**Interview with Frances (Fay) Bark , Cromford, May 2017**

Introduction

As the last-known person alive to have lived at Aqueduct Cottage, a filmed recording of an interview with Fay was done, with the help of students from the University of Derby, at the Wharf Café, Cromford, on 20th May, 2017.

The purpose was to find out some details about the interior of the cottage, since we had none prior to the interview, and to obtain an insight into family life, given the cottage’s remoteness and total lack of connected utilities.

It was an absolute delight to meet Fay, and listen to her memories as a child living at the cottage. She also produced and handed over three detailed sketches of the cottage, providing invaluable details about the layout and contents of the house and grounds. These have since been posted on the FoAC FB page.

The following is an extract from the transcript of the interview. There is some minor editing for ease of reading.

**Question 1: Family**

Ron Common: Well Fay, thank you very much for coming down to talk to us about your memories at Aqueduct cottage. The first thing I would like to ask is about your family, when you lived at Aqueduct cottage?

Frances Bark: Well there was Dad and Mum, my older sister, and then myself and then Frank and my younger sister, so four children

RC: So, there were six of you living in the cottage?

FB: Yes, June, myself, Frank and Ruth, were the four children, and we were only young, Frank and Ruth, were very young and we had to protect them due to the safety of the canal.

RC: How old were you?

FB: I was about thirteen

RC: When you first moved in?

FB: Yes, about thirteen or fourteen, and we went to Lee school, up the hill and through the puzzle gates from the Aqueduct. And, because we come from a country cottage, we were taught to fetch the water by mum, and how to do all the chores.

RC: Where did you get the water from?

FB: We walked up the canal, over the swingy bridge, and over the shunting lines (they called it in them days), and you went up the shunting lines and there was a natural spring there, and all watercress grew around it.

RC: We are going to search for it later aren’t we? (WE FOUND IT STILL FLOWING)

FB: Yes, and what I did, which you wouldn’t do in these days, is I used to have a wash there in the beautiful spring water, and then come home with the water. But, we all had to take turns with the water because it was heavy.

RC: And how did you carry the water?

FB: We had two milk churns

RC: OK, they must have been heavy?

FB: They was. To wheel a milk churn on a wheelbarrow, I can tell you, you got to be pretty strong , one was balancing it and one was pushing it, yes.

RC: So , what did your father do, what was his occupation?

FB: He worked at the lead mine, and ran poultry on the side, for making pocket money for Christmas.

RC: He reared chickens?

FB: Yes, cockerels, Rode Islands. And the pocket money went towards gifts for Christmas and new clothes.

RC: And your mum?

FB: Mum? she was a nanny. She worked at the Crown Hotel, as a young woman, in Matlock. She came from Chesterfield, and bless her heart, she was a brilliant scholar, I wish I could have been as good as mum.

RC: She raised four children as well.

FB: Yes, and she was a brilliant cook, and we always had to go for a walk in the evening, up the canal before bedtime, with the dog, and then come home and have porridge.

RC: Did you know the previous owners before you moved in?

FB: Yes, it was an old gentlemen. I didn’t know his name. What happened was, father and I went fishing on the river ( his uncle ran the fishing licence place), and we met the old man and he said he was moving out. He got a dog and he says to my Dad, would you have my dog? My dad says, course we would. At the time, we didn’t know that the Butts quarry at Ashover was shutting down. It was a coincidence.

RC: And that conversation triggered the move to the cottage?

FB: Yes, and about a month after we moved in, the dog came - back to where he come from.

RC: So, how did you find the cottage when you first moved in?

FB: It was pretty fair considering, for a country cottage. He kept it tidy.

RC: Had it been changed much?

FB: No, where the kitchen is, there’s black and red tiles, a fireplace, the mantle piece (which was higher than me), there was a pantry on the side, and under the stairs was the cubby hole, where you kept all your goodies. There were only two bedrooms though.

**Question 2: Cottage Layout and Decor**

RC: OK, well, you started talking about the interior of the cottage but today, sadly, it’s completely derelict and we have no information about the interior, or what each of the rooms were used for. Can you tell us a bit about the interior and what was in each room, and what they were was used for?

FB: Well, in the kitchen was red and black tiles, Victorian style, and it were painted half way down with that dark green, and then below, it was white washed, same as the lime in the pantry, and around the light. The cooking was done all on the stove.

RC: What sort of stove was it, can you remember?

FB: It was like them old fashioned ones

RC: An old range?

FB: Yes, with boiler at the side of it. You got hot water when mum baked in the oven. She used to put apples on a tin plate and make a hole in them, and they’d be ready to eat when you wanted a nice apples and cream.

RC: So the kitchen is where the family would have their meals?

FB: Yes, all the meals, yes. You were never allowed to go into another room with food.

RC: Where did you wash the pots?

FB: The washing of the pots? That would be in the pantry side. But, on a warm day, I’d get a bucket and put them all in, and soak them in rain water. Then I’d scold them with boiling water after I’d washed them, and then let them drain, then take them back in.

RC: OK

RC: Now the front room, what was that used for?

FB: That was only kept for special occasions, Christmas and Easter. Easter were very celebrated. Our uncles ( that were’nt married, and never did marry), came at Easter. They lived in Chesterfield, and they loved the cottage.

RC: And how was the front room furnished?

FB: It had my mams best china cabinet, and tea trolley. She had lots of wedding gifts, a nice two-seater settee, and a little chair at the side, and a lovely table in the middle. It were kept very tidy, we had rugs around the sides as well.

RC: You had fires in both downstairs rooms?

FB: Yes, there was a fire in there too.

RC: And one in the range in the kitchen?

FB: Yes, because that was the main part of the house, the heart of the house I would say.

RC: OK, upstairs, you had two bedrooms?

FB: Upstairs, yes, two bedrooms. The first one you entered off the landing, it was quite large. We had that one, because it was above the kitchen and the chimney kept us warmer in winter. We had iron beds against the chimney wall, and mattresses flat as pancakes.

RC: So, there were four of you in that one bedroom?

FB: No, only three. Ruth, the youngest was in Mum and Dad’s room with a partition. We had us own bed, cause in them days, with the army stores, they had lots of iron single beds, and they were strong.

RC: Do you remember anything about the decoration upstairs?

FB: It was painted a light green, and because I did art then, I painted a border to make it look more impressive.

RC: And the curtains?

FB: Curtains,.. we made them because I was taught dress making by Auntie Kate in Matlock, who lived behind the Royal Bank of Scotland. She was a dress maker and she taught me how to do it.

RC: One of the things we noticed is the interesting window frames on the old photographs, they look to be swinging out horizontally.

FB: Well they did... exactly like Victorian school ones. If you go to a school, maybe they still got them up at Lea. They had a string on and you pulled the string down, and it comes out, like you’ve seen them, on a slope.

RC: Were they made of timber?

FB: They were wood, all wood. Painted white, and on a swivel, yes, and very effective because you could open them very wide and when they were like that, the air would flow.

RC: Now, you say there was a landing, but there’s nothing in the building today, so where were the stairs?

FB: You went through the front door and the stairs face you.

RC: So were they open tread stairs?

FB: Yes, there weren’t many of them, they were made from wood.

RC: And the bannisters?

FB: Open, Yes

RC: Moving outside now, the cottage has got what looks to be a garden on the right and a small one on the left.

FB: That’s it

RC: Do you remember anything about them?

FB: On the right hand side, as you go over the bridge, there was a stone wall, with old man’s beard on it (VARIETY OF CLEMATIS) plus rhododendrons at the back, beautiful plants. On the left, was where you went to the toilet, on the side where the old canal was, there was an old stone building

RC: The privy?

FB: Privy yes; and you went in, and it had a wooden toilet with a wooden seat. And the ashes, from the fire, went below through a little gate and collected all the waste, and that was quite a thing in the country.

RC: So, you would use the ash when you went to the toilet?

FB: Yes, the ash would soak up all the waste, and it would deteriorate and then it were dug into a hole in the ground in the wood.

RC: So who had that nasty chore then?

FB: Well, we shared that, and the digging.

RC: Digging the holes in the woods?

FB: Yes, and they went deep.

RC: There were some other out-buildings, on the right hand side of the cottage?

FB: That’s right, there was the wash house

RC: There’s one on the side of the cottage, and another in front on the same side

FB: That’s right, the small one at the back was a pantry, leaning onto the cottage, and the one in front was the wash house. It had got an old fashioned red brick boiler with a cast iron bowl inside it, and a fire at the bottom. Dad adapted a drain and a tin bath in there, and I put curtains in. That was our bathroom.

RC: That was the bathroom?

FB: …And the wash house, and we’d get the water heated and pale it into the bath, and then have a bath.

RC: There was a footbridge across the canal. Was it a wooden footbridge?

FB: Yes; the swingy one, not the one coming from the cottage, which was stone and had wooden handles on the side coming across it.

RC: OK.

**Question 3: Everyday Life**

RC: Now, living in a cottage with no connected utilities must have been challenging at times, especially bringing up a family of four children. So, I imagine that you all had to do your share of the chores. How did you share out those chores amongst the family?

FB: Well, occasionally there was a bit of a dispute, because you favoured one chore more than the other, but we still had to take that turn, and Dad was very disciplined. We’d fetch the water from the spring, and we helped with the gardening, because all the food on the table was all grown. We didn’t buy vegetables or onions in, or any earthly thing you could grow on your own. And, my Dad had chickens, so we had our own meat, and we got rabbits. We exchanged eggs for rabbits.

RC: In the village?

FB: No, the chap on the hill on Florence Nightingale Estate, he had rabbits, so he’d get eggs and we’d have rabbits. And, we lived off everything we could provided from the land.

RC: What about the heating of the place?

FB: We had a paraffin heater. I used to have to fetch the paraffin on my bike from down the canal, here to Cromford, and the Blacksmiths shop would have all those things you needed there. But it’s very hard balancing on the bike with paraffin...

RC: How often did you do that?

FB: About twice a week, after school.

RC: Did you use the paraffin for lighting as well?

FB: Yes, old fashioned Victorian lamps we had, we were instructed about safety though. Mum had a bowl with a damp cloth in it and we were taught to smother the fire if anything happened. She was very strict on that, which is a good thing. We also had candles.

RC: …And the fuel for cooking was coal ?

FB: It was coal and wood, and there were those pans with the very long handle. But I wasn’t allowed to go near the stove because mum says I would trip over something.

RC: And what about water for cooking? Did that come from the spring?

FB: Yes, the spring water we fetched over the swing bridge, up the canal down on the High Peak Junction where the shunting lines are, and there’s a spring there, it’s still there to this day.

RC: And you used that for drinking?

FB: That were drinking water.

RC: Did you filter the water?

FB: No.

RC: So it was clean enough ?

FB: Well, I drank it and I’m ok.

RC: What about washing?

FB: As well as the spring, we also used rain water for washing, Yes. We collected it when we could.

RC: OK

RC: What about the clothes you wore ?

FB: Clothes? Mum knitted a lot. Auntie Kate made us a lot too, she recycled old clothes from the war years for the poorer children.

RC: I guess there must have been a lot of hand-me-downs?

FB: Yes, and I did a lot of mending, but Mum did the socks and jumpers. Having a patch on, which you have for fashion now, is a thing you had to make things last.

RC: What about diet, what do you remember about the typical food you had to eat?

FB: Mostly potatoes… and turnips mixed in with potatoes, mashed. Rabbit and Chicken was the main meat… and we had lamb on Sundays.

RC: As a special treat?

FB: Yes

RC: And did you have favourite treats that your Mum would make?

FB: Well, the best treat was the apple pie, and my Dad made egg custards, they were both good cooks.

RC: And the fruit you had was grown along with the vegetables ?

FB: Yes, but some were bought. The shopping was down here in Cromford and in Matlock.

FB: Dad would come home from work from the lead mine at the end of the day, and go to the barrow boy in Matlock, where they sell the vegetables. He would let dad have the vegetables for half price and dad would stack his BSA up with boxes of tomatoes and everything to bring home.

RC: So, going back to the range of vegetables you were growing, do you remember what they were?

FB: Yes, there was a lot of cabbage, which I’m not fond of, there was a lot of winter cabbage. There was a lot of onions and shallots, they were a favourite, and turnips and kale.

RC: Potatoes?

FB: …Potatoes, yes. There were every vegetable that you grow in the ground that could be made into a hotpot mostly.

RC: Did you go into the woods to get mushrooms or berries and things like that?

FB: Yes, but we weren’t allowed to touch the mushrooms unless Dad were with us. I went up to Florence Nightingale estate quite often, with the dog. I knew every part of it.

RC: What about family illnesses and the remedies used, do you recall how your Mum and Dad managed that?

FB: We had Indian Brandy, from Boots the chemist in Matlock,… I was only very ill once, as I remember.

RC: Was there any other alcohol in the house?

FB Yes, Halls wine that they sold at Boots. Father did earn good money. He always made sure we had the things we needed.

RC: Regarding your education, you went to Lea school?

FB: Yes, I went to Lea school. To be honest, I weren’t the best of scholars, I was a terrible speller. I did Bee Keeping in my last year. I also did the news sheet at school. There were three of us: one got the news, Rachael corrected the spelling errors, and I printed it on a duplicator.

RC: Was any education done at home?

FB: Mum tried hard with me because I did suffer that way, but I managed to cope, and I always earnt an honest living. Still do now [laughs].

RC: Now, the cottage is a little remote. I can imagine in extremes of weather, especially in the winter, life could get hard. For example, did you ever get snowed in ?

FB: Yes, we had a very bad winter once, and the paper boy, who came from Lea, would walk with the papers on his back.

RC: That’s a long way to bring a paper?

FB: Yes, and he used to go over the swinging bridge up on the High Peak, but bless him, that winter he slipped and went in through the ice. We all went out and got him out, but the papers went floating up the canal. [laughs]

RC: One memorable occasion there.

FB: It was.

RC: I guess he quit his round after that, did he?

FB: He did.

RC: The cottage was dry you say, apart from the back wall, that was a little damp?

FB Yes, Mum always kept the furniture a little away to stop the dampness going into the wood and into the furniture.

RC: But it was generally dry?

FB: Yes.

RC: Being remote you’d have to make your own entertainment, what did the family do?

FB: Well, we had to sit in a circle and do peg rugs in winter, till darkness came, and then that was it. And as for amusement, the canal was a very big thing for us.

RC: There’s a lovely photograph you’ve taken with your brother and a friend and your sister on the bridge.

FB: Yes. We used to go swimming in the River Derwent, but were told not to go near the currents. If you look over the Canal wall…over the bridge wall to the Derwent, there’s a beautiful sandy piece and it’s gorgeous.

RC: And that was your beach?

FB: That was our beach, yes… Oh, and there’s Bullyheads (Bullheads) there, if you lift the stones up, they are little fish, with a big head. And we used to put them in a jar, but we had to put them back after.

RC: Now, did you say that your Father was a fisherman?

FB: No, he went fishing, he wasn’t a fisherman but he went fishing, Yes.

RC: In the Derwent?

FB: For Rainbow Trout, they’re beautiful

RC: OK

RC: There’s some talk of there being Otters back then. Did you see them?

FB: Yes, they were on the River Derwent, going from the coal house, coming from Leawood, and down at the bottom, there’s a big drop, and they used to be very busy there.

RC: Wonderful

FB: There were lots of them, it was quite bizarre. Oh, and there were Foxes and Badgers. They would cross your path, and make you jump, when it were dark. [laughs] But you knew they were there.

RC: You went swimming in the river, but did you play in the Lea Wood as well, with friends?

FB: Yes, we did a lot of biking. Frank’s friends would come down.

RC: Of course, the wood is terraced, isn’t it?

FB: Yes, and Florence Nightingale estate was a paradise to us, because we could run wherever we wanted, nobody bothered us, because it was so wild , but often full of bracken. Sometimes, it was thick, you had to make your way through the best you could.

RC: What are your fondest memories, as a child, living at the cottage?

FB: My fondest memories are the people that came along the canal, they weren’t used to living without convenience, and they called us the Hillbillies. [laughs]

RC: These were walkers, I guess, along the canal?

FB: Yes, my Mum did well selling crisps and pots of tea on a tray for the fishermen, and my job was to take it out to them, and they sat on the side, and I used to get a little tip.

RC: That’s great.

**Question 4: The Natural Environment**

RC: So, you lived at the cottage during the 1950’s…

FB: Yes

RC: I’m curious to know a bit more about who was using the canal, because today it’s very much part of the leisure industry around here and there are lots of walkers, but not boats…

FB: There was a lot of fishermen, because there were fishing rights there, and that goes back in history. And fishing was part of Derbyshire life, even for a working man. A lot of them fishing on the canal worked on the Shunting lines, shunting stone up the incline to Wirksworth.

RC: OK

FB: I remember a man called Tappa Cartwright. What his job were, he hit the wheels and if they didn’t make a bell sound, that meant they got a crack in it, and his job was to repair them.

RC: This was at High Peak Junction?

FB: …Yes, on the High Peak, on the Shunting lines, and that’s why he was called “Tappa” Cartwright.

RC: Now, in terms of the animals you kept at the cottage, which pets did you have?

FB: Well, a dog, cats and chickens…

RC: These were the ones that you kept?

FB: …And ducks, but there were lots of wild ducks too, and sadly…after they had ducklings, they cleared off with the others so we just kept the poultry. Mostly, my dad would fatten the Cockerels up, because he could sell them. He could dress them and knew how to do all that, and he taught us how to do it, to prepare them for the oven.

RC: And what about animals in the woods?

FB: There were badgers, oh, and also snakes that lived on the wall. Also, there was a kind of lizard, and if you put your hand on them, their tail sometimes dropped off. I was quite horrified when I first did that because they camouflaged themselves into the moss, and when you put your hand down, you see them go stiff, so they must think, oh I’m in danger, and then their tail drops off, but they do grow another one, (laughs). There were swans and beautiful dragonflies, they were stunning, yes. And on the other side of the wall of the canal, going down on the critch, it’s all swampy, there’s an abundance of all sorts over there.

RC: Now, I heard a tale that you went swimming in the canal as well as the river, is that right?

FB: Yes occasionally, it was forbidden, but we did it, and we got told off later.

RC: Mum and Dad told you about the safety aspect of going in the canal?

FB: Oh, definitely, because my brother, bless him, when he was young, he was rather chubby, and he hung over the wall one day, [laughs] and he went…

RC: into the canal?

FB: … we all went in, we all had to get him out quick, because we knew we’d be in big trouble, big trouble, if we didn’t get him out, yes.

RC: Were the canal lock gates still there?

FB: Yes, the locks were there and they were still used.

RC: Can you describe the lock, on Leawood arm of the canal, just next to the bridge?

FB: Yes, well they got a handle on each side.

RC: Oh, were there two, two wooden gates.

FB: Yes, and two men, one on either side of the canal, and they’d to be pretty strong to lift them, to release the water, and do the swing.

RC: Right, so they lifted them vertically?

FB: Yes, and they’d man-handle them, on each side, and lift them up to let the water drop. And where they did the steam engine part, ( LEA WOOD PUMP HOUSE) where the water flowed away on the overflow, they used to lift them there too, when we had a bad winter, because it would go everywhere.

RC: And in the winter time, the canal froze over regularly?

FB: Winter time, yes it did. And I’ll tell you it was so cold you had to pinch yourself to see that you were there, yes. But wool kept us warm, knitted wool, from recycled wool in them days, what the forces have. Auntie used to knit them and they were beautifully warm. And army blankets we had on the beds. They were warm too.

RC: Okay, thank you.

**Question 5: Leaving the Cottage and wishes for its future**

RC: So, it sounds like you had a wonderful childhood at the cottage?

FB: Excellent, we all did, yes, but it was hard work, don’t get me wrong. There were times when you could cry, you used to say “why me?”, why have I got to fetch that water. And then Dad said one day, you’ll be carrying water for the rest of your life, for others. [laughs]

RC: So, then came the time to leave…

FB: Yes.

RC: And do you remember what the reasons were, why you left, what happened?

FB: Yes, I do. New laws came in on the housing and sanitation, by the council…but they never bothered us. But Dad was in a good position, he was a very sensible man, looked after his money, and when the railway started with the cottages on, he bought the cottages. But the bizarre thing, an old lady beat him to it, and made money out of Dad who bought them off her. I travelled on his Lambretta scooter to Skegness with him, to buy them, yes.

RC: That’s a long way for a Lambretta , and for a pillion?

FB: Yes, I tell you, I fell off twice, because I was so stiff, even though I was 16 then [laughs] Yes.

RC: I’m impressed the Lambretta got that far ….

FB: Oh, we were very good travellers.

RC: and Skegness was worth it …

FB: Yes.

RC: So, it was basically a change in the law, and your father had actually accumulated enough money to buy your own property, which he did.

FB: Yes, and then my older sister left home and got married so there was only three of us left.

RC: How old were you when you left the cottage, can you remember?

FB: I know I’d be about sixteen because I was working at Lea Mills… and I worked with a lady called Connie Dawes, and she trained me, and in two years I was on piece work and earning fabulous money, more than the lads. But they broke the rules, I was on shift work when I shouldn’t have been, but this is how it goes, yes.

RC: And have you returned to the cottage at any time since you left?

FB: Yes, in my heart. I’m born and bred in Derbyshire, and I’m a Derbyshire girl, your heart always travels back to where you come from, I think all over the world people do that.

RC: Of course.

RC: Now, as you know, according to the history of the cottage, it was last occupied almost 50 years ago, but sadly its now in a derelict state. However, we’ve got ambitions to restore it.

FB: Yes.

RC: What would be your wish for the cottage in the future?

FB: Well, I should like to come and see it when you achieve your goal, because I think the younger generation should embrace it, because to come round here [Cromford], I know from experience from being a guide, when I was younger, the American, Chinese and other visitors love it, plus it will bring money to the place. I think it would be wonderful, I really do.

RC: Well Fay, on behalf of all of our team I’d like to thank you, very much indeed, for sharing such wonderful memories with us, and we look forward to showing you the cottage when it’s restored and back to its former glory.

FB: I shall look forward to it and embrace it.

RC: Thanks Fay. Thanks very much.