

Reflecting on the Rochdale

Phil Prettyman writes:

This was a journey of two halves! On the way there, there was low water and rubbish and on the way back, after heavy rain, there was plenty of water and rubbish - oh, and a couple of broken locks. But the canal is great and worth all the hassle of getting there. We had worked closely with the CRT regional teams and with Ian McCarthy (our area rep and volunteer lock keeper) to manage this unusual number of boats for this canal. The Club had wanted to explore a lesser used canal and this certainly rewarded the effort.

The small towns of the Calder valley

are full of interest with friendly people. Littleborough, Todmorden and Hebden Bridge are particularly attractive with fascinating shops and markets. In Todmorden and Hebden Bridge it is possible to eat your way around Southeast Asia - only with plenty of pubs! On the day we arrived in Todmorden it was a Buddhist

festival and we were lucky enough to have our boats blessed by the monks.

After arriving at Hebden Bridge we set up our displays on the towpath and polished the brass. The Club had already set another display up in the town library together with a splendid spread by Diana Monahan on local canal history. On the Friday morning Phil and Clair gave an assembly at the Canalside Junior school all about the canal and the working boats. Children from the school were

Photo: Clair Butler



Buddhist Festival in Todmorden during the blessing of the boats

invited onto the boats and visited the back cabins. This took place in small groups on Thursday and Friday when the cabins on **Beatty**, **Plover** and **Stanton** were opened for display. It was a very successful exercise and generated lots of interest and questions. We also think it encouraged many parents to come to CRT's "pop-up" Canal Festival on the Saturday. There was a good turn out for this event and the weather was kind.

During the weekend 33 members' boats were present

and made an impressive display organised by Diana and Paul Monahan. Most of the visiting public had never seen working narrow boats and several claimed that they had never seen a lock being used! Visits by the mayors of Hebden Royd Town Council and Calderdale Borough Council as well as subsequent reports in the local press certainly raised the profile of our gathering.

In the evenings the Club held its usual activities. The two talks on the Friday evening were: "Carrying on Northern Waterways" by

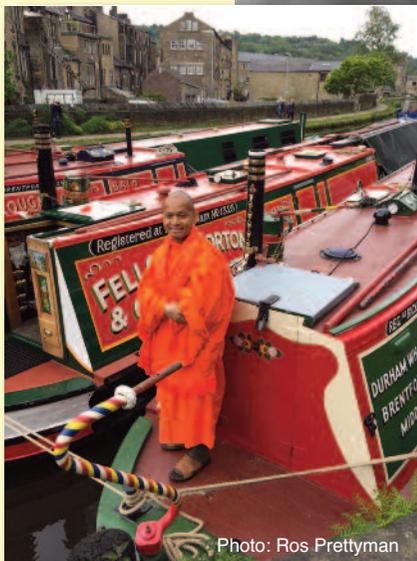


Photo: Ros Prettyman

Members' Boats attending:

- Achilles*
- Aldgate*
- Bargus*
- Bath*
- Beatty*
- Belfast*
- Bream*
- Daphne*
- Enceladus*
- Flamingo*
- Forget Me Not & Hazel*
- Joel*
- Madeley*
- Maria*
- Marquis*
- Milbury*
- Pensax*
- Plover*
- Purton*
- Rat*
- S & L Tug No.2*
- Saltaire* (back end)
- Selinova*
- Squire*
- Stanton*
- Swan*
- Tasmania*
- The Earl*
- Thea*
- Thor*
- Warbler*
- White Heather*

Mike Clarke and "Listed buildings in the Calder Valley" by Peter Thornborrow, senior historic buildings officer for West Yorkshire. On the Saturday David Lowe gave an organ recital at St James's church, after which we held the quiz, this time run by Nick Grundy with local input from Paul Monahan, and on the Sunday afternoon we held the auction. Despite the large amount of "tat" of dubious value, it all went to good homes and we raised £420. The club is looking for a way to use this to support some project on the Rochdale Canal. During the evening we watched films about the local area presented by Nick Wilding, a local filmmaker, and we did our best to finish all the beer.



Photo: Bob Jervis



Photo: Bob Jervis



Photo:Liz Grundy

On the Monday morning Diana led a guided walk around the historic hilltop village of Heptonstall. Then there was a very staggered departure from this gathering - deliberately so initially to conserve water, but extended further by failures at locks 49 and 66. Although some of the full length boats were trapped for several weeks, CRT engineers managed to sort some difficult problems in short order - the repair to lock 66 is particularly impressive. Shorter boats on the other hand were lucky enough to be able to escape eastwards via the Calder and Hebble.