



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 2 April 2021



London strategy
50 years of boating
Eco-toilets



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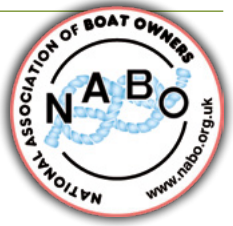


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NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

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Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images in JPEG format please. Please email your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk or post to the Editor by May 1st 2021.

Cover photo

This month's photo Clopton Bridge, Stratford on Avon is by John Sutton geograph.org.uk/5748435

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.



NABO News is published by the
National Association of Boat Owners
20 Oak Grove, Hertford, SG13 8AT
Editor: Peter Fellows Production: Chris Pink

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After what seems to have been an eternal winter, it's good to see spring arriving again.

Some members have used the latest lockdown to reflect on boating as it used to be: Stephen Peters looks back over 50 years to, among other boat facilities, instantaneous Ascot water heaters, and John Devonald recalls a simpler, electricity-free life afloat.

“There is nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.” KENNETH GRAHAM

Editor, **Peter Fellows**, is hoping to be back on board this month



Photo: CRT

NABO has been busy throughout the lockdown and this issue has our response to CRT's London strategy consultation, together with a perspective on progress to date from London liveaboard, Simon Robbins. There is also a BSS report on serious incidents in 2020, especially injuries caused by propellers, fires and explosions—although fewer incidents of CO poisoning, possibly because of the requirement last year to fit CO alarms.

Helen Hutt reports on the last CRT Council meeting and Peter Braybrook has filed his first regional report of a CRT meeting in the West Midlands. Paul Monahan has been trawling the CRT website for nuggets of information.

Following CRT's decision to review the disposal of 'humanure' at its facilities, Helen expounds the charms of eco-toilets on boats. I have included the third part of my survey of boat names, showing that some owners might have revealed rather more than they intended when choosing a name.

At the time of writing, the fate of Braunston Stop House is not decided, but Lewis Esposito has written to reinforce the notion that CRT should be protecting our waterway heritage, not selling it off. In another letter, Don May offers thanks to CRT ground-staff for the help and support they offered when the water in the canal he was floating on at Beeston suddenly disappeared.

There is at last some good news to report on red diesel, something that NABO has been campaigning on for more than two decades! Finally, I've asked for your view on whether you would like to continue with paper issues of NABO News or change to an electronic version.

Hopefully it won't be too long before we can all start “messing about in boats” again.



I hope that some of you might be able to get out on your boats soon—it has been so frustrating and worrying, especially if your boat is not safe in a well-managed marina. I had to handle a report last week of a boat close to us on the K&A, slowly sinking—all we could do was to inform CRT, as nobody knew who the boat owner was.

Many boaters in the London area will have to become more electric-based, given what is happening there with the creation of 'e-moorings'. These have electrical supply points made available—if booked and the electricity is paid for!—and the accompanying gradual banning of both running diesel engines and burning cheaper coal and wood. Along with existing boaters using more electrical systems, there is mounting pressure for the development of non-fossil-fuelled boats in general. Initially (at least), these would most likely be electric-based, and probably largely hybrids. So, for the BSS, the problem is simple—how do we set up an effective electrical inspection regime that covers both AC and DC, with high voltages and currents, without increasing the cost of the inspections? As an ex-Director of the IEE—now IET, I am only too well aware of the domestic wiring regulations that apply to land-based homes, to keep them electrically safe. There are two issues here, however: first, they do not currently apply to our boats; and secondly, inspectors must be fully qualified to undertake work related to these standards. Will this ultimately require BSS inspectors to be so qualified? An expert group is being set up under the BSS Technical Committee to investigate all this as a matter of urgency; I have also used my previous contacts to open discussions with the IET.

We have not yet seen the

outcomes from either the CRT consultation on proposed changes to our licence T&C's, or the consultation on the issues regarding the London situation. It is very clear, however, that in both cases CRT is looking towards addressing—amongst other things—the 'problems' related to moorings in London and other places such as Bath.

To anyone walking the towpaths

Electric boats and mooring congestion

Chairman, **Mike Rodd**, describes just two of the issues facing NABO

(as I do) in London or Bath, there is an obvious and serious issue, largely due to too many boats and too few moorings. Also, without constant monitoring, how do you ensure that those moorings that are available are fairly used? Most hire-boat companies seem to have given up on allowing their boats to go into London, and have warned hirers that in Bath, they are unlikely to find anywhere to moor close to the centre.

It is very obvious that the root of the problem is simply that, to many, living on a boat is seen as a cheap—or even profitable—way of living near to where they work or study. A few months ago, I met someone battling to get his enormous broad-beam boat through the relatively low bridge near Hungerford, on his way to Bath. He had calculated that his student daughter could not only live on it, but also let out the other 11 bunks to other students, which would pay her study costs at one of the universities there. Asking him whether he was aware of the restrictions on moorings and the need to move every 14 days, I got a shrug of

the shoulders. I also asked him what BSS he had for the boat: "The usual private boat one" was the answer! And then there was that priceless query on one of the boating websites from the person who had just bought a boat to live on in London: he asked where he could moor so that he had a permanent water connection, as he needed a boiling hot 15-minute shower twice a day. All very hygienic, but it showed that he had not done his homework! But why should he, when there are so many TV shows and magazine articles claiming how lovely and cheap it is to live on a boat in London?

Of course, CRT fully understands all these issues—and if there were any simple answers, I am sure that it would have used them. And yes, it is cheaper to live on a boat than rent an apartment near to the centre of the city. But it is not so simple: the Waterways Act—as NABO has pointed out many times—really does give CRT little room to manoeuvre; but also local authorities are unwilling to allow more places to be opened up to create new moorings. As the Residential Boat Owners Association has pointed out on many occasions, there are many opportunities to create new residential moorings that are close to London, for example, in some of the old gravel pits, but local authorities are simply unwilling to grant permission for these. So, with the best will in the world, there is no straightforward answer to these issues. I suspect that in the end the only control that will be possible will be based on money. How that can be applied within the current Waterways Acts is going to continue to be the problem facing CRT. For NABO, all we can do is to keep talking and ensure that we do everything to protect the interests of our members. It would be good, though, to have more London-based

members—although our membership remains strong, most are based outside the capital.

We continue to follow, with deep concern, the introduction by the Environment Agency (EA) of a commercial car parking company to monitor and enforce any over-staying on ALL its moorings on the non-tidal Thames. This is due to commence despite serious, legally supported objections by NABO and all the other Thames boater representative bodies. An FOI (Freedom of Information) request finally allowed us to see the highly redacted submission by the company involved. In this, there were some amazing statements about user organisations not only having been consulted, but also supporting their tender! It was something of a shock to us all to discover that, as a government agency, the EA cannot question the accuracy of any claims made within such a tender, but is simply forced to accept its veracity at face value! The operators do receive some funding from the EA, but their business model also, depends heavily on receiving fines from boaters who overstay, which can rapidly rise to £150 per day! Interestingly, we have not been able to find any evidence of the company successfully taking to court anyone who refused to pay the fines. The business model seems to be based on the fact that most would simply pay up and not contest any charges. Our worry is that CRT uses this model across the system, as it apparently is for some of its mooring sites in London.

As our recent Council meeting showed, we have a lot to deal with at the moment. Fortunately, with many brilliant new Council members, we are able to cope—just! And we are all anxious to achieve what we all want—to get out on the water! If you can, enjoy!

Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the March Council meeting

A nearly-full turnout and a packed agenda for the latest teleconference meeting. Councillors were pleased that CRT is taking seriously NABO's comments on the readability of its Terms & Conditions documents. But it is likely to go ahead with the changes to the T&Cs no matter what the consultation results. In London, CRT will have another consultation on the ideas arising from the last consultation, but it has done little yet to implement the recommendations from the 2018 consultation. There's a pilot scheme to prevent double-mooring on the River Lee where a rowing club operates which, together with the creation of some new short-stay moorings, will reduce the total number of moorings in the Capital for boaters who do not have a home mooring. There will also be 33 pilot 'eco-moorings' in Islington, Kings Cross and further west, funded by local authorities. Boaters will not be allowed to run their engines while moored and will need a Meter Macs account to use the electricity provided. They can still use smokeless fuel in boat stoves, but this will probably be banned after the pilot scheme (ironically, some of the expensive houses overlooking the canal have aesthetic wood-burning stoves alongside their central heating).


Braunston Stop House is the latest heritage treasure to appear in the cross-hairs of CRT's asset disposal machine. NABO and the local council are pressing to have it added to the buildings-at-risk register. Councillors expect more property

disposals as CRT increases working from home and virtual meetings, post-Covid, when offices are no longer required. But it should not be NABO's job to protect the canalside heritage; this should be the normal way that CRT operates, rather than flogging off our national assets.

It is often difficult for boaters to meet without the subject of toilets coming up and there was a discussion of CRT's updated advice on disposal of solids from separating toilets. CRT doesn't want to have composting sites at service facilities, but there is no reason why composting bins could not be located at marinas or alongside flights of locks where flower beds need regular nourishment.

The Covid lockdown has caused delays in dealing with stoppages, with serious landslips north of Anderton on the T&M and on the Shroppie, and other problems on the Macclesfield, Peak Forest and Leeds & Liverpool canals. But the councillor who attends CRT's Stoppage Committee was full of praise for the way in which it conducts its work. Likewise, praise for CRT's towpath mowing plan, with trials this year to see what works best—such as an early cut, and then allow the Spring flowers, followed by a summer cut.

Finally, and hopefully, everyone was looking forward to be boating again by early April.

Byeeee


Council meetings are normally held at boat clubs in the Midlands area. However, with COVID-19 they will be held by teleconference until the Council is able to meet again face-to-face.

Members are welcome to join in the teleconferences; please just let the Secretary or Chair know in advance (contact details inside cover).

The dates for Council meetings in 2021 are: April 24th, June 19th, September 4th, October 9th and November 13th (includes AGM).

Membership Matters

Paper or electronic NABO News?

At its last meeting, NABO Council discussed the cost of printing and posting NABO News and a possible electronic version of the magazine.

This would have a 'page-flip' feature so that it can be easily read on a computer or tablet screen. Opinions were divided between keeping the current printed format on the grounds that members wanted to have physical copies to read and share with colleagues, and those who felt that we should move towards an electronic version that was easy to read and distribute and would result in substantial cost savings. The

Council decided to seek the views of members before discussing it again.

I would be grateful if you could email or write to me, the Editor, detail page 2, to let me know what you think. The two options are:

- 1 I would like to continue to receive printed issues of NABO News through the post;
- 2 I would prefer to change and receive electronic issues, sent to me by email.

If you could let me know before April 24th the Council can discuss the results at its next meeting. Thank you for your help.

CRT Council

Boater's Representative, **Helen Hutt** picks the bones of the March meeting.

A challenging winter, with serious weather-related incidents on the Aire & Calder (£3-3.5 million, reopening this summer), Shropshire Union, Trent & Mersey and River Weaver. The bottom Figure of Three lock on the Calder & Hebble reopens at Easter after a £1.5 million rebuild.

Financially, income during the pandemic has fallen by 7% but costs have been held, so the deficit is relatively small. Friends' numbers have fallen by 10%. There will be more home- and hub-working in future, leading to the closure of 12 offices, with a potential saving of £11 million annually.

On safety, there were three non-related fatal incidents on the Wigan flight and a three-year-old drowned in the river section of the K&A near Newbury; these and other minor incidents have prompted a review and closer community ties.

Over 60 youngsters have taken up six-month placements on the Kickstart programme.

Environmentally, there are now 400 miles of canal designated 'Green Flag' and the first 'Blue Flag' has been awarded to Liverpool docks. The focus is now on improving urban areas (artworks, living walls, pocket gardens, etc.)

There are 147 infrastructure projects in the pipeline, including the refurbishment of the

Anderton boat lift in 2023/4. The spillway option at Toddbrook Reservoir should be agreed shortly, allowing planning approval this summer and a winter start to works, which will last up to two years. The third fish-pass on the Severn, at Diglis, including an underwater viewing gallery, is finished; the final one, at Holt, will be completed later this year. The future of heritage properties was aired briefly and "will be carefully managed"; the fate of Braunston Stop House was raised but "no decision has yet been taken".

CRT claimed a good response to the Terms & Conditions consultation (3,300 responses = 10%) with an average of 78% support for the proposed changes. However, there will be some amendments to the original and readability has been improved. A report will be published in April, followed by the new T&Cs in May and implementation in June. On water resources; CRT is having to apply for 155 exemptions costing £232,500 allowing abstraction of water from reservoirs and rivers for the next six years.

Finally, we had an up-beat update on the Defra Review—far more involved than I had imagined!— which, it is hoped, will secure funding beyond 2026/7.

The next CRT Council meeting is in September.

Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

West Midlands Peter Braybrook



I want to introduce myself as the NABO West Midlands Representative. I joined NABO Council at its AGM in November last year and was asked to take over this role. I am not officially located in the West Midlands, being resident in Banbury, with my boat's home mooring on the South Oxford canal just half a mile away. However that is only eight miles and 12 locks from Boundary Lift Bridge 141, which marks the start of the West Midlands in Warwickshire so we can be there in about five and a half hours.

We started boating in 1999 on a hire-boat on the Black Country ring, so the first locks I navigated were the Farmers Bridge flight. Again in the autumn that year we cruised on the smaller ring to the south of Birmingham: the Worcester & Birmingham, North Stratford and Grand Union Canals. We fell in love with the canals from there. Our cruising in the summer months nearly always takes in a cruise through Birmingham. We like to use Cambrian Wharf as a base and visit the parts of the BCN that are little visited. This summer we will be there again on the way to and back from Worcester and the IWA National in August.

On your behalf, I attended the CRT West Midlands *Showcase* acclaiming the work that CRT is doing to promote community activity and wellbeing. In their words;

"This was our third in the region, but the first we'd held on-line, and it was great to see so many there. Over 100 listened to and engaged with us on a wide range of presentations, covering:

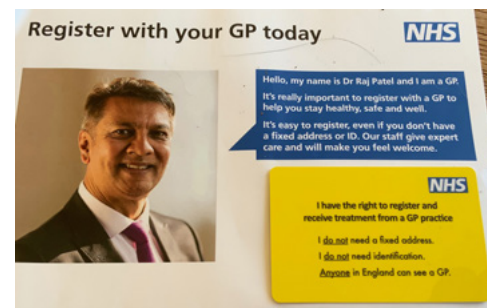
- A regional report on the past year and insight into the plan for next year by Regional Director, Adnan Saif;
- Reflections from two of our key partners, Pete Ezard of Aston Villa Foundation and Andy

- Tidy, Boater, Roving Trader and Historian;
- Keynote presentation from Chenine Bhatena, Creative Director of Coventry City of Culture;
- An update on preparations for the Birmingham Commonwealth Games from Dean Hill;
- Question & Answer panel with CEO, Richard Parry, Chief Operating Officer, Julie Sharman and Adnan Saif.

Copies of all of these presentations are available on our website, along with a record of questions and answers at canalrivertrust.org.uk/meetings/45733-west-midlands-annual-public-meeting-and-showcase.

My only question as to whether towpath 'improvements' can include the provision of mooring rings remains unanswered. In the future I will meet with the management of CRT to discuss the subject of returning boating to the top of the agenda in the West Midlands, which is where I believe it should be. Should you have any matters of concern, or can inform such a dialogue, I look forward to hearing from you.

GP registration



NABO General Secretary, Mark Tizard, has a supply of these yellow plastic cards that will fit in a wallet. If any members would like one posted to them, please let him know.



Annual report of incidents and accidents recorded in 2020, Doc H1, BSS AC #106

BSS report on serious incidents in 2020

Incidents reported between January and October 2020.

Major injuries, MOB and propeller strikes

Two people were on a hired wide-beam in February when one slipped and fell off the stern when trying to recover a dog that had jumped into the water. The hirer was caught in the propeller and one of his legs was severely injured. Following treatment, the victim has retained both legs.

In June, a number of hirers were on a day-hire cruiser when a member of the group, already in the water, attempted to re-board the boat at the stern. His shorts tangled in the propeller and his leg came into contact with the blades, requiring stitches for the injuries.

In August, on a borrowed narrowboat, the steerer was pushed off the stern deck of the reversing boat by the tiller, when the rudder struck something under water. He was drawn onto the propeller blades and suffered very significant and deep injuries to the lower part of his body, which he survived.

In August, a Broads hire-cruiser with forward controls crashed into a quay in what may have been an erratic or emergency manoeuvre. A crew member was on the steps at the stern which had BSS-compliant hand holds. The victim lost hold, was thrown into the water and died due to multiple injuries and drowning due to entrapment beneath the boat.

In September, young hirers who had been drinking were pushing

each other into the river. One was swept or drawn by the current into the rotating propeller blades as the boat reversed towards him. The victim suffered leg injuries so significant that, despite being rescued, he died in hospital.

Explosions

In January, a narrowboat moored in St Pancras Basin, London, suffered a gas explosion when the cylinder was being changed. After a seized valve was freed suddenly, gas filled the bow and entered the boat interior. The gas was ignited by the lit solid fuel stove. The occupant was hospitalised.

In August, two people were taken to a Regional Burns Centre after an explosion on board a boat in Stourport. The cause was recorded by the fire service as a camping stove that allowed a build-up of flammable gasses which then ignited.

Also in August, a small cruiser suffered an explosion and fire as the owner decanted petrol from a spare fuel can to the portable outboard tank aboard the craft with the doors open. The marine surveyor believed that a gas fridge pilot-light ignited petrol vapours. The owner received light burns.

An explosion destroyed a cruiser on an urban canal mooring. According to a police report, a passing towpath user was injured and needed hospital treatment. The owner of a house next to the canal reported that the explosion caused their house to shake. The media has reported the cause as a gas canister leak.

Fires

An owner and dog escaped from a burning narrowboat. The victim was given oxygen by fire-fighters before being taken to hospital. The owner may have been asleep when the fire started. There was no smoke alarm fitted.

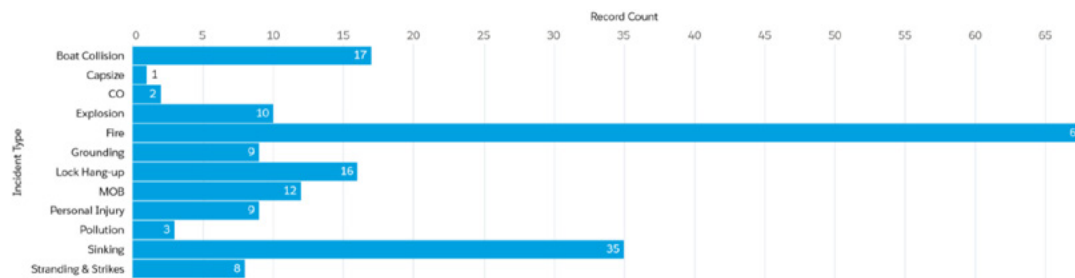
In February, an owner was cooking toast on a hob with the engine running. A spray-paint can vibrated off the counter and split open when it hit the floor. The owner threw the can into the sink to contain the paint but paint fumes were ignited by the hob flames. The owner's hands and

arms were burned and the boat's galley area was badly damaged.

There were two narrowboat fires in December, both linked to the use of solid fuel stoves. On one boat, post-fire repair works revealed that an unprotected gas line was running behind the stove. No smoke or CO alarm was found.

Possible CO poisoning

In January, around 4am, fire-fighters were called to a possible CO leak on a boat. Fire crews and paramedics rescued two casualties who were taken to hospital.



CRT tests new safety device

After CRT's sudden rush to install incongruous, inappropriate and unsightly 'safety' fences on various lock-tail bridges and even on the inaccessible side of Marple Aqueduct, there have been concerns about similar disfigurement of more famous structures.

However, instead of installing a railing on the offside of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct 'for safety reasons', there have been covert trials of a new device that we understand will be required on any boats wishing to cross. A NABO member was able to observe one such trial from a distance.



CRT website

Paul Monahan has been digging deep to produce a boaters' guide to what is available

These pages are only a selection from the information available and are those that I have found to be among the most useful and interesting.

All pages begin canalrivertrust.org.uk/notices/about-us/document-library/meetings/national-consultations/business-and-trade/public-notice/specialist-teams/planning-and-design/planning-consultations/specialist-teams/managing-our-water/reservoir-watch/specialist-teams/managing-our-water/annual-lockage-report

The asset explorer is at: canalrivertrust.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=0bf82e7a27b24511b5e19f4257ae8 and the online archives are at collections.canalrivertrust.org.uk/home.

CRT's website can provide useful information that is of interest to boaters and canal enthusiasts.

Most boaters will know of the 'stoppages' web page, which gives information about closures and restrictions—not all of them, sometimes late, often blaming 'boat damage' and occasionally misleading, but generally still useful. Most boaters will also have seen copies of the 'Boaters' Report', which includes a summary of CRT's annual accounts. The full accounts and many other items of information are available on their website or for download. For example, among the other items, there are agendas for, and minutes of, some meetings (sometimes with the interesting bits heavily redacted), reports of lock usage, accident statistics and water resources. National public consultations are listed on their own page; this does not include those addressed specifically to boaters and sent via email.

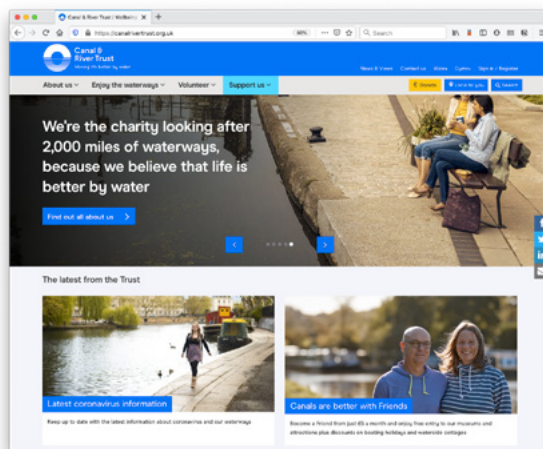
Digging deeper

Some of the documents can be difficult to find, even via the search option, without any obvious link to them. They are usually labelled by reference number and outdated versions are not always removed. Easily found, though,

are two highly informative and important sections of their website: 'Public Notices' and 'Planning Consultations'.

The public notices page must be published by the Trust as a legal requirement of its charitable status. It lists where the Trust proposes to sell, or give rights over, any land or navigation that it controls. Location plans are available and comments are invited. Details of planning applications for which the Trust is a statutory consultee are given on the planning pages, together with any planning applications that the Trust makes on its own behalf.

Comments on any of these applications must be made to the appropriate planning authority, not to CRT, but links are provided to the relevant websites. Unfortunately, those in CRT responsible for compiling the list often fail to allocate an



The CRT website with, sadly, no mention of boats on the home page

application to the correct waterway—Did you know that King's Langley is on the Aylesbury Arm, or Stafford is on the Macclesfield Canal? No, neither did I—so do not search by waterway name. Usually there are between forty and sixty applications listed each week.

Another page gives information about reservoir holdings and water supply, and yet another gives access to the 'online asset explorer' map of CRT's known assets, such as locks, bridges, aqueducts and even some of the culverts. Annual lockage reports give the statistics of the most, and least, used locks. Finally, and particularly for the waterway historian, there is a link to the online archives held by CRT. This is well worth exploring, especially the photographic libraries.

Start digging now—you may just find buried treasure!



Christening party in 1913 on the Faulkner horse-boat 'Elaine' at Buckry on the Grand Junction Canal, taken by T.W. Millner. The people include boatwoman Sarah Roberts, holding her baby son Edward. From the CRT archive

Red diesel... Yes!

In the March budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer agreed that boaters can continue to use red diesel with the customary declarations on tax split.

You may recall that the Treasury held a consultation at the end of 2020, and NABO responded as we reported in the October NN. We are delighted that the Treasury has listened to us. NABO has been campaigning on this for more than 20 years! This sets aside, once and for all, the European Court judgment that was threatening us for many years. There will be other changes to the red diesel market as proposed last year. In 2022, the construction industry and mobile refrigeration will change over to white diesel and this may impact on some of our suppliers. This is because of the change in volumes of the diesel supplies. We shall have to see how this works out. Overall this is excellent news and a very pleasing moment for the stalwarts. We have a bit of cheer for once.

Changes to six-month licence requirements

There has recently been clarification from CRT regarding the distance it expects boaters to travel during the term of a six-month licence and NABO notes that the guidance has changed.

It used to be CRT's policy that boaters issued with a reduced licence were still expected to cruise the 20 mile plus range that full licence holders are expected to do and indeed this is what NABO advised its members.

CRT has now confirmed that this has changed and that boaters who have been issued with a six-month licence are expected to cruise a pro-rata distance of 10 miles (16km) within the time period of their licence.

CRT's London strategy

NABO's response

In this paper, NABO is responding to CRT's recent consultation and Zoom meetings, seeking suggestions from boaters to further address congestion, principally in the London area.

For several years, CRT sought views via the Boater Relationship Group and subsequently, when this collapsed, it facilitated meetings that resulted in the publication of its London Strategy document in June 2018. This document outlined the actions that CRT would take to address congestion in London.

We are concerned that CRT is seeking to repeat this exercise without first implementing a significant number of the promised outcomes. Surely, after all the effort that went into the 2018 strategy document, it would make sense to implement it in full and then carry out a review of where the strategy had worked or failed, before seeking to repeat the exercise. By CRT's own figures, the numbers of boats have not risen

substantially since the strategy was published. The effects of the current pandemic have seen boats spread out further and the longer-term implications are as yet unclear.

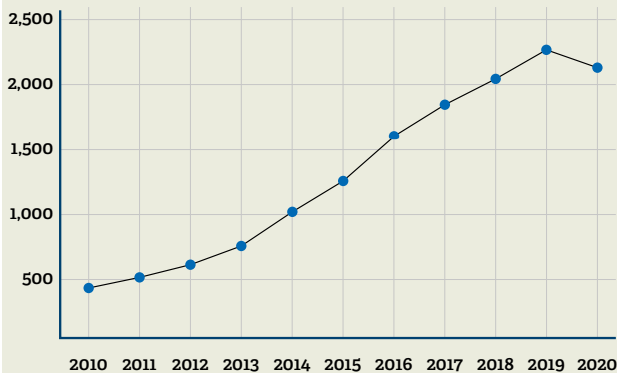
Turning to some of the agreed actions, these included:

- 1 More general towpath mooring and limited offside moorings outside the Regent's Canal area;
- 2 Increase the number of short-stay visitor moorings;
- 3 Increase monitoring and management of towpath and visitor moorings;
- 4 Major improvements to facilities:
 - six new water points
 - nine new rubbish disposal points
 - four new pumpout facilities
 - five new Elsan facilities plus one (potentially two) reopened facilities.

A key outcome was improved information and communication for boaters. The reality, sadly, is that the London boating manager has left and not been replaced, and the information flow between CRT and London boaters is almost non-existent.

There has been one update since the London Strategy document was published. Even when the current consultation was launched, no explanation was given of how much of the 2018 Strategy had been implemented and the reasons for any delay. It's hardly surprising that London boaters are disengaged and the attendance of boaters at the Zoom meetings was so poor. Even these low numbers were often as a result of boaters themselves using

Boats logged in London without a home mooring 2010-20



social media to suggest that others attend.

There has been little visible or published evidence of increased management of towpath and visitor moorings, nor indeed of addressing the problems of boats mooring on lock landings or at service blocks. This is despite it being relatively easy to identify the relatively small number of boaters who blatantly ignore any regulations and overstay, and against whom no visible action is apparently being taken.

As can be seen from the above, the timing of the current consultation seems to be based more on PR perception and politics within CRT than on evidence of changes on the ground. Perhaps it was influenced by the comment of the facilitator on the Zoom meeting that: "the last Tim and Pru programme made London look bad as they had to cruise late into the day to find somewhere not very nice to moor".

The fact that London hosts a busy and diverse range of boats, people and ages is a good thing and should be celebrated. It is exactly what CRT needs to replicate elsewhere. In applying for a renewal of its grant, CRT should promote this diversity, both on and off the water. There is nothing from CRT to suggest an optimum number of boats in the London area that any changes are seeking to achieve.

Notwithstanding the above, we appreciate that congestion exists in central London. However, it needs to be recognised that, from a boater's perspective, the London area is effectively from Rickmansworth to Hertford. Any changes proposed to the Regent's Canal area need to take the knock-on effect for other areas into account.

From NABO's perspective, the available options are limited. We would suggest:



- The 2018 strategy should be fully implemented, with regular boater updates on progress. The current consultation should be deferred until the effects of this strategy and the pandemic can be assessed.

Boats on the Regent's Canal
Photo: Stephen McKay
geograph.org.uk/5561794

We are concerned that CRT is seeking to repeat this exercise without first implementing a significant number of the promised outcomes

- Given that CRT cannot prevent boats travelling to the London area, much more needs to be done to counter the easy journalism in the national press, which presents London boat life as a cheap easy lifestyle, with little mention of the practicalities.
- Stronger and visible enforcement of bylaws to prevent boats mooring on lock landings and at

services.

- Stronger and visible enforcement to prevent double/triple mooring, where this hinders navigation.
- Use the available bylaws as part of the enforcement regime and not just the long drawn-out S8 process.
- Many boaters would support the introduction of a range of stay times, including some additional bookable moorings for boats visiting from outside the London area. However, these should be proactively managed by mooring wardens/rangers to ensure that all boaters have the opportunity to make use of them. Where feasible, these should allow for boats

to be breasted up.

- There needs to be more dredging to the edge and, where it is difficult to use pins, mooring rings should be put in. This should be the default action when towpaths are re-graded or derelict high-voltage cables are lifted.
- The suggestion to change the acceptable interpretation of 'bona fide' navigation from the current one is not practical. How can you be 'bona fide' navigating one year and not the next for the same cruising range?

There are no legal grounds that would support a no-return policy or fines.

CRT's response to NABO's submission (abridged)

We have been working to implement the mooring strategy; however the delivery of such a wide range of measures was always intended to take place over a number of years.

To date a number of additional waste and water facilities have been installed along with hundreds of metres of new mooring rings and an additional pre-bookable mooring. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done and have just published an update on outstanding measures. We're aiming to deliver the vast majority of these outstanding measures before implementing additional measures, but we do not think that it is a conflict to progress the development of future proposals alongside implementing measures already set out.

Although the current work is looking at how we might manage boats in the busier areas, we are not doing that in isolation. We will

consider the implications of any proposal across the entire London waterway. We agree that the range and diversity of boats and boaters in London brings many positive benefits, but this also brings significant challenges that we need to address. Not least amongst these is the consistently low satisfaction rate amongst London's boaters.

Before we finalise and publish any proposals we are commissioning some additional work to engage with liveaboard continuous cruiser boats in London to help us better understand their situations. This will be carried out in February and will help us inform our final proposal.

We now expect to publish a proposal in March which will be followed by a formal consultation. Once we have a proposal, I'd be very happy to arrange a meeting to discuss this with you and others from NABO, and of course we'd welcome your formal response as part of the consultation.

NABO's response to the London congestion consultation was that CRT is seeking to introduce changes without first implementing, and assessing the impact of, the changes

promised in the 2018 strategy. Here, Simon Robbins, a former NABO Council member and London live-aboard boater, reports in detail on what has actually been achieved.

A London boater's perspective

In 2012, arising out of the huge displacement of boats from East London for the Olympics, and the less than sensitive approach by BW/CRT to dealing with that, came the 'Better Relationships Group'. The name reflected the fact that even BW recognised it had upset a lot of boaters along the way and now wanted to be seen to be trying to build bridges, coincidentally coinciding with the launch of Canal and River Trust. That group lumbered on painfully, with relationships barely improving for many months, reported in 2014 and then nothing much happened.

In 2013 the Greater London Authority became involved through Jenny (now Baroness) Jones, and the GLA produced the 'Moor or Less' report. This was a genuinely independent

report which highlighted the need for improvements in facilities for boaters on the London Waterways.

CRT then went round the circle again, eventually launching the London Moorings Strategy, starting in 2016. The final report was finally published mid-2018. So, to the present: in late autumn 2020, CRT announced a new consultation on London Boating based around the Moorings Strategy. Awkward git that I am, I wrote to CRT asking how much of the existing 2018 Strategy had been implemented. In mid-February, four months after asking, and after the consultation meetings, CRT finally disclosed its assessment of how much of the 2018 Moorings Strategy it has implemented so far.

Here we go!

An analysis of progress with the mooring strategy

The data provided seems rather to confirm what NABO, London Boaters, NBTA and others have been saying for the last while.

There has in fact been very little progress on CRT's part in implementing the 2018 London Moorings Strategy. CRT's analysis breaks the Strategy down into 199 potential actions.

Some are relatively minor: some if implemented will be substantive improvements to services for boaters, which was, after all, the point of the whole thing from the boaters' point of view. As of February 2021, CRT reckons to have completed 64 tasks, i.e. just under a third of the items on the list. Not bad you might say... until you look a bit closer.

If you are generous, there are perhaps twenty completed items that actually represent new services for boaters.

Examples:

16 completed items are 'offer Winter Moorings', but if you check the sites listed, most of them are existing established winter mooring sites. Little change or addition to facilities for boaters there then?

Another 12 items include the word 'retain' in the title; in other words, CRT has included things it already did or provided as 'com-

The London Mooring Strategy page on CRT's website gives work that will be progressed in 2021, a press release is at canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/original/43139-canal-charity-improving-londons-waterways-for-boaters.pdf

A summary of on-going works is at canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnaill/43138-london-mooring-strategy-ongoing-works-january-2021.pdf

The GLA 'Moor or Less' report is at www.london.gov.uk/about-us/about-us/london-assembly/london-assembly-publications/moor-or-less-moorings-london%E2%80%99s-waterways

pleted' actions. A number of the 'retain' items are only of use to CRT and contractors: setting aside space for workboats, commercial craft and loading—necessary—but not of direct help to private boaters.

Six items are Olympic legacy items, committed to over a decade ago which were supposedly finally signed off since 2018.

Other 'completed' items are let us say 'arguable' when it comes to whether they are substantive improvements.

For example, their assessment announces that there is a new Elsan point at Norwood. Old hands like me would point out that this is not an additional service, but just re-

newing the existing one, so counts as maintenance and upkeep. Another three completed items are re-opening the sanitary station at Hazlemere Marina, again not new facilities but repairs and updating existing ones. One project counts as three completions too! I could go on dissecting the completed items list, but you get the picture. At best CRT's count of completed work is generous; at worst it is outright misleading.

To boaters with local knowledge, if you are generous, there are perhaps twenty completed items in CRT's assessment of the London Strategy that actually represent new services for boaters. Those of most direct input to boaters are:

Location	Proposal
Sainsbury's Alperton Visitor Mooring	Additional mooring rings
Limehouse Basin	Improve rubbish facilities—new compound and recycling
Hertford Union—Bow Wharf	New long-term mooring 4 berths—Waterside Moorings
Limehouse Cut—between Ropemakers Field Footbridge 8 and A12 Bridge 1	New Mooring Rings
Yiewsley—west of Trout Road Bridge	New Mooring Rings
Alperton—between Hazel Grove Bridge and Carlyon Footbridge	New Mooring Rings
West Drayton—North Hyde Bridge 202—Western Road bridge 201	New mooring rings—subject to dredging survey
Steele Road—east of Gas Pipe Bridge	New rubbish disposal
Feildes Weir customer service facilities	New rubbish facilities and signage
Slough Basin	New water point
Atlip Road Alperton service mooring	New water point
Old Ford Lock 19—Dace Road	Re-locate Elsan to provide direct external access
Hazlemere Marina—Waltham Cross	Re-open Elsan
Hazlemere Marina	Re-open pump out
Hazlemere Marina	Re-open water point



Boats on the Regents Canal
Photo: Stephen Craven
geograph.org.uk/2378528

So where are the other improvements, things of most practical use to boaters, that we have been crying out for, for over a decade?

Mooring rings

The simplest and most consistent suggestion from boaters over the last decade has been to put in more visitor moorings outside the central London zones, most simply by installing new mooring rings. Do that and boaters will more easily disperse and relieve pressure on central London facilities. Yes, in some places spot dredging would help, a simple remedy.

On CRT's figures, of the 24 sites identified in the Strategy as suitable to put in additional mooring rings, only four have been completed since the Strategy launched over 2 ½ years ago in 2018. Not great progress on one of the easier targets.

New moorings

There are 20 instances identified where other formal moorings might be feasible.

The strategy indicated a mix of sites, nearly all offside, including the three main types: Residential, Leisure and Visitor moorings. The list mixes meterage and berths, but if completed conservatively it provides for well in excess of 120 new moorings. Only two sites have been completed so far producing eight

new berths. Of the other 18 sites, CRT's notes indicate no feasibility work has started on any of them. To old cynics like me this is just confirmation that CRT's claims to wish to provide more long-term moorings in their most crowded region are no more than lip-service.

Boater facilities: Elsan, pumpout, water and refuse

Finally let's turn to the desperately needed additional service facilities for all boaters, water Elsan/pumpout and refuse points.

Every exercise in the last decade has included requests for improvements here. Now let's be clear, these are certainly the most challenging and expensive projects for CRT to achieve, requiring in most cases both capital works and an ongoing commitment to maintenance and upkeep. But providing these improvements was the thing that boaters and other canal users have consistently indicated as being required. CRT has grudgingly admitted that these are most likely to help free up existing facilities and 'hot-spots' on London canals. CRT complains about the growth of boater numbers in and around London, but has done little to accommodate them or increase facilities for what are in fact paying customers. CRT's sheet lists 39 projects as 'Customer Service Facilities'. Eleven are marked



Limehouse Basin
Photo: Stehen McKay
geograph.org.uk/4594481

as completed (if you forego some of the double-counting that I have suggested above. (e.g. the three out of one at Hazelmere Marina.) In 2019/20, £67k was spent on waste facilities.

In 2020/21, £58k was spent, comprising customer service water/waste facilities (£33,500), new mooring rings (£18,350), project management (£4,000), environmental works (£1,750) and signage (£400).

Of most interest to boaters are the incomplete items:

- We are promised six new Elsan and four new pumpout points across London from Enfield to Slough (CRT counts that as ten projects by the way even though four pump-outs are co-existent with the Elsan points!)
- Six new refuse points have been proposed. Since the Strategy was published, two have been dismissed as having 'no access.' (One wonders how they got into the Strategy in the first place!) The other four are awaiting completion of feasibility studies.
- Two out of the five new water points proposed have been com-

pleted but the remaining three do not have feasibilities completed yet. A further curiosity is that some of the Elsan point sites will contain new water points, others not.

Of those projects that survive, all are still only at the pre-feasibility stage, in theory to be assessed during 2021/22. If they pass that, none has commitments for implementation before 2022/23 and four (three Elsan's and a pumpout) have no estimated commitments to feasibility or implementation studies at all.

Conclusions.

On CRT's own numbers limited progress has been made on implementing the London Moorings Strategy, even less in terms of genuine new services and improvements for boaters in the real world.

Yes, it's a work in progress, but based on performance and commitment to date it seems, even allowing for a year off for Covid, CRT does not so far seem too enthusiastic about implementing the things it promised London's boaters in the Strategy nearly two and a half years ago, and progress is pretty thin.

Canal heritage—why bother?

Mark Tizard asks an heretical question

At first glance the answer is obvious, but is it? To understand CRT's priorities as laid down by Government, I went back to the original Articles of Association.

The Trust's primary objects are to preserve, protect, operate and manage inland waterways for public benefit. The second object is to protect and conserve for public benefit sites, objects and buildings of archaeological, architectural, engineering or historic interest on, in the vicinity of, or otherwise associated with inland waterways.

There is the need to preserve its buildings and structures, especially those that are listed in the context in which the buildings sit. I'm not convinced, for example, that the conversion of the historic Bulbourne engineering yard, where locks were built for years, into 25 houses is preserving our heritage, even if the listed buildings remain. Heritage without context is just building preservation. I was reminded of this when contacted about the closure and risk of sale of the Stop House at Braunston. This unique canal-side toll building, built in 1796, is important in the context of the historic boating village of Braunston.

The canal narrows outside the cottage so that boats could be gauged and tolls levied. Preserving the historical context of the canals and how they link with buildings like the Stop House should be at the forefront of CRT's thinking and accords with the Trust's own heritage policy.

How does this square with previous comments made on the award of a conservation grant? "Peter Chowns, conservation architect at

the Canal & River Trust, comments: The Trust owns and cares for some of the finest examples of historic canal-side cottages. Dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries, we want to conserve them because each helps tell the story of Britain's former industrial waterways and of the people who helped play a crucial role in the world's first Industrial Revolution."

NABO wrote to Richard Parry expressing our concerns and our letter ended: "We urge you to fully investigate how the building could be used as part of any of the wider wellbeing, education and environmental programmes that the Trust champions. It is very difficult to imagine any other association charged with preserving our national heritage selling this building. Should this occur it will reflect badly on the Trust in the eyes of all users be they friends, volunteers or boaters." Hopefully CRT can and will investigate what other uses the building can be put to—a training and exhibition centre that promotes its environmental and heritage credentials perhaps?

First published in
Towpath Talk March 2021

Braunston Stop House at risk

SAVE Britain's Heritage is putting the Stop House on its 'at risk' register. Additionally, Braunston Parish Council is applying to have the building listed as an Asset of Community Value. savebritainsheritage.org

Braunston Stop House
Photo: Nigel Cox
geograph.org.uk/3388628



How things have changed

50 years of boating

Stephen Peters reminisces about the 'good old days'.

My boating adventures started at the tender age of 13 and now, after more than 50 years' experience of river and coastal cruising, I reflect on how some things have changed.

In the mid-1960s, most of the craft I encountered on the rivers Avon and Severn were of traditional timber construction. Indeed, such boats were still being built at boatyards such as Beechams at Tewkesbury and Seaborne Yachts at Kempsey near Worcester. Sadly, the market changed and owners would no longer commission a new timber boat when a GRP river craft could be purchased for a lower price and equipped with more modern conveniences.

The traditional yards sometimes tried to diversify by fitting out GRP hulls but ultimately they could not compete with modern mass production methods.

We used to pay 5p per foot per week for bankside moorings on the River Avon.

Nowadays, boating is an all-year-round pastime for many people, but when I was young boats would be lifted out for the winter and laid-up ashore safe from floods and harsh weather. There really was a 'boating season', which generally stretched from Easter until the end

of September. Without adequate heating, sleeping on board could be a bracing experience and a good quality sleeping bag was essential prior to the introduction of 'continental quilts', now more usually termed 'duvets'.

Moorings were cheap. We used to pay 1 shilling (5p) per foot per week for bankside moorings on the river Avon. Fuel was cheap, too: red diesel could be purchased for as little as 1s (5p) per GALLON! Most boatyards would also supply petrol, in addition to diesel, as many boats still had older petrol engines. No one ever considered the safety aspect and four gallons of the old 4-star fuel could be obtained for £1. If a boat had an outboard engine it would undoubtedly have been a 2-stroke motor requiring lubricating oil to be mixed with the petrol. Little or no thought was given to the pollution from engine exhausts in those days.

Since very little boating took place during the winter months, on-board heating was not a priority and a small portable gas heater would suffice, or one would rely upon lighting the gas oven for heat. All LPG used on board was butane—either Bottogas or Calor—and the British Standard code of practice dated 1956 related only to the use of butane. The modern-day usage of propane gas is a more recent development, and one wonders whether the original strictures about not using propane cylinders indoors have been overtaken by events. The size and design of the larger butane gas bottles differed from the current pattern, with a removable threaded

shroud; and all had a handwheel valve with a left-handed screw-on connection which nowadays is only to be found on the smallest of butane cylinders. Clip-on connectors simply had not been invented back in the olden days.

Calor Gas had a near-monopoly of the market at one time, but today there is competition from the likes of Flogas. Personally, I favour the latter product as I find their gas prices are lower and I can obtain 13kg butane for £26 (September 2020 price) from a local hardware shop which is far cheaper than the advertised price and that of their competitor.

In the days before the Boat Safety Scheme, there were no rules or regulations relating to on-board equipment such as the need to carry fire extinguishers. Most boats had them in any case, but their contents were unknown and little thought was given to regular maintenance checks. They would just sit there with their highly toxic contents such as carbon tetrachloride, bromide compounds or, in later days, BCF (aka halon); all of which are now banned substances. Present-day alternatives such as dry powder or foam may present their own risks to health and one should avoid discharging them on board except to facilitate escape. They most certainly will not tackle anything larger than a small fire at an early stage and once a plastic boat catches fire it will quickly become a raging inferno that will only cease when the boat finally sinks.

Many traditional natural fibre rope materials were in common use when I started boating and these were gradually replaced by nylon and terylene ropes. More recently, many exotically-named synthetic fibre ropes have become prevalent and are easier to handle and more durable. But is it not time to ban

Without adequate heating, sleeping on board could be a bracing experience



Photo: FCG geograph.org/3724513

polypropylene rope? After a short exposure to sunlight this material breaks down into microscopic fibres which find their way into the natural environment and contaminate the food chain of marine life. I refuse to use this fiendish material on my boat.

At one time, all on-board cooking and water heating was effected using gas appliances. Instantaneous gas water heaters such as Ascot and Ewart had their limitations and, with no flame failure safety devices, the pilot lights could easily blow out in a draught. I once tried to re-light one and ended up with singed eyebrows! That's how teenagers learn. Water used on-board was frequently obtained from a sink-top tap with a lever handle, by which you could pump the water by hand. Showers were not to be found but a few luxury boats might have had a hip bath.



Foxton Locks in the early 1960s

Some boats had gas fridges, but many had to rely on Osokool cabinets which utilised the evaporation of water to cool the contents. These would keep milk fresh for a period, until one could find a milkman or local dairy to replenish the stock. It was not possible to buy fresh milk from general stores, so as a last resort you could use tinned milk or Long-Life milk (both of which tasted

awful) or Marvel powdered milk.

Any responsible person thinking of venturing out onto tidal waters would have enrolled at their local adult education centre for a course in Coastal Navigation. It seemed rather perverse that a local authority would provide such courses, heavily subsidised, for comparatively wealthy boat owners. Today, the fundamentals can be learned from the internet or by attending training courses, at a cost.

The use of on-board power to operate the many items we rely on nowadays usually means that a shore power electricity connection is essential. At one time, all power on board had to come from 12-volt batteries, which would need charging by running the engine at the mooring or when underway. Incandescent lighting gave a poor level of illumination and it was not until transistorised fluorescent lighting was developed that reasonable lighting became affordable. Thank God for the invention of today's LED lights!

A simpler life

A TV company, Five Mile Films, is making new documentary series later this year for Channel 4. It is looking for people who want to live a simpler life. Filming will take place over a number of months this summer in 'an idyllic spot in rural Britain'. The idea behind the series is to say goodbye to smartphones, Zoom calls, social media, Amazon etc., and experience the 'good life' fantasy and consider 'what modern life and its multitude of choices, has really given us'. It will explore the idea of whether in fact, less is more. They are looking for a cross-section of people of all ages to apply - families, couples, single people - to take time away from their normal life in a different way of living. If you are interested in applying, go to simplelife@fivemilefilms.co.uk.



A rose by any other name...

Part 3: Relationships

Amongst the extraordinary diversity of boat names **Peter Fellows** finds that some owners reveal more than they might have intended when choosing a name.

A surprising number of owners use their boat name to say something about the state of their relationships (or their anticipated relationships!)...

...although some relish the thought of being on their own...

Without a Crew, Hideaway, Hideout, Aloan At Last, Cause For Divorce, A Loan Again, Ma-Damn-Ex, She Got the House, Get Over It!

...some, but not many, want platonic friendships...

Just Lookin', Just Good Friends, Knot So Nauti, Kindred Spirit, Emotional Rescue.

...others use their boat name to describe how they see themselves...

Loose Cannon, Reckless, Risktaker, Rebel Spirit, Outrageous, Hulla-Boat-Loo, Rebel's Dream, Jack the Lad, Forever Young, Knot-T-Buoy, Nauti Buoy, Nauti But Nice, Hot 2 Trot, Knotty Buoy.

...and perhaps intend to use the boat name to attract someone new...

Mate Bait, Knotty Little Minx, Footloose For Fun, Knot Related, Miss Chief, Final Fling, Miss B Havin', Miss Chevious, Miss Conduct, Miss Creant.

...looking forward to ways of 'having some fun...

Play Pen, Play Station, Playmate, Just 4 Play, Play-N-Hooky, Making Whoopee, Mutual Fun, One for Fun, Just 4 Fun, Tons-O-Fun, Sum 'R' Fun, Sun Fun, Hav'n Fun, Revelry, Par-Tee-Thyme, Porta Party, Party Out of Bounds, Clown'n Around, Just-4-Kix, Sin or Swim.

...some are quite explicit in their anticipation...

Temptation, Temptress, Trynhooker, Hydrolust, First Date, Indulgence, Winkin' Blinkin' & Nod, Infatuation, Irrational Exuberance, Ode to Joy, Instant Gratification, Naughti Business, Absolute Deck-Adence, Adults Only, Idlevice, Cheap Thrills, Boat of Us, Current Wife, Alibuy, Unexpected Pleasure, Lengthy Affair, Unwedded Bliss, Hearts Desire, Affair of the Heart, Heavenly Body, Gentle Persuasion, We B Miss B Haven, Hanky Panky, Snuggle-Time, Tender Tickle, Sticky Lips, Love Byte, Naked Time, No Tan Lines, Four Play, Berth Control, Wet Pleasures, Reckless Abandon; Paul-Sating Vessel, Ram'n'ewe, X Tasy, XTC, Oar-Gas-Umm.

...although this may not work out for all: Indecent Exposure, Dirty Laundry, Wages of Sin.

Stage and Screen

Some owners use their favourite music or film as their boat name; whether it is groups...

Grateful Dad, Madness, Blondie, Men at Work, Mutley Cru, Blood, Sweat & Tears, Heavy Metal.

...or songs...

Paint It Black, Run Aground Sue, Local Motion, Bad Moon Rising, Mello Yellow, Purple Haze, Rapture, Candle in the Wind, Comfortably Numb, Feva Pitch, Final Frontier, Moon Shadow, Jamaica-Me-Crazy, Little Miss Molly, Rock-a-Bye Baby, Magic Moments, School's Out!, Scooby Doo, Stairway To Heavin, Sugar & Spice, Tee Fore Two, Gimme Shelter.

...or films and characters

Moby Deck, Tinytanic, Fatal Attraction, Italian Job, Dick Terrapin, Legally Blonde, War N's Peace, Potty Harry, Darth Wader.

The eco-toilet debate rolls on

says enthusiast **Helen Hutt**

Let me first declare, I'm a fan of eco-toilets. As a continuous cruiser, I bought one in 2009.

Every two months or so, I emptied my poo pot into a 10-litre paint tub with a tight-fitting lid until I could dispose of the contents, using a network of amenable farmers' muck heaps and friends with garden compost bins. Never, ever, would I have considered 'bagging and binning' it!

CURRENT CRT ADVICE

Small quantities of waste can be bagged and binned for a little while longer. From the end of December 2021, we request that no bagged solid waste from separator/composting toilets is disposed of in CRT waste bins. Bagging and binning this type of waste is not an environmentally sustainable way of disposal and we strongly advise that boaters only use these toilets if they can completely compost the solid waste or have access to somewhere that will do this for them.

There weren't many of us back then and, indeed, we were considered a bit strange. But the idea caught on and at some point, I think around 2017, someone asked CRT how they could dispose of their solid waste. CRT rightly advised it could be bagged and binned—and unfortunately that resulted in a surge of interest from boaters who had previously thought disposal was an insurmountable issue. You know how the story has unfolded from there!

The compost question

You'll notice I don't call it a composting toilet—because that's exactly what it isn't!

A better term is 'separating toilet' because that's exactly what it is. I know of one boater who insists that what he takes out of his poo pot is fully composted, but I don't get that. Assuming the toilet is in daily use, how can yesterday's poo be composted today when normally it takes six months?

Over the last few years, manufacturers have produced ever more sophisticated and better-looking separating toilets, which is great so long as boaters buying them fully understand the implications of disposal. Urine can be tipped into a toilet or Elsan, or into a soakaway at least ten metres from a watercourse, or diluted and used as a fertiliser for non-edible plants. Easy. The problem lies with—what shall we call it?—'humanure' is a term I quite like.

Environmentally, composting 'humanure' is the best way to go. It should never go to landfill, where it releases potentially 20 times more greenhouse gases than composting. A separating loo uses no water and no chemicals. It's no more disgusting to empty than an Elsan—and you have to do it far less often. What's not to like?

CRT has no contractual obligation to provide facilities of any kind, but it would be great if they (and other navigation authorities) installed a few compost bins around the network. Let's face it, they will take a lot of persuading to find the necessary cash from already-stretched budgets—but it's not out of the question. It would avert the problem of Elsans blocked by 'humanure'. There would need to be fewer bins than Elsans, because separating toilets don't need to be emptied so often. There

are no moving parts or electrical connections, so maintenance would be low. Depending on the size, each bin would need to be emptied perhaps twice a year. Bins would be lidded and accessible only with a Watermate key, to cut down on misuse.

They could also be sited at boatyards, marinas or waterside businesses, where the resulting compost could be used on flowerbeds. I'm encouraged to hear that CRT is looking at running a pilot scheme and hope that produces positive results.

This is a big subject, and I could go on for a long time, but I'll sum up with a few key messages:

- **Boaters:** consider the implications before installing a separating toilet, but do your best to find a way because you'll be helping the environment as well as yourself;
- **Everyone:** (including manufacturers and navigation authorities) stop referring to 'composting toilets' and use the terms 'separating' or 'eco' instead;
- **Everyone:** start thinking of 'humanure' as a resource, not a waste product. *"It's only waste if you waste it"* says boater and campaigner, Dr Kate Saffin;



- **CRT and other navigation authorities:** embrace this new environmentally sound trend and find a way to provide or enable adequate facilities as soon as possible.

We all need to think about the bigger picture here!

Sleek and stylish: the Compost separating toilet. But is the brand name a little misleading?
Photo: Compost at composttoilets.com

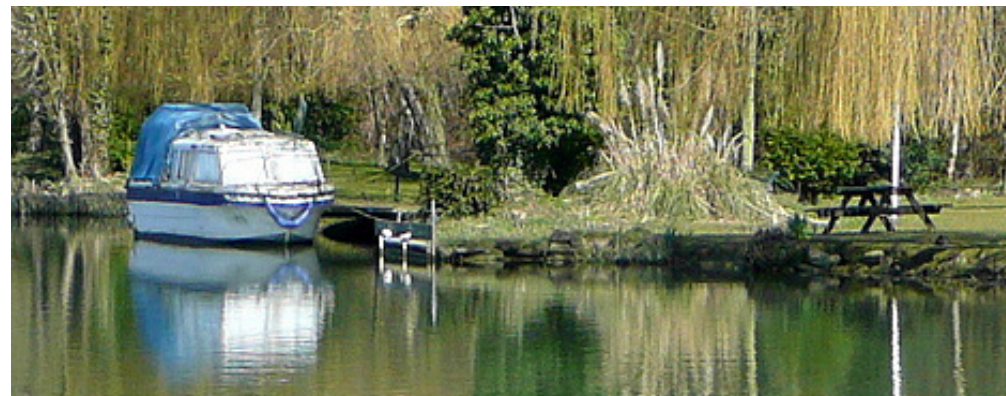


Photo: Graham Horn geograph.org.uk/3400735

TECHIE'S



CORNER

Aspects of boat design, construction, equipment, facilities or maintenance

I'm sure a great many of us have had that sinking feeling when sitting in the boat at night, the television has suddenly stopped working or the inverter starts to beep madly at you. Perhaps you have come home from work and when you press the start button for the Webasto it clicks and whirs and then stubbornly refuses to fire up. So what's the problem? Yes, of course your batteries are flat.

Musings on electrical power

John Devonald recalls a simpler life afloat.

I suppose we can regard this as a relatively modern problem for boat dwellers. The old working boats were pretty well electric-free. Engines were hand started, in some cases with rituals that bordered on witchcraft. Heating and cooking was by solid fuel. Lighting was from hurricane lamps. Who needed electric-ickery?

Even when I took up leisure boating on the canals in the latter part of the last century (that statement makes me feel very old), my first cruiser, being a pure day boat with a cabin didn't have an electrical system at all. My next boat had a Honda outboard with electric start and very basic cabin electrics—I was going up in the world! In reality I very rarely used the electric on those boats as they were purely leisure boats and I'd go to bed when I came home from the pub and get up once it was light!

As time went by I changed boats, moved away from cruisers to nar-

rowboats, and with each boat I watched the electrical systems become more and more complex. My present boat, Marjam, was built in 2004 and the people who commissioned her spared no expense on the electrical system. It has a high-end German inverter charger, 240V and 12V systems and sockets. There are four 110Ah leisure batteries plus starter and bow-thruster batteries, so six in all. Add in a 500W solar system and, with all the associated equipment, it's more complicated than my house.

I have sat on this boat on a summer evening with nothing running except a fridge and asked myself "why"? Why do we need this complexity? Then winter comes and I'm huddled down with the central heating on and my wife wants to watch Netflix. OK, point made.

Between 2012 and 2015, I was working in London. Rather than pay London Midland £4,500 a year for a season ticket to travel to work from my home in Milton Keynes, I decided to take my narrowboat down into London and become a continuous cruiser there, living on the boat during the week and coming home at weekends. In the process I found that, purely by luck, I already owned the ideal liveaboard narrowboat for me. I had bought *Eefer* (no, I have no idea where the name came from) when I decided to give up yachts. She was 39ft with a BMC 1500 engine and, most importantly, 12V DC only.

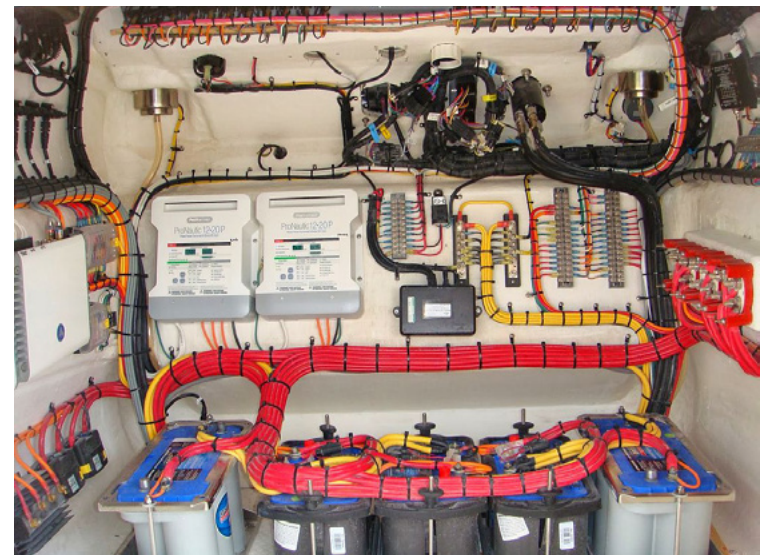
The only electrical items on her were a television, car type CD/Radio and a fridge, with LED lights. Heating was from a Taylor diesel heater. Hot water was supplied by a Paloma instant heater and cooking was by gas. *Eefer* had two leisure batteries and 300W of solar, and I also had a cheap Chinese generator. The result of this was that, in the

best part of three years, I never had my batteries go flat on me. How many people can say that!

Now I have to confess that there were a few things I did that allow me to get away with making that claim. I was on my own on the boat and freely admit I lived a very power-frugal existence or, in other words, according to my wife, like a slob! I had enough clean clothes for the week and took them home at the weekend to be washed and ironed for the next week. I used the shower facilities at work. Sheets would last umm ... let's say longer than was hygienic, and I used the pubs for everything I could where possible, from internet, to food, to toilet facilities. I even used hurricane lamps rather than the electric lights when on the boat at night. In reality I was using the boat more like a hostel room than a proper home, but it served its purpose for me at the time.

In the modern day, most people who live on their boat want the same modern conveniences that house dwellers do. Of course they do. Washing machines, internet, freezers and similar are not regarded as luxuries nowadays. Paraffin lamps are not considered to be something desirable due to fire risks. Rules and regulations now control what you can and can't have on your boat. Systems are also going to get more and more complicated as hybrid and totally electric boats start to become more widespread and probably horrendously more expensive.

I did enjoy my time as a continuous cruiser down in London and



sometimes I wonder what it would be like to attempt an extended time on an old boat with no electric, just to see how the working boat community coped. But then I also rather like having Alexa controlling my boat's lights and having cold beer out of the fridge on those lovely warm summer evenings!

We as a community have no idea what will happen in the future for our boating life. Solid fuel stoves and diesel engines are now the spawn of the devil and electric is the way forward in mainstream life. This is going to impact upon us in many ways, some of which we probably haven't thought of yet. I'm worried about the future, not so much for me but for the younger people on the cut. We need to encourage people to join NABO and other boating organisations or we will just get steamrolled by legislation that isn't aimed at us.

Ah well, in the meantime, just keep a good eye on those battery voltages. It's a horrible time of year to be without power.

Now, where's the switch for the hurricane lantern?

Photo: Club Nautique

Rewind

Issue No 2, 2006

Howard Anguish explores NABO News from 15 years ago

Chairman's column it is suggested that, at last, BW is starting to take notice of NABO. They give the impression that they are ready to talk before any consultations go ahead, and eager for an early involvement at Director level—a welcome development, with BW appearing keen to involve NABO in discussions when setting the next year's mooring fees.

The issue of **congestion** is a subject which BW was keen to consult about. It is particularly important during the summer with lock queues and the increasing difficulty in finding an overnight mooring at 'honey-pot' sites. The EA has tackled the same problem by encouraging rafting up, but this solution would be far from a 'cure-all' on canals. Here, the conflict is between three different factions: the ecologists, the holiday hirers and the private boaters. As the Chairman points out, somewhere the blame appears to have been concentrated on 'continuous cruisers'. He suggests that it might be beneficial if BW reserved a few mooring spaces for hirers, but only if equivalent space was created—perhaps away from habitation, for the more self-sufficient boaters. They would then come head-to-head with the ecologists. A difficult balancing act but he called on BW to get talking about it.

Red diesel Discussions were continuing about a further five years' use of red diesel for pleasure boaters. It was pointed out that the perception of "boaters can afford it" may

be understandable "when a smartly painted narrowboat cruises by bristling with satellite dishes and all the latest gizmos. It wouldn't occur to a member of the public that someone had given up a house, no posher than their own, to pay for that boat, nor that what lay within that gleaming exterior may well be the result of years of graft by the owner's own hands." It is heartening to note that a recent decision has resulted in the continuing use of red diesel—great news indeed.

Deep Cuts on the Basy Will the Basingstoke be the first canal to close? Will the Anglian rivers follow as the EA is starved of funds and forced to concentrate its efforts on the water feature that provides the back-drop for the estates of the rich and famous? This prophesy concerning the Basy certainly came to pass after Surrey County Council cut £50,000 from the 2006 and 2007 budgets. With continuing cuts from half the riparian borough councils, this would seriously threaten the future of the navigation.

A Heartfelt Plea Please remember we want letters and articles from you. It is not intended to be all Council stuff, but no 'travelogs' please, unless they have a novel slant that sets them aside from the sort of thing that cruising clubs publish, where much of the value comes from knowing the author. A little gentle satire wouldn't come amiss—if there is a 'Reg of Rickmansworth' type out there prepared to lighten up NABO News please make yourself known. This plea is as valid today as it was in 2006!

Have Your Say

Letters to the Editor

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

Breach at Beeston

We all have a moan about CRT, myself included, but I would like to propose a pat on the back for them. When the canal wall collapsed at Beeston in the middle of the night, I was literally tipped out of bed! The boat was settling on the bottom at a horrifying angle and, as I struggled to push her upright, two CRT men appeared to help me. Yes, they were on hand at 11pm and it was snowing!

The following day, an army of the contractor's men (Kier) worked like slaves to build a temporary dam, carrying every item of equipment a mile each way. At the end of the day, they were covered in mud and you could see the exhaustion on their faces.

The dam failed, but valiantly, they returned to fix it. It failed again, but all praise to them for a very brave attempt. CRT's man on the job, Darren Spann, was attentive throughout, and generously offered to pay for hotel accommodation for me, which I refused, preferring to look after my boat and cat. It took five weeks before the canal was flooded once more.

A big, big pat on the back for Darren and his team, and for Kier's army.

Don May

nb. Wine & Roses.

Heritage assets

Mark Tizard's article in the March Towpath Talk made interesting reading, and I am in complete agreement regarding the lack of adherence by CRT to their Articles of Association regarding protecting 'our' waterway heritage assets.

I think most of the public believe that CRT is equivalent to the National Trust, a receiver of grants, public donations and volunteering, and for that they preserve the waterways and their structures, buildings and sites, but this doesn't seem to be the case. The Trust has continued to operate as British Waterways did they seem to

be ignoring their own remit to protect and preserve these for the nation, and sell property as an income stream.

A high percentage of the system's lock cottages, lengthsmen's cottages, warehouses and wharfs have already been sold off, but there comes a point when this has a very negative impact on the preservation and safety of the waterways. Having experienced employees living on site certainly helps to prevent breaches and vandalism, as well as providing help to boaters. Selling property as an income stream is a short-term gain; repairing breaches and locks due to lack of supervision can run into millions of pounds. (I remember when councils decided to use contract cleaners on their housing estates in London and to do away with caretakers living on site ... it was an unmitigated disaster and I don't think they've ever recovered to the standards which they had). I think CRT's actions are not those of a heritage institution and will increasingly have a negative impact on the preservation of the waterways.

There must be a point when they have to be brought to task for selling items that they do not own, but belong to the nation.

Regards,

Lewis Esposito

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 the Trent & Mersey that I spotted in the autumn.



NABO News back issues are available online at nabo.org.uk/index.php/reference/nn-back-issues-2

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