

Calder Navigation Society
Newsletter April 2021

Spring is here! And just to prove it, a snap from …



Let's hope that 2021 is going to be better for everyone and the CNS.

Kathryn steps into the breach

For some time now, CNS has been looking for a new secretary. After a least a millennium at the helm, Mike Fretwell has decided to retire and hand over the reins to someone new. With Mike's substantial reputation and abilities, most of us were reluctant to step into his shoes, but Kathryn Walker has come to the rescue and has taken over for 2021. This means there is no longer a threat to the society's existence and it only remains to thank Mike for a lifetimes work for the society and to thank Kathryn for boldly going where no one else was prepared to go. Thanks Mike and Kathryn. We really appreciate your efforts!

The Grand Depart – Tour de Yorkshire 2021 – 12th April 2021



With just hours to go before hire boating can restart, here are some of the eighteen Shire Cruises booked to leave Sowerby Bridge on the first day of the easing of lockdown rules. If the weather lasts up to 100 visitors are going to have a great holiday in Yorkshire.



Notes from our Chairman

Is the end in sight? Let's hope so and we can get back to some kind of normality.

As mentioned by our editor, we have a new Hon. Secretary who is already doing an excellent job! Again our thanks go to Mike who for years has carried out the task as only he could do.

We welcome some new members who have recently joined the Society, not sure if I should print the names what with this GDPR thingy but they know who they are, all 5 of them – welcome!

There is little to report at the moment as we are still in the grip of the wretched Covid. The Brighouse events organisers have decided not to hold any functions this year so maybe if Covid permits we shall consider running boat trips later in the summer in order to generate some income. So far we have two firm bookings for Savile later in the year and again if the situation allows then they will go ahead, Savile is all set and ready to go.

Work has been going on behind the scenes by our IT genius and we are well on the way to having a "Survey" page on our website whereby boaters and waterway users in general can enter their comments and submit to us, we would then decide if any needed to be passed on to C&RT. Keep an eye on our website for it going "live". If we have constant updates on the state of our waterway then we can keep up the pressure to have some remedial action where necessary. Comments both positive and negative will be welcome.

Once again may I take this opportunity in thanking you all for your support during these difficult times and I wish you a safe and happy summer.

Thank you,

Peter Davies,
Chairman



Saving Wildlife and Saving Money!

It sounds too good to be true, but CRT's latest initiative sets out to do both. CRT currently spends over £2 million each year mowing towpaths every four to six weeks throughout the growing season. As well as providing a pleasant pathway for walkers, towpaths provide unique ecological corridors that benefit flora and fauna and link fragmented woodlands and other important habitats.

This year, CRT is going to change the mowing plan for 375 miles of towpath, almost a fifth of the total, in a six month trial designed to improve conditions for wildlife without damaging enjoyment of the waterways for boaters, anglers and walkers. Four different mowing regimes are to be introduced and each chosen section of canal has been allocated to one of the four options.

Option 1 reduces mowing to one end of year full width cut removing saplings and woody vegetation. This will be applied to canals with very low soil fertility, of high elevation or for redundant canals where towpath use is low.

Option 2 includes the year end cut in Option 1 plus two added navigational cuts to ensure boating sightlines are not obstructed and grass growth is limited at places where people walk. This regime is said to be ideal for limited use or disused canals.

Option 3 features a single end of year cut and four navigational cuts. This is similar to the present regime and is expected to be used for most of the network.

Option 4 includes two full width cuts at the start and end of the season and three navigational cuts. This option is said to be suited to southern canals where the growing season is longer and soil fertility higher.

Where does the Calder & Hebble stand in the plan?

The Calder & Hebble is one of the chosen waterways and will be part of the trial. The map on the CRT national website shows that the entire canal is in Option 1 with just the Ashton Canal for company. No prizes for guessing that when our chairman saw this he immediately headed for the typewriter to protest at what appeared to be a very strange decision. No one who puts the Calder & Hebble in the infertile, high and redundant category is going to get away with it.

Local CRT managers have replied and say that they have chosen the Elland to Sowerby



Bridge section for the trial and the section will come under Option 3. This seems sensible and we can only assume that the map needs correction. We have raised this with CRT nationally and await their response.

From the Papers

200 years ago – From the Leeds Mercury and probably featured on 'Escape to the Country'……

To Be SOLD or LET, for a Term of Years by PRIVATE CONTRACT, and can be Entered upon at Candlemas next, that singularly Eligible and Delightful Mansion-House called ELLAND BANK, with Stabling, Malt-kiln, Warehouse, Cottages, Plantations, Gardens, and other Premises adjoining, and about Five Acres of Hill-Side Land, situate on a considerable Eminence, within 20 Yards above the Banks of the navigable River Calder, (and the Property between it and the said River belongs to the Advertiser) and within two Hundred Yards of the Turnpike-Road leading from Halifax to Huddersfield, and within little more of the Calder and Hebble Navigation, which communicates with both Eastern and Western Sea.
ELLAND BANK is a Freehold Estate, in a very healthy Situation, within 2 miles of a good Classical Free School, taught by the Rev. Mr. Wilkinson....

100 years ago from the Rochdale Times of 25 June 1921… as you might expect, it is all the fault of the workers.

CANAL CO. CEASE CARRYING

As from July 9, the Rochdale Canal Company will cease to be carriers on their own account on the ground of the unprofitable nature of the business. A recommendation of the directors to this effect was approved by the shareholders at a special meeting on Tuesday in Manchester. It is a most regrettable decision but one which seems to have been unavoidable in the circumstances. The chairman, Mr J. Sutcliffe Thomas, of Hebden Bridge said that the company were faced with an annual freight loss of over £15,000, due mainly to the greatly increased rates of remuneration and the reduction in hours of labour and partly to the competition of railway and road traffic. He blamed the Ministry of Transport for granting these large wage increases while the canal was under Government control.....



New Stanley Ferry Sand Quarry

Wakefield Council has recently approved a new quarry at Stanley Ferry. The quarry owners plan to extract sand and gravel from two sites on either side of the Calder and to remove about 1.6 million tonnes of material over the next ten years. The operator plans to use the navigation to transfer sand and gravel to sites in Leeds and Dewsbury. Although there are several laid up barges available that could take sand to Leeds, the locks on the Calder & Hebble will restrict the size of vessels that can be used on the Dewsbury run. It will be interesting to see what the operator decides to do.

Commercial Traffic on Yorkshire's waterways

In its heyday, Yorkshire's canal network was the busiest in the country and commercial navigation remained important until relatively recently. A few years ago all commercial traffic ceased and the remaining barges were laid up. Several of them are still laid up at Goole and have not worked for years. In 2016, Exol Lubricants decided that their regular lube oil traffic from Hull to Rotherham should be transferred to the waterways and they purchased the tanker barge Humber Pride. After a full refurbishment, she entered service in 2016 as Exol Pride and until 2020, she was the only working barge on the system. Twice a week she loaded in King George Dock at Hull and delivered her cargo to Rotherham.
Last year saw a limited resumption of the sand and gravel trade to Leeds but the canal breach on the Aire & Calder has now put paid to all traffic for the time being.







Exol Pride in Ocean Lock at Goole, returning to Hull for another load of lube oil.

Plans to revive commercial traffic are a never ending subject of discussion, but not very much ever seems to happen. The cynic may think that if you can mention using the waterways for freight, then perhaps your controversial planning application has more chance of success.

Canal Royalty spotted in Brighouse

The lady on the stern of this Shire Cruiser is the great, great, great, great niece of Mr. James Brindley. She was spotted being helped through Brighouse Locks en route from Sowerby Bridge to Barnoldswick. The first Shire Cruiser through Brighouse for this season!







Work in Progress
1 - Dredging Programme

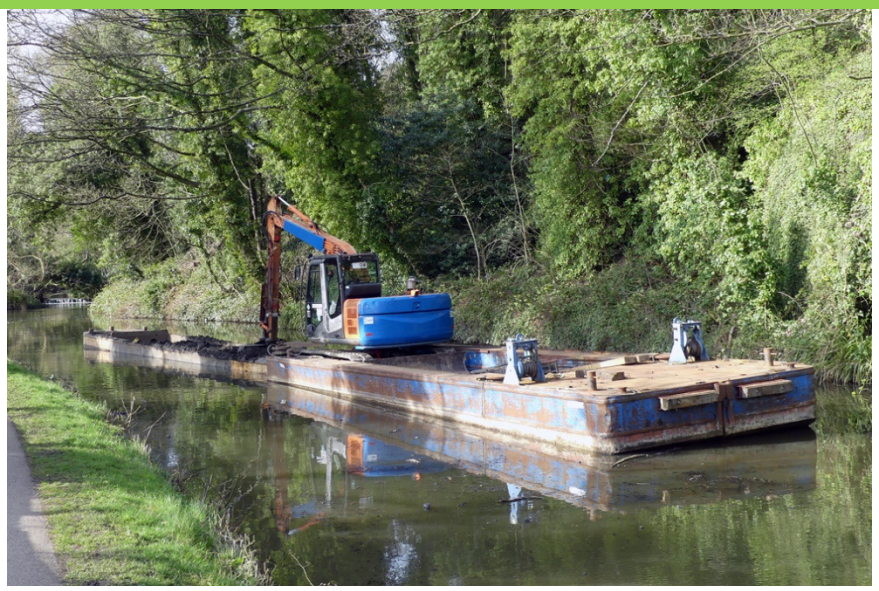
Last winter's floods resulted in several of the flood locks getting silted up and at Brookfoot, the Red Beck brought down enough sand into the canal to block the navigation.

The cavalry flew in to Brighouse Basin in late March when a dredger, two tugs and four dredging pans were craned into the basin. It was planned to have completed the dredging programme by 12th April when the canal reopened to everyone.

The spoil from the canal at Brookfoot was sent to a landfill near Middlesbrough and all was quiet on 30th March as the crew waited for the wagon, no doubt held up on the M62.







Just around the bend, the dredger was also resting as all the pans had been filled. In the photo the outlet from the Red Beck can be seen just to the left of the dredging pan.

2 - Figure of Three Re-opening

Your CNS reporter was on hand at the Figure of Three at 1000 on 12th April to capture the occasion.



On arrival he found both the top lock and towpath blocked off and two CRT men working on the paddle gear for the top lock. Clearly there was a hitch. A quick check of the stoppage list revealed that at 0955, a new message had appeared. A broken paddle had been found on the top lock and the locks would remain closed until it could be fixed. The report said that divers had been booked and the canal would re-open as soon as possible. CRT has since



reported that a plastic safety barrier has been removed from the paddle gear and the lock was opened to business just one day behind schedule.

3 - Further Afield

Following a breach in the Aire & Calder near Goole, the canal is closed and is expected to reopen after remedial works in the summer. Water is being pumped over the breach to maintain water levels in Goole Docks but the port authority has put some restrictions on pleasure boat use of the locks into the Ouse to cut down on water use.

Savile Excursions

Are you fed up of days at home, hidden away from friends and relatives? With luck all this is coming to an end and it is time to think of a day out with your loved ones. You could try an excursion to Blackpool or Scarborough but who wants crowds and traffic jams?

But why not get away from the multitude and try a grand day out on our Yorkshire Waterways. From June 21st, days out on Savile will be available for a donation of just £75. Up to 12 passengers can travel on the boat and CNS will provide the crew to ensure you can relax as Savile glides effortlessly along the navigation. From our base at the South Pennine Boat Club, we can take you on a short excursion to Shepley Bridge or full days out to visit Brighouse, Dewsbury Basin or The Brewers Pride at Healey.

We think that this is just the outing to eliminate those covid blues, so don't hesitate to contact Avril Davies by email or phone. She will be pleased to provide all the information you need to plan the best day out in 2021.

Avril can be contacted at :- savile@calderns.org.uk
There is a booking form on the CNS website
She can also be contacted by phone on **07870 423194**

So don't delay – book today!!



Brookfoot Ship Wreck – Or is it?



A recent enquiry to the CRT asked about a wrecked boat in the Calder on the Rastrick side of the river just above Brookfoot Weir. A usually unreliable source thought that a missing Spanish galleon had been found. The real truth is not quite as exciting and has been unearthed by CNS's archivist with the aid of the My Rastrick website.

The weir at Brookfoot dates from the 1660's when a water powered corn mill was built on the site. It was maintained over the centuries but has been neglected in recent years. In early 2021 yet another Calder flood broke through and the entire centre section of the weir was washed away. As a result the river level above the weir dropped and what looked like the remains of a large boat could be seen emerging from the mud.

It turns out that the "boat" is actually the remains of Lillands Wharf which was used to move stone brought down from quarries at Longroyd and Lillands. Full details can be found on the My Rastrick website which also has lots of other canal related information and photos. It is well worth a look…….. https://myrastrick.com/

Battyeford Island – Wildflower Meadow

We at CNS have a relationship with the Mirfield in Bloom team (MIB) and have helped on several occasions with litter picking tasks in and around the Mirfield Area. Our most recent claim to fame was instigating and organising the painting of Ha'penny Bridge which was achieved with the help of our members and friends at South Pennine Boat Club plus a small army of local residents (and some from further afield!).



As mentioned in our last Newsletter CNS is attempting to develop a “Wildflower Meadow” on an area of land on the island in support of the MIB entry in Britain in Bloom.

Before any work could commence the landowner had to grant permission, in this case Yorkshire Water have kindly done so. Next all traces of weeds and undesirable growth had to go, the ground then ploughed or rotavated before any seeds could be sown. A good few willing volunteers would be required for this! A Facebook page was set up called “Battyeford Wildflower Meadow” and already we have 30 folk who have signed up to help, if you haven’t done so yet then please consider signing up! The project was all priced and funds made available by MIB but the dreaded COVID put paid to any group gatherings.

I had sought advice on how to go about things from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and then I decided to ask a local company for further advice regarding what type of machinery to hire etc. A meeting was arranged with one of their representatives and much to my amazement they have offered to sponsor the project in its entirety as a good will gesture! All we need to do at the moment is watch things take place – there really are heroes out there.

So, why do we need all of the volunteers? Well apparently the type of seed to be sown will require a certain amount of maintenance, hopefully the seeds grow, the plants flower, they then self seed and this is where we come in as it all has to be mown, de-weeded and kept tidy until the following spring.

All we can do at the moment is to be aware of and respect the area and all being well by the end of April we shall have a Wildflower Meadow in the making! At the time of writing the area has been treated with an approved herbicide and it is quite possible that by the time you are reading this, the area will have been rotavated and seeded! Hopefully CNS will generate publicity and possibly attract more members and supporters by involvement in this project.



These two photos show the site before and twelve days after the herbicide was applied



What can you do for the CNS?

Navigability Survey

CNS wants to know what users think of the waterway and the best way is to ask them. Do you have a boat or are you hiring one on the Calder & Hebble Navigation this year? If the answer is yes – when you come home after a grand time on the waterways, please go to the CNS website and complete our navigability survey. When the results are in we will know what impresses and what concerns boaters. We will then be better able to take matters up with the C&R T. Whatever you find, good, bad or indifferent – Please let us know.

Photos for the Website

We would also love to add your photos to brighten up our website. Photos of a diverse set of themes would be good……. boating, history, nature, exercise, recreation, fishing, volunteering etc. Anything with a waterway connection will be just fine. Just send your snaps to:-

webmaster@calderns.org.uk

The Back Page

The annual coarse fishing match was held at Brighouse locks in preparation for the navigation season. Ace grappler, John Elam, blew the field apart with his stunning technique, netting an Old Spot brewery barrel and a Continental tyre….



And even if the sport leaves you cold, at least the lock gate can now be fully opened….

Richard Potter