

Calder Navigation Society
Newsletter November 2024



As autumn fades into winter, it is once again time for the winter edition of our Newsletter. This time we feature our very own Colour Supplement on the history of the Navigation. We feature everything from tram roads to shipbuilding…and many thanks to our contributors who have spent hours delving into the past and writing up their results. I hope you find something of interest.

And now…for the very last time…The thoughts of our retiring Chairman

It feels like just yesterday that Avril and I announced at the last AGM our decision to step down from our official CNS duties. Time truly flies, and now, as we prepare to hand over the tiller, I look forward to seeing continued positive progress for our Society.



I took over the Chairman's role from Alan at the 2018 AGM, which means it's been six wonderful years in the chair. Throughout this journey, Avril has been my steadfast partner, managing countless tasks with her characteristic super-efficiency. However, as the years pass, age has a way of catching up, and with my 80th birthday only a couple of years away, it feels like the right moment to retire.

Reflecting on our time with the Society, I can honestly say that Avril and I have enjoyed our roles immensely.

During my tenure, we've undertaken several meaningful projects, such as the refurbishment of the Halfpenny Bridge, various litter-picking initiatives, lock gate paintings, and the Cooper Bridge stable block painting this year. These projects are a continuation of the incredible legacy built over the Society's 56 years—just look at the plaques at Tuel Lane Lock and Brighouse waterfront as reminders of our collective efforts. Beyond the physical tasks, we've also served as a pressure group, persistently advocating with the Canal & River Trust (C&RT) to ensure the right actions are taken, often with successful outcomes.

Over the past year, our efforts have continued with Savile and the many trip bookings. These outings have been greatly enjoyed by members of the public, with many returning for repeat trips—testament to the excellent work of our crews. Having participated in the majority of recent trips, I can confidently say that our volunteers deliver an exceptional experience. The professional standard we've achieved is something we can all be proud of.

Looking to the future, it's time for new hands to guide the Society. At the first committee meeting following the AGM (26th January 2025 14:00 at SPBC), a new committee will be formed, and Officers appointed. Our Vice Chair, John Smith, has graciously offered to take on the role of Chairperson, leaving the position of Vice Chair open. Jerry Holland has also kindly agreed to step into the role of Hon. Membership Secretary, but we still need someone to fill the critical position of Savile Co-ordinator to manage bookings and related responsibilities.

I urge you to consider supporting the Society by stepping into one of these vital roles. Your contributions will help ensure that our Society continues to thrive and build upon its strong foundation.

As for me, I look forward to remaining on the committee and will happily continue my Savile duties, both in maintenance and as a skipper/crew member.

Thank you all for your support and dedication over the years. Avril and I wish you a very Merry Christmas and all the best for the year ahead!

Peter Davies - Chairman



Membership Renewal & Savile's Summer Travels

It's hard to believe another year has almost gone by. As I tend to wear a few hats when it comes to being involved with CNS, I shall deal with one hat at a time beginning with the Membership. The number of members has remained steady and I hope you will all renew when you are asked to send in your Membership renewal forms at the end of the year. I had started a new system a few years ago where I sent a Christmas Card (it is always good to wish everyone a Merry Christmas) and I enclosed your renewal form. Unfortunately, last year I was hospitalised and my stand-in sent out the renewal request via e-mail. I was in no state to argue as I was confined to my hospital bed living in dread of the hospital sprouts with which I was continually threatened if I did not make a recovery in time for Christmas! However, from a more practical, cost-effective view we have decided to keep to that method so you will be receiving your renewal request via e-mail at the end of this year. I am sure you will all be delighted to be in receipt of same at the appropriate time.

I shall remove the Membership hat and replace it with that of the Savile co-ordinator.

Savile had another year of success regarding the trips. We enjoyed the Brighouse forties weekend which was an outstanding success, the South Pennine Boat Club open day and the private trips which took place almost on a weekly basis were all so enjoyable. All in all, we left 100s of people with a smile which makes it all worthwhile. A big thank-you to all who volunteered their help because without them we could not operate and a big thank you to those who help maintain Savile because she always needs to be in good order.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support and I hope we can remain positive as we move forward.

Best Wishes to you all for 2025.

Avril



A reminder to our members about Gift Aid

Because we are a registered Charity, CNS can claim back 25p every time an individual donates £1. So, on a single annual membership of £8 this is £2. On a donation of, say, £20 it is £5. This is called Gift Aid, and it makes a real difference to our income.

The donor must:

- have paid at least as much in Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax in that tax year as CNS want to claim in Gift Aid
- make a Gift Aid declaration that gives CNS permission to claim it

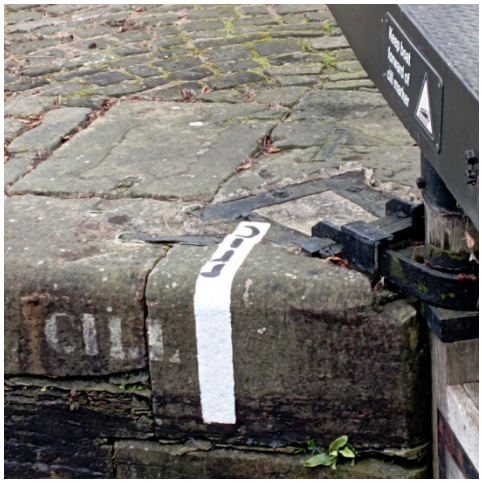
You must also let CNS know if your circumstances change such that you don't pay tax any more.

Increases to some pensions are putting more people into the basic rate tax bracket. So if you earn more than £12570 in the 2024/25 tax year you will probably be paying tax. If some of that income tax is taken off at source, for instance in a work pension, then you may not realise you are paying it.

Please do let our membership secretary (membership@calderns.org.uk) know if you need to either fill in a declaration or tell CNS that you are no longer paying tax so that we can get our records straight, and claim as much Gift Aid as possible. If there is no change then please note we will be sending out new Gift Aid declarations at some point in the next year or so, as we are required to do by HMRC.

Thankyou - Nicki Smith – CNS Treasurer

Spot the Deliberate Mistake!



Paul Hesketh spotted this recently at the Figure of Three locks.

Could the Canal & River Trust have adopted the Cillyric alphabet?

Or are they just Cilly Billies?

Sorry!

No prizes and no apology for the desperate attempts at humour……..



The Annual General Meeting

The next AGM will be held at the **South Pennine Boat Club at Battyeford on Sunday 26th January 2025 at 1400.**

Yes, I hear you say, there is no need for me to attend, I am sure that the officers have the charity in order and the finances seem to be fine, so why bother?

Well that might normally be the case but this time things are a bit different and it would be great if as many members as possible came along to put forward their views.

So, what is different this time?

Firstly, as you may have noted from our Chairman's Report, two stalwarts of the Society, Peter and Avril Davies, are retiring from active service and it will be a chance for as many of us as possible to thank them for their years of hard work in making the society the success it is today.

This of course leads us onto the second good reason for you to attend. The loss of these two experienced officers means we need to review how the society is run and more volunteers are needed to help. Have you any ideas how we could reduce the administrative burden for the committee? Would you like to help running your society? Come along and let us know!

Thirdly, we need to make sure that we are doing all we can to ensure the survival of the Calder & Hebble Navigation. It is certainly true that the Navigation is in as much danger now as it was when the Society came into being over 50 years ago. Are we taking as many steps as we can to ensure the waterway stays open? Do we need to adopt a more high-profile approach? Have you any ideas on what more we could do to advance our cause? Come along and let us know!

And lastly, for the first time, we have a guest speaker to entertain you. David Lowe has been involved with Yorkshire's inland waterways for many years and he is going to tell us about his "Early Life on the Waterways." An event not to be missed!

The AGM is your chance to have your say. Your thoughts and ideas really matter and if you can assist with the running of our charity, then that will be very much appreciated.



The 2024 Summer Project - Cooper Bridge Stables





Before……

The former stable at Cooper Bridge has long been a less than attractive feature of the Navigation. CNS volunteered to repaint it eons ago and earlier this year, the Canal & River Trust finally gave the go- ahead.

During….

Work went ahead in August and the Works Superintendent rounded up a team of keen CNS members to complete the job in record time. Special thanks go to the CRT Brighouse volunteers, all of whom are CNS members, who turned up en-masse to assist. Here we see our leader seated enthroned and casting a critical eye over our efforts.





And After….

You must admit that it is a great improvement.

Well done everybody!



Ye Historical Colour Supplement -Delving into the Past

Tramroads to the Navigation – By Paul Hesketh

The Flockton Waggonway or Newcastle Road

Coal has been extracted in Flockton and Stilington between Wakefield and Huddersfield since the Middle Ages, by outcropping, drift and bell pits. The first recorded pit was opened in 1515. By the 1700s the pits were up to 300 feet (91m) deep. There were several seams of coal; the Flockton Thick was used for producing gas, oil and coke, and was up to 48 inches (122 cm) thick, and the Flockton Thin, an excellent house coal, is about 15 inches (38 cm) thick.

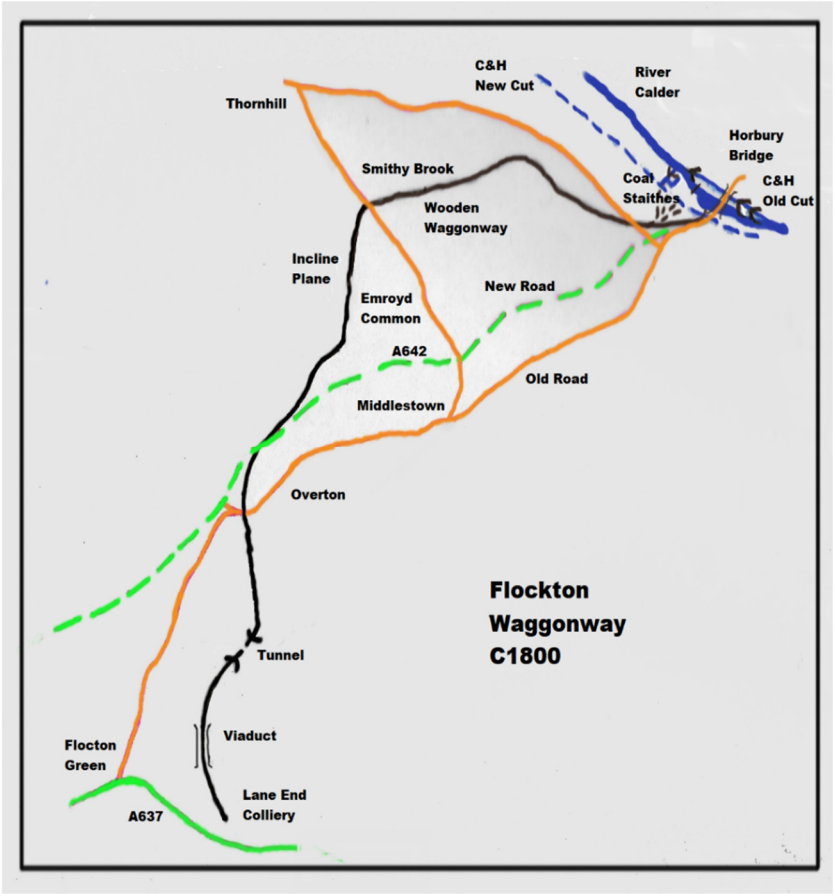
Due to the condition of the local roads even after they were upgraded to turn pike roads, the high cost of the carriage of coal prevented access to a wider market. When the Calder and Hebble Navigation was completed in 1770, just a few miles away this was an opportunity to access a much wider coal market

In 1772 pit owner Richard Miles created a 2 mile (3.2 km) long wooden Waggonway from his pits at Dial Wood (between Flockton and Middlestown) down to the new navigation. The staithes were behind the Bingley Arms pub at Horbury Bridge and the West Country Keels (barges) were loaded at Horbury Pond Wharf below the weir. The waggonway rails would have been of beech, 4 or 5 inches (100 to 125mm) square fastened to oak sleepers. The sleepers set the gauge of track, with the load being carried on the ballast below the rails. The Waggonway was worked by gravity and horses. It was referred to as a Newcastle Road as it was similar to those built around Tyneside. The early wooden waggons carried some 47 cwt (2.4 Tonnes), with the early Keels carrying 25 Ton (25.4 Tonnes) so 10 or 11 waggon loads would be required to fill a keel.

In about 1792, an upper section of track was added, an extra mile (1.6 km) from Lane End Colliery, on the road between Flockton and Midgley. The line ran over a 20-arch viaduct that crossed boggy ground, passed through a tunnel and on the steep section there was a new self-acting incline plane. The single tracked viaduct was built of stone and was 180 feet (55 m) long, 122 inches (3 m) wide between parapets, with an arch span of 6.5 feet (2 m), supporting the track up to 10 feet (3 m) above the ground. The tunnel is about 300 feet (91 m) long, 80 inches (2 m) wide and 90 inches (2.3 m) high. The viaduct is believed to be the world's earliest multi-span railway bridge or viaduct and the tunnel is probably the oldest railway tunnel.



C1816, the wooden Waggonway was upgraded to use cast iron rails, iron chairs supported on stone blocks.



C1839, the Calder and Hebble Navigation new cut was opened, the coal staithes had to be moved from near to the Bingley Arms to four new ones on the wharf, on the north side of the Horbury Bridge turnpike road bridge. The stone staithe abutments can still be seen from the towpath.

C1878, the lower part of the line from Emroyd to Horbury Bridge was upgraded again with flat bottom rail for a Manning Wardle F class steam locomotive.

A national coal miners' strike in 1893 stopped production and the waggonway was closed. It never reopened and by 1895 all the equipment was up for sale.



A Replica of a Horse-Drawn Coal Waggon at Silkstone





The Waggonway Viaduct



The tunnel entrance under New Hall Approach Road

A view inside the tunnel



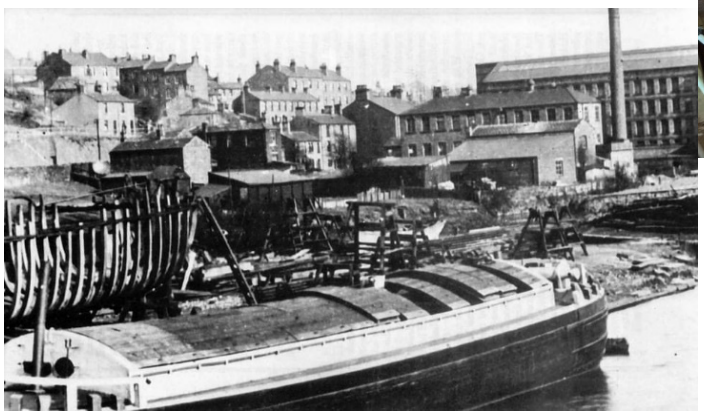


South Pennine Boat Club Site History – The Graving Dock

By John Smith

Our Society Boat Savile has her home mooring at the South Pennine Boat Club (SPBC) and undergoes regular maintenance in the covered dry dock there.





The Club is planning to upgrade the sides of the dry dock to make the environment more weatherproof and hence comfortable to use in the winter months. As part of this project a substantial amount of research has been done in to the history of the site which was a former boat building yard. Boats would be built on land which was excavated to form the basin at SPBC and then launched sideways into the Cut.

Early maps of the site refer to the dry dock as a “Graving Dock” so it was with interest I decided to try find out more about why it was called a graving dock. I found a couple of explanations. The earliest use of Graving I found was the dismantling of old wooden ships to salvage parts to build new ones, i.e. end of life, soul and legal entity of the vessel. Later graving became a nautical term for the scraping and cleaning of boat hulls to remove barnacles and then to tar or re-paint them.

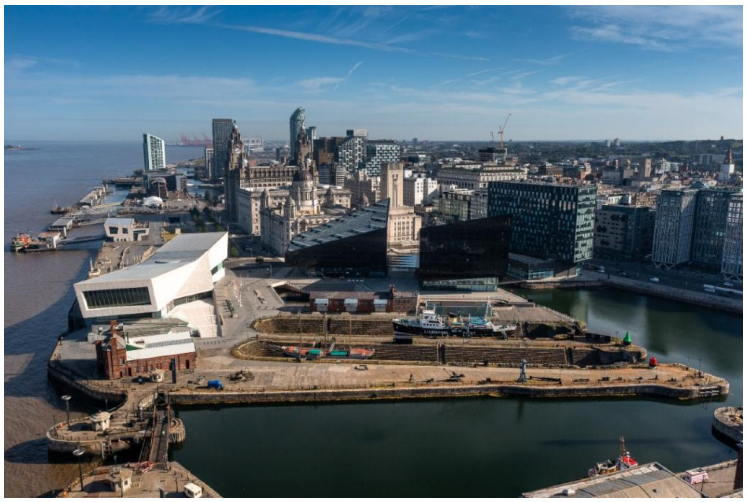






The site at SPBC is of heritage interest because there are very few graving docks now compared to previously. During the restoration of the dock the stone cobbled floor was protected and preserved under a new concrete floor due to the heritage interest.

At the height of our nation's dominance of seafaring, graving docks were to be found in major ports and shipbuilding areas such as Belfast, Govan and at Canning Dock on the waterfront at Liverpool. Inspecting the ships after a voyage was key to ensuring their safety for the next voyage. Keeping the hulls clean made the vessels faster and speed was key to efficient transporting of goods around the oceans. Unfortunately, this included transport of slaves on some routes.



With the increase in size and tonnage of modern ships these docks became too small and so they fell into disrepair. Some however are now being brought back into use as tourist attractions, such as Canning Dock in Liverpool and the Hamilton Dock in Belfast or as sites on which to centre new developments around the old docks as is the case at Govan.

John L Smith – CNS Archivist



The loss of the "Faugh-A-Ballagh"

On 10th January 1873, the schooner "Faugh-A-Ballagh" sailed from London bound for Rotterdam and was subsequently reported missing. She was presumed lost with all hands, just one of thousands of ships that disappeared in the age of sail taking their crews with them. At the time of her loss, she was owned by George Byass of Hull and was also registered there.

She came to my attention as she was built by Peter Thornton at Mirfield in 1849. At the time of her loss she was reported to be 76 feet long. Three questions immediately came to mind. How can a ship of this length travel from Mirfield to Hull on a navigation with locks only 57 feet long and whereabouts in Mirfield was she built? And lastly, "Faugh-A-Ballagh" sounds Irish, not Yorkshire, so why give the vessel this name?

The first question was resolved when I discovered that following completion at Mirfield in 1849, she was substantially rebuilt and lengthened in 1852, so she was no doubt originally built shorter to allow her to navigate the Calder & Hebble Navigation. Further investigations show that she was just 55 feet long with a beam of 12.6 feet when first completed so she would have had no problems sailing down the Navigation to the sea.

In the past, barges were built at Shepley Bridge, Ledgard Bridge and Battyeford but I have not been able to trace Mr Thornton's yard. I suspect she was built at Ledgard Bridge as that yard was operated by Thornton & Jackson in its later years and in 1829, a Peter Thornton, boatbuilder, married a daughter of Mr Jackson, ship owner, at Mirfield. Not really conclusive evidence, can anyone confirm which yard it was?

At the time of her loss there were 9 vessels in the British registry called 'Faugh-A-Ballagh', so it was clearly a popular name but what does it mean? Dig a little deeper and we find that it is a battle cry first used by soldiers of the 2nd Battalion of the 87th Regiment at the Battle of Barrosa in 1811. It is an anglicised version of an Irish battle cry meaning 'Clear the Way" and later became the motto of the Royal Irish Regiment.

Perhaps we should adopt it as our battle cry when 'Savile' is hindered by slow moving boats ahead.



Exploring Halifax's Hidden Waterway: A Guided Walk Along the Halifax Branch of the Calder and Hebble Navigation

By Daniel Taylor

I recently had the privilege of joining a guided walk along the Halifax Branch of the Calder & Hebble Navigation. This fascinating event was part of the Heritage Open Days initiative and was organised by *Halifax Heritage Tours CIC*. Led by an enthusiastic and well-informed guide, the walk offered insights into the history, engineering marvels, and industrial importance of this lesser-known canal.



A Journey Through Time

Starting at the Salterhebble Basin, opposite the once charming Lockkeeper's Cottage, our group embarked on a 1½ mile trek tracing the path of the now-defunct Halifax Branch canal. Despite the modern surroundings, the remnants of the canal's infrastructure whispered stories of a bygone era.

Our guide began with the context of the branch's creation, highlighting the financial challenges and engineering brilliance involved in linking Halifax to the main Calder and Hebble Navigation. This short canal extension was crucial for Halifax's industrial boom, providing a lifeline for transporting coal, raw materials, and goods to the town's mills and factories. However, the route's steep gradient and the resistance from mill owners along Hebble Brook made its construction both contentious and costly.

Engineering Feats and Fascinating Details

As we walked along the start of the Hebble Trail, the remnants of the canal locks, bridges, and retaining walls emerged like hidden treasures in the wooded landscape. Today, the silence of nature has reclaimed most of this area.



One of the tour's highlights was learning about the innovative pumphouse system at Siddal. The canal faced a significant challenge: a lack of natural water sources for the locks, which required tens of thousands of litres for each operation. The solution? A sophisticated water-recycling system using side ponds, tunnels, and a beam engine to transfer water between reservoirs.

From Decline to Revival

The canal branch's closure, due to declining use and maintenance costs, marked the end of an era. Yet, it was heartening to hear how efforts of the community and local authority transformed this stretch into a nature trail, preserving its history and offering a tranquil escape.

Halifax Heritage Tours CIC

The event was made possible by the volunteers of Halifax Heritage CIC, whose mission is to promote and preserve the town's heritage. Proceeds from their events support educational projects, ensuring that Halifax's rich history continues to inspire future generations. Find out more at www.halifaxheritage.co.uk

Reflections on the Walk

As a member of the Calder Navigation Society, the walk was a positive reminder of how our waterways have shaped communities, industries, and landscapes. The Halifax Branch may be masked under decades of change, but its legacy endures, thanks to the efforts of passionate individuals and organisations.

I left the walk with a deeper appreciation of Halifax's industrial heritage. Events like these are vital in connecting us to the past and inspiring us to safeguard it for the future. If you've yet to explore the Halifax Branch or take part in a Heritage Open Days event, I can recommend it. Plan your visit at www.heritageopendays.org.uk



Waterside Buildings

In our last inaction packed issue, we bemoaned the lack of any developments with the Cooper Bridge Stables and Salterhebble Lock Cottage. This time we can be much more positive. At long last CNS received instructions in black and white from the Canal & River Trust for the stable at Cooper Bridge and the building is now resplendent in a new colour scheme. Yes, you guessed it, black and white. More details on this project are on Page 6.

At Brighouse, the new owner of the Old Lock House is undertaking a major refurbishment to the property and a similar project is being undertaken by the owner of the Cooper Bridge Lock Cottage. Even the Canal and River Trust has been working at Cooper Bridge and has replaced the access bridge to the cottage.



That just leaves us with Salterhebble Lock Cottage and despite appearances, there is positive news. Calderdale Council received a planning application for the new roof in September and as I write this the planning consultation period is almost at an end. The Trust expect to have contractors on site later this month and once works are completed, will put the building up for auction. We can only hope that the successful bidders are as positive as the owners at Brighouse and Cooper Bridge and maintain the building in a good condition.

Stop Press – Salterhebble Cottage is now scheduled for auction on 4th December.



Salterhebble Road Works – Almost Complete

There are currently two major bridge construction sites on the Navigation. The railway viaduct at Ravensthorpe is still in the early stages of construction but the new road bridge at Salterhebble is now in use and the canal towpath is once again passable from Elland to Saterhebble Locks.





Not content to be Bridge 13A or something equally boring, the new road bridge is named The Laura Annie Willson Bridge. Like me, you probably thought that this was a spelling error. Everyone knows Wilson only has one “L”. But just like me you would be wrong; the spelling is correct. But who was Laura Annie?

She was born in Halifax in 1877 and started work in a textile mill at a young age. Despite her humble beginnings, she rose to prominence as a champion of women’s rights. Laura became a leading suffragette, was twice imprisoned for her activism, and later became a founding member of the Women’s Engineering Society. After World War I, she also dedicated herself to improving housing conditions for the working class, designing and overseeing the construction of affordable homes.

Through her work, Willson broke multiple barriers for women in male-dominated industries and demonstrated the importance of combining social activism with practical engineering solutions.

There is no doubt that such a prominent daughter of Calderdale deserves to have a bridge named after her.





SUP Yorkshire takes to the Navigation

Look said I “A flotilla of stand-up water boarders”. No, said my wife, “it’s fun, not torture! You mean Stand Up Paddleboarding”

SUP Yorkshire is a community group of paddleboarders from across Yorkshire. They organise regular outings to rivers and canals in the region and here are some of the twenty-four members that paddled their way up the Navigation from Elland to Sowerby Bridge on 3rd November. It looked like a grand social occasion and it was good to see some activity on this canal section of the Navigation.

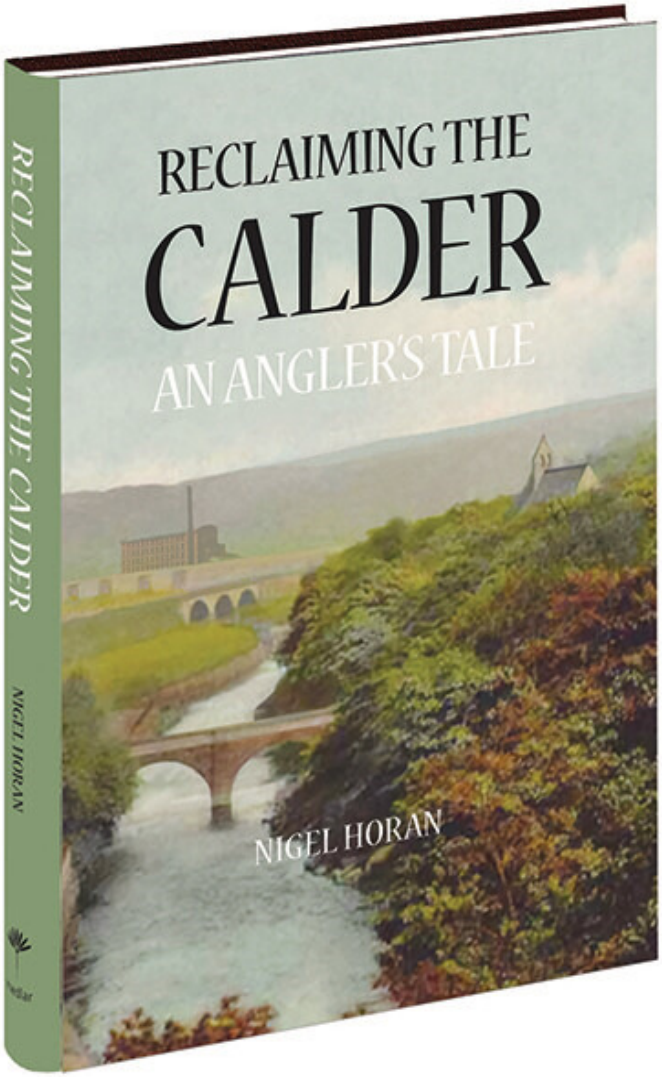
And here they are posed for a group photo next to the old corn mill at Woodside Mills Lock.

If you would like to know more, they can be found on Facebook. Just search for **SUP Yorkshire.**





From Paddleboarding to Fishing



Reclaiming The Calder – An Angler's Tale has just been published by Medlar Press and might be just what a Society member with an interest in fishing might love as a Christmas present. As the publisher's blurb says:-

"This is the story of a river. Although it is not a long river, it had the power to drive the Industrial Revolution and make a major contribution to the financial might of Britain in the 19th century. The river's reward for this contribution was pollution. It was stripped of its extensive stocks of game and coarse fish for the whole of its 44 miles. It was left in such a state that a government commission in 1867 reported: 'The Calder throughout its course is abused, obstructed and polluted to an extent scarcely conceivable from Todmorden down to Castleford.'"

The author describes the history of the Calder and its rebirth as an attractive destination for anglers. Although primarily aimed at the angling community, it is also of interest to anyone who wants to know more about the history of the River Calder. Full details can be found at:-

https://www.medlarpress.com/code/bookshop?store-page=Reclaiming-the-Calder-p605544923



The Battyeford Island Bin Saga

Earlier this year C&RT announced that as a cost cutting measure, they had decided to remove most of the rubbish bins on their land, this included the one situated at the entrance to Battyeford Island. In June of this year CNS asked C&RT to reconsider as people were of the impression that a bin was still in situ but it was of the invisible variety! Consequently, people deposited rubbish, mainly in the form of dog poo bags into the invisible bin.



Despite our pleas to C&RT to replace said bin they fell on deaf ears claiming that they no longer could afford to pay a contractor to service the bin whereas it was always one of their own staff who emptied it on a weekly basis! CNS tidied the area until sometime in September someone decided to hang a black bin bag on the fence which rapidly filled to overflowing, see photo on the left.

Our chairperson passed the word to SPBC members and Mirfield residents via Facebook to use an “app” Called Love Clean Streets whereby the local council would be informed via the app of the mess. The case was also taken up by the Commodore of SPBC who is also a CNS supporter. He lobbied C&RT and Kirklees Council threatening TV coverage if nothing was done! Miracle of miracles, on the very same day it all disappeared, C&RT deny responsibility, so we assume that the Council did the right thing – well done to them! See photo on the right.





Spot the Waterway – Results



Congratulations to Nigel Stevens, the first to correctly identify Bugsworth Canal Basin. Sited at the head of navigation of the Peak Forest Canal, it was once the largest and busiest inland port on Britain's narrow canal system and is the only one to survive intact. Benjamin Outram, built the 14 mile long Peak Forest Canal from Dukinfield to Bugsworth and in 1795 the six mile Peak Forest Tramway was built to link the Basin to the limestone and gritstone quarries in Derbyshire. Business boomed until the railways took trade from the canal and the Basin was eventually abandoned.

In 1968 volunteers of the Inland Waterways Protection Society started to restore the canal and basins and they were re-opened in 2005. The Bugsworth Basin Heritage Trust now looks after this historic site.

Spot the Waterway – The next challenge.



So where could this possibly be? Will you be the first to reply this time?



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

Thanks to Paul Hesketh, John Smith and Daniel Taylor for providing articles for the Colour Supplement.

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**

