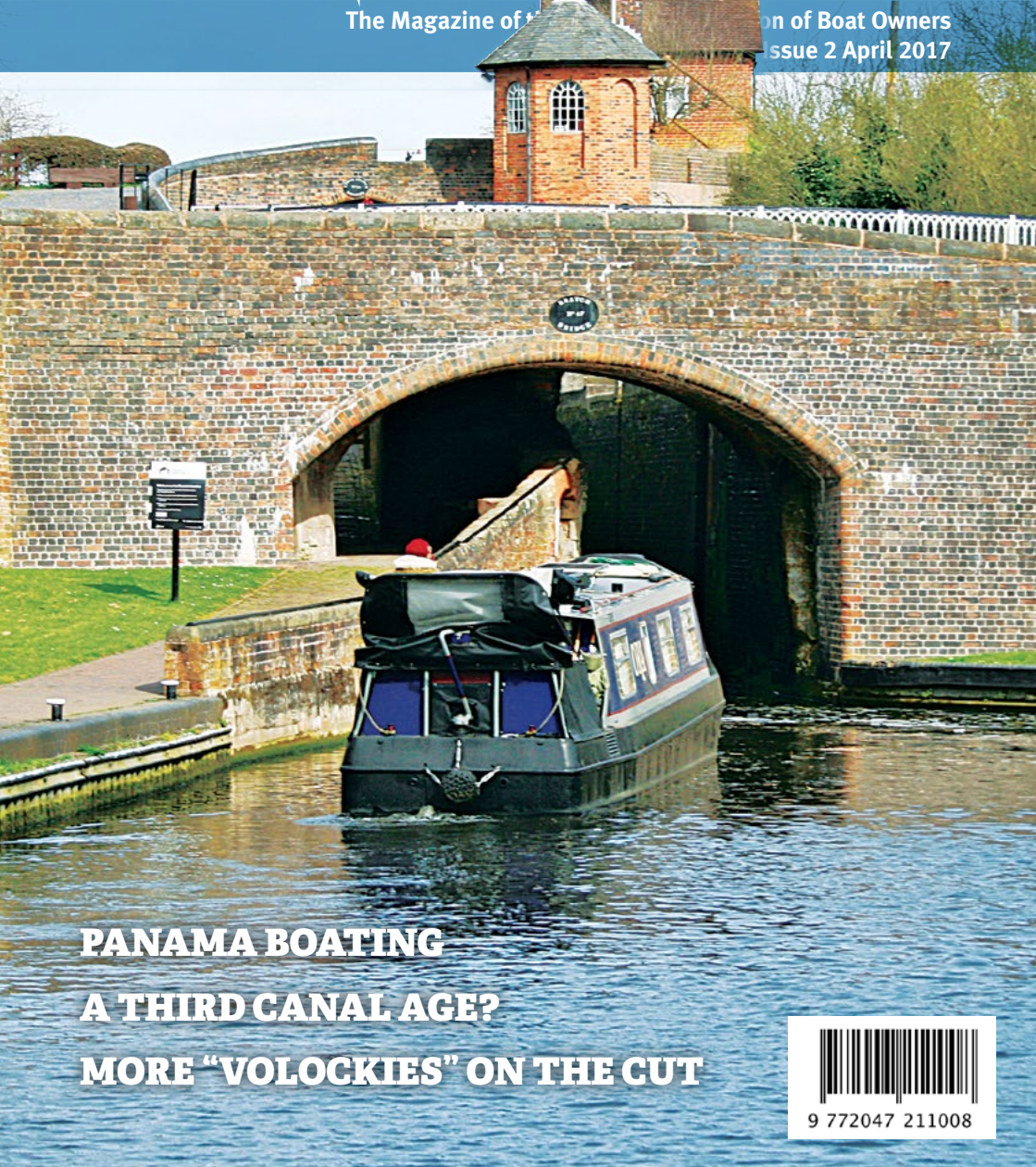




NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 2 April 2017



**PANAMA BOATING
A THIRD CANAL AGE?
MORE "VOLOCKIES" ON THE CUT**



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NABO Calendar 2017

Council Meetings in 2017: April 22nd, June 10th, July 22nd (if required), September 2nd, October 14th, November 11th (includes AGM).

Council meetings are held at boat clubs in the Midlands area - see the NABO website for details. Members are welcome to attend Council meetings; please just let the Secretary or Chairman know in advance (contact details inside cover).

Cover photo

This month's cover photo of the Bratch on the Staffs and Worcester Canal was taken by editor Peter Fellows

Win a year's free membership by having your photo selected for the front cover of NABO News. Please email photos as JPEG attachments, ideally portrait format with a file size of 2MB or larger.

Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images and photos in JPEG format please.

Please email or post your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk by **29th April 2017**

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CRT Emergency No: 0800 4799947 **EA Emergency No: 0800 807060**
 Contact CRT waterway managers at canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-regions



From dark arts, via 100 feet-wide locks, to volunteer lock-keepers

Editor [Peter Fellows](#) introduces a packed issue

We emerged from hibernation in March and a group took our shared narrowboat out for the first time this year, to introduce a new shareholding family to the joys of the cut. Although it was a fine, warm(ish) day, there were very few moving boats—possibly just as well while the new family got to grips with the tiller! I was surprised at the amount of floating debris in the Coventry Canal, presumably from storm Doris a few weeks before, and we had several stops to clear the prop. CRT contractors had also been out on the job, removing large trees that had fallen across the canal.

In her column, Chair Stella is also emerging from the winter, with a myriad jobs that need doing come spring. Many Council members were otherwise engaged and so the March meeting was cancelled, giving Fly on the Wall the day off, but there's been a lot happening at CRT over the last few weeks—all reported in this issue: the boat licensing review is underway; there are updates on progress to transfer EA's waterways and the impact of HS2; price increases on CRT-owned moorings; a new interim head of boating, following Mike Grimes' departure at Easter; and developments at Paddington Basin.

Plus a government consultation on red diesel that no-one seems to have heard about. Mike Rodd reports on the National Inland Navigation Forum AGM in February and there is a list of floating markets that you might want to visit this year.

In the boating section, Helen Hutt has an expensive clean-out of her diesel tank, diesel tanks being something I guess many of us simply forget about, and David Fletcher experiences a fascinating world of boating through 100+ feet-wide locks on the Panama Canal, aboard a 90,000 tonne vessel.

I have also included an article on galvanic isolators for those readers, who like me, previously thought that hull corrosion due to galvanic currents was simply some manifestation of the dark arts.

Several readers have contributed their views in this issue, both in 'Talking Points' and in the letters pages: Jim Batty has some fresh perspectives on low-impact, online moorings for residential boaters; there are differing views on Scottish Canals' proposal to turn one of the caissons on the Falkirk Wheel into a pedestrian viewing platform, thus reducing the opportunities for hire and private boats to pass between the Union and Forth and Clyde Canals and Mark Tizard has some thoughts on the activities of volunteer lock-keepers.

Mark Holdsworth describes the charity 'The Narrowboat Sessions', which raises money for Cancer Research, while promoting unsigned musicians. There is also a look at problems with boats hanging up in locks on the L&L Bank Newton flight—and now we know where many of the new boats in London have come from.

Enjoy this issue and the warmer weather to come.

'Bring Out Another Thousand'

NABO Chair [Stella Ridgway](#) Ridgway gets ready for some springtime maintenance



Spring has finally sprung here in the Peak District: the birds are busy building nests; the wild garlic is sprouting; lambs are being born and the ducks and geese are mating loudly. My daffodils opened this week, the sun shone, and for the first time this year we didn't need to put the engine on to charge the batteries as the solar panels had enough sunlight to charge them. We have noticed an increase in boats passing as folks take their boats out for a weekend cruise or start a spring journey. This is the time of year that the boat gets a good spring clean, although I am still waiting for the mud to dissipate before clearing the floor and scrubbing it. Muddy towpaths and dogs equal a constantly muddy floor and I have been pushing the mud around the floor all winter. We have two Labradors who love swimming, so towels to dry them off are constantly drying, no matter what the weather.

We moor on the Upper Peak Forest Canal—a brilliant place for water dogs and a lovely walking area. Our cruising pattern over winter has

been limited to trips to Bugsworth Basin to water up, empty the Elsan etc., but in the winter, the canal takes on a different life. Christmas was quite busy although we were iced in this year, when nowhere else was up here. In fact, we had our first experience of breaking ice to moor up as the canal was freezing as we moved.

Spring is also the time we double-check everything after the winter. There is work to be done—that instant water heater has seen better days. Replacing it means we have to dismantle the cupboard that it is in. And should we also replace the galley, as the oven is quite old, and is the fridge as efficient as it could be? The cupboards are looking worn. BOAT definitely equals 'Bring Out Another Thousand'. We may even get the boat painted this year, weather permitting, with another undercoat on the roof—is that five and is that enough?

I am hoping to get to the User Group meetings in Manchester and Pennine and I will share reports as they come in. The Partnership meetings have taken place and the six-monthly Canal and River Trust Council meets on 22nd March. I am still hoping to attend, although changing my dialysis slot is a challenge. I have had a busy month, back and forth to the hospital for tests to go onto the Transplant Register. Dialysis curtails my ability to travel and get to meetings and so we value members being able to step in and attend. This has also meant that we did not hold a NABO Council meeting this month, although we still plan on having one in April. All members are welcome.



Photo: Peggy Melmoth at www.narrowboatwife.com

CRT review of boat licensing

CRT has begun the first phase of its three-stage consultation on how boats are licensed on its waterways, using the independent charity specialising in public engagement, Involve. In stage one; representatives of the main boating organisations are being interviewed to find their views on how the consultation should work and what it should cover. In the second stage, from April, a series of in-depth workshops will be held with boaters who reflect the diversity in the boating community.

The final stage will consult all boat owners to find their views on the options developed during the first two stages. The aim is to find the fairest and simplest boat licensing system to address the financial contribution made by different types of boats. Ian Rogers, customer service and operations director at CRT, said: "The current licensing system has been in place for over 20 years. Boating has changed a lot in that time and the Trust wants to ensure the licensing structure is fit for purpose. Feedback from boaters suggests that many feel the current licensing is overly complex and can be perceived as unfair, and this consultation seeks to discuss these areas of concern."

Mark Tizard adds: NABO has already been approached by Involve as part of the first stage of the consultation. The interviewer asked what I thought of this approach. I asked her to name one other organisation with an effective monopoly that went to such ridiculous lengths to work out a pricing strategy for its customers. I suggested that it was because none of the relevant staff had any experience of using the product they were selling. Instead of going through this lengthy, expensive process, it would be more honest and cheaper if CRT formed some proposals of its own (they must have some) and, if need be, just test these with either NAG or some boating group workshops. After all they are likely to pick the solutions closest to their internal proposals.

HAVE YOUR SAY

canalrivertrust.org.uk/national-consultations

Transfer of EA waterways—an update

After two 'false starts' in 2010 and 2013 and two new waterway ministers in 2015 and 2016, DEFRA, CRT and the EA have been working together since 2016 on the transfer of EA waterways to CRT. Phase 1, to mid-2016, involved information exchange, data gathering and c100 site visits, with around 400 assets inspected. There has been consultation with the IWA, and development of funding and management options, leading to an interim report to the CRT Board and Trustees.

They are now in Phase 2, to develop options, conduct a more detailed assessment of the transfer issues and undertake a preliminary engagement with the key stakeholders. A detailed report was sent to the CRT Board and Trustees in November 2016 and further work to understand the costs and risks will take place in 2017. This will include completing an asset management database for over 2300 of the EA's assets that are proposed for transfer, information on their condition, steady-state maintenance costs and capital investment costs. There are 640 miles of navigations under consideration. In addition to the Royal Military Canal and the harbours at Lydney and Rye, the 32 rivers and other navigations that are subject to the transfer are: the Ancholme, Bedford Ouse, Burwell Lode, Cam, Clen, Derwent, Ely Ouse and the Forty Foot Navigation, Great Ouse relief channel, Great Ouse, Idle, Lark, Little Ouse, Lugg, Nene, New Bedford, non-tidal Medway, non-tidal Thames, Old Bedford, Old West, Reach Lode, Rother, South Forty Foot, Stour, Sussex Ouse, Welland, Wicken Lode, Wissey and Wye. The assets under consideration are shown in the table.

Two scenarios are being modelled: navigation assets only and navigation assets plus 'non-critical' weirs and sluices. Both scenarios will require

	Thames	Anglian	Medway	Total
Locks	48	62	11	121
Sluices	0	63	12	75
Weirs	11	90	10	111
Bridges	133	58	6	197
Buildings	128	12	16	156
Total	320	285	55	660

capital investment from the Government as current income is less than the required expenditure. The aim is to jointly present a proposal to the Government within the next few months.

Red diesel consultation

The government announced in the Spring Budget that it is seeking evidence to support the use of red diesel. Chancellor, Phillip Hammond, said that the consultation will focus on understanding how it is currently used and which industries use the most rebated gas oil. It is thought that the focus will be how it is used in urban areas, with

some experts suggesting that the government is looking to lower the use of gas oil as part of their plans to reduce levels of pollution, but this has not yet been confirmed. At the moment, little is known about what the consultation will mean for red diesel users.

Because the evidence is focusing on urban areas, it is likely that any suggested changes will have an impact on boilers and generators, but agricultural vehicles that make short road journeys could also be affected. As far as NABO is aware, no boating organisations have been invited to take part in the short consultation, the findings of which will be published after the closing date on 30th June 2017

Pennine explorer cruise

If you have a week to spare this summer, you could not do better than take part in the first Pennine Explorer Cruise on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal from 23rd June to 1st July, organised by the Huddersfield Canal Society and CRT. Starting at Portland Basin, Ashton-under-Lyne the cruise will visit Stalybridge, Mossley, Diggle, Marsden, Slaithwaite, Milnsbridge and Huddersfield before finishing at Mirfield. To make the lock passages easier, the 'roving rally' will give boaters mutual help with the locks and assistance from volunteer lock-winders. A programme of evening events will add to the excitement.

Places are limited, so first come, first served. Early expressions of interest are essential by contacting the Huddersfield Canal Society. Not all boats can fit into Standedge Tunnel and the controlling dimensions and other information are available at <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/library/279.pdf>. Boats that fit the shorter, wider locks of the Huddersfield Broad and Calder and Hebble canals can continue to complete a circuit. Full length narrowboats can turn at Huddersfield for the return journey.

Contact bob@huddersfieldcanal.com to express your interest.



Boat gathering at Diggle Summit on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal
Photo: Ian Bradbury

Mike Rodd at NINF

The National Inland Navigation Forum (NINF) met at the St. Pancras Cruising Club on 25th February, with eight of its eleven member organisations represented. This forum continues to be a useful meeting point, bringing together navigation bodies involved in the waterways.

There was, naturally, much discussion of issues relating to the possibility of the EA's navigational responsibilities being taken over by CRT. Of importance was the report from the recent Thames User Groups' meeting, where Richard Parry had said that providing all the facts come together, he has to move to a position when, together with the EA's CEO, Sir James Beavan, he can go to DEFRA to gain acceptance 'in principle'. It is already costing significant sums of money to effect the investigation and this would be wasted if it does not proceed. He had hoped that this would have happened before the end of last year but there was still no progress. It was felt that the best NINF could do now was to use all its political contacts to urge the Minister responsible to end the uncertainty! Michael Stimpson would also write to Richard Parry to ask what else NINF could do to help move things on.

The possibility of expanding the towpath through the Edgbaston Tunnel, at the cost of narrowing the navigation, was extensively discussed. It was felt by most that this was yet more evidence of CRT bowing to non-boaters' needs and ignoring those of boaters; and also of not protecting the heritage of our canals. However, the financial realities were recognised.

There was also much discussion of concerns about EA closing some of its waterways due to 'safety concerns'. The meeting noted the IWA campaign relating to this and requested all members to discuss the matter with their councils. It was pointed out, though, that the three cases cited by IWA, although of concern, were well-known and the locks had been in serious trouble for some years.

The changes to the hire code BSS requirements were reported on and welcomed. It was emphasised, though, that there were still ongoing issues relating to hire-boat handover procedures not always being effective.

Finally, the issue relating to the charging reviews being undertaken by both EA and CRT

JARGON BUSTER

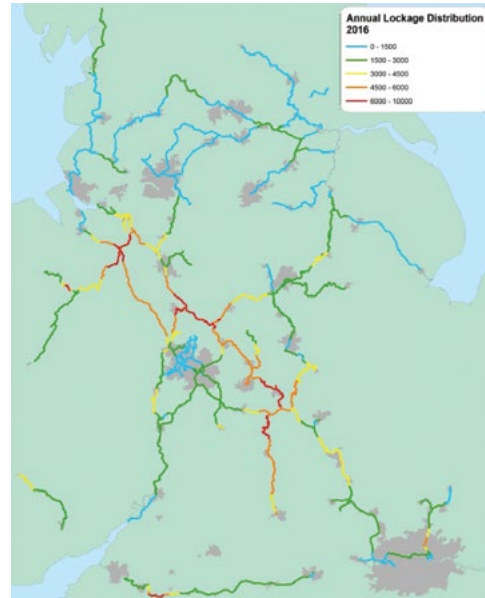
NINF, National Inland Navigation Forum, a semi-formal meeting of representatives of boating organisations across the national network (not just CRT waterways), a useful forum to share concerns and strategies outside CRT meetings.

were briefly mentioned and all member organisations were urged to get involved.

Busiest locks in 2016

CRT's latest Annual Lockage Report gives details of the total lockages at locks on all of its canals that have telemetry devices fitted. The busiest locks were the paired locks at Hillmorton on the North Oxford Canal, with 9,598 lockages, an increase of 5% since 2015. The next busiest was New Marton Lock on the Llangollen Canal, with 9,104 lockages, an increase of 4% on the previous year. Somewhat less used, in third place, was Lock 4, Cholmondeston Lock on the Shropshire Union, with 7981 lockages. The least-used lock was lock 1, at Belan on the Montgomery Canal, with 64 lockages over the year.

More information: canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/original/31240-annual-lockage-report-2016.pdf



2017 FLOATING MARKETS

- Linslade, Grand Union Canal, 14 - 17 April, near the Globe Pub (LU7 2TA) between bridges 111 & 112.
- Bollington, Macclesfield Canal, 14 - 17 April, near Clarence Mill (SK10 5JZ) between bridges 26a & 27.
- Market Drayton, Shropshire Union Canal, 29 April - 1 May, Lord's Bridge 64 & Betton Bridge 63. (TF9 1HL)
- Berkhamsted, Grand Union Canal, 29 April - 1 May, between bridge 140a & Lock 53. (HP4 1HS)
- Burton on Trent, Trent & Mersey Canal, 13 -14 May, Shobnall Field north of bridge 32b. (DE14 2BB)
- Stoke Bruerne, Grand Union Canal, 27 - 29 May, above Top Lock 14 towards the tunnel. (NN12 7SE)
- Fazeley, Coventry Canal, 27 - 29 May, northwards from the water point by bridge 77 (B78 3QZ)
- Chester, Shropshire Union Canal, 24 - 25 June, between Bridge 123d (CH1 3LH) & City Wall Park.
- Merry Hill, Dudley Canal, 25 - 28 August, along the embankment between Greens Bridge & Daniels Land Bailey Bridge. (DY5 2QS/DY5 1XD)
- Birmingham, New Main Line Canal, 23 - 24 September, Barclaycard Arena, (B1 2AA)



Roving Traders at Black Buoy
Photo: RCTA

CRT increase mooring prices

CRT says that the prices it charges for long-term leisure and residential moorings are set by reference to market rates. It also reports that that 97% of moorings have been sold at auction, many above the guide price. It has used these sales to assess the level of price increases. The majority of sites will have a 2.7% increase, based on the projected inflation rate (RPI). Sites that have an increased demand, or where CRT has made a 'substantial investment', will have increases above inflation. Sites that are proving unpopular will have prices unchanged. In practice, 3% of sites will have no increase in real terms, 57% will have an inflationary increase, and 40% of sites will have increases of 1 - 3% above inflation. CRT will only write to boaters on sites that will have above inflation increases, who are currently on 12-month contracts. Three-year contracts are not affected. Boaters who have end of garden moorings (adjacent to their residential property) or those moored on farmers' fields, will have permit prices increased in line with their local 'indexed' mooring site.

However, there seems to be some deviation from the factors that are used to set mooring

charges. Previously, British Waterways' criteria for setting mooring prices were to compare prices at local marinas and other moorings providers, but these made no reference to property prices in the local area. However, when questioned, CRT's press office said: "With regards to waterside moorings, we've considered the local property market when setting out mooring prices, along with a range of other factors, for some time." So it now seems that rapidly increasing property prices in the area around a mooring can also increase mooring fees for existing CRT moorers, when their contracts come up for renewal.

But, at least in one instance, the condition of the mooring doesn't seem to have an impact on the amount being charged. An Oxford

boater complained to CRT about the deteriorating condition of the towpath on the Agenda 21 moorings at St. Edwards. This was caused by a leaking water pipe that caused a permanent muddy patch near to his mooring throughout the summer and which, during the winter, became a boggy swamp. Additionally, he reported that the mooring had become so silted up that he had to keep getting a longer gang-plank as the boat is now moored some distance from the bank, which is crumbling into the canal. The mooring rings are pulling out of the bank, but nothing has been done to rectify any of this. He then received a letter from CRT, informing him of a mooring fee increase of 3.7%.

NABO notes: charges should reflect the condition of a mooring and fall if the quality of the mooring deteriorates. The CRT-owned British Waterways Marinas Ltd. (BWML) operates 19 marinas and with CRT's towpath moorings, it is the largest provider. It could be said to be the market leader from a pricing prospective.

Fradley saved from HS2

CRT has responded to the Government's consultation on the next phase of the HS2 high speed rail line, to highlight issues that could have serious adverse effects on parts of the canal network. It has also made suggestions to minimise these effects and safeguard ongoing canal restoration projects.

Phase 2B will link Crewe and Manchester, with an eastern line connecting Curdworth in Birmingham to Leeds. These lines will affect the canals at a number of locations: a rolling stock depot near Crewe would have a 100m wide four-track crossing over the Middlewich Branch; there would be three crossings within a three km length of the Trent and Mersey Canal near Northwich; a diversion of the Erewash Canal; and impacts on the restoration of the Ashby and Chesterfield Canals.

During consultations for the first phase of HS2, recommendations for changes



Interim head of boating

CRT has appointed North East waterway manager, Jon Horsfall, as its new interim head of boating, following the departure of Mike Grimes at Easter. Jon will remain in the post throughout the review of licensing, which is scheduled to last until the autumn. Recruitment for a permanent head of boating will take place in the meantime, with the application date likely to be extended.

Photo: Pennine Waterways News

to the line were successful, including an alternative alignment of the line to protect Fradley Junction, saving around £50m, and a 350m extension to the Wyrley and Essington Canal near Cannock to provide a future connecting point for the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals. Details of the CRT response are at www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/the-hs2-rail-network-and-our-waterways/publications-and-consultation-responses



Fradley Junction is no longer in danger from HS2
Photo: Peter Fellows

Paddington Basin

As part of CRT's London Mooring Strategy, Paddington Basin is to be transformed into 'an exciting hub for boaters, residents, workers and visitors'. GoBoat, a Copenhagen-based hire company, will introduce electric day-boats, built from sustainable materials, to explore Paddington, Camden and Little Venice, operating from two pontoon moorings at the end of the basin. Two new visitor moorings will be created on the opposite side of the basin. GoBoat will also trial a free water taxi service for two days a week between Paddington Station and Merchant Square. If it proves popular, the water taxi will become a permanent feature. Two new business boats: a gift shop and coffee outlet with the history of the basin and its regeneration; and a floating café, run by 'Beany Green', serving coffee, lunches and cocktails. A temporary 'Floating Pocket Park' will be created at the far end of the basin on waterspace leased from CRT. The park will have 730m² of lawns, planting, communal seating and a trade boat mooring. CRT has also promised to 'keep plenty of space for visiting boats.'

Mersey Gateway Bridge

We reported on the new Mersey Gateway Bridge last year. The project is due for completion in the autumn, but there is some way still to go, including crossing the Manchester Ship canal on the south side of the river.

Photos: Val Fletcher



Will the last person leaving...

CRT has awarded the national contract for all its mechanical, electrical, instrumentation, control and automation work to AMCO. The contract includes around 1000 pieces of engineering, from swing-bridges, pumps and level monitors, to the Anderton Boat Lift and the Tees Barrage. It covers maintenance, renewal, upgrades and repairs and will run for seven years, starting on 1st April.

Mark Tizard commented: "So that's dredging outsourced, vegetation management outsourced, waste disposal outsourced, lock keeping outsourced (volunteers), and legal work outsourced. I think this just leaves the enforcement and licensing departments and, of course, the management team."

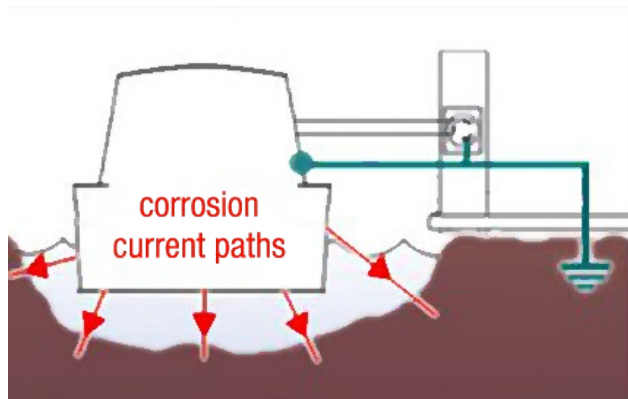


Earth leakage on boats

Edwin Watt of Galvanic Isolators explains the difference between earth leakage, stray currents and galvanic currents.

For further information, contact Galvanic Isolators by phone on 0757 8073490 or via galvanic-isolator.co.uk

Earth leakage is mains electric current that flows to earth from the 240V circuit in your boat, due to electrical faults in wiring or equipment. You are protected from by getting a fatal shock if you touch something live by a residual current device (RCD) which also provides some protection against these electrical faults. Every boat and shore supply should be fitted with an RCD, and in the event of a fault in the boat's wiring or equipment, the RCD disconnects the electrical supply. What earth leakage does not do, at least not directly, is cause corrosion to your boat's hull. However, there are other types of earth currents that do damage a boat's hull and deplete its anodes.



When a galvanic current flows, it takes metal from your boat's hull and deposits it on the bank side.

Galvanic Currents

These flow whenever your boat is connected to a shore-based electricity supply. They occur as a result of chemical reaction between the metalwork of a boat and surrounding metal such as pontoons, other boats, and the minerals in the bank-side.

Galvanic currents are at a very low voltage, so they're not dangerous to life. But they do cause corrosion of a boat's hull, and cause faster than normal anode deterioration. A galvanic isolator or isolation transformer can prevent this from happening.

Stray Currents

These currents flow as a result of faulty wiring or equipment. Unlike earth leakage, which would trip the RCD, stray currents often show no symptoms, and everything appears to be completely normal. But it's not. Voltages are not high enough to kill, but they are much higher than galvanic voltages, so the potential for causing hull damage is enormous.

Anodes can corrode from new to nothing in a matter of months. When, or even before, the anodes are gone, the boat's hull corrodes.

Imprinted Leakage

There is yet another type of leakage, known as imprinted leakage. This can come from the power supplies of battery chargers, computer power supplies, phone chargers etc. Even brand new equipment can cause imprinted leakage. Because of the high frequencies that these devices use, some of their power can be 'coupled' into the boat's wiring, and then to earth. There is often a direct current component to this type of leakage, and it's this that can cause rapid damage to your boat's hull and anodes.

Again, everything can appear normal and this type of fault will not trip an RCD.

A stitch in time...

...could have saved **Helen Hutt** an embarrassing breakdown!

Surely I'm not alone in believing that my fuel tank is well looked after, making sure no water or foreign bodies fall in, keeping it topped up to prevent condensation, adding FuelSet to protect against diesel bug. How wrong I was!

On the first really warm afternoon this year, I moored up in a fairly isolated, pretty spot, and waded into my maintenance programme, changed the oil and filter, the air filter and finally the fuel filter.

Unfortunately, I was unable to refill the new fuel filter despite hand pumping for more than half an hour. The tank was about a quarter full, but I poured in another 20-litre anyway—to no avail. A call to RCR was inevitable. An engineer talked me through various scenarios over the phone but he was as stumped as I was as to the possible fault.

The following morning, an engineer came out, seemingly unfazed at having to walk over a mile down the towpath. After some rather unpleasant blowing through pipes, he eventually got fuel flowing and the filter filled. But... the engine wouldn't start. He surmised that more fuel was needed to ensure that there was enough above the out-take to prevent any floating debris causing a blockage. But he recommended that I got the tank cleaned out because, almost certainly, fuel contamination was the root cause of the problem.

Although still convinced that it probably wasn't all that bad, I did get the job done two days later, just to be on the safe side. Tankbusters, recommended by RCR, estimated a minimum £270, which in itself took some swallowing. In the event, the diesel in my tank was in such a state

that extra filters had to be used and five hours later I was facing a bill of over £400! They pumped the fuel out of my tank, filtered it to remove water, rust and diesel bug, and returned it, along with 50 litres of fresh fuel which they brought with them. I was genuinely shocked by the difference between what came out of my tank and the fresh diesel—a cloudy old port against a quality rose! Just try it. Pump a jam jar's worth of fuel out of your tank. If it's not absolutely clear, bright pink, it's contaminated—and a breakdown waiting to happen!

Finally, I understand that pilots on some river and sea crossings may insist on seeing evidence of a recently cleaned tank before they will take you. How many more reasons do you need?



STOP THEM BUGS....

Some advice from Tankbusters

- Before filling up at a boatyard or from a fuel boat, proffer a clean jam jar and ask for a sample of diesel to check for clarity. It stands to reason that supply tanks should also be cleaned regularly to eliminate contamination, but I wonder how many are.
- Clean your tank filler-cap and inside thread regularly and smear a little grease on it to ensure a good seal to keep water out.
- For good measure, fit a water filter—in the form of a bag which floats on the surface of the fuel—to remove condensation. Not cheap, but worth it for extra peace of mind.
- Use Marine 16 fuel additive, which is a more effective biocide than FuelSet.

Tankbusters

tankbusters.co.uk
Bruce 07974808277

...to fresh rosé

From old port....

Lending a hand

Mark Tizard reviews the activities of 'volockies'

The volunteer's role

- Welcome, engage and assist visitors
- Deal with the general public, including boaters and other canal users, to provide information and assistance
- Offer help to operate the locks and handle boats through the locks (assistance is mandatory at mechanised river locks)
- Encourage water conservation—i.e. check sluices are closed and encourage lock-sharing
- Undertake light maintenance tasks, such as painting and edging around the locks as agreed with the Task Manager. This varies around the country.
- Report any significant changes or issues to CRT staff.

When CRT was formed, there was a determined thrust to increase the involvement of the public in the canal system through the recruitment of 'Friends' and volunteers. From the boater's perspective, the most noticeable effect of this has been the introduction of volunteer lock-keepers across the network. In 2015, CRT recruited 700-plus volunteer lock-keepers and deployed them over 70 different sites. CRT estimates that the volunteer lock-keepers speak to around 11,000 people per week on boats and on the towpath—a substantial number, not withstanding that CRT also estimates that there are around 430 million visits to the network per year. CRT also claims approximately 3.8 million lockings each year through its 1,583 locks.

Recruitment of volunteer lock-keepers is ongoing and undoubtedly they are becoming the face of CRT as it seeks to widen its brand recognition—a key aspect of getting a further grant from the Government when the existing funding expires. As CRT states: "Our lock-keepers are the face of the canal, safely seeing boats through the locks, as well as helping with directions and information on the area."

CRT advises volunteers as follows: 'Help and advice should not be forced upon people, but offered with a smile. Boaters are welcome to refuse any help offered by a volunteer lock-keeper—for some, operating the locks is what makes their experience so enjoyable, or they may just have a different way of doing things. Providing that they are not at risk of endangering themselves or others,

this should be graciously accepted. Volunteers are there to support waterway users, not police them.'

Recruiting volunteers

First, there's a meet-and-greet session for potential volunteers at their nominated lock flight, with a Q&A session and a demonstration by existing volunteers. Volunteers are then selected and go through an induction and training programme:

- 1 Attendance at a one-day comprehensive induction to CRT.
- 2 Attendance at a one-day Health & Safety Foundation Course.
- 3 On-site training days with qualified lock-keepers at a local site.
- 4 Verbal and practical assessment for lock-keeping.

Once this is completed the volunteer is ready to undertake lock-keeping duties.

Boaters' response to volunteers

The burning question is, of course, are volunteer lock-keepers needed? Boaters are an independent group and there is a mixture of views as to whether we need them at all. After all, in the recent past it was very rare to find a lock-keeper helping boaters through locks at most flights. They come at a considerable cost that involves training, supervision, clothing, protective equipment and travelling expenses.

A common comment we receive at NABO is: "Why is their approach so inconsistent?" For many boaters, it is, perhaps, unclear what their expectation should be when approaching a lock and seeing a volunteer. CRT should manage that expectation better and both the

NABO Members' Comments

"As most will say, my personal experience of the volunteer lock-keepers is mixed. Generally, on the K&A, they are useful—especially on the Caen Hill flight. The guys who look after the extremely busy Bradford on Avon lock do a really excellent job. But we also had an horrendous experience of a group of volunteer lock-keepers allowing kids in small kayaks to go down through the lock and getting aggressive when we told them that this was not allowed. In all fairness, the local manager sorted them out pretty quickly when we officially complained."

"On the Mon & Brec, generally they do a good job, especially helping new hire-boaters to get through the main flight of locks. However, one of their regulars now thinks he owns the locks and proceeds to instruct all users, regardless of whether they need his (often questionable) advice or not!"

"When I first got my boat from Wilton Marina, I had never done a lock; nor had any of my crew. Read a lot, but very daunted. We arrived at our first lock and two born-on-the-canal volunteer lock-keepers took us through the whole procedure giving me tips that I still use today. Gawd bless em."

volunteer and the boater should be aware of what the volunteer's responsibilities and authority are. Who is in charge when the volunteer lock-keeper meets you at the lock? After all, nothing in the information sheet on the CRT website explicitly states that the boater is in charge when going through a lock. The implication is there, in that the volunteer's role involves 'assisting boaters to operate the lock'. But NABO is aware that this has caused issues to arise between boaters and volunteers. One of these resulted in CRT clarifying the role as follows: "The boater is firmly in charge and the volunteer lock-keeper is only there to guide and (if you wish) to assist, with your agreement. Volunteers should never do anything without agreeing it with you, and certainly not put you or your boat in any danger". If this has not been your experience, fill out an incident report form that can be downloaded from the CRT website and submit it. CRT will only be aware of any issues if we tell them.

In summary, volunteer lock-keepers provide a link between CRT, boaters and the local community



Volunteer lock-keepers Lee Cox and Mark McCumsekey on the Liverpool Link Stanley flight. Photo: Lynn Pegler/CRT

If you live up t'north, CRT is currently recruiting volunteer lock-keepers for:

- Leeds & Liverpool Canal (Gargrave/Bank Newton Locks, Rufford, Wigan lock flight, Stanley Lock in Liverpool, Dobson and Field Locks at Apperley Bridge, Hirst Lock to Bingley Five Rise, Office to Newlay Locks, Johnsons Hillock Locks, Blackburn Locks, Barrowford and Greenberfield Locks)
- Glasson lock flight, Lancaster Canal
- Ribble Link, Preston

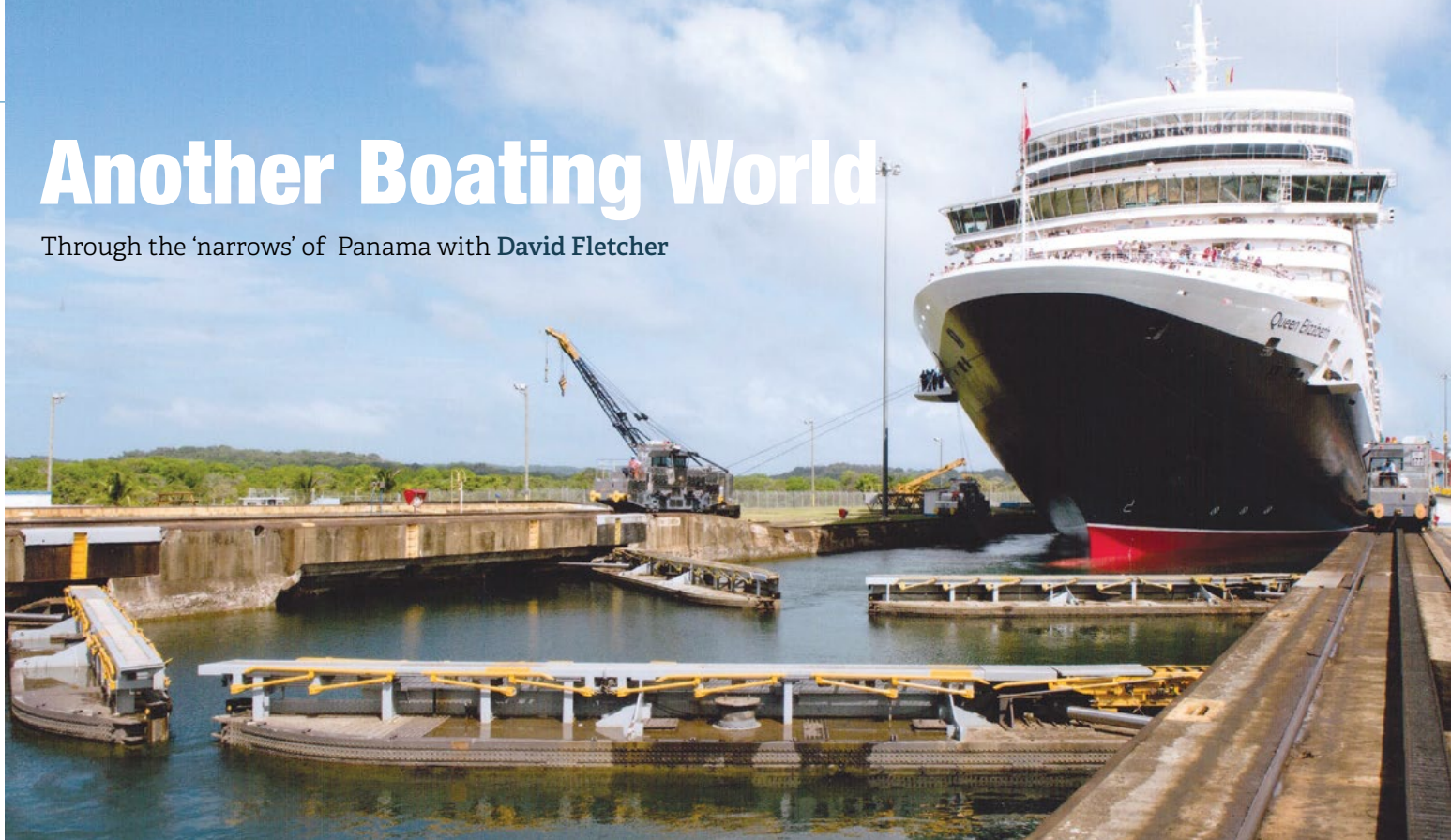
Being fortunate enough to go through the Panama Canal on a cruise ship in January, I was asking all the canal-type questions that don't appear in the guide books, so here are the answers I could find.

The passage is about 52 miles overall, north to south, Atlantic to Pacific, through the narrowest part of the Panama isthmus. The sea levels are about the same on both sides and the summit is 85 feet above sea level, which requires three locks up and down. About half of the transit is across Gatún Lake, which is a man-made reservoir, created by damming valleys to provide the navigation and hold most of the water supply. The remaining half, to the south, is an excavated channel, which was the major part of the 19th Century original construction. The region is tropical, with 10 feet of rainfall per year, so water runoff is gathered from the surrounding jungle-covered mountains. The level in the lake is controlled by weirs and excess water drains to the sea at both ends. Water supply is not always abundant and there have been problems recently with low levels in the lake due to El Nino weather effects. There is no back-pumping. Reduced levels can result in large ships being denied passage due to their lack of clearance over the top cill. The depth in the navigable lake is about 65 feet which is much deeper than the ships' draughts.

When arriving at the canal, there are lots of ships at anchor at the north end port of Colón, waiting for a transit time or for orders. Cruise ships pay extra for a daylight passage, because that is what the passengers want. We had an early time slot and arrived off the coast at 7am. A transit through the canal takes about nine hours, and this happens day and night. About 40

Another Boating World

Through the 'narrows' of Panama with David Fletcher



ships transit each day and the cost of about \$250,000 per ship is one of the main sources of income for Panama. Approaching the locks, there is a long sea channel protected by sea defences on the north side and natural headlands on the south. There are currently two access bridges over the canal: one at the canal narrows (Centennial Bridge, clearance 260 feet); and the other at the southerly sea exit (Bridge of the Americas, clearance 200 feet but tidal). A third is under construction at the northern sea entrance.

The main locks were built in the 1900s and are 110 feet wide, a dimension that has driven ship construction for decades (as we know on our canals—about seven feet wide). Vessels built to go through the canal are called 'Panamax', and our ship was an example, having 106 feet

maximum width—two feet clearance on each side. At the northern end, there is a pair of triple-staircase locks at Gatún, with no side pounds. One set were being used for ascending and one for descending. There was a steady run of ships going both ways in convoys, with four in the lock chambers and another pair at the lock landing, waiting to enter. Lock filling is fast, taking about 10-15 minutes. The gates are doubled as a precaution against ship damage. There are also intermediate gate positions in the locks, but they did not appear to be used, and some were missing.

At the southerly end, the locks are split and there is a pair of single locks at Pedro Miguel, and, after a short pound, a pair of double-staircase locks at Miraflores onto the Pacific. These locks were both in

use going down, because of the traffic flow. New locks were opened in 2016, and these are much wider, at 180 feet. They are a single run of triple-staircase locks, with each chamber having triple side-pounds and no back-pumping—plenty of potential for over-topping here! They are adjacent to the old locks, with massive, long, excavated header and tail channels. They are open for tankers, bulk-carriers and container ships, but not currently for cruise ships. Ships using these locks are referred to as 'Post-Panamax' and tugs are used to control these ships in the new locks.

In the old locks, transit is assisted by the use of electric locomotives known as 'mules'. These do not pull a ship through the locks, but are used to keep it central, side to side and fore and aft. The ship's engines

All Photos: Val Fletcher



are used for forward movement. The mules have two wires on separate winches, so that they can pull on either, with or without moving, a bit like a moveable bollard. In our case we had three mules either side: the first was tied square to the bow, to keep it central; the second was part way back from the bow and held a spring line to check the ship from ramming the gates; and the third at the stern uses two wires—one as a spring and other as centring line. This was duplicated both sides. Our ship was 90,000 gross tonnes; presumably smaller ships need fewer mules. The locks are marked with distance boards at the side, so that the crew know how far they are into the lock to avoid hitting the gates.

The ship approaches the locks at a one-sided lock-landing, with a tug alongside on the off side. Steel wires are taken out the ship by rowing boat. Apparently they have tried all sorts of work boats, but rowing boats are best. The mules then winch

the ship alongside and guide it forward into the lock approach, so that the mules can be attached on the offside. The winches are constantly adjusting the tension so that the ship is positioned accurately. There was visibly very little space between the ship and the lock walls, but there are rubbing strips and there is no continuous contact. We did notice a couple of lurches during the passage and there was some loss of paint on the sides. The ship sides were cleared of protrusions on the boat deck level, with lifeboats winched inboard and cleaning gantries removed.

In the photo, you can see the mule tracks (five feet gauge). Note how they run up a steep incline as they go to the next lock level, using a centre rack. The lights on the top of the cab, along with bells, allow the mules to communicate with the canal pilot, who is in charge of the ship in the locks. The power for the mules is obtained from an underground third rail on the shore side,

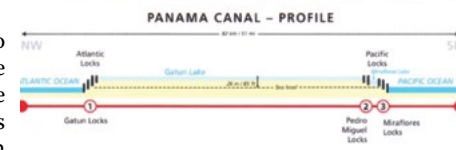
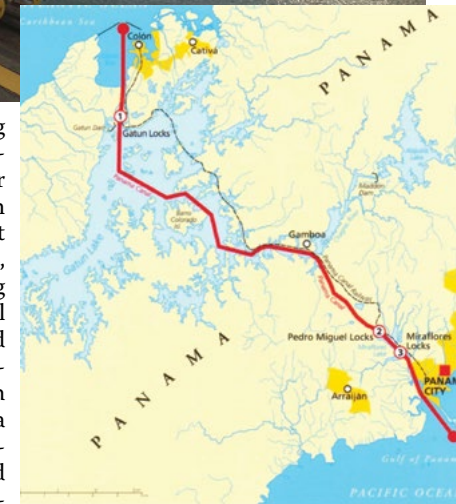


which also prevents the mules from being pulled off the track by the ship. Passage through the locks was very slick and professional, and the shore crew were very happy to exchange smiles and waves. The shore boatmen, who came onto the ship with the pilot to handle the wires (work demarcation), had a ready supply of fridge magnets and other tourist junk.

Once into the massive Gatún Lake, there is anchorage (visitor moorings) and a buoyed and marked channel, which involved a lot of twists and turns though the many islands. All around is impenetrable tropical jungle, and this is the main security protection for the canal zone. Occasionally, the railway line can be seen, which is a legacy of the 1900s' construction. It would have been impossible to build the canal without railway arteries to move resources into the centre and the excavated material out. In the Gatún Lake, ships pass each other, and it is

very disconcerting to see an approaching oil-tanker manoeuvring like an oncoming hire-boat across the channel, and then whizzing past with minimal separation. We used no tugs, but vulnerable ships, such as tankers, have a 'brake' tug, close-coupled astern, and another cruising behind, just in case.

The channel to the south is the true canal, called the Culebra Cut. It was excavated though the mountains, and was a massive undertaking. The ground continues to move here, due to the rainfall, and there are frequent land-slips. The canal has a fleet of dredgers to keep on top of this, and has also spent money





Centennial Bridge

terracing the hillsides to limit runoff. The channel is too narrow for ships to pass, so they operate in convoy. This means that the Pacific locks were in operation with both sets of locks going one way. The one-way convoys limit the traffic flow and prevent continuous operation both ways.

The three canal pilots came on board on the approach to the first locks and left only when out to sea in the south. The Panama is the only canal in the world where pilots take responsibility for the ships. In our case, the ship was not fitted with a conventional rudder and propeller. Instead it has turnable propeller pods and no rudder. The pilot said to the master that he was not confident in handling a ship with this drive and that she should retain command.

Navigation through the canal is constrained in several ways: until recently, the width was limited by the old locks to 110 feet, the length less so, at 1000 feet. This has been overcome with the new locks: the depth limit is water over the top sill of about 40 feet, with the lake gener-

ally being dredged a bit deeper. Both are affected by rainfall and water usage, and so the summit pound level can vary by a few feet. The quoted maximum draught for Panamax ships is 39 feet. The air draught is limited by the 1960s Bridge of the Americas, which has a clearance of 200 feet. Historically, this has not been a problem for the Panamax vessels or for post-Panamax cargo vessels, which are wide, deep and long, rather than high. But the new generation of post-Panamax cruise ships and liners over 100,000 gross tonnes can be too high to get under the bridge. Queen Mary 2, for example, is 232 feet and cannot pass. All they can do is go in from the Atlantic, cruise Gatún Lake and exit back to the Atlantic. Some operators of Caribbean cruises do this already, even with smaller ships.

So there we have it: a brilliant experience and well worth doing. If you are interested in finding out more, there is a lot of information on the web, including videos of ships in transit. They give a very good impression of what is going on.

Paved with gold?

Where do London's new boats come from?

Wilton Marina in Northamptonshire posted a blog in January titled: *'The Secret of Living Cheaply in London'* that has caused some consternation among the boating community. In part, it reads: "We have noticed a trend in the past 18 months of young people purchasing narrow boats from us with the intention of cruising to London and living on the canal system in the city.

An amazing 3rd of all narrow boats sold from our Marina each year make their way down to London. This alternative living accommodation is allowing young people to get their foot on the property ladder, and have an investment in the future. Young people who are looking to leave home and find their own accommodation and independence are choosing to buy a narrow boat. Affording a bricks and mortar property has just become too expensive for many. It is estimated that there is around 100,000 narrow boats currently in London already, with easy access to commute via the underground getting around London couldn't be easier..."

"Becoming a continuous cruiser means you don't need to buy a permanent mooring licence and, as long as you cruise every two weeks, you are able to continue to enjoy living on the water ways."

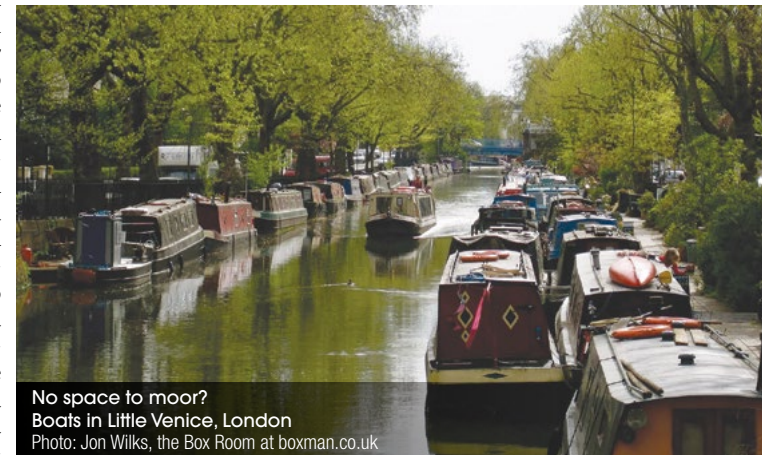
"When living aboard all you have to pay is a cruising licence to the

Canal and River Trust and cover the running costs of diesel to heat your boat ... making day to day living very reasonable in a city location."

"There is now a growing community of young people living on the waterways not just in London, but across the whole of the country. With over 3000 miles of canals in the UK there is plenty of room to accommodate this new trendy style of living."

www.wiltonmarina.co.uk/narrowboat-blog/2014/01/the-secret-of-living-cheaply-in-london

London Boaters Group at www.facebook.com/groups/73933281285/



No space to moor?
Boats in Little Venice, London
Photo: Jon Wilks, the Box Room at boxman.co.uk

Becky Wallace shared the following with the London Boaters group: "I used to write web content for Thai hotel chains and villas, having never visited them and only given the sketchiest of briefs. I successfully wrote a load of aspirational buzzwords and bollocks, which is exactly what this little beauty reads like. It's just written in such a f***ing disingenuous way. Am I wrong to be p***ed off with its tone and inaccuracy? Sell your boats by all means, but stop advertising c'ing as the panacea to all your woes."

The third canal age?

Some fresh perspectives on the inland waterways from **Jim Batty**

Jim Batty is a photographer, graphic designer and author of 'Narrowboat Life: discover life afloat on the inland waterways' (Bloomsbury; 2016).

As a liveboard narrowboater, aware of changing times on our inland waterways, I'd like to raise three related thoughts that I think are worth discussing. The first is that we are presently experiencing an historical shift in canal use, with liveboard boating becoming increasingly more important. The second is that navigation authorities oversee assets that have more social, political and financial value than is often generally recognised—potentially offering organisations such as CRT greater resources and self-determination. Thirdly, by encouraging new thinking in canal and marine engineering we can produce and sustain small-scale, online residential moorings across the system that do not greatly hinder cruising, for example, those that don't necessitate 'tick-over' speed when passing boats.

Historical shifts in canal use

The first great canal era—when most of the inland waterways were built—was one of trans-shipment. At the time, this was a genius solution to the problems of moving raw materials, manufactured goods and foods between mines, villages, towns, ports and other markets, with a few important passenger services thrown in. This era peaked with Canal Mania in the 1790s.

By 1825, a quarter of the canal system had been sold to railway companies—outclassed by advances in steam locomotion and metal track technologies. Canal companies began to sell off their 'day-boats' and the long commercial decline of the

waterways had begun. Increased rail competition meant a dramatic fall in boatmen's pay and many responded to the financial squeeze by moving their families into the back cabins of their boats, initiating the first large-scale expansion in liveboards on the system. The commercial trans-shipment era concluded with the near-dereliction of the waterways by the mid-1950s, which ensured the near-disappearance of working families afloat.

A second great canal era, from the 1950s onwards, has seen the waterways system reborn for leisure boating and recreation—thanks to a couple of brave and forward-thinking individuals and an ever-growing host of like-minded waterways volunteers. The number of private, hire and co-ownership boats has grown continuously since and, not surprisingly, alongside this expansion has developed an equally keen interest in living afloat. Over the past decade especially, trade in new and second-hand narrowboats as liveboard homes has been swift. Some boatbuilders have even shifted production from narrowboats to liveboard wide-beams to meet demand. Last summer, we witnessed more newly-minted replica Dutch barge homes cruising the River Thames than ever before.

Who are these people living afloat? During our seven plus years cruising as liveboards, we have met every sort of person imaginable, from architects, accountants and actors, via IT experts, consultants and mechanics, to photographers and musicians—and recently a nuclear

engineer. All are enthusiastic about their unique lives afloat and 99% of them are self-funding. These people are an intrinsic part of the 'new' emerging canal world. This upsurge in liveboard boating is similar to its historic predecessor in being financially motivated, but now by two different main factors: the skyrocketing costs of buying or renting a home; and the emancipation of pension savings. Also, I wouldn't discount the existential need of many, young and old, in stressful times to 'downsize', 'simplify life', 'live closer to nature', or adopt a more 'environmentally aware lifestyle'. The actual increase in residential boating is difficult to quantify because the various navigation authorities have so rarely asked. Most recently (in 2008), BW asked in a boaters' survey: 'Is your boat your main residence?' 18% replied 'Yes' as their main or Monday-Friday residence. Extrapolating from this, BW estimated that there were about 5,400 residential boats out of approximately 30,000 privately licensed boats. More recently, in places like London, CRT has been counting the increase in continuous cruisers on an annual basis. In March 2012, 638 CCers were sighted; in March 2016, there were 1,615, representing a 150% increase over five years. Of course, we can't conflate continuous cruisers with liveboards, but the data suggests a strong trend and anecdotal evidence of the increase in liveboards across the system certainly isn't difficult to discover.

Online moorings—valuable waterways assets

For a wide variety of reasons—political, economic and social—we have a shortage of homes in Britain and many local authorities are under great pressure to develop more. Their obligation to evaluate and



Cruising past boats: Public moorings (right) and mixed residential (left), near Rickmansworth
Photo: Jim Batty

address local housing needs is a mammoth, complex, hugely expensive and often controversial task. Any simple, economical, safe and environmentally aware solutions that can contribute to local housing needs, while simultaneously reducing the number of comparatively expensive homes needed to be built on brownfield or greenfield sites, would be very valuable indeed.

At the same time we have an unprecedented shortage of residential moorings on the system. Boaters have been asking for more liveboard facilities for years, and the need is increasing.

Scattered across the waterways



Rough banks: Public 14-day mooring (left) and CRT long-term mooring (right), Great Bedwyn, K&A
Photo: Jim Batty

system, in the hands of CRT and other navigation authorities, are short sections of linear canal and river moorings that, with a relatively small investment, could be transformed into highly valued, low-key residential spaces. That is, highly valued by liveboard boaters who want to remain within a particular community. They are extremely valuable to local authorities on tight budgets that are desperate to both make a dent in their overall housing plan requirements and address the needs of those already locally afloat.

Of course, it is up to organisations such as CRT to proactively promote these valuable assets to local and national authorities, build partnerships, negotiate development and long-term licensing agreements, and so on. But surely this would be to their financial advantage, contribute to the upgrading and successful guardianship of the inland waterways, and benefit boaters and other canal users across the system.

Naturally navigation authorities and trusts are not housing providers—they have a host of waterway responsibilities to be getting on with. And residential moorings are not a silver bullet to the housing shortage. But a careful, ecologically sensitive

and limited development of online residential moorings would make a worthwhile contribution towards the UK's housing problem and a big difference to the growing population afloat.

Low impact, online moorings—beyond the controversy

Most non-boaters are surprised that online moorings can be controversial. Here's the lay of the land as I understand it: many boaters are not keen to see more online residential or leisure moorings because they dislike having to slow down to tick-over when cruising past a line of moored boats. That said, some boaters, probably a minority, are adamant that slowing to pass moored boats is not an inconvenience and simply a welcome part of inland boating's tranquil pace. It is also present CRT policy to eliminate online moorings in areas where new offline facilities, such as marinas or waterside developments, are built. Unfortunately, commercial offline developments are very patchy across the system and very expensive to build—and can only represent a partial solution to mooring requirements. On the other hand, CRT does wish to 'seek more appropriate recognition of residential moorings in national and local government policy and guidance, particularly within the planning and housing sectors', and it hopes to encourage a 'more informed consideration' of residential moorings by local authorities. (From 'Policies for Mooring Along the Banks of our Canals and Rivers—Policy 10', CRT; active 2009 - present). I believe many boaters' worries about online moorings could be alleviated by the development of a more technically savvy, lower impact type of mooring.

Here's my view of what this might look like:

A low-impact online mooring would be along the bank of a well-dredged canal or river and offer a depth of about 18 inches below the maximum draft of any craft likely to be tied up at it. The mooring would be indented into the towpath or offside bank by at least 3.5 feet and preferably more where possible. This widening and possible deepening of the mooring channel is crucial to the stability of stationary boats and the efficient progress of passing boats. Such moorings would be equipped with a reasonable number of rings and their walls would have a vertical, reinforced and long-lasting construction—built of formed metal, wood, concrete or whatever was locally appropriate. Importantly, the walls would be well-fendered. Linear marine fendering can be extremely sophisticated (no more bald car tyres!) and I expect a dedicated inland waterways variety would be designed and installed. For example, composite material fenders are available in a range of 'D', 'B', 'O' and other profiles, incorporating a variety of wear-resistant and low-friction properties that protect and absorb the energy of a range of differently-sized craft. So, not rocket science but rubber science.

These type of low-impact online moorings would ensure that well-tied-up boats remained relatively stable—rising and falling but not overly jostling, grounding, catching or shifting laterally when craft pass at 2 or 3 mph, rather than at tick-over speed. As to numbers, it is probably appropriate to the waterways environment that low-impact linear moorings are limited to, say, no more than six 70-foot berths within a specified distance. Residential moorings developed in partnership with, or subsidised by, local authorities, would probably require water, rubbish disposal and perhaps elec-



Passing online residential and leisure moorings, Great Bedwyn, K&A
Photo: Jim Batty

tric points. If these moorings seem expensive, reflect on the difference in costs for a local authority to: a) upgrade a six-narrowboat length of canal; and b) secure planning permission, develop the infrastructure for, and build, six new homes on the edge of town.

Really, I'm suggesting that, in changing times, we need to consider our inland waterways from fresh perspectives: view them within a shifting historical context; seriously consider promoting them in higher profile ways; and actively seek out modern, low-impact methods that address age-old problems. I think our beautiful waterways deserve it.

The Narrowboat Sessions

Mark Holdsworth explains the rationale for the charity and its development over the last three years.

More information

thenarrowboatsessions.com

www.facebook.com/thenarrowboatsessions

@thenarrowboatsessions

Contact:

thenarrowboatsessions@aol.co.uk, or 07831 566556



Double CD for sale in aid of Cancer Research, The Glendale Family; a six piece band and all alone, the famed singer-songwriter Nick Harper.



The Narrowboat Sessions (NBS) is a charitable organisation, created to promote unsigned musicians and at the same time raise money for Cancer Research.

I started the NBS after realising that I'd lost more friends to cancer than anything else, despite being a motorcycling ex-serviceman! My wife Sue's cousin died in her late 40s from cancer, leaving Sue as the oldest member of her family aged 47. The final straw was when the lovely folk musician, Maggie Boyle announced that her cancer was terminal.

I spent most of my childhood on and around the Trent and Mersey Canal near Shardlow in the 1960s

North Wales. Cariad IV started her first musical tour days after hearing the dreadful news about Maggie, and the itinerary was changed to include Hebden Bridge as a matter of urgency. We arrived there ten days later, despite a water shortage on the Rochdale. Amazingly, Maggie and husband Steve Tilson came aboard and performed possibly their last duet together in the extra-large front cratch of Cariad IV, only weeks before Maggie sadly died.

Every musician that views the videos on Facebook wants to take part, so there is never a shortage of people to play on the boat—to the point where I have had to limit the sessions to 100 each year, organised and assisted by my wife Sue, Catrin Francis, artistic and website advisor Kira Jamieson, Alan Rutherford and regular crew member, Steve Rickard.

In our second year, we headed south to Stratford upon Avon and last year we went north again, towards Lancaster but, due to engine trouble, detoured to Liverpool. This year we will be heading to London.

There are now more than 500 videos on our website and Facebook page. All genres of music are welcome, provided that they are predominantly acoustic. Our first album is currently on sale on the website or Facebook (all profits go to Cancer Research). Betty Jones is the brains behind the album production, and tracks for a second album have just been selected. It will hopefully be on sale in the summer.

The music videos from the sessions often appear on NABO's Facebook page.

and I've been involved with the canals ever since. We live on our boat, Cariad IV, and when not touring the NBS, our permanent mooring is in

Leeds and Liverpool lock safety

A boater has won a substantial out-of-court settlement from CRT after his boat sank in Lock 40 of the Bank Newton flight in 2012. The settlement means that CRT does not have to make a formal declaration of liability or fault and it continues to say that the lock is not defective. However, L&L canal incident reports included 24 chamber wall boat hang-ups, of which 22 were on the Bank Newton Flight, including eight at Lock 37 and seven at lock 40. CRT's published Minimum Safety Standards specify that locks should not have protrusions that could snag boats. In view of this, the boater asked the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to issue CRT with an improvement notice, stating that the Trust has failed to take all reasonable practicable measures to ensure the safety of its locks, but the HSE has refused to act.

The boater noted that the Trust had provided HSE with a drawing of the 'out of vertical' Lock 40 north chamber wall and its 'protrusion risk'. Re-pointing of the wall in 2006 and 2009 shows that CRT is aware of the risk, although it has neither agreed nor denied the risk. He requested HSE to reconsider its position as there is a high probability of another boat hang-up, due to CRT failing to carry out any remedial work. HSE replied, saying it has pointed out again to CRT that the history of incidents at the Bank Newton flight demonstrates a risk remains, as does the duty on CRT to assess and control it. HSE has advised CRT to closely monitor any incidents or near misses to see whether whether any more needs to be done to reduce the risk. Regular users of the flight are aware of the



Stonework on the north wall of Lock 40
Photo: Peter Fellows

condition of the locks and know that it is dangerous to share with another boat, a pair often being too wide to escape the protrusions, so are in fear of being hung-up. But newcomers, and particularly hire-boaters, know nothing of the dangers, and can find themselves in a dangerous position when sharing.

The boater commented: "It was a Trust QC who told one of his boating clients that it is CRT's unwritten policy to agree to settlements at any cost rather than have recorded judgment against it. I wish I knew that before, because I wanted to go to court, and reluctantly agreed to the settlement in the interest of my wife's health and welfare. Sadly the four years of CRT's lies, deceit and arrogance will have a lasting effect on my wife."

From the *The Floater* February 2017 at www.thefloater.org and Tom Crossley at www.narrowboatworld.com 9426-the-disgrace-that-is-bank-newton

Rotate!

Scottish Canals are under pressure over both their increases in charges and their 'Rotate' project for the flagship Falkirk Wheel

A plan for a static pontoon to be fitted to one of the caissons of the Falkirk Wheel, named 'Rotate' would leave just one caisson for use by the trip boat and any other boats wishing to travel between the two canals. The proposal would reduce the availability for hire and private boats by 75% because the main users of the wheel are trip-boats operating at the site.

Scottish Canals says: "We have been considering how we can offer more opportunities for visitors to experience the Falkirk Wheel; in particular, those who don't have time to take a boat trip onto the Union Canal. We are still at an early design stage and we are carrying out a full review of the project. Rotate will not change the nature of the Falkirk Wheel, or prevent navigation of the Lowland Canals."

Increase in charges

Falkirk-based Capercaillie Cruisers says that the charges Scottish Canals aims to levy next year, said to be an increase of up to 500%, would see the firm running at a loss. The hire company is one of the boating pioneers in the Scottish Lowlands, starting with two boats and now operating twenty-one.

Waterways planning consultant, Patrick Moss, says: "One of the issues with the Scottish Canals is that they haven't attracted that much boating activity - I'm not sure how many private boats are based on the canals, but from what I gather very few of them ever go anywhere.

Looking at this rationally, the changes are an attempt to make more money from the lift, which needs an operational subsidy, while accommodating the fairly limited demand for through traffic. If it's a floating pontoon carrying foot traffic, it is readily reversible. The policy is arguably short-sighted, as it might be a better idea to try and promote more boat traffic.

There is also an issue that, while it's a feature, it is also a barrier in the same way that, say, Marple Locks are. I've had boats moored on the summit of the Macc and have gone past the top of Marple Locks far more often than I've gone down them - the novelty wears off. That may be happening with the Scottish Canals and that long pound from Falkirk to Edinburgh.

I don't know enough about Capercaillie Cruisers to comment on the business model, but the market for canal holidays in the Scottish Lowlands needs a lot of promotion and development; the market needs to be created not just tapped into, and you can't just tag it on to the English tourism offer. While Capercaillie Cruisers are a bit of a success story, they seem to be the only show in town, and perhaps the exception rather than the rule. If the hire market was really ripe, I'd have expected more operators, with up to half a dozen based along the canal, for example (the first thing that comes up on a Google search is boats being used as Air BnB - and that's really not healthy). The local



The Falkirk Wheel showing a widebeam trip boat in the lower caisson.
Photo: Sean McClean (Wiki Commons)

opposition is significant. Has the Scottish public signed up to the idea that the canals are about boats, or do they see them as linear parks?"

Responses from Scottish boaters

"Put that together with SC's vision of the canals as 'linear parks' and the future for navigation and boaters isn't looking safe in their hands".

"This is an absolute disaster for Scottish Canals and for Scottish canals".

"This will be 'Parks' as in somewhere to park a boat, I take it? The idea that someone would actually want to untie a couple of mooring ropes and cruise to a different location is clearly anathema to SC. This appears to be a simple piece of mathematics that has come to underpin SC's current philosophy and will enable a caisson on the Wheel to be permanently taken over by a pontoon, unmolested by those pesky hire-boats that queue up for passage

on a weekend".

"So this puts SC well on the way to achieving their aim of becoming a regeneration agency rather than a navigation authority: a role that many delegates left last year's World Canals Conference in Inverness feeling was SC's primary objective. This is, therefore, a very sad day for the Lowland canals indeed and there are people within SC Property Department that should be hanging their heads in shame".

And a visiting English boater Comments: "Scottish Canals don't exactly go out of their way to encourage visiting boat owners to their waterways. The cost of our visitor's licence for seven days on the Caledonian this year is going to be £140.70!.

Hardly cheap for a 23ft boat and way more expensive than other areas we have visited. The EA charged us £14 for seven days on the Fens and the Broads Authority was £31 when we visited last year.

Letters to the Editor

Opinions expressed here are independent of NABO policy and statements made have not been verified as true.

Edgbaston update

After a rummage, I found one of my, as yet untried, Christmas presents to play with; it's a radar speed gun. So armed with said gun and the multilingual instructions, I stood on the back of the boat and ... well you guessed it, speed-gunned the passing cyclists. The results, while not accurate enough for the legal system, were pretty consistent and interesting.

The normal speed for a cyclist is between 14 and 16 mph. The pushing-it-a-bit cyclist is up to 19 mph but in the 20+ mph club, there were four at 20 mph, six at 21 mph (note: these six were traveling together and this was the speed of the woman at the back; the leader was leaving them behind), two at 22 mph, one at 23 mph and one at 24 mph.

Should any of the 20+ mph club ride on the road outside my house at these speeds, they'd be breaking the law as the speed limit was reduced to 20 mph recently due to safety concerns. Yet they do nothing wrong just because they are on a pedestrian towpath. These were all normal-looking cyclists.

Where? the vale, just up from where CRT is considering narrowing Edgbaston Tunnel to single-way working, so the towpath can be widened

as it slows the cyclists down too much. I wonder if they've done any similar survey... doubt it.

Peter Jaggars

Licensing review ...

I think it is quite unfair to wide-beam boaters to suggest they should pay 50% more, after years of paying the same as narrowboats. New registrations maybe, but increases out of the blue on this huge scale for existing boaters are just not reasonable (I do not have a wide beam!). NABO appears to be suggesting that licences for all boats should be divided into under- or over-14 m bands in the interests of 'simplicity'. It may be simple, but I can't see how the owner of a 47 ft boat will think paying the same as 70ft one, or a 30ft boat paying the same as a 45ft is OK. I don't think working out rates based on accurate lengths (and possibly widths) is beyond the wit of most, especially in these days of calculators and computers. The EA certainly used to publish tables for all lengths and widths, so CRT could easily do the same. Their online licence renewal database presumably could cope with the calculation. I hope NABO will not recommend this idea to CRT. It is just the sort of poorly thought through scheme they would go for!

... and South Oxford restoration

I would find licence and (above inflation) mooring increases more acceptable if I saw evidence of better maintenance of my local canal. While it is good to learn in NABO News that the South Oxford between Newbold and Wormleighton has had attention paid to vegetation clearance, regrettably the stretch between Banbury and Oxford is in a dire state. Offside and towpath side vegetation is rampant in many areas and reed/sedge growth in the channel is making one-way working increasingly necessary. Last December, spurred on by an item in NABO News, I exchanged emails with CRT about this. I quote part of their reply, referring to the work on vegetation clearance south of Wormleighton: "Our

I name this boat ...

If you have spotted a boat name that made you smile, please let me have a photo to use in future issues. Here's one from **Helen Hutt**.



Contract Delivery Manager is currently trying to secure extra funds to continue to proceed south, however, due to budget restrictions we are not optimistic". As for the condition of the collapsing banks and bridges, I despair.

Dave Chipchase

More on licensing review

I cannot imagine that NABO Council's suggestion that the licence bands be reduced to just two will go down well with some boat owners. To keep charges revenue neutral for CRT, would mean that smaller craft would be paying more than at present. At present, the authorities seem to be able to cope with multiple bands, CRT 18, Gold Licence 19, EA Anglian 8, and EA Thames 16. With just two bands, an 18 foot boat would pay same as a 45 foot and a 46 foot the same as a 70 foot. As for charging wide-beams, I would consider the Thames system the best, as craft come in various widths. If some reduction is given to wide boats because they cannot use all of the system, a similar reduction should apply to craft over 57 feet, which are also restricted. When people buy these boats surely they are aware of the waterways they can use.

Rodney Hardwick

Bridgewater clarifications

Following another exchange of emails, I have spoken at length with Peter Parkinson at Bridgewater Canal Licensing and had a constructive conversation. He told me that some of the issues I have raised had never been queried with them previously and all will be considered as they negotiate a new reciprocal agreement with CRT, so it is possible arrangements may change at some time in the future.

At present, he has clarified the rules as follows: the free period allowed on the Bridgewater Canal is up to seven days and expires the day a boat leaves their waters. He accepted my point that it seems perverse that if two boats leave Preston Brook on the same day, both returning there on the seventh, one going only to Castlefield and the other to Wigan, the former will require no payment but the latter will need to purchase a temporary licence to enter the Bridgewater

Canal on the return journey, even though it has used the canal's water and facilities for a shorter period. He said this will be considered when they review the arrangements.

The 28-day 'no return without payment' period applies from the date the boat last departed from Bridgewater Canal on a free visit, even if three- or seven-day licences have been purchased since that date for subsequent visits. Although the Bridgewater Canal website talks of 'temporary licences', 'permits' and 'return permits' these are all the same thing and can be purchased at any time during those four weeks.

If a boat made two same-direction circuits of the Cheshire Ring within a 28-day period in which payment was necessary, two three-day temporary licences would be acceptable. Temporary licenses must be purchased by telephone on Mondays to Fridays between 1400 and 1600. There is, however, also provision on the BCC website to purchase on-line at any time. If a permit is required at a weekend and the boat crew is not tech-savvy, it is acceptable to enter Bridgewater Canal without a temporary licence and pay an Enforcement Officer, who can accept both cash and card payments. It was accepted that the website is insufficiently clear as regards arrangements for visiting boats and there are plans to revise it.

Brian Johnson





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