

'Our' canal

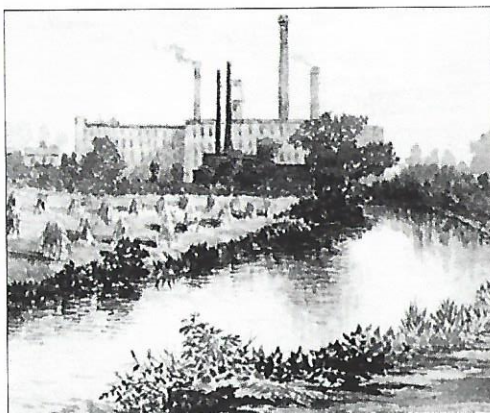
by STEVE CLIFFE

The 'Lanky Cut', as the Stockport branch of the Ashton Canal was affectionately known, was vital in the early industrial development of the town. Terminating at the top of Lancashire Hill after a journey from Gorton through Reddish, it was open by the 1790s and fed the busy wharves, unloading raw cotton, coal and grain and taking back flour, silk and cotton goods.

Had Sir George Warren, lord of the manor of Stockport not eloped with the Duke of Bridgewater's mistress, Jane Revell, in 1758, the canal might have arrived earlier, as the Duke took his revenge by blocking Warren's attempts to get a Canal Act for Stockport through Parliament! But eventually it went ahead.

Since 2003 the Manchester and Stockport Canal Society have been trying to get our long abandoned and filled-in canal reinstated. Now it seems there is a good chance restoration may start in 2-3 years time, with 80,000 cubic meters of spoil to be excavated and a 250 boat marina created in Lower Gorton. Recently the society elected a civil engineer as chairman, a surveyor as secretary and an accountant as treasurer, so confident are they.

The MSCS have so far carried out industrial archaeology at a former ironworks alongside the canal, created an education pack on its history and are installing a series of heritage plaques on buildings. Civil engineering students are proposing that the canal enter and leave the lake at Debdale Park via locks, and that a mooring marina be created there. They have also designed an aqueduct to cross the railway at North Reddish. A smaller marina



Cornfields alongside Reddish branch canal in this 1880s watercolour

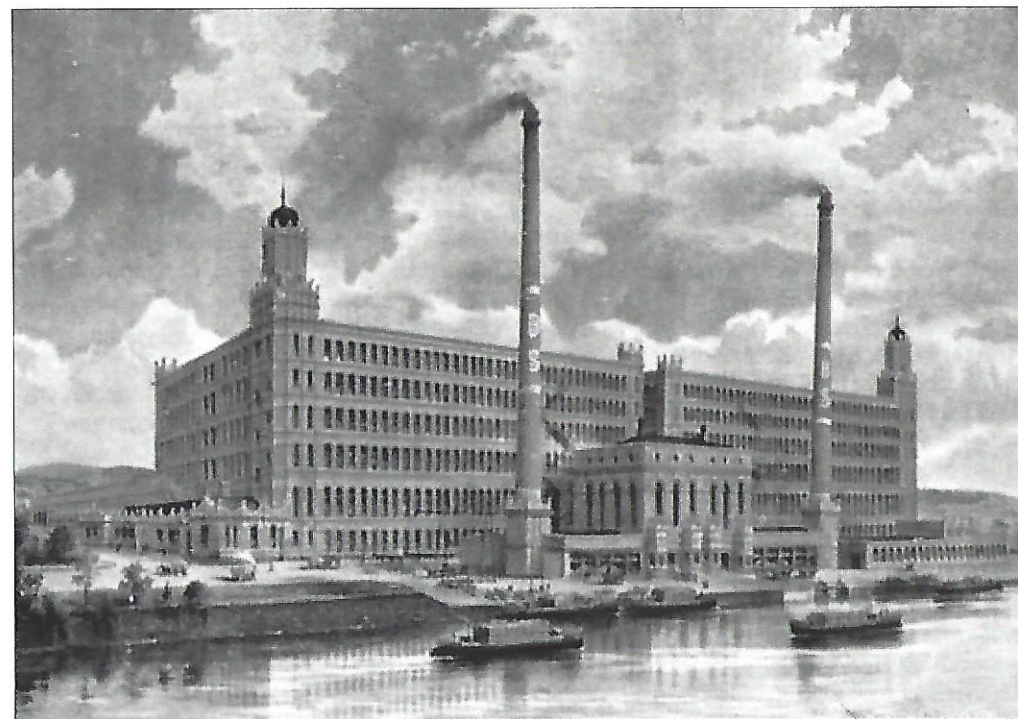


The canal entrance at Clayton is still open

may be opened at Broadstone House, Reddish.

If discussions with Manchester City Council and United Utilities give a green light, a Heritage Lottery Fund bid based on a business plan may raise the cash to start work. Peter Scott, the retiring secretary, a founder member, said: "Things have moved on apace over recent times. I felt it time to step down so that new people could carry us through what looks like an exciting period."

In a few years colourful canal boats could be heading through Reddish for moorings near the famous Houldsworth and Broadstone mills, once the biggest cotton mills in the world.



Broadstone Mill had wharves and it is proposed a small marina be re-created here

Old cottages once stood by the original canal bridge carrying Broadstone Road pre-1908

