

# Calder Navigation Society
# Newsletter November 2023

## But first, a reminder of summer…




## And now here he comes with a few thoughts, it's our chairperson……..



Time for another Newsletter and Christmas is rapidly approaching – how time flies!

I see in the last Newsletter that I mentioned the state of affairs with the Salterhebble Lock House, the latest information we have from C&RT is that they plan to repair the roof and offer it for sale in March or April of next year. The best we can hope for is that it goes to a sympathetic buyer who will look after the land and building.

I also mentioned the situation with the funding or rather lack of funding for C&RT. I see no proactive action on their part, the management seem to have taken the approach to remove rubbish bins from C&RT land, this in my opinion is possibly alienating the public whose support they badly need. If you have not already protested to your MP, then please consider doing so as soon as you can.



Our summertime lock painting project was successful and again I would like to thank all who took part. The remaining job is to repaint the stable block / storage facility at Cooper Bridge Lock, we are waiting for someone at C&RT to decide what colour it is to be but they seem to be having difficulty in making this decision! All in all 14 CNS supporters took part and spent a total of 222.5 man/lady hours.

Savile is now resting from her busy schedule and we have booked the Drydock at South Pennine Boat Club for 2 weeks commencing Saturday 17th February so please make a note in your diary if you would like to come along to help.

The "Dolly" evening was very successful and all who attended had a really fabulous evening, in fact some people are still talking about it! If you couldn't manage to come along you missed a most enjoyable evening. It must have been something special to make this Chairperson get up and attempt "granddad dancing"!

At the time of writing Avril is sadly incapacitated but I'm sure that if she could then she would mention the fact that our membership has increased slightly which is good to hear. May I take this opportunity to welcome our new supporters?

Before we know it, the AGM will be upon us and after that spring will be around the corner which means that the calls will go out for volunteers to crew Savile. I hope that the response will be as good as last year!

That's about it for now, many thanks for your continued support of our Society,

Peter Davies - Chairperson

**Many of the topics raised by our chairperson are covered in more detail in the following pages, so please read on……we also have articles by our archivist on the early history of CNS and a report on a Rochdale Canal restorer by Keith Noble. I hope you can find something of interest.**

## Corrections Corner

In a recent Newsletter, I said that CNS had been a member of the IWA for over 40 years. Keen readers have pointed out that I was out by 10 years. Yes, it is 50 years since CNS joined with the IWA.



# Editorial - Canal & River Trust in the Dock

## And here is what some of the critics are likely to say:-

**The Government**

The Canal & River Trust has received substantial support but should now be less reliant on government funding. We will support them because they help give people an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, they help with levelling up, they look after sites of special scientific interest and they have a role in ensuring the historic waterway infrastructure is maintained and made resilient to climate change risks.

**The average boater with a mooring**

My current opinion of the Canal & River Trust is that nothing works, everything keeps breaking and I still must pay more than ever before. They ought to spend their money on properly repairing the canals and chasing all those who won't pay for a mooring and in some cases don't pay at all. All this social work is a waste of time and should be stopped immediately. I don't see why I should pay more for a canal network that is subject to more and more breakdowns.

**The residential boater without a mooring**

It's my lifestyle choice to live on a boat. Housing is so expensive, but the canal life suits me fine. They ought to spend more of their time keeping the sanitary stations in good order and less time trying to chase me from mooring to mooring. We are being victimised for our lifestyle and now they want to try and force us off the waterways by putting up prices for us more than for anyone else.

**A man with a dog**

I don't know what's wrong with them. They have taken all the litter bins away along this stretch of canal. It's a charity and they should help the dog walkers and other visitors to the waterway.

**The Local Press**

They have just evicted poor old Jimmy from his houseboat on the canal. He had lived there for years with his two boats and his equipment on the towpath. Charities are supposed to look after the poor. And what about the litter bins, they have gone as well.

**The Donor**

I give money to the Canal & River Trust because they look after our historic waterway network and maintain many of the historic buildings along the canals. But now they seem to be trying to sell off much of this valuable history and I am beginning to wonder if I am giving to the right cause.

**The CNS Member**

I could not possibly comment…we all have our own opinions.



**And here is what I think!**

The government wants to save money, but they are still a major supporter and the Trust cannot afford to neglect the aspects of Trust work that Government want to support. Although they do not say so, the government does not want to subsidise anyone's boating hobby or anyone who chooses to live on a boat and avoid many of the expenses and taxes that others must pay. They value the social and educational efforts of the Trust and are prepared to give some financial support for this part of the Trust's work.

They also claim to support the Trust's efforts to bolster the network against climate change and flood risks, although cutting the funding for both the Environment Agency and the Trust seems a funny way to do this.

Despite the high charges levelled on boaters by the Trust, the boating community payments nowhere near cover the cost of maintaining the navigation in good order. The rapidly increasing number of 'continuous cruisers', no doubt driven by the shortage of affordable homes on dry land, is putting even more pressure on the Canal & River Trust's limited resources.

It just seems to me that the Trust cannot win. Despite their alleged shortcomings, I think we must support the campaign for better funding for our historic waterways.

## Study your shade cards




The next project for our intrepid lock painters is the former stables building at Cooper Bridge.

What colour do you think it should be?

The boffins at the C&RT are still thinking about a suitable colour scheme. Surely they can come up with something better than the current muddy brown matt finish.



# Well Hello Dolly, it's so nice to have you back where you belong…..

This year's grand entertainment, another joint CNS and South Pennine Boat Club production took place on 6th October when almost a hundred excited members of the two groups packed into the Boat Club to see Dolly. She jetted in from Barnsley - Yorkshire's answer to Nashville, to entertain us.




Highlights included a rendering of one of Dolly's most popular songs aided by Kenny Davies and Kenny Macgregor. Both helmsmen normally try to avoid islands in the stream, but they were prepared to make an exception for Dolly and the audience.

A usually unreliable source reports that there was only one dissatisfied customer. The man in question is alleged to have said that "looking back at the event, it would have been better if I'd faced the front!"

Rather than attempting to wax lyrical, I can't find any Dolly lyrics to fit, I should just say that it was an excellent evening. Thanks to Avril and the SPBC for arranging it all. So moving swiftly to tailor a conclusion. "It was rare, I was there, I remember it all too well."



## Dick Booth

*An appreciation of a Rochdale canal pioneer by Keith Noble*

Longstanding and perhaps more recent members of CNS will be sorry to learn that Dick Booth has died, aged 83.

Dick played a major part in the early stages of restoration on the Rochdale Canal, though mostly on the Yorkshire side. He worked in the bridges department of the former West Yorkshire County Council and when that council decided to actively promote restoration of the canal through the Manpower Services Commission as a job creation project, Dick was assigned to the work. Funds became available in drips and drabs and Dick led a small team rebuilding bridges, restoring locks, dredging, securing water supply and other works needed to support navigation. They completed nearly all the Yorkshire side of the canal apart from larger works such as the deep lock at Sowerby Bridge and major bridges for which outside contractors were engaged.

As successive stretches of canal became available Dick's rôle evolved from restoration to operation, maintenance and administration of a working canal which he continued until responsibility was passed to the former British Waterways.

Lots of people had a hand in restoring the Rochdale Canal but in the early days, apart from a few volunteers, it was Dick who put their aspirations into effect and he did it in his own quiet, efficient and self effacing way.

Dick ran a workshop at Callis Mill making lock gates for the Rochdale and worked with Hargreaves Iron Foundry in Halifax making the castings needed for the paddle gear. After he retired he continued working with Hargreaves making lock gates for restoration schemes all over the country. Boaters may still notice the distinctive Rochdale style paddle gear in all sorts of unexpected places on canals between Ripon and Godalming.

## The Winter Stoppage Programme

As I write these notes, there are no stoppages proposed at all for the Calder & Hebble Navigation. There are, however, a number of stoppages on the two Huddersfield Canals and the Rochdale Canal this winter. With luck this work will reduce the number of unplanned stoppages that both canals have suffered this year.



## Batman Returns

Despite the amount of time expended on discussions on the future of the Salterhebble Lock Cottage, there is still no final solution as to how the building should once again be brought back into use. Us mere mortals really need a Superhero to sort this out. And as can be seen from the latest report from the Canal & River Trust below, he should be arriving next year….

"The Trust intend to carry out the roof repairs to the property following the recent spate of vandalism however, we must undertake a bat survey before undertaking any works and will complete this survey in spring 2024 once the nesting season is out of the way. This is a stipulation of the listed buildings consent required for the works. We intend to complete the roof repairs shortly thereafter. At this stage, we haven't made a formal decision on the future of the property and will engage with all stakeholders next year before making any decision."

## South Pennine Boat Club – Home of the Calder Navigation Society




The splendid new sign on the gate to South Pennine Boat Club welcomes people to the club but also includes "Home of CNS Calder Navigation Society". There are quite a lot of new members to SPBC so this article was written for their Handspike Magazine to explain about the history of the Calder Navigation Society and its association with the club.

The Calder and Hebble was once a thriving commercial waterway and when the IWA (Inland Waterways Association) was formed in 1947 there were probably few concerns about its viability and future. Despite the closure of the Halifax Branch in 1943, there was some consolation the following year when the LMS Railway transferred the Huddersfield Broad Canal and part of the Narrow to the Calder and Hebble Navigation Co. However, in 1952 the Rochdale was formally abandoned and then the next year the last remaining regular C&HN traffic above Brighouse ceased carrying coal to Sowerby Bridge when the gas works closed. There were occasional one-off loads, but commercial movements were in serious decline.



Come the 1960s, with the demise of the British Transport Commission, British Waterways and British Railways were separated and BR set about the Beeching Cuts. Encouraged by the Government, BW then set out on a similar course and the top end of the C&HN was seriously under threat. The upper reaches would cease to be a navigable waterway if the weirs and cuts were not maintained and left to become derelict. Canal enthusiasts, including some of the early members of SPBC were very worried about this and wanted to stop it happening. Something had to be done! This waterway is the vital link between the three trans-Pennine canals, the Leeds Liverpool, Rochdale and Huddersfield Canals. It is understood that the Act of Parliament to create the navigation has a clause that prevents the closure of it whilst it continues to be navigated.

It was the Halifax Civic Trust and IWA that did it. A public meeting was called which established that there was a body of support for promoting and developing the Navigation for leisure purposes. The IWA at that time had a policy of working through local canal societies so in April 1969 the Calder Navigation Society was formed. It was agreed that the IWA would produce a guide to the Calder and Hebble Navigation and that the young CNS would acquire a boat to run trips and





demonstrate to the people of the Calder Valley that they had a navigation worth keeping. The guide was expected to attract boaters from further afield.

The first boat acquired by the Society was called Doreen which was purchased from a vendor on Windermere, and you can see a resemblance in the style of Savile, the current boat of the Society.

In the archives of CNS, we have recently found some lovely photos of the exploits of our early CNS and SPBC members, including Peter Spence, late husband of Denise Spence. We plan to share some of those photos and stories in future issues of Handspike and the CNS Newsletter. What an adventurous and enthusiastic set of



people they were. And how grateful we should be to them that our navigation remains open. Without them, I doubt if SPBC would be here on Battyeford Cut.

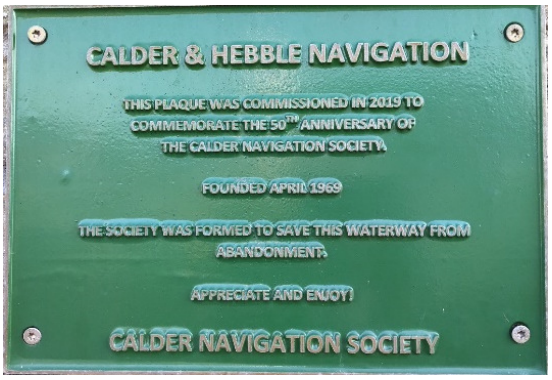


As a society, CNS continues to promote the use of our waterway by running our trip boat Savile. We try to be an effective lobbying group for the continued investment and maintenance of our waterways for navigation. As a Registered Charity we greatly appreciate the continued cooperation and support of SPBC who provide a mooring for Savile and allow us to hire their superb dry-dock facilities for maintenance.

During 2019 the Society celebrated its 50th anniversary and plaques commemorating it were unveiled in Brighouse basin and at Mirfield. Words on the plaque read as follows:

“The Society was formed to save the Waterway from Abandonment”. “Appreciate and enjoy”.

If any non-members of CNS are reading this article via our website and you want know more about the society or join and take an active part in our membership, please contact our Membership Secretary Avril Davies.
I would like to acknowledge Keith Noble as the source of much of the historical information from an article he wrote for the SPBC Handspike in May 2014.




to

John L Smith
CNS Archivist & Member of SPBC



# This Years Big Project – Painting the Locks



This autumn, regular boaters and walkers along the Navigation will have noticed a major improvement to the appearance of the locks in the Battyeford area. A CNS team of volunteers has successfully completed a painting programme on three of them. Thanks to all the CNS members who gave their valuable time to brightening up this section of waterway.



Check out the photos to see how much better the locks now look.



From Top to bottom:-

Cooper Bridge Lock

Battyeford Flood Lock

Battyeford Lock



# Good News & Bad News

## Good News for floating pennywort… bad news for everyone else



Despite spending in the region of £100,000 on a campaign to rid the North Eastern waterways of the invasive plant, the Canal & River Trust seems to have lost the 2023 campaign to control the beast. The pennywort has drifted onwards to the furthest outposts of the Aire& Calder and is now competing for space with the shipping in Goole Docks.





## The War on Plastic……..Spot the Balloon Stick!

Study the two photos below of canal and river rubbish in the Calder & Hebble Navigation and see if you can locate any plastic balloon sticks.





New legislation from 1st October this year has banned the use of single use polystyrene cups and trays along with single use plastic cutlery and balloon sticks. Litter pickers along the Navigation have already noticed a reduction in polystyrene trays, but other types of plastic takeaway plates and trays are still legal. One cannot help but conclude that the Government is merely tinkering with the problem.

**Why are they not doing anything about single use plastic bottles?**



# The 2023 Boating Season

Both the Rochdale and Huddersfield Canals have suffered from a series of unplanned stoppages this summer and it has been noticeable that fewer boaters are heading North to visit our scenic waterways. Due to frequent stoppages on the Rochdale Canal, holidaying hire boaters have had to head eastward towards Wakefield far more often than is usually the case. Even the normally reliable Calder & Hebble has suffered from unplanned lock closures and the unseasonable heavy rain led to several days when river levels stopped boat movements on the Calder.

At the height of this year's holiday season, Ganny Lock at Brighouse suffered a structural failure and the Navigation had to be closed. Several of Shire Cruises narrowboats could not get back to base and their customers holidays ground to a halt in Brighouse Basin on 15th August.




Shire Cruises could not get them back to their base in time to prepare the boats for the next hirers and some holidays had to be cancelled.

In October the temporary repairs to Kirklees Top lock failed and another two week closure had to be undertaken to allow permanent repairs to go ahead.

Despite all this disruption, **Savile** sailed on through her summer programme operating trips on 26 days and carrying a grand total of 860 passengers. The trips ranged from the short Brighouse ones in the Spring to full day outings from Battyeford to Brighouse or Dewsbury. Chairperson Peter commented that the crew and shore helpers all know who they are and they all did a wonderful job - let's hope that we can repeat this success next year.



## A new destination for Savile

The reopening of the Bingley Arms at Horbury, under its new name ‘The Bingley’, opens the possibility of a new destination for day trips and late in September, a voyage into the unknown was arranged to see if the new plan was feasible. With eight locks to go through in each direction, there were some doubts as to whether there would be enough time to get to Horbury and allow enough time for a good lunch at the The Bingley.

Savile’s crew were expecting to face delays and difficulties at several of the locks, but their fears proved to be unfounded. CNS’s restaurant critics were also complimentary about the food served at The Bingley. The day out proved to be a complete success.



Here are the intrepid voyagers on their way home, taking time for a post lunch reflection on the joys of navigation and not in the least bit agitated by the thought of their impending transit of the Figure of Three locks.

**So if you would like to try something a little bit different in 2024, get your group together and book Savile to take you to Horbury for lunch.**

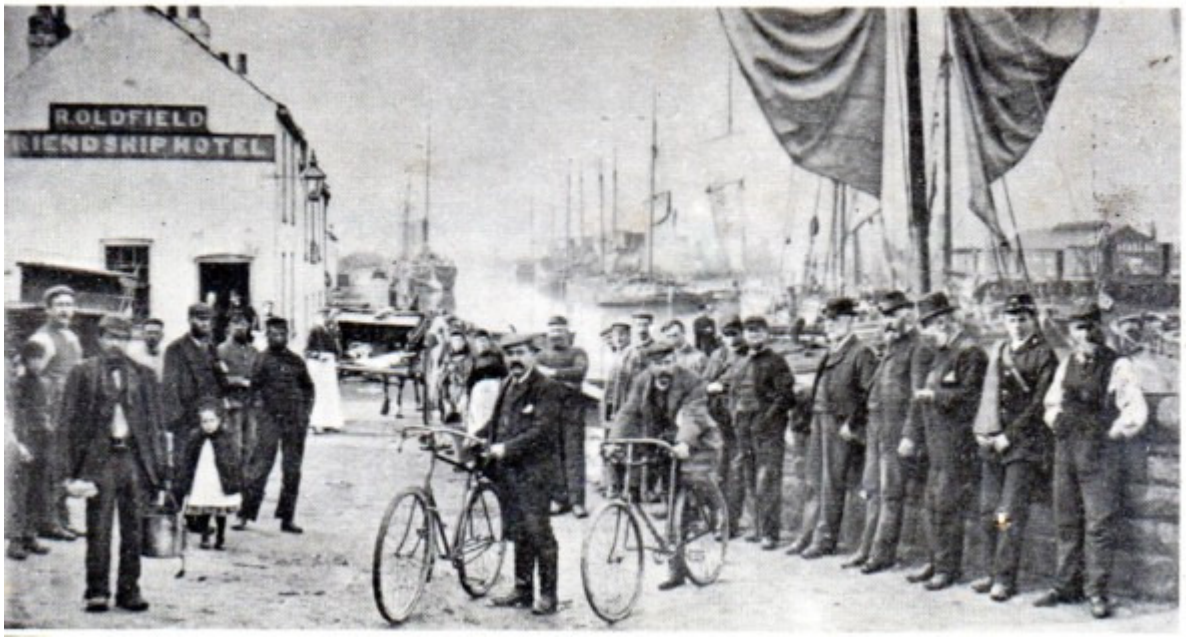


## Spot the Waterway - Results



And a first this time for this feature, Keith Noble has not only identified the location, but he has also provided us with a photo taken at the same location from when he was no'but a lad or perhaps even longer ago than that. Waterways World also printed an almost identical photo to ours in the October issue.

Yes, it is the Stainforth and Keadby Canal at Keadby.




Keith tells us that the Friendship Hotel in his photo was later renamed the Friendly Fox but has since closed down. We have not been able to find out which event had resulted in such a large turn out at this out of the way location, "Le Tour de Lincolnshire" perhaps.

Ten bonus points were also awarded to Keith for correctly identifying the Humber sloop 'Spider T' that appears in our photo.



## Spot the Waterway – New Challenge



This time we feature a waterway a little further away than Keadby, but which one is it?

### 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 the **Calder Navigation Society.**

### Articles & Photos for the Newsletter

Our aim is to publish the newsletter three times a year, in March, July and November. Any articles or photos for the Newsletter should reach me by the first day of the month in which the Newsletter is published. If you would like to write something for the newsletter or have ideas as to what we should be covering, then please get in touch. I can be contacted at:- **editor@calderns.org.uk**

## Stop Press – What do you know about Doreen?

*We have just been approached by a man who is writing a history of Windermere pleasure boats. He has discovered that the original CNS boat Doreen came from Windermere, but he is now seeking further information on her time with CNS and her career since she was replaced by Savile. If you can help with his research, please get in touch with our archivist, John Smith. John can be contacted at:-*

**archivist@calderns.org.uk**