

Calder Navigation Society
Newsletter March 2025

Shiver Me Timbers!



Nobody was going anywhere on the Navigation when this photo was taken on 12th January. We certainly had our share of ice, rain and wind this winter, but let's hope it warms up a bit for when Savile's trip programme starts in Brighouse in late April.

Good News & Bad News

Good News – A few of you will be thinking "This is a bonus. I never renewed my membership but they have still sent me a Newsletter……

Bad News – But unless these same few take action to renew their membership, this is the very last Newsletter they will receive. Please think about it and if you have changed your mind, contact Jerry to renew at membership@calderns.org.uk

Good News – For the many members who have renewed their membership, you will be helping the society to continue the campaign to preserve and improve our local waterways. You get a chance to crew Savile and priority for booking trips on Savile, and last but least you will continue to receive your Newsletter.



A few thoughts from our new Chairperson – John Smith

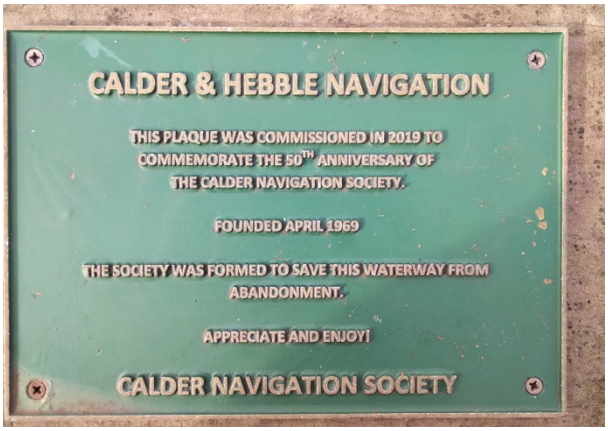
As I write these notes having taken over from Peter Davies, I think some words of appreciation are due for the fantastic work done by him and Avril over the years. I was at the meeting when Peter took over 7 years ago, and the Society has prospered under their guidance and diligent work. With the new team at the helm, I sincerely hope we can follow their example, and the Society will continue to thrive for many years to come.

I'm sitting at my laptop now and the sun is shining. The signs are that Spring is finally here. I hope you all feel as inspired and invigorated as I do to get out and enjoy the waterways and all they have to offer.

Savile has undergone her annual spruce up and is ship shape for the new season and, under the leadership of Richard Potter and his wife Heather, we will be offering boat trips as usual at events in Brighouse and occasional charters as we aim to increase awareness of the waterways and the benefit they bring to all.

The wildlife and particularly the birds are busy as they start their nesting season. Why not get out and take advantage of the good weather with a walk along the towpath as the trees start to bud and come into leaf? I can thoroughly recommend a visit to the Cromwell Bottom Nature Reserve between Brookfoot and Elland and particularly the bird feeding station where an amazing variety of feathered friends can be seen at this time of year. A great time to visit for old and young, and an easy stroll along the Navigation from either Brookfoot or Elland.

As a Society we aim to promote awareness of the waterways and lobby for their maintenance and preservation for all to enjoy, whether boating, walking, jogging, cycling, fishing or gongoozling. I hope as Chair to get to know more of you, the members, and that together we can inspire others to join us in our appreciation of the waterways. In the meantime, get out there, and as our 50th Anniversary Plaques in Brighouse and Mirfield say, "Appreciate and enjoy!"







Thank You Peter & Avril

Peter and I would like to express our heartfelt thanks for the card and gifts you so kindly presented to us at the last Committee meeting, as we officially stepped down from our roles with the Calder Navigation Society.

We are delighted to see John Smith take on the role of Chairperson, with Dan Taylor as his deputy, Jerry Holland as Membership Secretary, and Heather and Richard Potter as the new Savile Coordinators. It is reassuring to know that CNS is in such capable hands.

It has been a pleasure to contribute to the Society and help keep it afloat over the years. We are deeply grateful for all the support, time, and effort you have so generously given—not just to the Society, but to us as well. Most of all, we want to thank you for your friendship.

We wish the Society every success in the future.

Kindest regards,
Avril & Peter



The Annual Drydocking

This year's docking took place in February and Savile is now looking in pristine condition for the coming season. Fortunately, there were no big 'one off' jobs to do this year, just the normal annual blacking and touch up for the rest of the paintwork.



As you can see, Anti Rust protection has been applied to the hull and the name board removed for refurbishment.

Here is John Elam painting on the blacking to protect the hull for another year.

As part of the docking, the dreaded Safety Inspector arrived to undertake the statutory inspection. And yes, Savile passed.





And finally back afloat, with the CNS Engineering Superintendent at the helm, Savile is gleaming and ready for a summer of fun.



2025 – The Savile Programme



The plan this year follows the established pattern of the last few years. We need to generate enough income to pay for Savile's licences, insurance, maintenance and fuel as well as introducing as many people as possible to the Navigation.

The best way we have found to cover both aims is to run short trips from Brighouse when there are events on in the town and this year Savile will be in Brighouse for the Spring Market on **Sunday 27th April** and on **Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th June** for the 1940s Weekend. These trips are a perfect introduction to the Navigation, so if you have not been before, come and join us for a short trip. The trips set sail from the towpath behind Sainsbury's. They are very popular and to make sure you can get aboard, please come and book in advance with the team on the towpath as soon as you get to Brighouse. The team will be there to take bookings from 0945.

For the rest of the boating season, we offer day trips from the South Pennine Boat Club at Battyeford. The most popular day trip is to Brighouse and back but some groups prefer to visit Dewsbury instead. We can also tailor our trips to fit your requirements. We have few bookings so far this year and are offering a priority booking service for CNS members for the next few weeks. So if you would like to book a day out for friends or family, now is the time to get in touch with me at savile@calderns.org.uk The boat can comfortably accommodate up to 10 passengers and all we ask is a minimum donation of £80 for society funds. Most boat operators are charging over £20 per person now for a one-hour excursion so you can see what a great bargain Savile is for a superb day out on the water. So don't delay, book now as the **Early Bird Member's Priority ends on 27th April 2025**.



Crewing Savile



One of the most enjoyable experiences you can have as a member of the society is the chance to join Savile as a member of the crew. Unless you own your own boat or can afford to hire a narrowboat for a few days, there are very few opportunities to cruise our local waterways for free. Membership of CNS gives you that opportunity.

Many members already volunteer to crew the boat, but if you have not volunteered in the past, why not sign up and try it. You do not need any previous experience, we will make sure that you join an experienced crew who can show you the ropes, as well as all the other aspects of navigating the waterway.

Savile has a crew of four on our excursions, a skipper/helmsman, two crew to work the locks and one to look after our passengers and keep them all safe. Join the crew and you can have a go at all these tasks.

If you would like to join our team of volunteer crew members, please contact me at savile@calderns.org.uk



The Grand Summer Project

It all started a few years ago when CNS led a group of keen Mirfield volunteers who repainted the Ha'penny Bridge over the Calder next to the South Pennine Boat Club.

Since then, a further three projects have been carried out. In 2022, Kirklees Top and Bottom Locks were repainted and in 2023, Cooper Bridge, Battyeford Flood Lock and Battyeford Lock itself received the same treatment. Following a series of delays whilst the Canal & River Trust made up their minds about the colour scheme, the 2024 project to repaint Cooper Bridge stables finally went ahead. There is no doubt that CNS volunteers have played a significant part in brightening up some of the major features of the Calder & Hebble Navigation….



So why stop now? Here's a challenge that could do with a full repaint!

The Double Locks at Thornhill near Dewsbury would look far better if the locks were repainted and CNS is hoping to have a go at it this year. Peter Davies may have stepped down as Chairman, but he is still very keen to improve the Navigation and will be leading CNS members in carrying out this project.

I am sure you will be keen to help when he calls for volunteers to help.



Transpennine Route Upgrade

Now that this major railway rebuild is in full swing, it is starting to have a much greater impact on the local canals, some good and some bad…

The Good



As well as upgrading the railway, some smaller projects are taking place to improve access to local stations. The towpath from central Mirfield to Shepley Bridge is being surfaced to make it a more attractive route for walkers and cyclists heading from the Shepley Bridge area to Mirfield Station. Money from the TRU has been given to the Canal & River Trust for the work and it is now going ahead as can be seen from this view along Lowlands Road in Mirfield. Our Mirfield correspondent reports that they are doing an excellent job

The Not so Good

The Rail Upgrade includes considerable work on road, rail and canal bridges and a result of this is the closure of sections of towpath for long periods.

I was planning to look at the work at Lock 2 on the Huddersfield Broad Canal but as you can see from the photo – you cannot get passed Lock 1.





Ye Historical Colour Supplement -Delving into the Past

Ordnance Survey Bench Marks – By Paul Hesketh

Have you seen one of these marks before? Do you know what they were for?
Warning: Looking for them can be addictive!



I've seen these marks all over the country but until recently, I ignored them as I thought they were stone masons' marks. Last year I noticed the marks were marked on old Ordnance Survey maps and started to look for them on my walks.



Hill walkers are familiar with Trig Pillars AKA Trig Points, concrete posts located on hill tops, originally you could see at least two more pillars from each one, but over the years some have been removed. Using triangulation between Trig Pillars their exact positions have been determined. From 1936, over 6500 were installed across the country to help the Ordnance Survey to create more detailed maps. Most Trig Pillars also include Flush Bracket Benchmarks as seen on the photo to the right

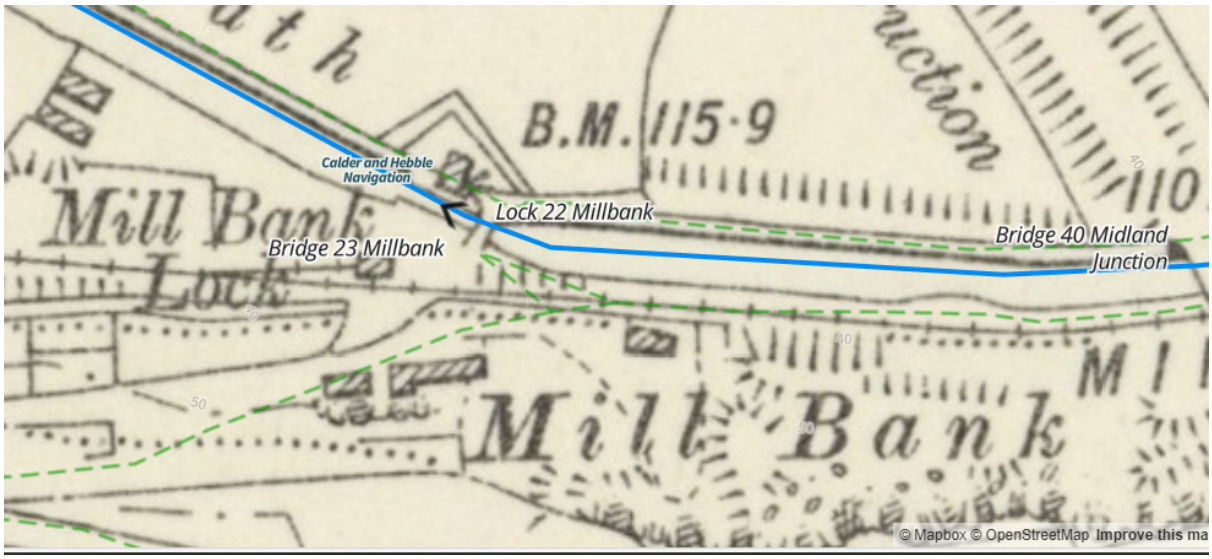
Benchmarks have been made by Ordnance Survey all over the country to indicate known heights. They can be found everywhere on public buildings, churches, private houses, bridges, mileposts, canal locks etc. They were made between 1831 and 1993 to record the height above mean sea level, known as Ordnance Datum Newlyn (ODN) in Cornwall. They are usually cut into stone or brick walls, but sometimes made of metal



A good example of a Flush Bracket Benchmark is at Horbury Bridge under the old railway viaduct where it crosses the A road. A special tool can be attached to the metal bracket for a more accurate horizontal reading.

By the Calder and Hebble Navigation towpath, under or on bridges and locks there are 2 types of Benchmarks, on vertical walls cut marks and horizontal cut marks with a metal rivet.





At Millbank Lock, old Ordnance Survey Maps on MAPbox and OpenStreetMap show a benchmark on the lock keeper's hut. B.M. 115.9 means the horizontal line is 115.9 feet [35.32 m] above sea level. The Hut was removed a long time ago, only the concrete base remains. As you can see on the photo below, there is also a Bench Mark on the bridge that I can't find on the map.









There are also a number of horizontal marks by the locks along the Navigation. These marks normally have a rivet. They can be very difficult to spot. This one is at Brighouse Top Lock.

My favourite example is near the M62 Bridge, next to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway boundary marker stone and on top of the 14 mile marker from Fall Ings.

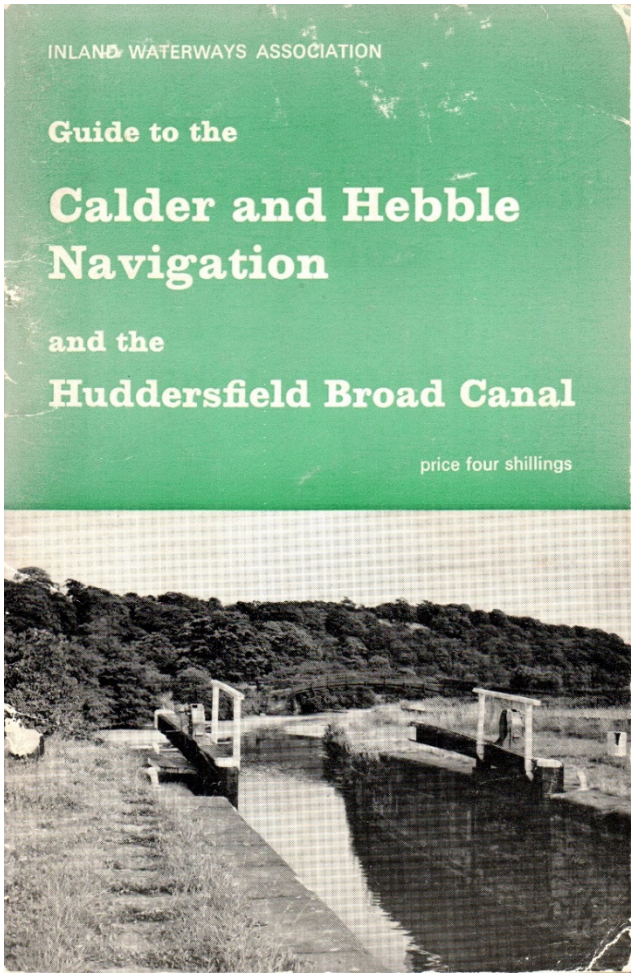


There is a lot of information online; I use OpenCanalMap (historical map), OS Benchmark Archive (map) and HistoricEngland (map).

Comparing different maps, there might have been about 55 marks near to the C&HN, but there were over half a million nationwide. Many have disappeared as buildings have been demolished, roads widened, bridges replaced etc. But as canals haven't been developed as much, more have been left in place along the waterways. Benchmarks have given me a new excuse to walk the Navigation and find them.



Then and Now – Something from our Archives

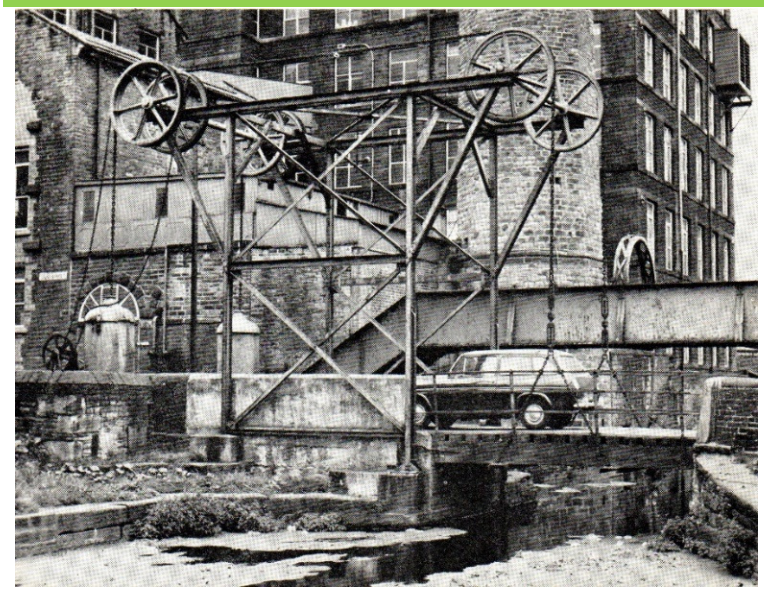


One of the benefits of being the Archivist for the Calder Navigation Society is the access to a variety of interesting items. Occasionally new items are added to our collection and the latest contribution is an Inland Waterways Association booklet, "Guide to the Calder and Hebble Navigation and the Huddersfield Broad Canal". This was kindly donated to our collection by David Burniston.
I can't find a date of publication in it, but David suggested circa 1970. If so, that was only a year after our formation, and we are listed as Calder Navigation Society under the Useful Addresses and Telephone Numbers on the inner cover.

Perhaps some sleuths amongst you can date it more precisely from the following clues:

- price four shillings (two florins if anyone remembers them!)
- many of the locks must have had lock keepers because there is a list of locks with telephone numbers – oh if only we could go back to those days!
- the telephone numbers were only 4 or 5 digits and listed with the area name rather than area code, e.g. Mirfield 3649 for Greenwood Lock, Brighouse 2650 for Anchor Pit and Halifax 62601 for Salterhebble.
- Special Navigational Notes request "It would be helpful if prior notice of intention to cruise above Brighouse be given to the Section Inspector (Mirfield 2151 or 3561)"
- Central Garage (Mirfield 2281) offered New and Used Cars for sale and held the distributorship for cars from the Austin and M.G. stables, and their logo coincidentally was a stagecoach.





Picture clue - who knows the brand and model of car on the Locomotive Bridge at Turnbridge and approximately what year these were on the roads?

No prizes I'm afraid, I don't know the answer either.

Amongst the other photos in the booklet are several taken on the Navigation, so I thought I'd share a Then and Now with you for interest.

Then



Battyeford Cut with the site of Helm Farm on the towpath side and what is now the linear moorings of South Pennine Boat Club on the right.



Now

The towpath side of the Cut is now Waterside Walk and has been developed for housing. The linear moorings on the right have been extended and improved considerably by the boat club.



John L Smith – CNS Archivist

Diana Investigates…….

Following publication of our last Historical Supplement, super sleuth Diana Monahan got to work and found more information on two of last times stories.

Laura Annie Willson – You've seen her bridge, and now thanks to Diana here is a photograph of the lady herself.





Mirfield Boat Builders

In the last Newsletter I guessed that the **Faugh A-Ballagh** had been built at Ledgard Bridge but could not be sure. Diana's investigations and a search of the Newspaper Archive have not been able to confirm this. It seems that the boatbuilding Thorntons were active in Mirfield for almost the entire 19th century and built vessels at all three Mirfield yards. George Thornton and his brothers were active at Shepley Bridge in 1842. Peter Thornton was at Ledgard Bridge in 1858 and William Thornton was at Battyeford the same year. By 1884 Peter Thornton was active at Shepley Bridge and Ledgard Bridge and Joseph & George Thornton were boatbuilding in Manchester. So there you have it…total confusion but we can say for certain that the Thornton family built boats at Mirfield.

Diana also came across a press article from 1939 that shattered another of my illusions. I had always thought that some of Savile's crew were the oldest and nimblest boatmen on the Navigation…… but this is what the report said.

Seventy Years on the Canals

So ran the headline in a local paper back in early 1939 when it reported on the golden wedding of Mr. Tom Priestley and his wife Mary Ann. Halifax's Captain Tom, aged just 76, was described as the oldest and nimblest boatman on the Calder & Hebble Navigation. He was captain, mate and crew of the **Velocity**, a barge owned by William Dutton & Sons of Elland, and spent his working days alone on the barge taking coal from Wakefield and the South Yorkshire coal pits to Thornhill Power Station. The **Velocity** could carry about 60 tons of coal and with the aid of horses and a steam packet, she maintained a regular service to the power station.

Tom was born at Brookfoot to boating parents and spent his childhood aboard their barge. There were no facilities for educating him on the barge and he went through life without being able to read and write but he made up for his deficiency by his encyclopaedic knowledge of northern rivers and waterways. In his younger days Mr Priestley had navigated his barges along the Aire & Calder, the Ouse and Humber to Hull but by 1939 his voyages were much shorter.

His wife had started work in a worsted mill at the age of eight, but after her marriage she spent much time aboard Tom's barge. She remembered some boatmen's wives having to pull the boat along the canal whilst their husband's stood at the tiller. She said this happened with the narrow salt barges that came to Sowerby bridge from Runcorn and Wigan.



Watching the boats go by on YouTube

There are days when the British weather means that it seems a much better idea to spend a day in front of the TV watching boaters on the screen, rather than heading through the wind and rain to the waterside. So why not go boating with YouTube?

Most of you will be familiar with Robbie Cummings whose **Canal Boat Diaries** has broken out of YouTube on to mainstream TV. His programmes for the BBC and Channel 5 can be found on “Catch Up” TV Apps, but there is also an extensive collection of his videos on YouTube. I particularly like his series on the Pocklington Canal. The videos all feature a Pub of the Week spot that failed to make the cut for TV. Just the channel for CAMRA boaters.

Cruising The Cut is another popular YouTube channel that tends to be a bit more technical. His latest video comes with the gripping title of “Fixing the Morse throttle control on my narrowboat.”. That is perhaps an extreme example and some of the videos are very good. One on crossing the Wash by narrowboat had me gripped. This is perhaps the best one for the technically minded narrow boater.

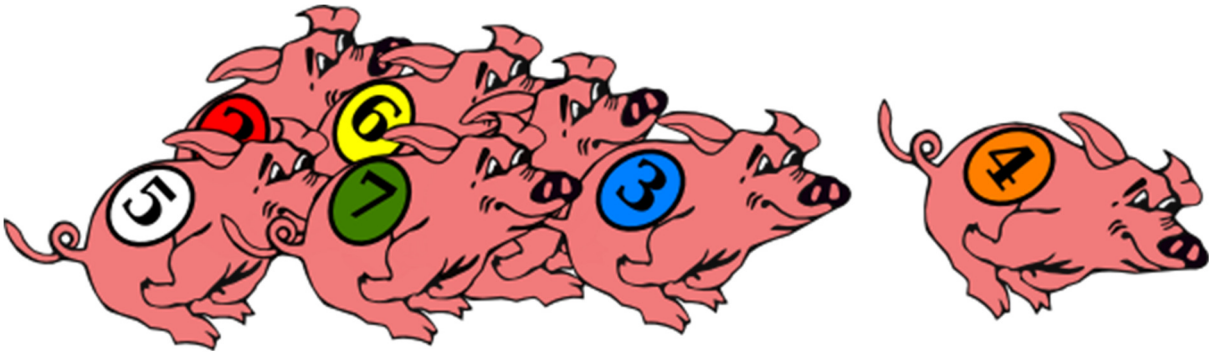
Far less technical but very well informed about the waterways are the **Foxes Afloat.** If you like to navigate through plenty of innuendo, these are the two men for you. Like several other boating YouTubers, they have left the waterways and have moved to live on a croft in Scotland but the earlier boating videos are still available. My favourite on this channel is when they used the Ribble Link to get to the Lancaster Canal. Not a trip for the faint-hearted.

Another pair that are still living afloat are **Taylors Aboard a Narrowboat**. At least they thought they were living afloat, until they decided to spend the winter on the Bridgewater Canal. Following the breach they have been aground for most of the winter and have spent a great deal of time videoing the result of the breach and the subsequent work to rewater the canal.

My current favourite is **The Mindful Narrowboat**. She concentrates on wildlife along the canals and in nearby nature reserves and is clearly very knowledgeable. A bonus is that she spent the winter on the Rochdale Canal and sailed along the Calder & Hebble in the past few weeks. She is now sailing towards Goole on the Aire & Calder and plans to go first to Sheffield before a comprehensive tour of the North Eastern waterways in the summer.



Attention! Never mind the horses or the greyhounds, how about a Pig Race…..but you will have to be quick!



The South Pennine Boat Club have invited Calder Navigation Society members to their annual Charity Pig Race evening which is a fundraiser for the Forget Me Not Children's Hospice. It is a fun evening and children are particularly welcome as they thoroughly enjoy it!

The event will be held on the evening of Saturday April 5th 2025 at the Boat Club where the bar will open at 7pm with the first race at 7:30pm, bring lots of £1 coins as this is the minimum stake.

Roast pork sandwiches will be available for a small fee. So that there will be enough sandwiches for everyone, please email social@southpennineboatclub.co.uk or text Dianne on 07979967451, orders by 1 April please.

STOP PRESS – Invasive vandal creates mayhem on Savile



In an earlier Newsletter, we discussed invasive species but never thought one would invade **Savile**. But this week it has happened. A mink has broken in and made a real mess of the boat. The mink's dining and toileting habits clearly leave a lot to be desired and he even left the remains of his fish supper behind.

Many thanks to Peter Davies who has spent hours cleaning the boat and is shown here with the remains of the invader's meal.

Steps are now being taken to try and rid the Boat Club of the mink menace.



Waterside Buildings Again

Homes Under The Hammer

Surely not more about the Salterhebble Lock Cottage, I hear you say…..



Following the repairs to the roof, the cottage was finally auctioned in December 2024. Despite being advertised with a Guide Price just over **£90,000**, it went for a mere **£238,000**. It seems that two or more people had Grand Designs on the place. Maybe they liked the Location, Location, Location. Whatever the price, the cottage is looking far better than it has done for several years.

A Bridge for Cooper Bridge



The access bridge to the Lock Cottage at Cooper Bridge has also been replaced and the lock is no longer one of the gloomiest and dilapidated locations on the Navigation. A renovated cottage, painted stables and even a new bridge. There is of course just one downside to this improving picture. Boaters still get far longer to take in the view at this lock as it fills very, very, very, very slowly.

Other historic buildings

There are of course many more historic buildings along the waterway and if you want to know more, Historic England have an excellent map on their website which allows you to locate all listed buildings along the Navigation. It can be found at:- https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search



We Have Lift Out



One of the most intractable and expensive problems facing the Canal & River Trust is what to do about boats that have been abandoned, belong to people who will not pay their dues or that represent a danger to other canal users. There must be thousands of boats like this all over the inland waterways cluttering up valuable mooring spaces and making no contribution whatsoever to the Trust's finances.

For at least three years, the small yacht in the photo had been moored locally, initially at Anchor Pit as a liveaboard and for the last couple of years lying abandoned at Brighouse.

The Trust must have finally been through all the necessary legal processes and contractors were hired recently to tow it to Battyeford where it was lifted out and driven away to a suitable storage place.

One down, two more to go, just to clear Brighouse Basin. The two remaining problem boats are a small narrowboat that has disgraced itself by sinking twice so far this year, once at Cooper Bridge and again at Brighouse. The second boat is a GRP cruiser without name or registration number that has been at the centre of a couple of police incidents in recent months and now seems to have been abandoned altogether. Both these two are tied up at the Visitor Moorings in Brighouse and will be in the way once the cruising season gets under way shortly.



Spot the Waterway – Results



This one was just too easy and was spotted by several of our members.

Yes, you are right, it is the Bridgewater Canal at Worsley.

This canal occupies a central place in the history of inland navigation in Britain as it was the first true canal to be built in Britain. The Duke of Bridgewater was keen to find a better way of delivering coal from his Worsley mines to the growing town of Manchester. After a visit to Europe to see the continental waterways, he returned and commenced work on the canal. Building the canal almost bankrupted the Duke but once it was completed and the money started to roll in, he soon became one of the richest men in the country. His home at Bridgewater Hall was demolished some time ago and is now the site of the newest RHS Garden.

Spot the Waterway – From the oldest canal…..



To a waterway featuring the oldest transporter bridge in the world. And unlike the bridge at Middlesbrough, this one is still in everyday use. But where is it and can you name the 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 the **Calder Navigation Society.**

Articles & Photos for the Newsletter

Thanks to Paul Hesketh & John Smith for providing articles for the Colour Supplement and Diana Monahan for following up on earlier stories.

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**

