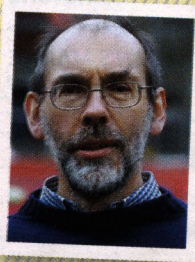




One of Nigel's boats on a rural section of the Rochdale above Hebden Bridge

# Twenty Questions



Nigel Stevens is one of the representatives of boating businesses voted onto the C&RT Council, he runs Shire Cruisers with his wife, Susan

## 1 What first attracted you to the waterways?

I was stung by a wasp beside a canal in France, aged 6. It wasn't only the wasp that bit, the canals incubated till I was 19 and went on Operation Ashton, the first big dig. That was it: Manchester rain and mud, spellbinding.

## 2 Which is your favourite waterway?

The Rochdale, obviously, but I also have special affection for the Upper Avon, the Stratford and the Caldon.

## 3 Tell us about your boating experience...

When we were young, Susan and I used to go with friends every spring on the cheapest boat we could find. This included camping boats from Willow Wren, which were astonishingly basic even then, but unmatched fun. We thought we'd be able to crack the boat hiring business....

## 4 Have you ever fallen in?

In Bancroft Basin, Stratford-upon-Avon – in front of all the tourists.

## 'There's a huge warmth towards the waterways which should help C&RT'

### 5 What do the waterways have to offer the country?

As we all try to make the waterways mean more to more people, the hardest thing to keep hold of is, the sense that as you go through the gap in the wall on to the towpath, you are entering a secret world.

### 6 How long have you been running Shire Cruisers?

Susan and I took over in 1980 – and hope to learn how to do it one day.

### 7 What's the best thing about your job?

We have two completely different times of year, the season and the winter. Both are hard work, but this gives double the variety compared to many other jobs.

### 8 And, is there anything you don't like?

Not every day is perfect, but we have fantastic staff, loyal customers and the most wonderful place to work – what's not to like?

### 9 What else have you been involved in on the waterways?

I was active in WRG and the IWA many years ago. I've joined in the work of APCO and have many friends met that way. I was recently chairman of BWAf, which helped form the consensus in favour of the plans for the C&RT.

### 10 How did it feel to be elected onto the C&RT Council?

It was jolly nice (I think...) of so many people to vote for me, not just in my part of the trade but others too. Now I have to help transmit the enthusiasm and commitment of the boating industry to the Trust.

### 11 What do you think of people on the waterways?

There's a huge warmth towards the waterways and many people who feel the waterways are 'ours'. This should help get C&RT off to a great start.

### 12 What are you reading?

*All Hell Let Loose* by Max Hastings, which shows the many reasons why my parents didn't like to talk about the War, which separated them for six years.

### 13 Who would be your ideal cruising companion?

Susan, my friend and wife of almost 38 years.

### 14 What did you want to be aged 12?

A doctor. It turned out I was better at diagnosing boats.

### 15 What is your proudest achievement?

My children. .

### 16 What do you do in your spare time?

Apart from family and friends, I'm interested in old and new buildings, other people's businesses, France under the Occupation (how would we have behaved?). I am not a gardener!

### 17 What is your favourite time of day on the waterways?

Early evening, when I can get on with jobs but look out of the window and see the canal's still there.

### 18 What do the waterways need most?

Money and common sense, and a view of the very long term.

### 19 Where would you go on your dream cruise?

A Norwegian coastal voyage, for which I don't yet feel old enough.

### 20 What superpower would you like to have?

To be able to lift Kielder Water into the sky, like a cross between Laputa, the aerial island in Gulliver's Travels, and a railway water tank, so as to drop limitless water down into whichever canal needed it.