

Calder Navigation Society
Newsletter November 2020

Well here we are again. Another Newsletter, another lockdown…let's hope that 2021 is a bit more normal. But first ….SOME NOTES FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Well, what a year this has been and still is! If we have heard the word "unprecedented" once we have heard it a thousand times over the last few months.

We have all suffered in one way or another during this COVID situation but somehow we have adapted and learned to live with it. Our society has obviously been affected. Prior to the outbreak of the virus we were looking to have a busy summer season with various outings planned for Savile and crew. Unfortunately, all bookings and events were cancelled including plans for celebrating the 250 year anniversary of the official opening of the Navigation. We did manage to spend a day clearing the local canal of rubbish which had accumulated after the recent storms. This occurred just prior to the national lockdown and since then the boat has not moved. Consequently our major sources of income were curtailed and we find ourselves in the unusual situation of making a loss for the year. Hopefully, if COVID allows and with your support we will be able to recover next year.

Earlier this year our long serving Honorary Secretary, Mike Fretwell expressed his intention to hand over the role to a successor and from that time we have been desperately trying to find a willing candidate prepared to take over the role. At one point we thought that we had found a successor but unfortunately our expectations came to no avail. At the time of writing we do not have a replacement for Mike whose services will be greatly missed as he has carried out his role in an exemplary manner but all good things come to an end as they say. The consequences of not finding a new Hon. Secretary would be devastating for our society as we would have no option but to consider dissolution. It would be such a shame to have to dissolve after what will be soon 51 years in existence. With this in mind I can only plead for someone to step forward in order for us to continue as the Calder & Hebble Navigation Society. If you feel that you can help then please contact me by phone or email. You may be able to help in a small way by taking on one of the tasks which are currently attributed to the Hon. Secretary. In this way maybe we could effectively share the role with someone holding the title of Honorary Secretary as a formality.

It is a little early but may I take this opportunity in thanking you all for your support during these difficult times and I wish you a safe and happy Christmas.

Thank you, Peter Davies, Chairman



250th Anniversary

2020 marks the 250th anniversary of the opening of the Calder & Hebble Navigation. The river navigation with a number of canal cuts opened from Wakefield to Salterhebble in August 1769 and the full length through to Sowerby Bridge opened on 26th September 1770. The current pandemic has prevented any celebration of the event, but maybe next year.

By 1740 Halifax was a rapidly growing town, growing prosperous from the wool trade but hindered by poor transport links. The main route east from Halifax headed straight up Beacon Hill and then down towards Hipperholme along what is now known as Dark Lane. Hardly suitable for packhorses, you can still walk it today. Try it and decide for yourself whether it was a quick and easy way out of town.

Halifax business men were keen to improve transport links and put forward proposals for navigation of the Calder as well as a number of schemes for turnpike roads. The first scheme to improve the Calder was put forward in 1740 but failed to get through Parliament due to objections from land owners who suspected that their land would be flooded, mill owners and the promoters of rival turnpike roads. The engineer John Smeaton was brought in in 1757 and his proposals eventually proved successful when an Act of Parliament allowing construction to proceed was passed in 1758. Work started in earnest in 1761 and the waterway was open to Brighouse by November 1764. At this point another leading engineer, Joseph Brindley, was hired and work continued. By early October 1767 work was almost complete when a severe flood resulted in breached banks as well as damage to weirs and locks. Repairs included the building of flood locks at the entrances to canal cuts. Just as work was progressing well another major flood occurred in February 1768. This is beginning to sound familiar.

By this time the proprietors were in severe financial trouble and a further Act of Parliament was required to sort out the financial position. It was this Act that first used the name ‘Calder & Hebble Navigation’ for the project. From then on work continued apace and the navigation fully opened in 1770, just 250 years ago.

If you want read more on the full history of the Calder & Hebble, Charles Hadfield’s two volumes on ‘The Canals of Yorkshire and North East England’ have the full story.

How it managed to survive the first 200 years without support from CNS remains a mystery.



Canals & Smart Phones

Yes, I'm sure that just like me you thought these two were worlds apart but new technology can make it easier to navigate century's old waterways. So just in case you have not come across them, here are three useful ways to help your days on the water or the towpath:-

1) **Stoppages** – CNS members currently get regular e-mails from Mike updating them on any issues on the waterway. To try and lessen the Secretary's workload we plan to stop doing this as there are other ways to get this information. Even though CNS will not provide the details, all the information is readily available on the CRT website and if you register with them, you will receive stoppage information on as many of their navigations as you choose. Just search for CRT stoppages on your phone. Then scroll down the page and Click on 'Sign up for a free account'. You then need to fill in a form to register for My Trust. You can then log in to My Trust and click on to 'My notices and stoppages'. Once on that page you can select which waterways you are interested in and from then on CRT will email you direct with details of all closures and restrictions on your selected routes. Alternatively, there is a direct link from the CNS website to the CRT stoppages information site.

2) **Open Canal Map** – There are lots of maps available for the canal network but a free one can be downloaded from the Apple Store or Google Play. Just search for Open Canal Map and download it. It provides a detailed map of the network and also shows stoppage information along with location information from **What 3 Words.** If this means nothing to you, read on.

3) **What 3 Words –** One day we were sailing along on the Lancaster Canal when a herd of cows charged down the field toward the canal. Nearly all of them stopped when they reached the water's edge but one plunged in and waded across the canal. Obviously exhilarated by the excitement, she then charged up and down the towpath and was clearly a danger to walkers. We rang the Police so they could advise the farmer. When they asked where we were, we gave them the canal bridge number. That means nothing to us they said. We suggested they ring CRT to find out exactly where the bridge was…not really a satisfactory result but with **What 3 Words**, you can provide accurate location information that the emergency services will understand. If you want to know where you are, you can find the App on the Apple Store and Google Play.



Work in Progress – The winter stoppages

Figure of Three



Contractors have now started work on the big contract to bring the ‘Figure of Three’ locks back to life. An access road has been built and work on site has started. It is estimated that the navigation should reopen in summer 2021.

Elland Locks



At Park Nook Lock, work has been completed below the lock, and bank restoration is now underway above the lock. At Elland Lock, polyurethane grouting is planned to prevent leakage from the lock.



Salterhebble



According to the stoppage notice, the current closure at Salterhebble is to carry out repairs to Sluice 2, next to the Aqueduct. At present the tunnel under the main road is closed off but it is not clear where the work is going on.

Woodside Mills Lock



At Woodside Mills, the lower landing has collapsed into the canal. A temporary landing has been erected on the other side of the canal and permanent work to repair the landing is expected to take place later this winter. At present the towpath is closed and pedestrians and cyclists are diverted onto the parallel road.



Savile Drydock Report - Peter Davies

When South Pennine Boat Club very kindly agreed to us booking a week in the Drydock we made plans accordingly and entered the dock on the 31st of October having first put out a call for volunteers. The response to the call was so overwhelming that it was decided to try and give everyone a chance to take part so a rota of 3 people per day was put in place. This meant that we were compliant with the COVID restrictions in place at the time.

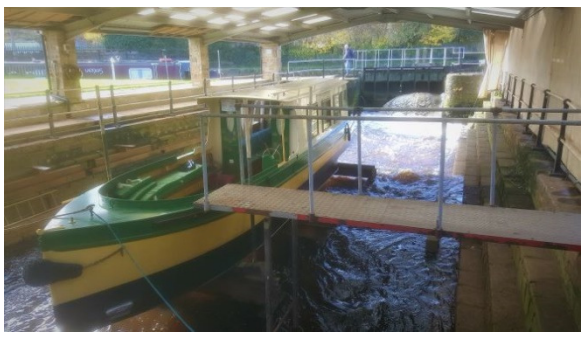
Last year we decided to apply a product called Keelblack to the underwater parts of the hull, unfortunately on draining the dock we discovered that the product did not live up to its advertised hype. So, instead of a simple touch up job it transpired that we need to recoat the underwear parts and a call went out for some suitable blacking. To save time Rod and Sally kindly let us have 10ltr which they had in storage and so we could make progress.

Savile entered the dock on late Saturday morning and by Sunday pm she had been pressure washed and re-blacked! On the evening of the same Saturday it was announced that the country would go into a second “lockdown” which would begin on the coming Thursday. Because of this a decision was made to curtail operations and leave the drydock on Wednesday. Fortunately this gave us enough time to complete what we were doing, namely descaling and blacking the rudder post tube plus general touching up. Volunteers for Thursday onward were stood down and Savile duly departed the dock on Wednesday about noon.

The volunteers who took part know who they are and on behalf of the society and the members I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all, it was a brilliant team effort! Thank you and see you all again next year.



Not a good advertisement for Keelblack!



Waiting for the water to subside



Broad Cut Moorings

CRT has written to about twenty boat owners that have moorings at Broad Cut advising them that the moorings are to be closed due to the flood risk on this section of canal. They say it would be too expensive to protect the boats and moorings against flood conditions. There are very few alternative sites and the boat owners feel they have nowhere to go.

CRT's concerns are based on the fact that the Environment Agency is not prepared to undertake flood prevention works on the Calder next to the Figure of Three locks. As a result of this, they expect flood water to once again spill over into the canal and create flood conditions at Broad Cut.

A petition has been started to oppose this change and although the CRT have now said that the moorings can be used in the summer, this does not solve the problem for boat owners. CNS has written to CRT in support of the boaters. There is a link on the CNS website if you wish to sign the petition.

Almost all moorings along the Calder & Hebble are at risk of flooding. Here is Brighouse Basin in February this year.





Battyeford Island – Wildflower Meadow

Working in conjunction with Mirfield in Bloom, CNS is planning to brighten up a section of Battyeford Island with a wildflower meadow. It is hoped that work can start in the spring and that volunteers from the area will be keen to take part. With luck as many will volunteer as did for the bridge repaint. If all goes ahead as planned it will definitely be worth a visit in Summer 2022.

Extending the Calder Valley Greenway

Plans are afoot to extend the current Greenway from Ganny Lock, through Brighouse and on to Bradley. A public consultation has been held and CNS is all in favour provided the concerns of existing canal users are met. CNS has responded to the consultation and stressed the need for it to incorporate features to curb the minority of speeding cyclists.

CRT Campaigns

Stay kind, slow down

The Trust are at last listening to our Chairman and have started the **Stay kind, slow down** campaign to try and influence speeding cyclists on their towpaths. The current Waterfront magazine has a full two page spread on the issue and with luck it will improve the behaviour of the small minority of errant cyclists.

Plastics Challenge

Another CRT initiative is straight from the CNS speechmakers playbook. They are at last starting to try and stem the tidal wave of plastic filling the waterways. Follow the direct link from the CNS website and you can pledge to do your bit.

And last but very far from least……If you have ever wanted to be a secretary of a group. Now is your chance to step up and help the society out of a crisis.

I hope you will have found something of interest, if not please send me something better for the next edition.

Richard Potter