

SAMPLE PAGES

The 56-page, A4 handbook for <u>Waterways &</u> <u>Railways across the Derbyshire Peak</u>, with text, photographs, maps, a chronology and a reading list, is available for purchase, price £15.00 including postage and packing.

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Waterways and Railways across the Derbyshire Peak

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Monday June 7th-Thursday June 10th 2010 interesting breaks with interesting people

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Above: Macclesfield Canal, Marple Junction

The Erewash Canal, which had opened from the River Trent to its terminus at Langley Mill in 1779, was by 1787 paying an annual dividend of 20%. A project to continue the line of navigation further up the Erewash valley from Langley Mill to Pinxton was amended through the influence of Sir Richard Arkwright. A separate proposal to build a waterway connecting Derby with Cromford, with a branch up the Amber valley, was abandoned in favour of carrying the Erewash Canal extension across the watershed into the Amber valley and then north up the Derwent valley to Cromford.

In this way the waterway became the Cromford Canal, with the Pinxton line as a branch. The engineer William Jessop's estimate of £42,697 was subscribed within a fortnight, and, after some dispute with the Erewash Canal proprietors over water-rights, the Cromford Canal Act gained the Royal Assent in 1789.

The line served the virtually untapped coalfield north of Langley Mill, the furnaces which developed into the Butterley and Alfreton Ironworks, limestone quarries at Crich, lead-smelting works at Alderwasley and the great cotton-mills at Cromford and Masson; further traffic was available from the lead-mining area around Wirksworth, the gritstone quarries north of Matlock and the textile industries of Belper and Mansfield.

The standard scholarly history of the Cromford Canal is Charles Hadfield, *The Canals of the East Midlands* (2nd edn, David & Charles 1970). A more up-to-date, detailed, illustrated account is Hugh Potter, *The Cromford Canal* (Tempus 2003), p 11. Mr Potter provides a succinct overview of the canal's history in 'Cromford Canal', *Industrial Heritage* vol 30, no 3 (Winter 2004), pp 9-12.

For a detailed outline of the growth of the network of navigations north of the River Trent in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire see G G Hopkinson, 'The Inland Navigations of the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Coalfield, 1777-1956', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* Vol 79 (1959), pp 22-41. For a detailed examination of the promotion and construction of the Cromford Canal see R B Schofield, 'The Promotion of the Cromford Canal Act of 1789: a study in canal engineering', *Bulletin of the John Ryland University Library of Manchester* Vol 64, No 1 (Autumn 1981), pp 246-278 and R B Schofield, 'The Design of the Cromford Canal, 1788-1794', *Transactions of the Newcomen Society* Vol 57 (1985-6), pp 101-123.

Des Greenwood, *The Cromford Canal – Portal to portal: a short history of the Butterley Tunnel* (Des Greenwood 2003) gives a detailed summary of the engineering inspections and archaeological explorations of the tunnel interior, and reconciles the various subterranean surveys with above-ground evidence to locate the Wide Hole.

The Butterley Company's mineral railway of 1793 from Bull Bridge to quarries in Crich and the Clay Cross Company's later mineral railway of 1841 are described and illustrated in the long out-of-print 'Dowie', *The Crich Mineral Railways* (Tramway Publications, nd, *c*1970).



Top: Cromford Canal, Hag Tunnel (*left*; 1963; *right*, 1969) *Centre and bottom left:* Cromford Canal, Bull Bridge Aqueduct (1969) *Bottom right:* Cromford Canal, Butterley Tunnel west portal (1963)



Above: Cromford & High Peak Railway, Sheep Pasture Incline (1968)

Cromford & High Peak Railway

After the completion of the Cromford Canal (1793) and the Peak Forest Canal (1800) the daunting massif of the Derbyshire Peak remained an obstruction to the formation of a direct freight route between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire to the south and east and Lancashire to the north-west. The most logical route for a canal was probably that of the proposed High Peak Junction Canal, which would have followed the Derwent Valley upstream as far as Bamford (tunnelling to avoid the Matlock Gorge and the Chatsworth estate, the former for physical and the latter for political reasons,) then followed its tributaries to Edale and then burrowed for 2¾ miles, along a line similar to the later Cowburn railway tunnel, to Chapel Milton. This last tunnel, if it had been built, would have been the second longest canal tunnel in the country, just over a third of a mile shorter than the Standedge Tunnel on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. John Rennie (1761-1821), the civil engineer, estimated the construction cost of the whole canal at £650,000; the maintenance costs, including three long tunnels, and the difficulties of supplying water at the summit would inevitably have been prodigious. The proposal remained sufficiently current, however, for a guide-book, G A Cooke's Topographical and Statistical Description of the County of Derby (1820), to assert, optimistically, that it was completed, though in truth it was never started.

An alternative proposal for a horse-drawn tramroad to cross the high ground between the two canals seems first to have been aired in 1814, and eventually gathered serious support ten years later: an influential public meeting at the Old Bath, Matlock, on June 16th 1824 initiated a survey of a "Cromford and Peak Forest Railway" by Josias Jessop, second son of the William Jessop who had been jointly responsible for constructing the Cromford Canal and a co-founder of the Butterley Company. Once the decision was taken to utilise rail transport instead of water, there was no further need for concern about water-supply, so that a route across the



Above: Cromford & High Peak Railway, cast-iron fish-bellied rail, displayed at Middleton Top

The Ecclesbourne Valley Railway is a fortuitous survival of a quirky example of the consequences of Victorian railway competition.

When the **Midland Railway** was constituted in 1844 it intended to collaborate with the then **Manchester & Birmingham Railway** to drive a route into Manchester independently of the existing route *via* Crewe. On the same day in 1846 that this scheme, the **Manchester, Buxton, Matlock & Midland Junction Railway [MBM&MJR]**, gained the Royal Assent, the Manchester & Birmingham Railway became one of three railway companies amalgamated into the London **& North Western Railway [L&NWR]**. This new company, then the largest joint-stock company in the UK, controlled the main line from London to Manchester and Scotland *via* Crewe, and had a strong interest in blocking the development of an alternative route to Manchester *via* Derby.

When the first section of the MBM&MJR opened as far as Rowsley in 1849 it was operated by the Midland, in an uneasy joint agreement with the L&NWR, but with no guarantee that the arrangement would continue beyond the end of the lease in 1871.

Accordingly, when the Midland obtained powers to build its line from Rowsley north-west to Buxton and beyond in 1863, it took additional powers to by-pass the MBM&MJR. This project consisted for a branch from Duffield, 5¼ miles north of Derby, up the Ecclesbourne valley to Wirksworth. This 8½-mile section, with stations at Hazelwood (originally Windley), Shottle (originally Cowers Lane) and Idridgehay, opened without ceremony on October 1st 1867.

Beyond Wirksworth, the unbuilt section would have been spectacular, tunnelling through the hill to the north of the town, spanning the *Via Gellia* at Cromford over a 280-yard long viaduct, punching through the Heights of Abraham above Matlock Bath and then descending along the west side of the Derwent valley from Matlock, parallel to the MBM&MJR, to join the Midland's own Rowsley & Buxton Extension at Rowsley.

Such a line was practically possible, though it would have added to the operational challenges of the steeply-graded route that was built through Miller's Dale and Doveholes. In fact, the proposal itself appears to have dissuaded the L&NWR from making trouble when the joint lease of the MBM&MJR came to its end, and Midland operations between Ambergate and Rowsley continued without interruption in 1871.

The physical evidence of this scheme remains in the bridges and earthworks of between Duffield and Wirksworth, all built to take double track. The original Wirksworth station had a single platform; the alignment north under the Cromford Road Bridge would have led shortly

The standard history of the Duffield-Wirksworth branch is Howard Sprenger, *The Wirksworth Branch* (Oakwood Library of Railway History 2004).

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Appendix 1: Chronology of canal and railway openings to 1899

1779:	Erewash Canal opened Langley Mill to River Trent
1794:	Cromford Canal opened Langley Mill to Cromford
1800:	Peak Forest Canal and Tramroad open Dukinfield to Buxworth and Whaley Bridge except for Marple Locks
1804:	Marple Locks completed
1831:	Cromford & High Peak Railway opened from the Peak Forest Canal at Whaley Bridge to a junction with Cromford Canal at High Peak
1831:	Macclesfield Canal opened from the Peak Forest Canal at Marple to the Trent & Mersey Canal at Kidsgrove
1840:	North Midland Railway opened Derby to Rotherham Masborough (with a connection to Sheffield & Rotherham Railway) opened (May); Rotherham Masborough to Normanton (June)
1844:	Midland Railway Consolidation Act: amalgamating North Midland Railway, Midland Counties Railway and Birmingham & Derby Junction Railway
1846:	Manchester, Buxton, Matlock & Midland Junction Railway Act: Ambergate (junction with MR) via Rowsley, Chatsworth, Baslow, Edale or Castleton, Chinley to Cheadle (junction with Manchester & Birmingham Railway); authorised on the same day that M&BR amalgamated with other railways to form London & North Western Railway with an existing line into Manchester and a vested interest in keeping MR out of Manchester
1849:	MBM&MJR Ambergate to Rowsley opened, 19-year lease jointly to MR and L&NWR, operated by MR, which also purchased Cromford Canal from MBM&MJR
1853:	C&HPR connected with MBM&MR at High Peak Junction
1855:	Stockport, Disley & Whaley Bridge Railway Act: junction with L&NWR south of Stockport, <i>via</i> Disley, New Mills and Furness Vale to Whaley Bridge, using part of the original MBM&MJR route to block MR access to Manchester
1855:	Cromford & High Peak Railway Act authorising connection with SD&WBR at Whaley Bridge, and Hurdlow deviation
1857:	SD&WBR including C&HPR connection at Whaley Bridge opened
1857:	C&HPR Bunsall Upper & Lower Inclines and Cromford & Sheep Pasture Inclines combined
1857:	Stockport, Disley & Whaley Bridge Railway Extension Act: Whaley Bridge to Buxton
1860:	Midland Railway (Rowsley & Buxton Extension) Act: Rowsley (south of MBM&MJR station, via Haddon, Bakewell, Hassop, Miller's Dale and Ashwood Dale