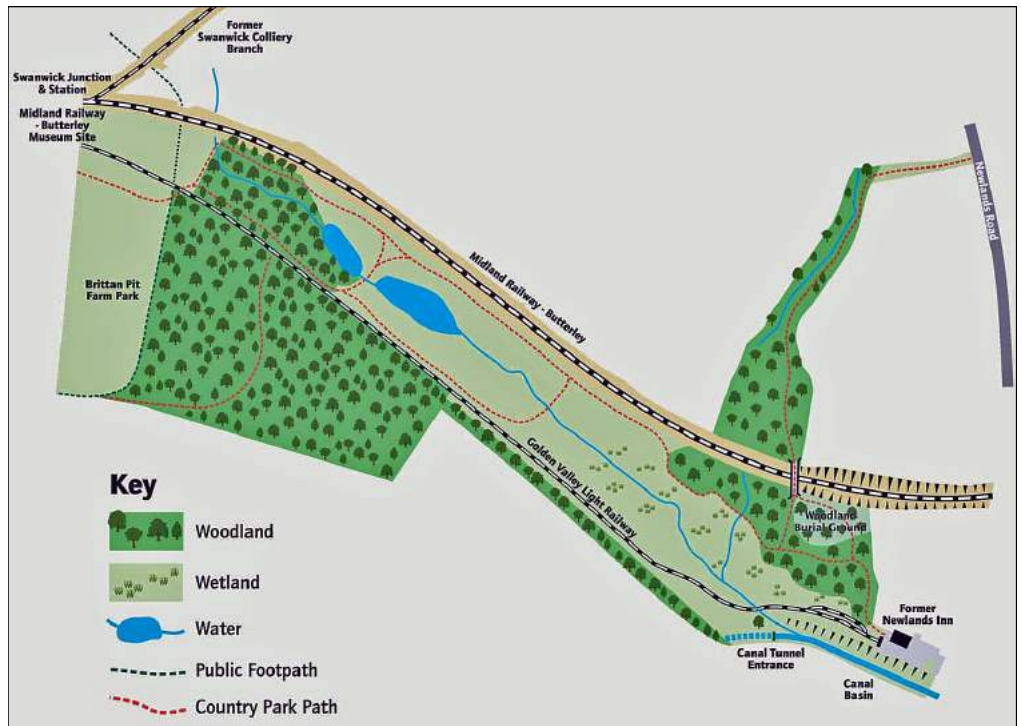
There is also a large viewing gallery over the workshop area, where you can see steam locomotives undergoing restoration.

You will also find a Demonstration Signal Box, Victorian Railwayman's Church and the Country Park are always open, plus there many other attractions for the whole family. The Golden Valley Light Railway (GVLR) and Butterley Park Miniature Railway are based here too. Refreshments are also available on the site and there is plenty of space for picnics.

On one of your visits you might also like to explore the Midland Railway Butterley Country Park further: Paths though the Country Park will take you through some delightful countryside between the Midland Railway - Butterley Museum site at Swanwick Junction and Golden Valley.

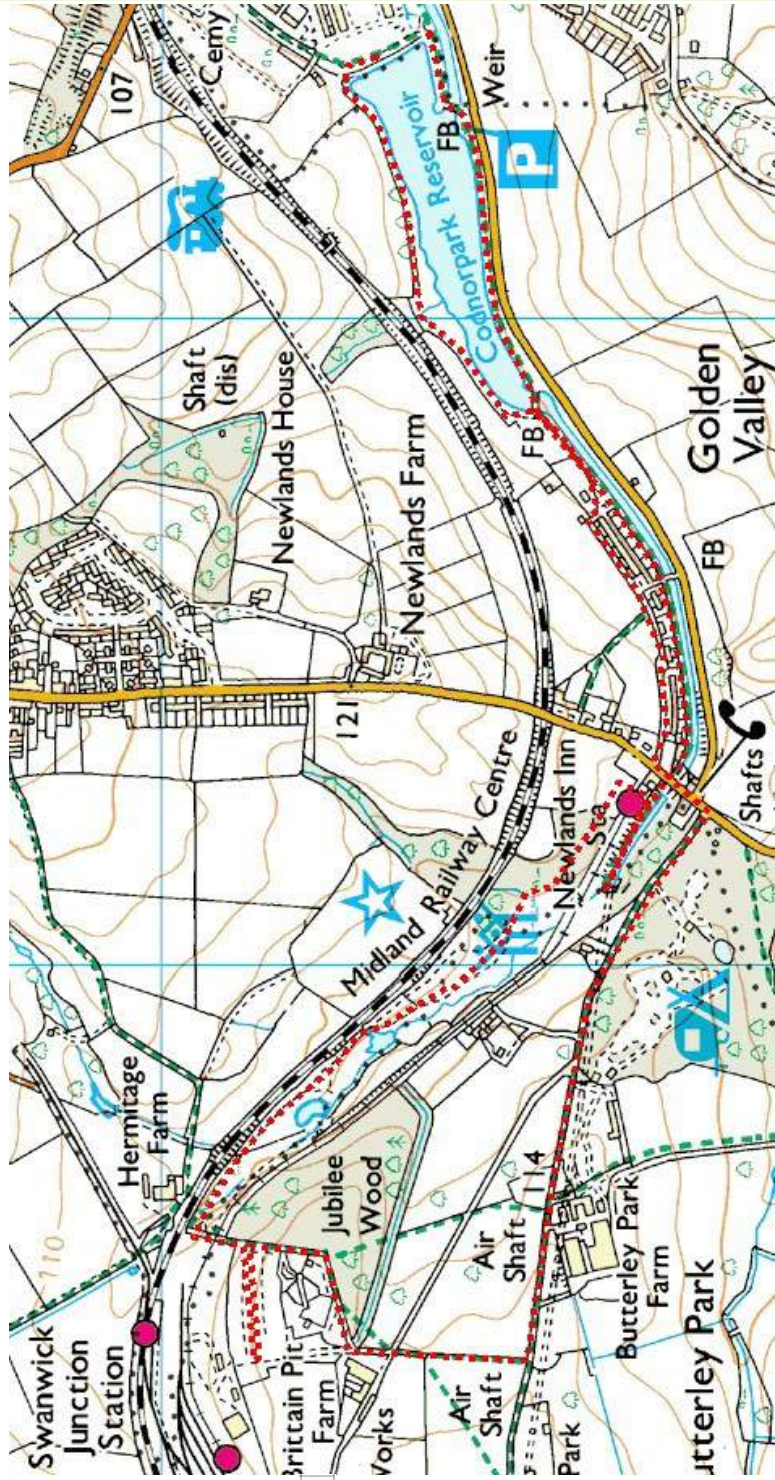
Through the year you will see the changes in wildlife from the bluebells and celandines of spring with the sound of birdsong to the trees in full leaf and the meadow flowers of summer. The autumn brings the colour of the leaves and the birds eating the wild fruits whilst winter brings its own beauty.

A walk through the Country Park will reveal an area that has remained hidden and unspoilt with glimpses of an industrial past. The remains of old collieries, tramways, reservoirs, the Cromford Canal and its Butterley Tunnel and even the mysterious abandoned village of Grumblethorpe. Much of which you will see on today's walk. You may also see trains passing on both the Standard and Narrow Gauge Railways that pass through the Country Park.



# MAIN ROUTE FOR THE WALK

## FOUR MILES - SEE DIRECTIONS ON PAGE 20 & 21



## IRONVILLE TO SWANWICK JUNCTION VIA GOLDEN VALLEY WALK (4 miles)

Starting with your back to the Crossing Club take Cinder Bank over the canal using the footbridge to Market Place. Turn right to cross the road and go down the slope to join the canal towpath by Boat Dock Lock.

Follow the path passing the old stone bridge (1) on your right then bear left to cross a metal bridge. Continue with Codnor Park Reservoir (2) on the right and the infilled bed of the Cromford canal on your left. Cross another metal footbridge at the head of the reservoir, ignore the path right that is for the return. On crossing the Reservoir Car Park note the Friends of the Cromford Canal and Local Wildlife information displays. You will also find the Burger van with refreshments here at certain times, (see page 15). Continue with the canal on your left passing under a disused footbridge. A wall on your right retains the gardens of the Golden Valley cottages, we will see more on the return journey.

The towpath ends with a steep climb up to the main road, (If you look to the other side of the road you will see the former St. Mathias Church, (3). You need to cross the road ahead but first turn left to cross Coach Road then the main road and continue along the private road which is also a public footpath and passes the entrance to Golden Valley Caravan Park. (N.B. **Take care when crossing roads**).

Follow the road for a half mile passing the old Toll House where a stile allows access if the gate is locked. Next look for the wide entrance on the left to Butterley Park Farm yard, just a few yards beyond this turn right over a stile to follow a hedge on your right along the side of a field.

Where the field path meets another road take the road ahead with farm building to your left. You arrive at large steel gates to the right; if these are open you can continue to the Midland Railway Centre Swanwick Junction site (6). If the centre is closed turn right along the public footpath with the fence to your left follow this around the perimeter to the crossing of the Golden Valley Light Railway (GVL R).

A second set of metal gates allows access to the Swanwick Junction site which is free to enter and explore, when trains are running there is a cafe and toilets.

*(As part of the return journey you could consider taking the GVL R train, (if operating) as far as the Newlands Inn before continuing with the route through Golden Valley. You can find the timetable on the GVL R web site).*

After a visit exit the site main gate and turn left across waste ground used as a car park. At the far side a path bears left and drops down steps to the GVL R crossing point above.

Cross the GVL R and continue along the path twenty yards then turn right over a stile. Follow this path for half a mile ignoring paths off to the right. You pass a stone structure on your left and after this the path climbs among the ancient spoil heaps of Grumblethorpe Colliery, (sunk 1830 and closed 1860).

Tree branches mark the edge of the path. Paths left lead to the green burial site. As the Newlands Inn site (4) comes into view through the trees bear right down steps to pass the very end of the GVL R. Turn right along the fence with the station site on your right.

From the station entrance gate steps go down to meet the towpath of the canal close to the entrance to Butterley Tunnel do take a look (see page 21). After an inspection head back along the towpath away from the tunnel to meet a narrow pavement hemmed in behind a concrete wall at the Newlands Inn.

Turn left in front of the derelict building and when the retaining wall ends cross the road and take Golden Valley to view the cottages from the other side, (taking a look at the notes on page 17 as you pass by).

Two thirds of the way down visit the memorial Garden where you will find an information board relating to local history and wildlife. Continue to pass the beautifully restored Stone Row (5).

At the end of the road bear right to meet the canal path bear left along this back to the metal bridge. Do not cross the bridge this time but take the path left around the north side of the reservoir. At the far end a switch back slope leads to the former Pinxton Arm of the canal, turn right to continue along the edge of the reservoir.

At the old stone bridge turn left to retrace your steps back to the Crossing Club.

Grumblethorpe pit was sunk in 1830 and was typical of the small collieries that sprang up in the area around the Cromford Canal. It is situated behind the Newlands Inn in Golden Valley along the footpath into the Country park, just beyond the portal of the Cromford Canal tunnel. Grumblethorpe pit closed in 1860. Excavations revealed some stonework believed to be the base of a small pumping engine. You will pass the some remains on the walk although they can be hard to find hard to find if overgrown.



*Grumblethorpe Colliery*

### The Butterley Tunnel

The tunnel was 2,966 yard (2712m) long, 9 ft (2.7 m) wide at water level, and 8 ft (2.4 m) from water to soffit (depending on the water level). At the time of building it was the third longest canal tunnel in the World. Thirty-three shafts were sunk during construction with the workings dewatered using a Woodhouse steam engine. Water was provided for the Cromford Canal from the 50-acre (200,000 m<sup>2</sup>) Butterley Reservoir situated on the hill above the tunnel. The Butterley Reservoir is itself crossed by a stone railway embankment currently used by the locomotives of the Midland Railway. Water flowed from the reservoir directly into the tunnel via an adit (from Latin aditus, entrance) 600 yards (550 m) along the tunnel from the Western Portal. Above the Eastern portal the Butterley Park Reservoir once provided water to the canal. This Reservoir was filled in during 1935. Both the tunnel and reservoirs were constructed by the Butterley Company, formed in 1790 by Benjamin Outram (1764–1805) and Francis Beresford (died 1801) with William Jessop (1745–1814) and John Wright (1758–1840) joining by 1793.



*With thanks to Madam Taylor Cockayne*



*Legging it through the Butterley Tunnel*

There is no towpath within the tunnel, which was for the most part only 9 feet (2.7 m) wide, therefore narrow boats were propelled through the tunnel using the muscle power of the narrow boat's crew. This process is called legging. Near to the Butterley Tunnel there was a wharf where boats were loaded with coal from the local pits and where boats waited for their turn to pass through the Butterley Tunnel. The horses were taken off and walked over the hill on the Coach Road above. The barges were "Legged" through the tunnel by men lying on planks across the boat and walking along the tunnel sides. "Leggers" could be hired from the nearby Newlands Inn.

The sign illustrated (above left) was displayed at both ends of the tunnel, and stressed the importance of only using the tunnel in any one direction at particular times. There are reported instances of fines levied for non-compliance with these rules.

**NOTICE.**

EXTRACT FROM THE RULES, BYELAWS AND ORDERS MADE BY  
THE CROMFORD CANAL COMPANY : 30<sup>th</sup> MAY 1804

NO BOAT SHALL ENTER BUTTERLEY TUNNEL AT THE EAST END EXCEPT BETWEEN THE HOURS OF FIVE AND SIX IN THE MORNING, ONE AND TWO IN THE AFTERNOON, AND NINE AND TEN AT NIGHT, AND NO BOAT SHALL ENTER THE WEST END THEREOF, EXCEPT BETWEEN THE HOURS OF ONE AND TWO IN THE MORNING, NINE AND TEN IN THE FORENOON, AND FIVE AND SIX AT NIGHT, AND EVERY BOAT SHALL MAKE ITS PASSAGE THROUGH THE SAME WITH ALL POSSIBLE DESPATCH AND ON NO ACCOUNT EXCEED THREE HOURS AFTER SUCH ENTRY. AND IF ANY PERSON OR PERSONS HAVING THE CARE OF ANY BOAT, SHALL OFFEND IN ANY OF THE PARTICULAR AFORESAID, HE OR THEY SHALL FORFEIT FOR EVERY SUCH OFFENCE, FORTY SHILLINGS AND SHALL ALSO TURN BACK ON MEETING ANOTHER BOAT IN THE SAID TUNNEL.

*With thanks to Ken Brockway who put this walk together in association with Andy Cadman. The main source for Golden Valley information were the three booklets published by Doris Una Ball: "Memories of Golden Valley," "The Life And Times Of Golden Valley" and "The Phoenix Has Risen." Also thank you to Alan Calladine, Development Officer for Midland Railway Trust for his consent to use the Swanwick Junction information .*

# A Derbyshire Delight

Exploring our local stretch of canal

Imagining its past & looking to the future



## **A DERBYSHIRE DELIGHT – OUR LOCAL STRETCH OF CANAL**

Early in 2019, the Friends of the Cromford Canal lodged a planning application for the first significant restoration of the waterway, since its base at Langley Mill was opened in 1972. Planning consent was granted in August 2020 (see page 26). So . . . why not take this opportunity to explore the first four or five miles considering what could lie in the future for our local stretch of canal.

### **HISTORY in a nutshell**

The Cromford Canal was conceived in 1789 as an extension to the earlier Erewash Canal to exploit the mineral resources of the upper Erewash and Derwent river valleys. Here lay not only plenty of coal, but also iron ore and limestone — exactly the ingredients needed to smelt iron.

The potential was not lost on engineers William Jessop and Benjamin Outram. While surveying the canal they had noted plentiful iron ore and coal at Butterley and astutely bought the local estate, forming what became the Butterley Company.

The third ingredient, limestone, was available in quantity at nearby Crich, and a tramway was built from the quarries to the canal at Bullbridge, from whence it was carried by boat to Butterley. A 3,000-yard tunnel was hewn through the hill to link the products, and a new local industry created.

From Langley Mill, the canal followed the River Erewash, and rose by 14 wide-beam locks to its summit at Ironville, just east of Butterley Tunnel. Here a 2-mile lock-free branch served the mines and ironworks towards Pinxton.

Opening in 1794, the canal immediately prospered. Inevitably though, traffic declined, and it was bought by what became the Midland Railway. Serious subsidence also occurred due to the extensive coal mining, particularly beneath Butterley Tunnel, which was closed in 1900. Trade on the Erewash side continued until the 1930s, but the canal was abandoned in 1944. It remained largely intact until the 1960s, when British Waterways sold off much of it. Further depredations occurred as recently as the 1980s.

The Cromford Canal Society was formed in the 1970s and attempts were made to preserve the route and plan restoration, but the society dissolved in 1990. Efforts were revived in 2002, with the formation of Friends of the Cromford Canal, and this time the destruction was stopped.



Portland Wharf near where Codnor Park Locks begin.  
The junction bridge, nick named “Humpy Bridge” during the recent successful restoration campaign by the Cromford Canal and Codnor Park Reservoir group. (See Newsletter 11, pp 9 -11)

## Planning your walk (Also see map on page 26)

### THE ESSENTIALS

Distance: 5 miles (Can be completed in smaller sections if preferred)

Terrain: A mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced pathways. Walking boots are strongly advised.

Starting point: Langley Mill Basin, NG16 4AA

By car: There's no car parking for canal visitors at the basin, but it's unrestricted on parts of Linkmel Road next door.

Public transport: There are numerous Trent Barton services along the route, and Langley Mill Rail Station is a short walk away.

It's less easy to return from the end of the walk at Golden Valley. There's an hourly bus service from Newlands Inn during the week, but on Sundays you might need to call a taxi or arrange a car shuffle. Close by is Newlands Inn Station, a modest little platform for the Golden Valley Light Railway, which runs a shuttle service to the Midland Heritage Railway Centre at Swanwick Junction, just a mile away. It operates every 45 minutes on summer weekends and during holiday periods, (please check their web page first: <http://www.gvlr.org.uk/>).

### The "Bite Size" Alternative

The basic principle behind this walk however, is that those who prefer can complete smaller sections at a time by returning and reversing the instructions after an appropriate distance, to travel back home from a car park, (or walk home if appropriate for those who live local). These mini walks can then be completed at a more leisurely pace and over time a good picture of our local canal can be built up enjoying our rich local heritage and wildlife at the same time.

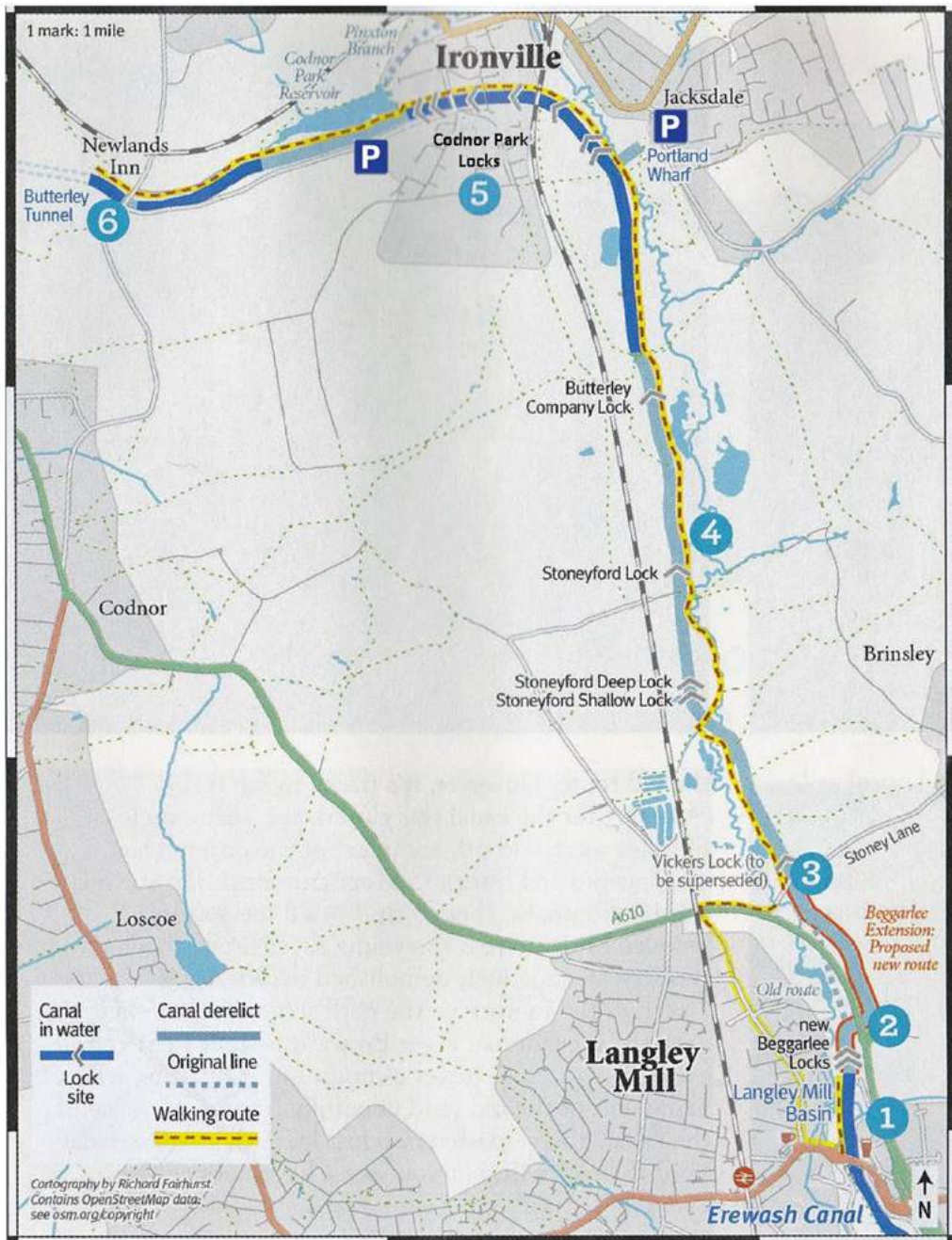
Car parks from which the walk can be joined are indicated on the Map on page 25. Parking is possible on some of the streets, (please check).

The section south of Stoney Lane would be a challenge for some to do from Ironville. To return from Stoney Lane along different routes is quite easy and there are linking paths so a choice of loop lengths is possible.

Plan your "bite size" walks carefully. For example a return walk between the Portland Wharf and the former Newlands Inn is generally well-surfaced easy walking and can be completed within a couple of hours. Whereas on a return walk between the Portland Wharf and Plumtre Road, Langley Mill, you will encounter stiles, and occasionally rough uneven ground, taking around 2½ hours. Some sections can become very muddy in wet weather. You could then drive to Langley Mill to view Parts 1 & 2 of the walk if you prefer. By taking shorter walks you could steadily build up to the full 5 or six miles over a few outings.



# A Derbyshire Delight – The Route



This walk has been adapted for this booklet by Andy Cadman from a walk that originally appeared in *Waterways World*, July 2019 : "A Derbyshire Delight" by Andrew Denny, with thanks to *Waterways World* for giving their kind consent.

# THE WALK

## 1. Langley Mill

The walk starts at Langley Mill at the top of the Erewash Canal. This is where the Erewash met the Cromford and Nottingham canals in what is possibly the only three-way junction on the English waterways. (In fact, most of the boats at Langley Mill are technically on the short stub of the Cromford, which is what was restored when the lock and basin reopened to great fanfare in 1973, although the work was done by the Erewash Canal Preservation & Development Association.)

Enter Langley Mill Lock from the footpath entrance by the A608 bridge over the canal. Cross the small swing footbridge and on your right is Great Northern Basin, the last remaining part of the Nottingham Canal and now providing private moorings. You'll pass the small brick building, which was the old canal toll collector's office and is now the home of the canal society. Cross the adjacent stile to follow the official footpath, bypassing the gate and dry dock, allowing you to reach the end of the basin.



Langley Mill Lock: the end of the Erewash and start of the Cromford

## 2. Beggarlee Extension

Head though the gate at the end of the moorings where you'll see the reconstructed Beggarlee Wharf, excavated ten years ago but still unused. Beyond here it's a tricky scramble up scrubland, where the Friends of Cromford Canal hopes to build the new Beggarlee Extension

The planning consent provides details for the construction of a staircase lock pair, a detour under the A610 bypass using an old mineral railway underpass, and over ½ mile of new channel leading up to Stoney Lane.

The Beggarlee project is the first substantial restoration work on the canal since the Cromford end was dredged and reopened in the 1980s. You can see where the A610 goes over the old railway bridge, but you won't be able to get further. Instead, retrace your steps back to Langley Mill Lock, turn right at the main A608 road, and right again on Cromford Road for ½ mile before continuing on Plumtre Road, through the underpass next to the railway, and follow what is now Stoney Lane for a 1/3 mile.

At the next public footpath sign you are now at the end of the Beggarlee diversion and back on the old route. Here once stood Vickers Lock, now completely vanished. It won't need to be rebuilt because the new Beggarlee line will be slightly higher than the old line, descending via that staircase we mentioned earlier at Langley Mill.



Beggarlee Wharf, rebuilt in the 2000s, looking towards the proposed locks



Footpath at the end of the Beggarlee Extension



The A610 bridge will be used for the Beggarlee Extension

### 3. Stoney Lane

Beyond Stoney Lane the restored canal will retain the old route. However, it's tricky to see this in places. After the canal was closed, the next couple of miles were sold off, and most of the channel has disappeared and returned to agriculture. It has stayed a public footpath, though; and you'll see a short wooden bridge across the young River Erewash which replaces an aqueduct, demolished decades ago.

Across the footbridge the path splits; keep to the right, with the meandering River Erewash to your right. You'll eventually reach a cluster of houses in Boat Lane, whose name tells of the old (and hopefully future) presence of the canal. You've passed two lost locks that will one day need to be rebuilt, but you won't have noticed them.

### 4. Erewash Meadows

From here the route becomes easier to follow, largely due to the excellent work of the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, which has marked out the lost route on what is now Erewash Meadows. It's a hard-core path for ½ mile, over two more lost locks that must be rebuilt, until you reach a small spinney and the brick column of a lost railway bridge, known locally as "Black Bridge". This one carried a link line between the now demolished Great Northern line to the right and the extant Midland line which you will sometimes hear and sometimes see on the left. The old canal line finally reappears — and it's in water, albeit rather reedy. From here until the end of our walk, if the channel is not always in water, it's at least visible. (You will encounter several informative DWT interpretation boards on this part of the walk that will tell you more about the area).

After another ½ mile you'll encounter a traditional and recently restored canal-bridge, the first since Langley Mill. It looks like another three-way junction, but it simply carries the towpath over the entrance to what was once Portland Wharf. The Cromford Canal and Codnor Park Reservoir Group, under the watchful eye and care of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust has had a distinct and measurable impact on this stretch of waterway as you will see, especially between The Butterley Company dam and Ironville.



An aqueduct over the River Erewash was replaced with this footbridge



The old line of the canal remains free to restore in the fields beyond the Beggarlee Extension



An artists impression of the Beggarlee extension



The canal goes back into water as it approaches the Portland Wharf, Codnor Park & Ironville

"Black Bridge"

Following a very simple start on the level of litter picking and reed clearing the group has now become a constituted group working alongside other local volunteer organisations on restoration projects, education and awareness of wildlife for local families and conservation of the abundant wildlife which is now flourishing along the canal. Pathways have been laid to provide better access for all abilities, rubbish bins have been erected and much more. The result has been a decline in litter, antisocial behaviour and dog mess and a wildlife haven which is now attracting visitors and interest from all over the UK and photographers keen to snap a great shot of birds, amphibians, insects, butterflies, mammals and fish.

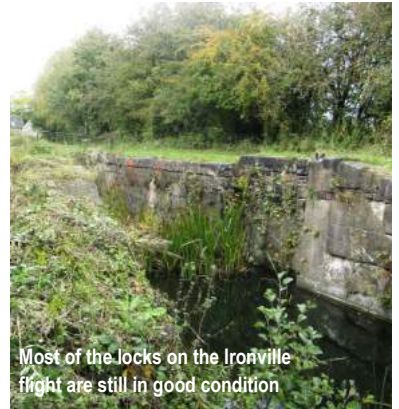


The bottom four locks now owned by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust are home to several rare species including water voles &

One of the greatest success stories of this work has been the increase in the Water Vole population which is one of the UK's fastest declining mammals. The native Water Vole is thriving along this stretch of the canal, listen out for the distinctive plop as one drops into the water or even spot them swimming.

## 5. Codnor Park Locks

You are now on the seven-lock Ironville Flight, and it's one of the Cromford's beauties. The sense of drama is acute — it's a post-industrial landscape, with housing closing in as you ascend to the top. The lock chambers are mostly in good condition, ripe for restoration, and there's at least a trickle of water in the bottom of each pound to help you imagine the completed waterway.



Most of the locks on the Ironville flight are still in good condition

The bottom four locks are owned by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, along with much of the preceding mile of canal.

The flight has been adopted by the Friends of the Cromford Canal (FCC), which has ensured a fine towpath and good fencing that adds some degree of safety to towpath users. Halfway up, on the off-side of Lock 4, its members have created a lock-keeper's garden', imagining the sort of fruit and vegetables the original keepers would have grown here. The FCC volunteers have done much good work in improving, maintaining and caring for this section of canal for all of us all to enjoy, as you will see on this next stage of your walk.

The channel gets deeper as you go up. The village is Ironville; hence the locks are sometimes referred to as Ironville Locks. The canal here skirted (and supplied with water) the great Codnor Park Ironworks. In their Victorian heyday the forge and rolling mill produced 'Butterley iron' — noted for its toughness and resistance to corrosion. Old maps here show the off side of the canal as a spaghetti of railway lines threading through a forest of small factory buildings, and everywhere is peppered with the words 'coal shaft'. It's all gone now. The former Forge site has been purchased by The Friends of Belper Parks (Dec 2018) and converted into a wonderful nature reserve, a wildlife haven, especially for butterflies. Why not "pop" over the boardwalk (near to the restored canal bridge), go up the steps and take a look and explore, keeping to the foot paths as time permits.

The summit lock has also vanished, demolished as recently as the 1980s. Above where it stood is the junction bridge for the two mile Pinxton Branch — worth a walk in its own right, but that is for the future.



The Codnor Park flight could be magnificent when restored and will encourage community redevelopment.

## 6. Golden Valley

From here on, the area wears the name 'Golden Valley'. The 10-acre Codnor Park Reservoir was built as a water supply for the canal in 1794 but was retained as a nature reserve after the canal closed in 1944. Today there is fishing here in well stocked waters. The Water's Edge Burger Bar on the car park provides an opportunity for food and drink, (Open Wednesday - Sunday 7.30am - 1pm).

Fears of flooding in the 1980s led to the restructuring of the weir, the lowering of the water level by six feet, and that aforementioned demolition of the top lock. This will need to be reinstated as part of the restoration. Cross the weir and follow the path along the side of the reservoir for a quarter of a mile. The old canal line lies buried again, to your left, but at least you can now see where it is. The channel reappears alongside a modern metal footbridge, another by-product of the 1980s reservoir works. A brief stroll takes you up to Newlands Road, and the derelict Newlands Inn. The stone bridge here was demolished and infilled after World War II and will need to be reinstated if boats are to reach the tunnel.

Newlands Inn, the end of our walk, shares the privilege of many pubs of being a local landmark. It is Grade II listed, was an original boatman's establishment and has quite a history. As recently as a century ago it was also the local slaughterhouse and the publican sold fresh meat from his front room. It closed as a pub in 2006, and five years later caught fire and burned out. You won't get refreshments here today. As a result of recently approved plans you may see the pub building being restored on your walk today and turned into apartments. Added to the properties being built in its grounds, the whole development should deliver a total of 19 dwellings. (Might be completed by the time you take this walk)

Finally, if you need to wait for transport back (whether by bus, car or the Golden Valley light Railway) cross the road to see the Butterley Tunnel's portal, looking tiny in the undergrowth - "a mousehole in a wainscot", to borrow Tom Rolt's phrase about Standedge Tunnel. Why not go and take a look anyway!



Before the fire.



Butterley Tunnel Eastern Portal



Newlands Inn terminus of GVL.  
A rare station named after a pub!

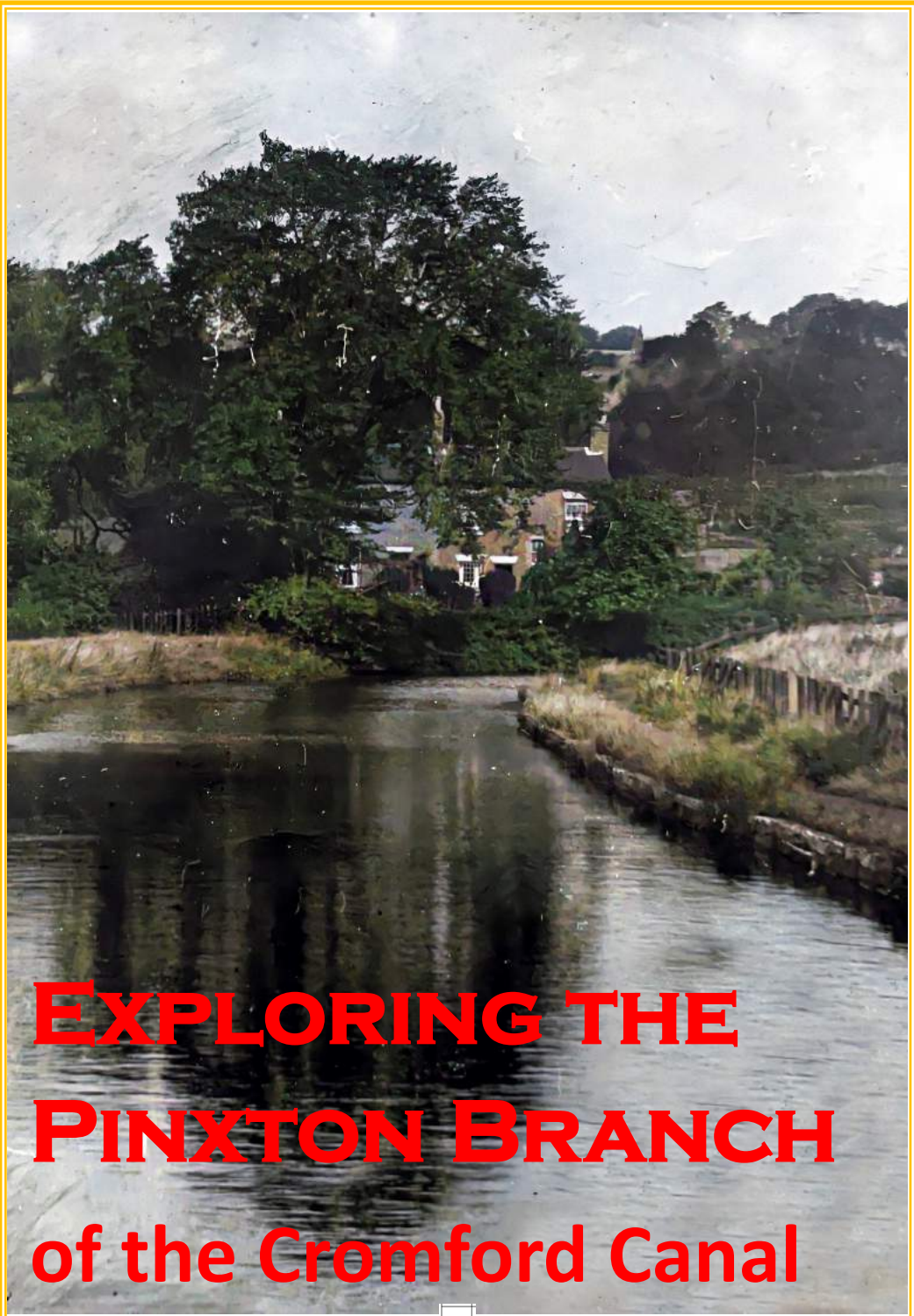
### More information

Friends of the Cromford Canal, Weighbridge Office, Gothic Warehouse, Mill Road, Cromford DE4 3RQ  
Also see web page: [www.cromfordcanal.org](http://www.cromfordcanal.org), Facebook page or Twitter at @FriendCromCanal

\* If this has whetted your appetite, why not obtain the fuller "A Walker's Guide to the Cromford Canal". It will tell you all you need to know about walking the whole canal, its history and its heritage, (including Butterley Tunnel, the Pinxtan Arm and Leawood branch). Highly recommended. This new edition guides you not only along the future restoration route, but dramatically shows you what has been lost, with numerous historical photos. As you walk you will gawp, asking yourself: "Can this really have gone?" You certainly get a feel for what an important and busy canal it used to be. (A "must-read" for all locals). It's £5.00 by post from FCC or on line via the Birdswood shop at <https://www.birdswood.org/>

\* The definitive history is The Cromford Canal by Hugh Potter (ISBN:9780752428024), priced £12.99 and also available by post from FCC and the Birdswood shop as above. (An essential read for all locals).

\*The 'Cromford Canal and Codnor Park Reservoir Public Group' a very active and knowledgeable local Facebook group, focused on the locks around Ironville.



**EXPLORING THE  
PINXTON BRANCH  
of the Cromford Canal**

## A VIRTUAL WALK ALONG THE PINXTON BRANCH *by Christine Johnstone*

Let's take a walk along the Pinxton Branch in 1878. All we need is the Cromford Canal toll receipts and some old large-scale Ordnance Survey maps - 6 inches to a mile will do, 25 inches is even better. The Friends of the Cromford Canal C already has a database for the toll receipts from Langley Mill, which includes 14th February to 3rd May 1878, and the National Library of Scotland has put thousands of OS maps online, including the ones we need, surveyed between 1877 and 1880.

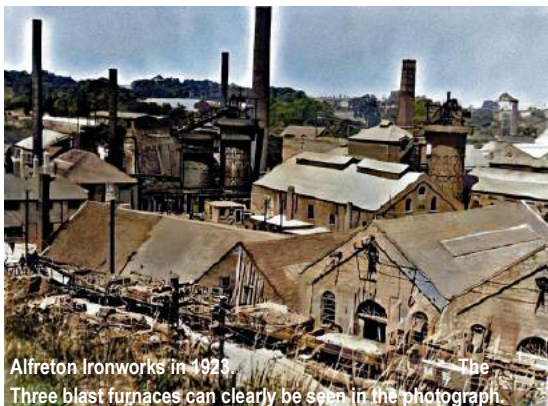


Bullock Lane crosses the Pinxton branch beside Christ Church.

Setting off from the junction with the "main line", we see the bridge which carries the main line' towpath over the Pinxton Branch. On our right (the towpath side) are 32 terraced houses facing each other across Ironville's Market Place and another 16 on Queen Street. On the opposite side of the canal is Junction Cottage (see page X), served by the next bridge we come to.

Soon the houses along Casson Street are on our right, followed by Christ Church, with the cemetery on the opposite bank. After Bullock Lane bridge, the Vicarage with its garden and summer house is on the far side, and the backs of houses in Victoria Street and Tank Street are on this side. Soon the Ambergate & Pye Bridge Branch of the Midland Railway crosses the canal, followed by the Nottingham Lane Bridge, with the houses of Oakes Row off to the right and Fletchers Row off to the left.

Then Riddings Colliery appears on the left bank, and a mineral line crosses the canal to serve it. As we come up to the Pye Bridge wharf, the far bank is filled with shafts, railway lines, brickworks, gasworks and the mighty Alfreton Ironworks - a sharp contrast to the fields on the towpath side. We might even see a boat at the triangular wharf, Three times in eleven weeks a pair of boats take a cargo out - bricks to the chemical works just north of here or castings to London. There is only one other receipt for a delivery here in spring 1878 - a mixed load of old castings and timber from the Erewash Canal. Passing the Alfreton - Nottingham road bridge, and not turning right to visit the Dog and Doublet public house, we continue on towards Pinxton. Under another Midland Railway bridge, a footbridge leads to Kempson's new chemical works on the far bank,

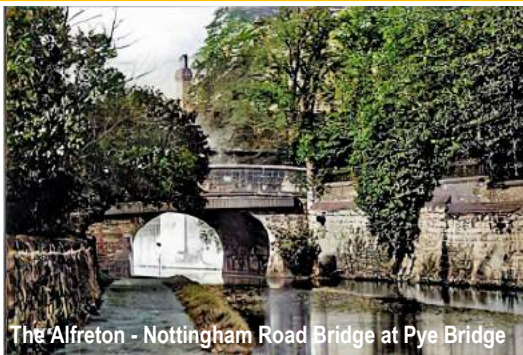


Alfreton Ironworks in 1923. The Three blast furnaces can clearly be seen in the photograph.

which is where the bricks are landed. And once every eleven days or so, a boat comes here from Nottingham with 20 tons of gas tar. On our right, the River Erewash runs through farmland. Crimea Cottages are tucked away between the canal and the railway on the far bank, and here's the Old House at Home beerhouse right on the towpath.

A basin on the far side links up with a colliery tramway, but the wharf is disused now. A bridge provides access to Office Rows, then the Great Northern Railway's Pinxton Colliery Branch crosses. Immediately after are the Meadow Rows houses on this side, with the Pinxton Colliery wharf on the far bank. We might see a boat here - once every three or four weeks a boat or a pair of boats take about 53 tons of coal down to the Erewash Canal. Nothing comes up here from Langley Mill though.

On the last leg of our journey now. On the far bank the air shafts, smithies and mineral lines of Pinxton Colliery. On this side, a footbridge crosses a small canal arm behind a building, then there are a few more buildings. Our journey ends at Pinxton Wharf, surrounded by limekilns, gasworks, factories and railway Lines. Where to next?



The 'Alfreton - Nottingham Road Bridge at Pye Bridge



Approaching the Pinxton Terminus with collieries on the left and Meadow Rows on the right



Office Row Bridge was used in the film of DH Lawrence's *Son's & Lovers*



The Old House at Home was alongside the Pinxton Branch

First published in the Friends of Cromford Canal magazine *The Portal* - Issue 74 pages 22 & 23.

The editor thought that it might be a good idea to explore the virtual Pinxton branch walk in modern times. On the face of it, this might seem a good a good idea but the reality is very different. While the footpaths across the Smotherfly site show clearly on the map, they do not exist on the ground and sadly have not done so for many years. There is an unofficial path some people do use and there is also a proposal to divert the official path onto this route but no decision has yet been made.

**Therefore a walk along this route is just not possible or advisable at this present time.**

However, Ken Brockway has kindly come up with an alternative route for us all to enjoy. It takes in the parts of the "virtual" route and explores other areas around Jacksdale that we have not covered elsewhere in this booklet. You will find this walk on the pages that follow. Enjoy . . .

## A circular walk of discovery - featuring **Ironville, Jacksdale & Pyebridge** (3½ miles)

From the end of Cinder Bank join the canal and walk east, away from the reservoir. Pass the Lock Keepers Garden. At the railway bridge keep to the towpath passing more locks and looking out for Water Vole along this stretch. At the restored Humpy Bridge leave the canal crossing the River Erewash left to enter Wharf Green. Take a look at the retaining blocks made of foundry slag and the information board about the Portland Tramway. Pass through the small car park at Jackdale Community Hall.

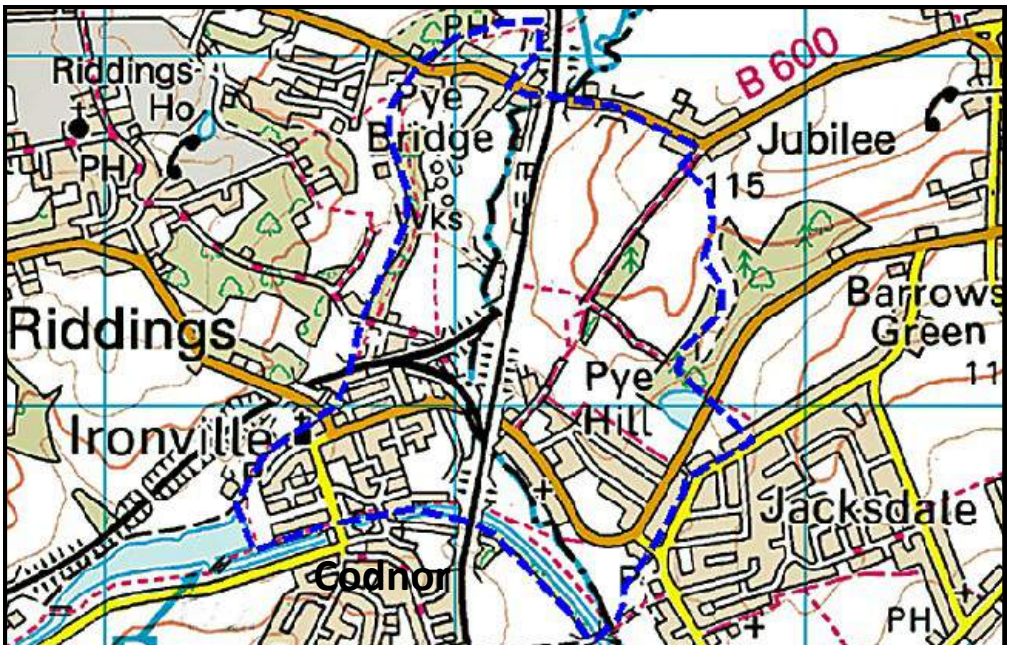


From the car park / community hall turn left, cross the road and turn right into Wagstaff Lane. Follow this for about a quarter mile (450M) then take the footpath left after number 77, Dale View. The path descends to a road.

Cross the road to take the path opposite which starts to climb. At a sleeper bridge you have a choice. *The definitive path continues along a hedged route offering occasional views towards Codnor Park and Ironville, turn right on meeting a track.* The alternative, by turning right at the bridge is a permissive path winding through grass land and trees, turn right when meeting a track where both routes converge.



Pass through the gate and continue towards a gap between houses to meet the road at Jubilee Village. Turn left along the roadside footway. Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee was in 1887, Jubilee Cottages on your right were built in 1889, look out for the date stone.



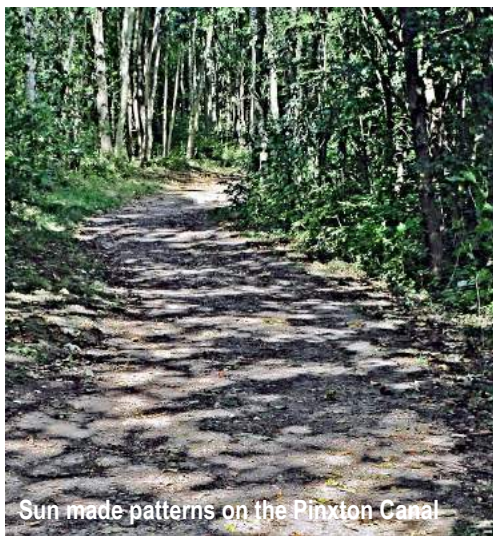
As you drop down the hill to Pye Bridge there is a good view north along the line of the Pinxton Arm across the unrestored Smotherfly open cast site. Pass under the rail bridge then at Erwash Street cross the main road to take the track opposite passing Pye Bridge Fields, managed by DCC Countryside Services.



Panorama of Smotherfly opencast site looking south

Climb a short flight of sleeper steps. This is now the line of the former Pinxton Arm. The canal to your right passed under the bridge then swung left. This route is now a challenge to explore so turn left to follow the canal line towards Codnor Park.

Passing the back of houses on your left you arrive at an in filled bridge. Cross the road and continue along the Pinxton Canal Path again managed by DCC. Never far from urban life this green corridor offers a breathing space in any season. Continue on the surfaced path to cross a minor lane until arriving in Ironville. The canal bed bends right to pass under a low bridge, pass behind the church to the car park.



Sun made patterns on the Pinxton Canal

To walk this section of the Pinxton Arm cross the car park then pass under a footbridge to emerge at Codnor Park Reservoir. Turn left with the water on your right. A bacon butty and mug of tea may be on offer in the car park here. The walk turns left at the original stone bridge. At Boat Dock Lock climb the ramp back to Cinder Bank.



Perfect spot for a break



Original stone canal bridge

**Aerial View of Ironville from 2015**  
**Compare with photograph on the front page.**



Photo by [martinneeves.com](http://martinneeves.com)

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