

Calder Navigation Society
Newsletter April 2023



As I sit here watching the snow mount up outside and with the worst yet to come, The Chairman has issued me with an amber warning, “Spring is coming…..so you better get on with the Newsletter.”

And first a few words from the Chairperson himself…..he has been working nine till five on this one.

Spring is in the air and it seems that I am no longer a Chairman, the wokies (whatever they are) have got to us so it appears that I am now a Chairperson or even a chair! I think that the person version is preferable as we all know what a chair is.

For those of us who attended the social event last December I am pretty sure that you all agree that it was a resounding success. The event was a combined venture organised by both CNS and South Pennine Boat Club and as a result we have agreed to do a similar thing again and “Dolly” has been booked to come along to



entertain us on Friday 6th October – a date for your diary. More details to come later, this is not to be missed!



Avril has been very busy dealing with requests for private trips on Savile as well as organising various Brighouse events. It looks as if we are going to have another busy year as we are fully booked up until July. Many thanks to all of those offering to crew, we continue with our hard work in promoting the waterway and hope to have the same success as last year. If you would like to come along and help at any of the events then please contact Avril as I am sure that she could find you something to do!

Richard has included an article detailing the recent Savile drydocking which went very smoothly thanks to the efforts of our happy band of volunteers. I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to all of the helpers, it was a pleasure working alongside you.

Finally I would like to wish Nigel and Susan of Shire Cruisers a happy retirement when the time finally comes though if my experience is anything to go by, retirement is the time when you become more busy than ever!

Best wishes to all and thank you for supporting the Society,

Peter Davies



Editorial – A tale of two charities

When the government set up the Canal & River Trust as a charity, to replace the British Waterways Board, the plan was that just like the National Trust it would preserve an important part of the country's historic heritage without support from public funds. To help establish the new charity, the government provided annual funding of £52.7 million to run until 2027. The plan was to announce a new funding arrangement in 2021 for introduction in 2027 but the Trust is still awaiting the decision on this. It was anticipated that once the charity was established that much less if any financial support would be needed. There is little doubt that both the government and the senior managers of the new Trust were wearing very rose coloured spectacles.

The National Trust has a large group of members willing to pay an ever increasing membership fee and many more people willing to pay to visit their properties. Almost all Canal & River Trust properties and canals can be accessed for free and few people are willing to make donations or join any sort of membership scheme. If the roof falls in on a stately home, the National Trust just closes the property and starts a campaign for donations. If a canal breaches or faults are found in a reservoir wall, the possible consequences for nearby residents, landowners and water courses mean that immediate action is needed. They simply cannot wait for donations and even if they could I suspect that there are very few donors desperate to finance safety work on old reservoirs.

The major problem facing the trust is that it must keep the government and the public on side to try and get a better government settlement from 2027. On the other hand, the only things it can do short term to ease the financial position are likely to have the opposite effect on public opinion. The Trust has already increased licence fees for boat owners twice this year and they still need more cash. They could considerably increase charges for continuous cruisers or ramp up action against the minority of boaters in the 'cant pay, won't pay' group. The majority of boaters would no doubt support this but there is little doubt that this would result in negative publicity. Cost cutting measures such as the proposed removal of the vast majority of towpath litter bins are already generating lots of critical comments in the press.

It is very clear that the Canal & River Trust is in trouble. An underfunded, expensive and unreliable inland waterway system is the last thing we need, so let us hope that the government come up with the cash and the Trust can find ways to maintaining the navigation in the future.



Savile's Dry Docking – The First Day



With the beams in place for Savile to rest on, the dry dock is refilled for Savile to enter. Keen observers will notice that our archivist John gets to do almost all the work.

Once Savile has settled on the blocks, it is time to put the wedges in to hold her firmly and on an even keel in the drydock.





Richard had volunteered to pressure wash the hull before the new hull blacking could be applied so it is time for a tutorial from John before he was let loose. It must have been a masterclass as Richard did a grand job leaving the blacking team with a very clean hull to paint the next day.



Savile Dry Docking – The Final Day

Once Savile was in the drydock, our two resident marine engineers, Peter & Chris, subjected her to a full survey and failed to find any significant problems. This is excellent news for our treasurer. The surveyors prescribed a repaint of the roof, touching up the cabin sides and topsides along with the usual blacking for the hull. Over the next ten days a team of volunteers worked to complete all these tasks.

Check out the two photos below and I am sure you will agree that the team have done exactly what was recommended. Thanks very much.





Savile left the drydock on 28th February. Here she is just before the dock was refilled.



Historic Boats – Paul Hesketh's Memories

After the last Newsletter was published, Paul Hesketh wrote to tell us his memories of the Ethel and her younger sister Gwendoline. We thought his memories warranted wider distribution…so here is his email in full.

It was good to read the articles about Ethel in the last two editions of the CNS newsletter. My brother Frank and I lived on Ethel at York for the IWA festival 1975 and crewed her back to Wakefield. Bunk beds were fitted in the bow tearoom. I remember falling out of a top bunk, the steps breaking my fall, landing on somebody sleeping on the floor, he didn't sleep there again. I had a little stall on the bank next to Ethel and Frank was normally manning the main CNS stand with Peter and the others. We used to eat out, a large group of us went to the Golden Egg in York, the waitress was getting confused and upset with us as we kept changing our orders. Another time Frank took the Rolls (Peter's old bike) to buy fish and chips, he was stopped by the police for riding the wrong way down a one way street, they were very helpful, and he had to follow the Moggy Panda car to the nearest chippy.

We picked up a rope around the prop and couldn't remove it with boat hooks, as there wasn't a weed hatch one of us might have had to dive in to the Ouse to remove the rope, luckily at the festival there were some divers nearby and they were happy to dive down and remove the rope.

We took her up to Linton Lock on the Ouse, the largest vessel to venture up there for a long time, near the Dawney Arms, Newton on Ouse there was an island we went up the shallow side, going hard aground, it took some time to re-float her but she was still a strong old vessel and didn't do any damage.

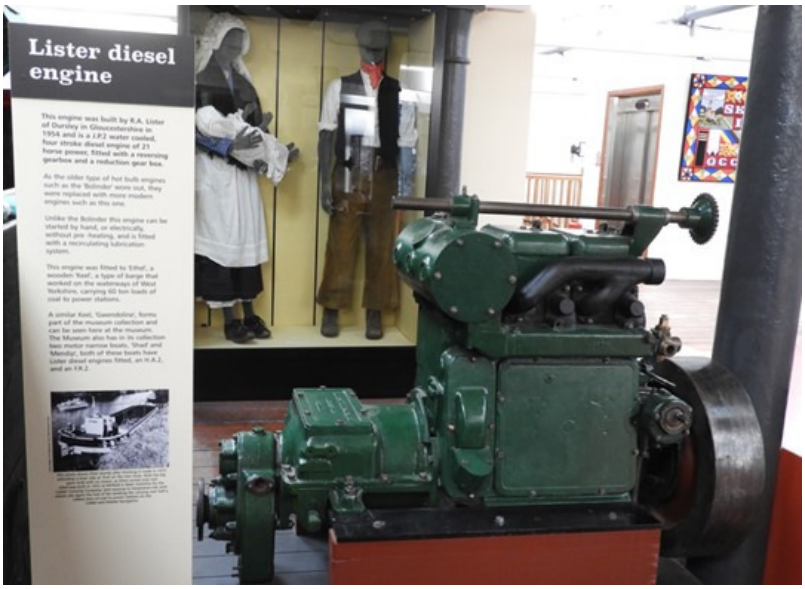
One of my daily duties was to polish the engine brass work. Her Lister diesel didn't have an electric start, she had to be cranked by hand taking care not to break your thumb. I don't remember actually starting her. At twelve, steering was quite a responsibility, foot operated throttle and not cutting corners to avoid shallow water. She performed remarkably well on the tidal sections of the Ouse. During her working life she had probably never ventured further than Castleford.

At least one of the ribs in the bow and some planks needed replacing. Decks / planks needed some re-corking but overall was in reasonable condition after her hard working life.

We used to occasionally visit Ellesmere Port Boat Museum, it was upsetting to see her sunk in one of the basins, and initially they did keep re-floating her. They fitted covers over the hold to keep the rain out. After many years she was out of the water and was actively being restored replacing some planks but I think by this time she needed more extensive repairs. On our next visit only her bow and stern was left, the original plan was to use them for an exhibition but were much later burnt.



Ethel's Lister Diesel JP2 has been preserved and is normally on permanent display near to Narrowboat Friendship.



The Black & White photo is of Ethel. Frank is on the left by the tiller. I'm at the wheel and Christopher Walker is with the mop.





Gwendoline, Ethel's (1952) younger sister built in 1953, retired in 1973 with William Hennel and both were converted to houseboats. In 1999 semi-submerged in Shipley she was acquired by the boat museum. Again the long term restoration was unsuccessful. During my occasional visits she continued to deteriorate. I did try to arrange access to Gwendoline over 20 years ago to take some key dimensions to at some time make a scale model but I never had a chance to take a day off work for a mid-week visit. A few years ago the museum had enough money to recover some vessels to a nearby location for either restoration or documenting before disposal. We tried to visit but this location was not open to the public. Search videos "Gwendoline Ellesmere Port Boat Museum" 3D scans. One video suggests that drawings have been created; it would be good to ask for a copy. One of the videos can be found on the CRT website "How are boats built", https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/explorers/learning-bundles/boats



Where have all the photos gone?

The Waterways Museum at Goole used to have a large selection of waterway photographs from waterway author Peter Smith's collection. Paul Hesketh had been helping the museum to identify and describe the locations featured in the photos but all this came to an end when the museum faced funding cuts and had to close down. There were over 200 photos of the Calder & Hebble Navigation and its boats representing a valuable heritage collection.

Since the museum closed, Paul has not been able to find out what happened to the collection. He thinks that the plan was to transfer the image collection to another museum but has not been able to find anything more about the fate of these photos.

Do you know where they are? If you have any ideas please let us know.



Art at the Tate



One of the highlights of this spring's modern art scene at the Tate Gallery is a joint exhibition by the Royal Horticultural Society and the Canal & River Trust. It concentrates on the visual fusion of the nautical and horticultural. Exhibits are being drawn from throughout the country and we were lucky to catch one of them heading through Brighouse on its way South. The exhibit is the work of Avril First, a prominent French avant-garde designer and mushroom afficionado from Hebden Bridge. Her seminal work will be a centrepiece at the show.

When interviewed by Sky Arts from her canal side allotment she said, "I was standing at the bottom of my garden searching for inspiration. Then I leaned on the garden shed and suddenly everything fell into place."

The Brighouse Boat Trips – April 2023

Savile is back in Brighouse this year on three April Saturdays to operate short half hour cruises. Sailing from the visitor moorings behind Sainsburys **Savile** sails down to Brighouse Basin before turning and heading for Ganny Lock. Each taster cruise takes just under half an hour before returning to the departure point. If you have never sampled the delights of **Savile** on the Calder & Hebble Navigation this is your chance to put matters right. For just £6, you can cruise on Savile as a starter and then have a small Fish & Chips from Blakeley's at Brighouse. If you don't fancy the meal, for just £1 you can take a trip on Savile and get a free drink for your trip.

If you want to know more or book your passage, go to:-
https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/and-huddersfield-road-bridge/rear-of-sainsburys



Developments along the Navigation – The Colour Supplement

Salterhebble Bridge



The main bridge span for the new road link at Salterhebble was lifted into place in late January, marking a significant stage in the construction project. The towpath will remain closed for some time yet as completion is not scheduled until next winter.

Woodside Lock Landing



On 9th February 2020, storm Ciara passed through West Yorkshire leaving a trail of damage behind her. The lock landing below Woodside Lock collapsed into the canal and a long stretch of towpath below the lock was left in need of major repair. Repairs have been on the Canal & River Trust's list for some time but have been put back until this year. The work is going ahead now with financial support from The People's Postcode Lottery. When this photo was taken on 15th March it was clear that there was still a lot of work to do but the plan was to reopen the canal on 17th March using the temporary lock landing on the other side of the canal. The towpath will remain shut for some time yet as further problems have come to light that will take some time to fix.



Brighouse Marina

After a few years delay, work is now going ahead to replace all the berthing piers at Brighouse Basin. The work is scheduled for completion before April.



Brighouse River Lock





The lower gates at Brighouse River Lock suffered from structural failure in January and resulted in the closure of the Navigation. The Canal & River Trust acted quickly and brought in contractors who speedily produced a steel corset to hold the beams firmly in place until the gates can be replaced. The gates had been in the 2025 replacement programme but due to their condition, they have been moved up the list and will be replaced next year.

The photos show the work taking place and the new steelwork on the outer gates.



Orde Wingate at Mirfield



Dating back to 1942 when she was built as a naval pinnace at Shoreham, Orde Wingate is named after one of the heroes of World War II. She was converted to a pleasure boat in 1955 and registered at London. When offered for sale in 2021, she caught the eye of a Yorkshire enthusiast who purchased her and refitted her. His daughter has been living aboard at Hull Marina but in March she was tied up in Mirfield. It has been claimed that she took part in the D Day Landings but there seems to be some doubt about this.

Mirfield blooming again!



Mirfield is becoming well known for its floral displays and the Canal & River Trust volunteers certainly do their bit to brighten up the town. This display of spring bulbs by the canal definitely gives an early hint of the floral displays later in the year.



Business Opportunity – Will suit waterway enthusiast



In 1973 Nigel and Susan Stevens started their hire boat business at Sowerby Bridge. Since then Shire Cruisers has introduced thousands of hire boaters to the joys of the Calder & Hebble Navigation and they have probably done more than anyone else to popularise the North Eastern waterways. It is not really surprising that after 50 years, they have decided that it would be good to enjoy some retirement…and this is where you come in. All you need is enthusiasm for the waterways, business acumen and £895,000.

On the other hand, if your wallet is not quite up to it, you can join us in thanking Nigel and Susan for bringing our local waterways to everyone's attention and wishing them a happy retirement. Let us hope that an equally professional operator steps in to keep Shire Cruisers in the hire fleet premier league.

River Calder hits the headlines…but for all the wrong reasons.

Entering the top ten of England's most polluted rivers, the Calder is straight in at Number Two. In 2021 sewage flowed into the river for a massive 27,901 hours. Dr Andy Gray of the Calder Rivers Trust reckons that the problem is even worse than that as this total only covers recorded spillages. Yorkshire Water say they are working to clean up the river, lets hope they can improve matters soon.





John Lord 31-3-1946 – 28-1-2023

John was an active member of the Calder Navigation Society for many years and some of his legacy can be seen when looking at his work on Savile.

He was always a hard worker and never had a wasted or idle moment in his life. 'I'm bored' was a phrase that never crossed his lips. John was always doing something even if it was simply chatting and sharing his wisdom on the veranda at his much loved South Pennine Boat Club.

Although a very private individual, he was easy to get along with, happy to meet new people, never judgmental and would do all he could to help someone with a problem.

He enjoyed, very much, being a member of the boat club and the CNS and was glad to help in any way he could. He contributed to the building of the dry dock lock gates and many other crucial and important things at the boat club. He also enjoyed working on Savile and just wherever he could use his skills as a joiner and handy man.

John was a very happy and contented person. He was fulfilled and he thoroughly enjoyed his life with his loving and close family and his wide circle of friends. John died on 28 January 2023 from cancer. Originally diagnosed and treated in May 2005 with symptoms reoccurring, as covid appeared, in the autumn of 2019. His last adventure in life was often an arduous one - to keep going - yet he still managed to see his family and friends and help out at the boat club too.

Wherever John is now you can be sure he will be regaling all with his adventures and exploits! He will be sadly missed by his many friends and colleagues.

Contains extracts from the eulogy prepared and presented by CNS supporter and celebrant Linda Knowles.



Spot the Waterway

Our mystery waterway in the last newsletter was Barrow Haven. Just a couple of miles to the seaward of Barton on Humber, the haven is now the last remaining Humberside creek that still handles commercial traffic. About twice a month, during the spring tide period, a ship arrives from the Baltic with a timber cargo. She is berthed at high water but then settles down in the mud as the tide falls. In shipping circles Barrow Haven is known as a NAABSA* port. Here is **Oak 1** firmly aground and waiting to discharge her timber cargo.



This month's mystery navigation looks to be a lot busier and the double decker train should at least help you get the right country. **Can you name this waterway?**





Where can I find more CNS news?

This Newsletter is just one of the ways members can keep up with what is happening in the society. If you want to know more, check out our website at:-

https://www.calderns.org.uk/

We are also on Facebook, and our posts can be found by searching for Calder Navigation Society.

Articles & Photos for the Newsletter

Our aim is to publish the newsletter every three months, but sometimes we are a little short of both news and imagination. If you would like to write something for the newsletter or have ideas as to what we should be covering ….please get in touch. I can be contacted at:-

editor@calderns.org.uk

That is all for now, the next Newsletter should be out in the summer.

NAABSA – "Not always afloat but safely aground". At the risk of upsetting the Canal & River Trust that sounds rather like any day out on the Navigation.

If you are still puzzling about modern art – Avril is not only the name of our membership secretary, it is French for April.