



# NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners  
Issue 3 May 2021

**CRT investments**  
**Boaters' headgear**  
**The dark art of battery**  
**maintenance**



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# NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners  
**Issue 3 May 2021**



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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](mailto:nabonews@nabo.org.uk) or post to the Editor by June 26<sup>th</sup> 2021.

## Cover photo

This month's photo is a River class narrow boat on the Grand Union photographed by 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.



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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This issue reflects two concerns that have been raised recently regarding the poor state of the canal infrastructure and the loss of waterway heritage. There are currently a record number of unplanned canal closures and lock or culvert failures, especially in the North. Given that the waterways have largely been out of use for months due to the Covid lockdown, these failures have to be due to inadequate inspection and/or lack of maintenance, rather than the usual excuse of blaming boaters.

## Time for a rethink?

Editor, **Peter Fellows**, considers an alternative to the present CRT structure

On the second point, CRT does not seem to understand that not all of its building assets are available to be sold off to generate income. There has to be due attention paid to the heritage of the waterways, which is embedded in CRT's objects as a charity. These topics are longstanding criticisms that have featured in NABO News for many years, and appear again in articles and reports in this issue by Mark Tizard. But CRT seems to consistently ignore them. Mark also reviews the results of the latest boaters' perception survey which, unsurprisingly, does not make happy reading for CRT.

I suspect that every boater would agree that a renewal of the Government grant to CRT is essential for the upkeep of the waterways. We are where we are with CRT's senior management, and they are probably the best people to lead the negotiations with DEFRA.

However, as part of these negotiations, I believe that there should be thought given to planning for a

new structure for CRT. This should clearly separate the Trust's responsibilities as a navigation authority from its wellbeing agenda that promotes the waterways to the wider public. Currently, these seem to be completely intertwined, but the Trust's responsibilities for maintaining and improving the waterway infrastructure seem to take a decidedly backseat position.

As Mike Rodd notes in the Chair's column, boats and navigation are rarely mentioned, let alone discussed, at CRT forums and regional meetings. A separate wellbeing division would allow the Trust to continue to generate income from a wide range of sources as it currently does. So the bulk of the new Government grant could be made available to the navigation division, to maintain what are unique national assets (with of course boating revenue). The division could then employ senior staff with the expertise and experience to properly manage the waterways.

It has been a busy month for meetings, with NABO Council members attending a disabled boaters' forum, a national users' forum and regional meetings for London and South East and the South West. John Devonald reminds us of the dangers from CO, after two boaters died in York, and also explores the dark art of battery maintenance in Techies' Corner.

To balance things up a little, Paul Monahan takes a sideways look at boaters' headgear and he also proposes to exempt historic structures from safety regulations, while I weigh up the evidence for the causes of the Suez Canal accident.

Lastly, we have all been shocked by news of the death of a CRT Licensing Ranger, Clive Porter, and Mark has written on NABO's behalf to offer our condolences.

At last – back on our boat for a week – it was wonderful; and good to see the hire fleets starting to operate again.

Of course, being based in Wales, we were always slightly out of line with England, but at last the lifting of the two sets of lockdown restrictions overlapped! And with the spring blossoms bursting through, even though a bit chilly still, it was a lovely time to be out on the water.

The NABO Council is busier than ever – everywhere we look, we see matters that need our attention – but thankfully, with a full Council again and with the very energetic new folk joining us, the load is well spread and we are coping – even if our teleconference-based meetings are getting very long.

We wait, of course, with bated breath for CRT's next version of the proposed new Terms and Conditions for private boat licences. I hope that by the time you read this, we will know where we are, although the report given at the National Users Forum seemed to indicate that there would be few changes – except (to our delight) that the T&Cs would be far more readable! As we (and our lawyers) have consistently said, we are positive about many of the proposed changes. But there are some proposals that we (and again, our lawyers) believe are contrary to the underlying Waterways Act and the T&Cs simply cannot be allowed to create such a conflict. To this end, you will have seen that our colleagues in the NBTA (National Bargees and Travellers Association) are also taking legal advice, and we have agreed to assist them.

We are equally concerned that our extensive analysis of CRT's application of the General Data Protection Regulations seems to have been ignored. Having examined

CRT's documents, we are alarmed that they are out of line with their legal responsibilities – and the T&Cs emphasise this. Are you happy, for instance, that they can reveal your (and your boat's) details to someone who knocks into your boat? Or that one of their staff can enter your boat if they think it does not meet BSS requirements?



## A month of meetings

Chairman, **Mike Rodd**, reports on the work of an active NABO Council

Sadly, the section of the EA responsible for their waterways (such as the non-tidal Thames) also seems hell-bent on going ahead with changes to mooring supervision and control, even though almost the whole of their boating community is opposing them. Personally, my deep worry is that this approach to outsourcing a core responsibility will also appeal to CRT (who already use the same approach for a few of their London mooring sites) and we will then see a similar approach applied throughout the waterways.

For example, would you be happy, when approaching a time-restricted mooring, to phone in your details and the time of arrival etc., and then be monitored to ensure that you move on as required, with the threat of a £150 fine if you overstay? It is telling that, in the early stages of its application for the Thames contract, the car-parking company noted where it was planning to operate – and with their complete lack of knowledge of the territory, they cited some sites where it isn't possible to moor and some that are not even on the river!

One aspect of CRT's work that has been drawn to your Council's attention is that whilst CRT seems

to be (quite reasonably) seeking to balance its budgets by selling off some of its properties, these do appear to include some places with heritage value, and that must be of serious concern to all canal users. We are pleased to note that since we and others raised this issue, CRT has established a Heritage Advisory Group, with many members who really understand the importance of our waterways' heritage. We will continue to watch this space very carefully.

I and my Council colleagues try to attend as many CRT forums and local events as possible, but one concern for all of us is that most of these events concentrate on the non-canal work that CRT is undertaking. This is all good and worthy stuff, I am sure, given that CRT believes the key to achieving further government funding to be promoting the canals as a cornerstone of the nation's health and wellbeing.

Fortunately (at least for my sanity), at one such event a member of the relevant regional board (who happens to be CEO of the UK's largest hire boat operator) did stand up and say it was important not to forget how essential boats and boating are to the waterways. This applies not only in terms of the income generated (not just boat licensing, moorings etc., but supporting the many waterways-based businesses), but also because the greatest attraction of the canals is seeing the boats.

As with the T&Cs proposals, we wait to see the outcome of the so-called 'London consultation'. We have provided a full submission – essentially asking that they should start by just implementing what they promised after the previous consultation, undertaken just a few years ago. Nevertheless, it is alarming that they are already going ahead with implementing some new pro-

posals. So, for example, we have the situation on the River Lee where restrictions are suddenly being placed on existing moorings, so as to create 'safe spaces' for rowers. Or creating eco-moorings in places in London. All well and good – but do these regulations even vaguely consider the costs involved in converting boats to all-electric? Once again, we have a supposedly environmentally friendly development that ignores both the underlying science and the economic consequences.

On a positive note, I should add that, at the National Users Forum, the very best and most professional presentation (in my view) was that delivered by the CRT team responsible for making sure that there is enough water in our canals.

Key to this work, and something I was not fully aware of, is that each and every case where water is abstracted for use in the canals is subject to a new abstraction agreement with the relevant authority. All these agreements have had to be renegotiated over the past few years. Over fifty have now been completed, with many others still subject to final agreement.

I have to say that I am continually frustrated by having to work with organisations with sections where the leadership appears to want to discount – and indeed often completely ignore – any input from their prime customers, such as boat licensing and its control. This appears odd – especially as we are approaching a time when both CRT and the EA will need support from their most passionate users. It just seems plain crazy to ignore them in the meanwhile.

But the sun is shining, we are coming out of lockdown and Covid cases are down, so let's get out and enjoy the waterways – at least while we can!

## Fly on the wall

### Observes proceedings at the April Council meeting

**T**welve days after non-live-aboard Council members were allowed to go boating again, some of them moored up for April's teleconference council meeting.

First up was the row brewing over the removal of moorings between Tottenham and Old Ford Locks on the River Lee. This is to 'make it safer' for scullers from the local rowing clubs—although no-one has yet provided evidence of any accidents caused by moored boats.

#### Braunston Stop House

The eventual fate of Braunston Stop House continues to cause councillors concern, with CRT still saying that no decisions have been taken, although it's reducing the number of its offices because more staff are working from home.

Coincidentally (?) it has appointed a new Heritage Advisory Group, who will no doubt be interested in a recent statement.

Apparently, CRT is not 'selling the family silver' but needs to manage its investments commercially to 'generate as much income as possible'. NABO councillors and other boating groups have pointed out repeatedly that there is a difference between flogging off unused and unwanted buildings and protecting the nation's waterway heritage—something that still doesn't seem to be registering.

#### A Surfeit of Stoppages

Despite (or because of) the lockdown, there is currently an unprecedented number of planned

and unplanned stoppages—especially in the North.

The Peak Forest, Macclesfield and Chesterfield canals are closed and there is no North/South route open to Manchester.

Trans-Pennine routes are beginning to suffer water shortages because reservoir levels have been lowered post-Toddbrook.

Some councillors thought the situation isn't as bad as it looks, with some lock failures being dealt with within a few days. But others believe so much engineering expertise has been lost that CRT has taken its corporate eye off the routine maintenance ball. It is now just reacting to fire-fight one emergency after another.

#### Another Boaters's Survey

The next boaters' survey is expected soon and councillors will be interested to see whether criticism of CRT is national or focussed in regions that are experiencing stoppages.

Whether CRT takes much notice of boaters' views is a moot point, causing one councillor to reflect that the lack of engagement with boaters is one reason why NABO sometimes has to resort to 'attention-seeking behaviour'!

Presumably, the Government will want to seek 'stakeholders' views when it starts negotiations with CRT over its grant renewal later this year. NABO councillors are ready and waiting .....

Byeee



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: June 19th, September 4th, October 9th and November 13th (includes AGM).



# Membership Matters

Paper or electronic NABO News?

Thank you to everyone who responded to my request for your preference either to continue receiving paper copies of the magazine or to change to an electronic format.

The results are very clear: 75% of respondents want to continue with the paper issues and 25% are happy to change. The 25% will now receive electronic versions and everyone else will con-

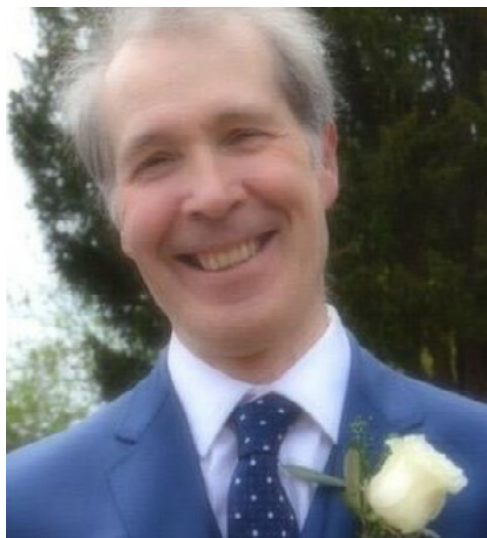
tinue to have posted paper copies. Thank you also for the kind words that many of you wrote about enjoying the magazine.

If you are a member of a waterway organisation that receives concessionary copies of NABO News and you would like to change to electronic versions, please get in touch.

## CRT employee killed

Clive Porter, a Licensing Ranger with the Trust, died on the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union following an attack on April 26th near Broughton in Aylesbury.

Thames Valley Police is appealing for anyone who was boating in that area or using the towpath near to Broughton crossing from 12.00—12.30pm on that day to come forward. A 34-year-old man of no fixed abode has been charged with his murder. Phone Thames Valley Police on 101 and quote reference 845 (26/4) or Crimestoppers on 0800 555111. NABO's Gen. Sec., Mark Tizard, has written to Richard Parry: "On behalf of NABO I write to express our condolences to all of your colleagues at the Trust affected by the sad and pointless death of Clive Porter. I am sure the boating community is at one in condemning this tragic attack on a waterways' employee carrying out this essential role. Please also extend our condolences to his family."



## South West Mike Rodd



I attended the meeting of the non-Wales part of the Wales and South West Region chaired by David Hagg, who leads the South West Regional Advisory Board.

As is usual now, the concentration was on everything non-boating, but fortunately Ed Helps, a member of the Board and CEO of ABC, did point out that it was essential that the boating activities were recognized as a key source of revenue for CRT! We (about 40 attended in all) were introduced to the members of the Board and it is clear that the bulk are non-canal folk. After a brief introduction by Mark Evans, the Regional Director, covering the activities over the past year, we had lengthy presentations on the multi-

## Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

million pound work to provide the River Severn with extensive fish passes and also on Gloucester as a regional hub.

A useful Q&A session was held at the end with some interesting comments on the situation regarding the Bridgewater docks (where CRT does not intend to continue its lease) and also a useful input from a Claverton Pumping Station volunteer about the lack of support from CRT for the volunteers who keep the station running!

There was also a quiet comment that none of the presentations had mentioned anything about CRT's heritage responsibilities!

### NABO AT THE USER GROUPS

## Disabled boaters' forum

Ken Hyllins reports on the meeting on 12th April

I joined this meeting for the first time with an open mind. There were seven people in the Zoom meeting: Matthew Symonds chairing with Rachel Heywood from CRT, a waterways chaplain and other people with an interest in this matter.

Major points covered by the meeting

- 1 CRT spotters are beginning to assess towpaths and structures with regard to disability access, which will take time to complete. However, there will be a charge to get the final publication. A private boater is travelling the cut assessing the canal as regards disabled access. I raised the possibility of using boating organisations' feedback to help with this matter.
- 2 CRT would like people/boaters to send a short video saying what they think is important for their staff to consider when dealing with disabled issues and the consideration needed.
- 3 All future work carried out by CRT will consider disabled needs.

- 4 CRT is looking to increase the number of marked disabled moorings.
- 5 The recent equality questionnaire was considered to be invasive. It was stated that this document is being rewritten for clarity and understanding (well done David Fletcher!).
- 6 The issue of reduced moorings fees for disabled people was brought up two years ago and CRT was criticised for having taken no action on this matter.
- 7 It was also stated that CRT has difficulty implementing adjustments on rivers as they often don't own the land.
- 8 CRT also said that boaters should get help in getting moorings and support from their local welfare and support officer. I challenged this statement as totally incorrect as there is little or no support on this matter for a boater.

Matthew Symonds requested to have a meeting to follow up my concerns. It's valuable to find out what is going on and the proposed adjustments. There is also value in this forum by raising issues on behalf of NABO members—the shame effect.

I will be attending the next meeting on behalf of NABO and I still have an open mind. It gives us another platform to work on and more contacts to work with.

# London and SE regional meeting

Ken Hyllins attended on behalf of NABO

The meeting in April was conducted over the Zoom platform and was chaired by Ros Daniels, Director, London and South East. Also present was Sir William Atkinson, Chair of the London and South East Regional Advisory Board.

It opened with a presentation by Ros, stating much had been done in the region over the year. Safety for its users in running the network was of great importance to the Trust. There had been many improvements made and staff training had been undertaken.

Volunteers had also been very active. There had been upgrades to facilities, with compactor bins and ordinary bins on the towpath. £1.5 million had been spent on infrastructure: £0.8 million spent on lock gates and £0.7 million to keep the network open. £2.4 million had also been spent on vegetation control, on reservoirs, offside vegetation, silt clearance from the Oxford narrow locks and high-priority tree work. There had been support to local canal operators, who had been given a free licence period. There were concerns raised over user safety on the towpaths in light of increased usage due to the virus. There was also mention of an inadequate mooring situation, which is quite complex and was addressed later.

There is going to be a big push to promote 'wellbeing on your doorstep', encouraging people within a kilometre of the canal to get involved and volunteer (for grant purposes). There is also going to be a push to get organisations involved and cre-

ate cooperatives with CRT. There is a move to increase the green flag areas in London and the south-east: CRT wants to bring up run-down areas, such as Harlesden, Tottenham and Brent, with a mixture of local inputs such as volunteers, local societies, Black Lives Matter, cooperatives etc. The aim is to repeat this process in the other regions.

Matthew Symonds, National Boating Manager (Leisure), conducted a session on congestion and CRT's intention to better manage boat numbers in London. There has been a 400% increase in continuous cruisers in London since 2010. CRT has had 15 online sessions with local boaters about this problem. He went on to say that CRT asked for boaters' opinions on the issue in February. The aim is to encourage boaters out of the centre of London into the less popular areas by providing up to 4 km of extra moorings rings, six extra water points, five Elsan points and a further nine refuse disposal sites. There will be a look into the safety of moorings and fair rules for their use—early May will see some proposals on this matter. CRT intends to review their findings/research in July. A pilot scheme will not be implemented before September. A review of the pilot scheme will take place in 2022-23 and the scheme will be implemented later in 2022-23. There was no mention of District Enforcement.

On the Oxford canal, the main topic was the towpath upgrade. It was stated that 64 km had been improved over the last 10 years, mainly to encourage a diverse use—not

just us boaters. This work had come under criticism from long-term moored boaters due to the lack of notification and consideration when the work was done. There will be areas of the towpath given over to vegetation and wildlife. There were also concerns raised that the towpath upgrade had created dangers from its increased usage. In reply, CRT answered that it had put up

signs and, in places, CCTV to monitor usage.

On lack of involvement in the forums, there was criticism of CRT for not using Twitter etc. and for no face-to-face meetings. The rest of the meeting was about bringing more people, charities, cyclists and walkers to use the canal. There will be a follow-up meeting, which I hope to attend on behalf of NABO.

## Bridgewater bookings

Following an agreement with the Bridgewater Canal Company, CRT-licensed boaters wishing to access the Bridgewater Canal, must now pre-book the visit using the on-line booking system after you have set up a customer account, or by phone on 0303 0404040.

Outbound passage, free of charge, is limited to a maximum of seven continuous days and return passage is up to a maximum of three con-

tinuous days free of charge. If you do not book the return journey when you book the outbound journey, you should log into your online account and tick the 'three extra days' box on the date of your return journey. The outbound and return journeys must be made within a continuous 28-day period, which starts on the first day of the outbound journey. You cannot return to the Bridgewater within 28 days, unless you buy a short-term Bridgewater licence from [www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk/boating](http://www.bridgewatercanal.co.uk/boating). Cost between £20 for three days to £160 for 28 days.

### Other places that require booking are:

**London:** Thames lock, River Brent; Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park; Bow Back Rivers; Three Mills, Carpenters Road and City Mill locks.

**East Midlands:** Blisworth, Saddington and Braunston tunnels (widebeams only); Boston lock, River Witham; Cromwell and Torksey locks, River Trent—online booking soon, currently call 0303 0404040.

**West Midlands:** Frankton locks, Montgomery canal; Harecastle tunnel.

**North East:** Bingley three- and five-rise locks; Tinsley flight, Tinsley canal; Newlay and Kirkstall Forge locks, L&L; Standedge tunnel, Huddersfield Narrow canal; Tuel lock, Rochdale canal; Keadby lock, Stainforth & Keadby canal/River Trent—online booking soon, currently call 07733 124611; West Stockwith lock, Chesterfield canal/River Trent—online booking soon, currently call 01427 890204.

**North West:** Anderton boat lift; Liverpool canal link and Salthouse docks, L&L; Ribble canal link; Marsh lock, River Weaver—online booking soon, currently call 03030 404040.

More information on booking the Bridgewater passage online is at [canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/original/43730-boaters-instructions.pdf](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/original/43730-boaters-instructions.pdf)



The Bridgewater canal at Castlefield  
Photo: Peter Fellows

## A sad reminder of the CO danger

John Devanwald reports

Every so often, something happens that brings home the dangers closely associated with our way of life and hobby.

Preventing carbon monoxide (CO) accumulation has been at the forefront of the fight to make life on a boat safer, with compulsory CO meters, adequate ventilation and a programme to make boaters more aware of the dangers. The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) has just released the findings of an investigation into the deaths of two people on a cruiser in York, which makes sobering reading. I really would recommend that you read it, but the following is a short synopsis.

The summary from the MAIB is as follows:

*'At about 2000 on 4 December 2019, the bodies of two men were discovered in the cabin of the privately owned motor cruiser, Diversion, which was moored to a quay in the centre of York, England. The bodies were those of the boat owner and his friend, who had spent the previous evening in the city centre socialising with former work colleagues and were spending the night on board. Both men had died as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning. The carbon monoxide had leaked into the cabin from the boat's diesel-fuelled cabin heater exhaust.'*

The report explains that the exhaust fitted to the Eberspächer heater was from a Webasto and designed for a lorry rather than marine use. It was the wrong diameter and was also only spot welded in place and therefore not gas-tight. This resulted in a high concentration of CO being released into the boat. The report says that there had been reports of nausea and sickness at previous times, which is an indication of CO poisoning, but this was not picked up on by the owners. Also, there were no CO alarms and the ventilation was inadequate, with just a few holes drilled and hidden behind a louvre grill.

CO alarms became compulsory about the time of this incident so even now, with the four-year cycle for a BSS, there can still be many boats without a CO alarm. If you haven't got one, I would fervently suggest that you get one as soon as possible. Also, ensure you get the correct ver-



Photo Marine Accident Investigation Branch

sion; it should be Kitemarked to BS EN 50291-2 (for camping/caravans/boats) and suitable ones are listed on the BSS website.

As a BSS examiner, I actually came across ventilation grills that had no holes behind them, just screwed to a door, but the owners had no idea it was like that. It's easy to check your ventilation by poking a bit of wire through, or by removing the grill if you can't see light through it.

Boaters tend to be pretty good at DIY; it's almost part of the way of life. If you are going to work on something like a heater, please check the manufacturer's recommendations and follow them; they are usually all available on-line. If you aren't sure, get a professional to do the work. None of us is expert at everything.

CO is produced by combustion: stove smoke, boat engine exhausts and heater exhausts are all meant to be lead outside your boat and away from the cabin. The only appliance you can have on a boat without a flue is your gas cooker. Everything else must have one, so don't light that paraffin stove you brought from your house (as I have seen suggested on social media); it really isn't a good idea.

Even on the best maintained boats, exhaust fumes can be blown back into the boat if the wind is in the wrong direction and windows are open. If you are moored next to another boat, its fumes can be blown into your boat, so ensure that your CO alarm is operational at all times.

Please check your appliances, check your alarms and stay safe everyone.

Read the full report at [www.gov.uk/maib-reports/carbon-monoxide-poisoning-on-motor-cruiser-diversion-with-loss-of-2-lives](http://www.gov.uk/maib-reports/carbon-monoxide-poisoning-on-motor-cruiser-diversion-with-loss-of-2-lives)

## A close call

Des McElroy of Ship Shape Stove Services reports on a recent stove failure.

One of our clients was very lucky not to have had more damage caused to their boat other than that shown in the photo.

The client was using heat logs: I personally don't like these as I feel that they burn far too hot. They had never used them before and put two on to get the boat toasty while they popped to the shop. They returned to find people trying to break into the boat, soon followed by the fire service and everything was then brought under control. We then attended, as the fire was thought to have been caused by a blocked flue. But that wasn't the case; the flue was relatively clean. After having a conversation with the client and investigating further, we came to the conclusion that it was a case of over-firing and a damaged baffle plate. This is especially shocking considering this is a double skin flue. Please be careful how you operate your stove, especially if using fuel you're unfamiliar with.

And if you're not 100% confident in servicing your stove then please book a professional to do it for you.

[www.shipshape1.co.uk/service-request](http://www.shipshape1.co.uk/service-request)



## Worcester and Birmingham canal stoppages

Birmingham University train station is undergoing redevelopment, which requires a series of 29-hour closures of the canal and towpath.

This is to enable large sections of the station building framework and canal footbridge to be lifted across the canal.

The stoppages will be between 00.30 on Sundays and 05.00 on Mondays on the following

dates: 27th—28th June; 4th—5th July; 8th—9th August; 5th—6th September; 26th—27th September; and 3rd—4th October. To minimise the effect of the closures, there will be two windows in which the canal will be opened to allow boats to pass through the site.

These will be 12.00-13.00 and 16.00-17.00 on each Sunday.



Photo: West Midlands Railway Programme

# Report on liveaboards' health

The report can be found at [www.gypsy-traveller.org/policy-publications](http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/policy-publications).

Organisations working on behalf of boaters estimate that between 15,000 and 50,000 people live on the waterways.

Friends, Families and Travellers, a national charity working on behalf of gypsies, Roma and travellers, has produced a report of a study on the health experiences of liveaboard boaters.

It found that 65% of respondents reported at least one long-term illness and 45% reported multi-morbidity (two or more conditions).

The research shows that 37% of boaters have been wrongfully refused registration at GP surgeries and dentists and that, if registered, they are on average 47 km away from their GP.

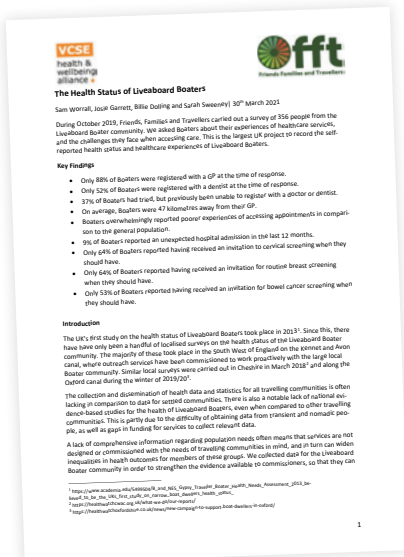
## Half of liveaboard boaters have no access to a dentist

Of the 356 people to respond, the survey found that 88% of boaters were registered with a GP and only

*"No fixed abode is seen as homeless. [I'm] told to register when I'm static and in [the] meantime go to A&E."*

52% were registered with a dentist. Boaters overwhelmingly reported poorer experiences of obtaining appointments compared to the general population, with only 50% of boaters rating their experience of trying to get an appointment as 'Very Good' or 'Fairly Good', compared to 67% of the general population. Many reported difficulty accessing ongoing primary care or travelling long distances to healthcare appointments. They may therefore be facing poor continuity of care, which can mean that their needs are more likely to reach an acute stage before they are addressed.

Only 64% of boaters reported having received an invitation to cervical screening or breast screening, and only 53% had received an invitation for bowel cancer screening when they should have. The report calls for healthcare services to develop a clear understanding of liveaboard boaters in their area and their health needs, so that they are able to access the primary healthcare services that they are legally entitled to in order to prevent a deterioration in health.



# Pam Ayres

## I love a little narrowboat

I love a little narrowboat, I love the old canal,  
Imagining the tales these ancient waterways could tell,  
I love to work the lock, those oaken gates so firm and strong,  
With know-alls up above to tell you what you're doing wrong.

I love to see the native creatures busy at the bank,  
The otter and the water vole, the terrapin and mink,  
And peering in the water, into shallows green and still,  
To see somebody's goldfish from the kitchen window-sill.  
I love to moor along the bank and hear the gentle rain,  
To cook a meal and watch the world beyond the window-pane,  
Little bobbing moorhen chicks, the mallard and the coot,  
Exhausted lovers hoping that their effort's bearing fruit.

I love the ancient bridges, every keystone, every corbel,  
The singing of the little birds, the chirrup and the warble,  
To feed a lonely swan, so perfect, white as alabaster,  
Who struck me with his wing; observe my collar-bone in plaster.

I love to meet the other folk who use the waterways,  
The walkers and the fishermen on sunny languid days,  
We drift beside the towpath and we breathe the summer's breath,  
Till roaring motor-bikers come and frighten us to death.

I love the inland waterways and if it's in my power,  
I'll just keep on a-sailing at about three miles an hour,  
And when I see that final tunnel, into it I'll glide,  
I'll raise my yachting cap and see you on the other side.



There is a video of Pam reading her poem on YouTube [youtube.com/watch?v=otD7nn8Qaf4](https://youtube.com/watch?v=otD7nn8Qaf4)





# Boaters' headgear

Paul Monahan ponders the etiquette of wearing a hat

The hat is a common item of boating apparel, especially for those with a diminishing natural thatch or those whose vintage engine emits glowing meteorites of soot, but a style guide is much needed.

**1 The Australian leather bush hat:** this is the most common hat nowadays. There is only one place where this can be worn with any credibility—Australia. However, they are often worn by boaters, especially when steering a boat with false rivets. Corks around the brim serve no purpose and they cannot be used to plug non-existent rivet-holes.

**2 The baseball cap:** the name is associated with a game based on 'rounders', as played on the other side of the pond. Unfortunately, this duck's bill cap is now widespread throughout the rest of the world. Do you really want to look like a rapper or a junior politician?

**3 The beret:** the ex-army beret is an excellent item of boating headwear—provided it is genuine and was worn by your granddad at D-Day.

**4 Other service dress:** naval officer's caps should not be worn—unless of course one really is a seagoing naval officer. (If so, why are you wasting time with a canal boat when you have a proper boat to cruise?) Matelots' caps are acceptable, although if the cap has 'Kiss Me Quick' on the ribbon, you should be prepared to accept the consequences.

**5 The trilby:** as worn by many

generations of boaters and now worn-out as a boating cliché. The trilby was the favoured headwear of the late Arthur Bray and now should be worn only by those with boating skills to match his.

**6 The flat 'at:** this cap is noted for its associations with whippets and clogs. It is important to assemble these items in the correct order: wearing a whippet on the head will invite unfortunate accidents. The flat 'at is a practical item of apparel, but it must be properly greased before use.

**7 The boater:** despite its name, certain rules apply. Only on the River Thames, during the summer, and only by those whose boating is always done while travelling backwards.

**8 The Panama:** it's a canal. You cannot wear a canal on your head.

**9 The pork-pie hat:** useful if you are prone to exclaim the phrase, "I'll eat my hat if..."

**10 Bobble-hats,** anything with earmuffs attached, or any hat looking as if Noddy once wore it, are best left to someone else's enhanced reality.

Finally, the lunatic fringe: unfortunately, there is video evidence of the author wearing a black top-hat with three brass 'rims' around it. There is also a recording of me wearing a crocheted cushion as protection against a sudden thunderstorm, thus looking like a soggy standard lamp. The most improbable headwear was displayed by one trip-boat steerer, who was seen during a hailstorm with a bowl from a Kenwood mixer on his head! I needed a replacement bowl, so a spare cloth cap was offered; the exchange pleased both parties.



# A rose by any other name...

## Part 4: Cruising and the boat itself

In the final article, Peter Fellows finds owners who take inspiration from using their boat to select the name

### Whether it's the crew...

Crew Knows Best, Crewless, Crew's Control, Premier Cru, Knot Sailors, Welcome a Broad, Tees Bruin, Are You Wet Yet?, Surface Tension, Wetever, Soggy, Wet Enough?;

### ...or the capabilities of the steerer...

No I Dear, Knot a Clew, Clueless, No Tuition, Wingit, Pantomime, Comedy of Aires, Outa Control, Riskibarge Inn, No Knotsense, Risk It, Oops!, Rizky Business, Forget Me Knot, Fraid Knot, Knots O' Fast, Fastenuf, Slow Mo Shun, Kruse Control, Old Her Staedy; Stir It Up, Inn Deep, Swimfully, Strait Aweigh, My Wake, Run-a-Ground, Towed a Lot, Gate Crasher, Jus'phitz, Rudder Chaos, Crewsindipsy Driver, Panic, Dazed and Confused, Only the Brave, Serious Trouble, Occupational Hazard, Out to Launch, Tight Lines, Tilt-N-Hilton, Tide Up, Tied the Knot.

### ...or the waterway...

Far Canal, Goncruzn, Upacut, Short Cut, Weigh 2 Go, Still Going, There and Back Again, Turning Point, Which Wey, Wherehell-Rwe?

### ...or canal features...

Interlock, Weir Wolf, Tunnel Vision.

### ...or the boat...

Summat in Waeter, Unidentified Floating Object, Unowotzizname, Not a Yot, Da Bote, Ze Baaj, How Boat Dat?, Knot One of Them Wood Things, Iva Biggun, No Big Ting, My Bigger Bucking Foat, Thistle Dhu, It'll Do, Jus T Nuf, So Long, My Last Boat iv, Noah's Dinghy, Straight and Narrow, Knot Big Enuff, Too Short!, No'orse. Man, Big Bertha, Large Marge, Ugly Betty, Leakin' Lena, Waterrat, Onion Bargee, Onion Barge-G, Sawley Mist.

### ...and its condition...

Hope It Floats, Shallow Minded, Sinkin' Fast, Floating Stone, Sinking Feeling, Unsinkable,

Floats Our Boat, Anywhere But Down, This Way Up, Other Way Up!, River Runs Through It, Flood Insurance, Dangerous When Wet, Keep'r Wet, Hole in the Water, Slippery When Wet, Flat Bottom Girl, Soggy Bottom, Nice Butt, Barebottom, Hull of Fame, Tin Can, Tincanali, Phippurtyphutt, Jammy Bodger, Screw Loose, Loose Nut, Loose Crew, Two Loose Scrooze, Rusti-Squeek, Mister Rusty, Scruffy, Lotta Junk, Riff Raft, Old Paint, Snap, Shackle & Pop, Tur-Na-Cog (from the 60s group Tir Na Nog).

### But sadly... not all boat names reflect happiness and contentment

Bad Idea, First Mistake, Never Again, Rue the Day, Damn Boat, Our Little Nightmare, Enuf's Enuf, Second Thoughts, All for Knot, Knot Bovered, Am I Bovered?, Face Bovered?, Big Toy, Buoys Toys, Dad's Last Toy, Mom's Toy Too, Mary's Toy Too, E.C. Come E.C. Go, Takin' it for Grant'd, Whatever, Who Cares, Waste of Time, Yes Dear, Firkham Hall, Tole-Ja-So, Don't Like Yours Either, Duck 'Em All, Get Knotted, Inflated Ego, Possession Obsession, Filthy Rich, Poshratz, Spoiled Brat, Temper Tantrum, Spoiled Rotten, Never Satisfied, Knot-E-Nuff, Never Enough, Marmite, Narcosis, Nasty Habit, General Malaise, Ruff Times, Schmidt Happens, On Edge!, Full Blown Insanity, Sir T Fiable, Loon-A-Tic, Raven Lunatic, Still Crazy, Nature Calls, Morning Flatulence, Ouse Dunny?, Passing Gas, Raspberry Blower, Moose Drool, Stinky Feet, Homeless, Homewrecker, My Doghouse, Nag Factor One!, Mis Adventure, Miss Appropriation, Miss Demeanor, Miss Fits, Miss Fortune, Miss Guided, Hazardous Material, Hell Froze Over, Death's Embrace, Krypt Keeper.

And finally:  
Still looking for a name?



# Did the Bernoulli Effect cause the Suez Canal accident?

Peter Fellows weighs up the evidence

The report of the investigation into the accident has yet to be published but, from the available evidence, this is what may have happened.

On 23rd March, a cold front swept eastward across Egypt and winds of up to 46 mph (74 kph) blew from the southwest, across the southern end of the canal. The 400 metre long, 224,000 tonne container ship, Ever Given, carrying 20,000 sea containers, became stuck across the canal at 0540 that day, about five miles north of the connection with the Red Sea. The Suez Canal

Authority and the ship's owner, BSM, suggested that the vessel ran aground due to the strong winds and a sandstorm that reduced visibility, making navigation more challenging. But the explanation is likely to be more complicated than this.

If the ship was travelling along the centre of the canal, water would be flowing symmetrically along the port and starboard sides and there would be no sideways force, or yaw. But if the ship got too close to one side of the canal, the water speeds up between the boat and the near bank. This causes the pressure to drop—

Stemmed up; a situation familiar to all canal boaters  
Photo: Suez Canal Authority



the Bernoulli Effect—and the stern is pulled into the bank—known as the bank effect. At the same time, displaced water from the ships' movement accumulates between the bow and the bank, producing a region of higher water pressure. This creates a force that swings the bow away from the bank, known as the 'bow cushion.'

The faster a ship is travelling, the greater is this effect and the bigger the ship, the more water is displaced. Ever Given has a beam of 53 metres in a canal that is 125 metres wide and it is reported that the ship was moving at 15 mph, well in excess of the 10 mph speed limit in the canal.

The Ever Given was travelling north, with the westerly winds coming from the ship's left and pushing it to the right. To compensate, the ship adjusted its heading to the left. Possibly because of a temporary lull in the wind, or a change in wind direction that reduced the cross-wind that was pushing the boat to the right, the ship may have been over-adjusting and hence moved left. The ship came close to the left, west, bank, where the bow cushion pushed the bow away from the bank. At the same time the bank effect caused the stern to hug the west bank. The Ever Given finally made an unplanned berth in the sand on both sides of the canal with its stern on the west bank and its bow stuck in the east bank. The speed of the ship and the angle of the bow punched a hole in the riprap (piled boulders that protect the sand from erosion) and wedged its bow-bulb in the soft



## The Ever Given

Ever Given is one of the largest container ships in the world. The ship is owned by Shoei Kisen Kaisha (a shipowning and leasing subsidiary of the large Japanese shipbuilding company Imabari Shipbuilding), and is time chartered and operated by container transportation and shipping company Evergreen Marine, headquartered in Luzhu District, Taoyuan City, Taiwan. Ever Given is registered in Panama and its technical management is the responsibility of the German ship management company Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement (BSM).

On 23 March 2021, while traveling from Tanjung Pelepas in Malaysia to Rotterdam in the Netherlands, the ship ran aground in the Suez Canal. The ship remained in place for six days before salvage crews freed it on 29 March 2021.

The vessel was impounded by the Egyptian government on 13 April 2021 for refusing to pay a reported \$916 million in fees demanded by the government, including \$300 million in "loss of reputation."

sand beyond it.

So, the wind may have played a part in the accident, but it seems that the Bernoulli Effect, in the form of the bank effect with the bow cushion, may have spun the ship when it came too close to the bank.

# CRT investments

Mark Tizard, Anne Husar and Peter Fellows respond to a recent CRT statement



NABO formally objected when CRT tried to sell the listed Blowers Green Pumthouse in 2018.

Photo: CRT

**C**RT inherited a portfolio of properties from BW, some of which are needed for its operations.

In a statement, it says that others were specified as investments to provide an income stream to fund ongoing maintenance. It also claims that it has to manage these investments commercially to generate as much income as possible as a condition of the Government grant agreement. To do this, it regularly sells assets if it thinks their potential to grow income has fallen and then invests the proceeds in new assets with higher growth potential. It denies it is 'selling the family silver' and reports that the investments now contribute more than £50 million each year to CRT funds. This compares to approximately £40 million a year from boating and mooring revenue. The statement goes on to say: "We do still own waterway-related properties like marinas and boatyards and some waterside properties with potential for development..."

## NABO comments

A fundamental point is missing from this statement: right at the top of CRT's primary charitable objects, when it was set up by the Government, is that it should '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.'

This perhaps explains why CRT has refused to respond to a recent freedom of information request for a list of the listed buildings that it has sold, as a good indication of those that are heritage related. Take away the heritage and you take away the canal experience for boaters and visitors alike.

It is difficult to imagine the National Trust selling off listed former operational buildings that it had been bequeathed, to invest in a non-operational asset like a shopping mall. Since NABO and other associations raised concerns about the potential sale of the listed Braunston Stop House, CRT seems to be on the defensive. By strange coincidence, it has recently set up a Heritage Advisory Group.

What CRT's statement neglects to say is that it fully realises its responsibilities to maintain canal heritage buildings, even though they may not generate a 'good return'. These are unique monuments from the UK's industrial past. They are not investment properties and shouldn't be seen by CRT as such. We all lose out if they are sold off, not just canal enthusiasts.

# Facebook Feedback

Mark Tizard posted this and found plenty of boaters who agree with the sentiments

**S**o here we have an organisation charged with maintaining the heritage, navigation and infrastructure of the canal and currently gearing up to re-tender for its Government grant.

The same organisation that is currently presiding over the largest number of navigation stoppages that I can remember in the last 30 years.

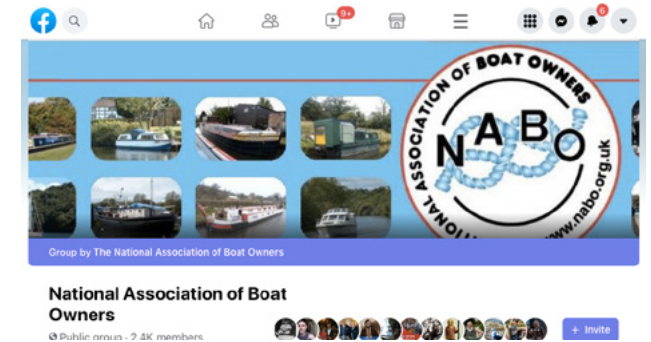
The same organisation which, after record winter rainfall, is now forecasting restricted navigation in many northern areas because of water shortages, having been forced to lower water levels of several reservoirs because belated inspections following the Toddbrook failure have led to maintenance issues.

The same organisation that is selling off our canalside heritage that they are charged to protect, and is too frightened to respond to a freedom of information request asking for details of listed property disposals.

The same organisation which, after yet another recent reorganisation losing more experienced engineers and supervisors, announces yet another stoppage caused by a broken paddle with: "Please bear with us when our teams investigate the failure and work towards a repair solution."

I just want an organisation that announces that they've sent a man to fix it. Anyone else remember those days?

Rant over



## Comments

"They seem to be everything but a navigation authority nowadays."

"People-power stopped the madness that was the European Super League. Isn't it time for NABO, IWA and all the other boater organisations to get together in a concerted effort to rally against the woeful CRT once and for all? Something needs to be done urgently to save the canals, as the navigable system is being lost forever. Am I sensationalising? I don't think so."

"They are not fit for purpose. End of."

"We tried our best to believe in CRT, to support them, but they continue to let us down, to disappoint us and make us angry. Rant justified."

"Too many accountants and admin."

"But, but... what about all the lovely blue signs everywhere?"

"Unfortunately, Mark, we are too far down the food chain to have any impact or to have any influence with the Government's view and I totally agree with you."

"Bloody well said!"

# “Strengthening alliances with the waterways sector—voice of users”

Mark Tizard looks at responses to the boater’s perception survey

This phrase was taken from a recent slide, presented by Richard Parry to the National Users’ Forum.

The slide was headed ‘winning hearts and minds’ and explained CRT’s strategy for obtaining a renewed grant from DEFRA, which is in every boater’s interest. Yet with a record number of stoppages (post-winter works) and rising boater unrest to CRT’s apparent indifference to preserving the building heritage that it inherited, it’s clear to see CRT faces a challenge.

This is echoed in the recent national boater’s perception survey, carried out by email to a sample of boaters between 27th February and 4th March. The results make uncomfortable reading for CRT. To allow for Covid effects, the survey separately identified boaters who used their boats in 2020. The overall level of satisfaction with CRT dropped from 60% in 2019/20 to 54% in 2020/21 (although, interestingly, the satisfaction level of continuous cruisers rose by 4% and that of leisure boaters decreased by 10%).

This increased level of dissatisfaction is also reflected in the drop in satisfaction levels with CRT’s upkeep measure. The number of boaters who rated the condition of the navigation in the lowest range 1-3 rose from 17% to 24%. Similarly, the number of boaters who rated

CRT 8 out of 10 or above fell from 20% to 18%. This can be broken down regionally with the worst area being Yorkshire and the North East, where only 40% of boaters rated upkeep in the range 6-10. There were only three regions that scored over 50%; the South West, the West Midlands and the North West.

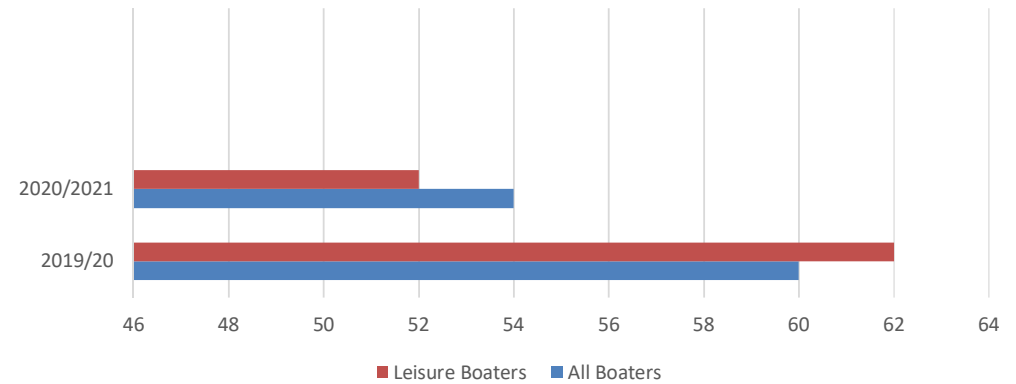
### Maintenance and inspection

These figures reinforce the views of NABO Council that more work needs to be done to improve the maintenance and inspection regime.

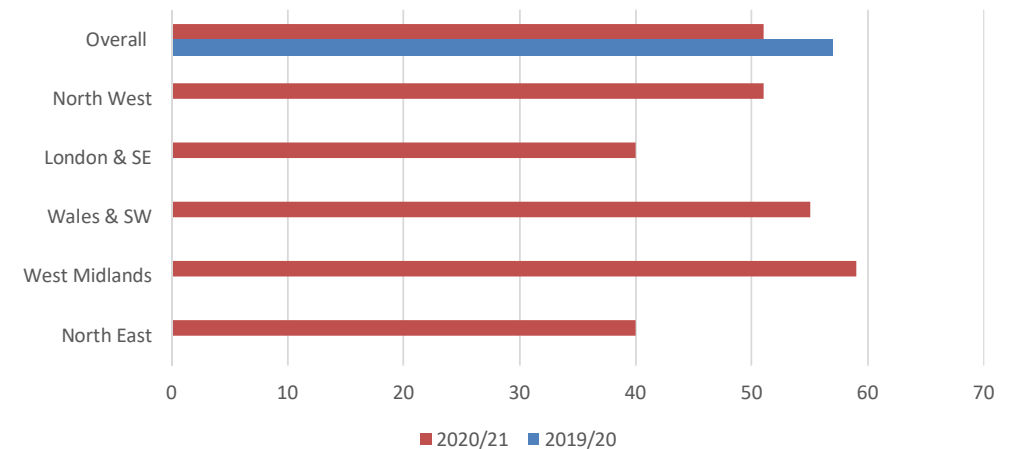
Boaters are feeling that, despite words to the contrary, they are unloved and not the primary focus of the Trust. Hopefully, these results will cause CRT to stop and rethink how to engage with boaters. The survey also showed that boaters appreciated the work done by volunteers.

When looking at the Government’s proposals for zero emissions by 2050, the largest group supported the proposal that any changes should be applied to new boats only, and a sizeable majority was opposed to enforced changes. When addressing the issue of alternative fuel sources, most were in favour of solar power and biofuels. The provision of electric charging points was not considered viable, with 40% of respondents ranking the feasibility of this option 0 out

Percentage of boaters satisfied with CRT



Percentage of boaters that scored CRT 6 out of 10 or above for Upkeep of the canals



of 10. Not surprisingly, the cost of changes to accommodate emissions reduction was highly ranked in importance by boaters, with 79% scoring this in the range 8 -10. Introducing regulation to control emissions as part of boat regulations was very strongly resisted, with two thirds saying it would either reduce or stop their boating activities. CRT

is supporting the Government’s initiative to reduce emissions, but these results show the scale of the problem. For many, boating is a discretionary leisure activity in competition with other leisure activities, and changes in the costs of boating over and above existing mooring, maintenance and licensing will have an impact.

# Changes to Thames water points

The EA has modified the mains water points at its lock sites on the non-tidal Thames. It has fitted back-flow-prevention devices to all taps that are close to the river and also removed all of the hoses.

This is to prevent the risk of river water or bacteria from hoses being sucked into the drinking water supply. Boaters who wish to use the water points will need to provide their own hose, fitted with a standard 'Hozelock'-type connector. However, the EA has stated that the hose should not be more than seven metres long, nor be an expandable type, nor have any other type of fitting as these will cause an increase in back-pressure. The EA recognises that the backflow prevention devices will considerably reduce the flowrate of water from the taps and suggests that boaters should allow additional time to fill their tanks. There is also likely to be an increase in waiting times when the water points are in use.

## Andy Soper replies to the EA

"The addition of a small bore tap and a non-return valve (NRV) has reduced the available flow for all users resulting in queues and congestion at water points.

The NRV is an inappropriate solution. At best it will allow 400 litres per hour—a typical narrowboat water tank is 350 litres and a barge 1500 litres. Its design allows for a 600 mm (not 6 metres!) hose and the filling point should be BELOW

the valve—think pump-out or Elsan wash-down. Most narrowboats will have fillers about level with your fittings but well below cruiser or barge fittings—resulting in an even slower fill.

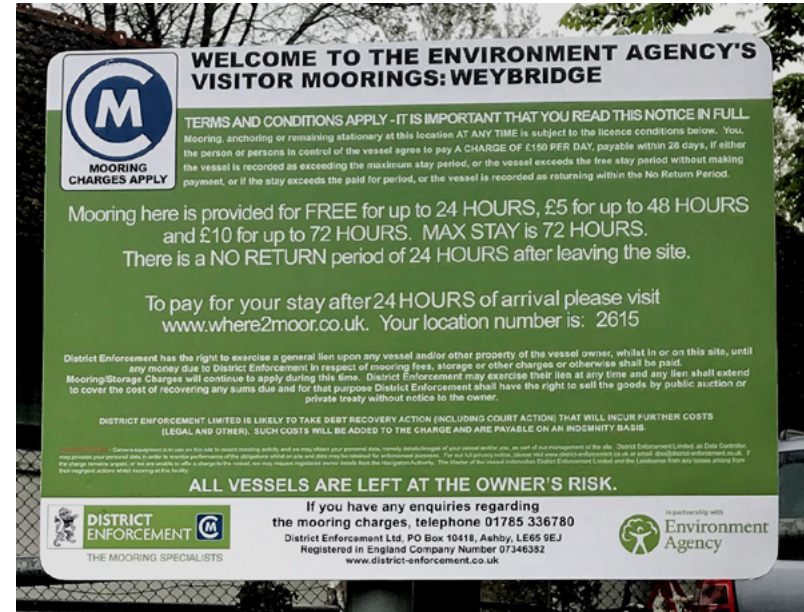
The original legislation does not appear to need any back-fill prevention device as the hose will be provided by the user and removed after use (current marina practice).

You quote the industry good practice guide which recommends a double check valve before the tap—as used by CRT—and does not have the same restriction on flow. I am surprised that we have ended up with such an unsatisfactory solution. I suggest that the NRVs are removed and taps at least doubled to produce an acceptable flow."

## NABO's River Thames Rep, Graham Paterson

"To prevent backflow, the onus is on EA in its design—NOT on the hose owner/boater!

So I strongly object to owners having to modify their hoses to enable EA to slide out of its backflow prevention responsibility! CRT does not make any stipulation as to the type of hose! If 'expandable' means the compact space-saving hose I've had for years, which takes up minimal storage space on my small boat, I strongly object to that stipulation. A solid hose takes up a lot of space. So further EA restrictions of zero benefit to the boater! Was anyone consulted on this proposed change, I wonder?"



## The EA customer charter

The charter describes the service that the EA will provide between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022. It aims to offer assisted lock passage to boaters between 1st April and 30th September, with locks manned by a lock-keeper and/or volunteers.

Assisted passage may be available between October and March but cannot be guaranteed. The lock-keepers' hours of duty are:

- 9am to 6:30pm in July and August
- 9am to 6pm in May, June and September
- 9am to 5pm in April and October, and
- 9:15am to 4pm between November and March.
- Lunch breaks are taken between 1pm and 2pm.

Boaters can moor at short-stay visitor moorings for a maximum of 72 hours. The first 24-hour period is free and, for a charge of £5 per 24 hours, boats may remain for two further consecutive days. These moorings may be managed by EA lock staff or by a third-party contractor.

Lockside short-stay moorings are available on a first come first served basis. Sites at Boveney, Cookham, Hurley, Days and Abingdon are able to accommodate several boats. These moorings are managed by the resident lock-keepers.

Restrictions at Teddington: from 13th April to 17th May, tidal transits and assisted passage through Teddington lock will be available from 6am to 10pm. Visiting licences will be available at the lock. From 18th May to 21st June, full 24-hour service will resume. For advice, call 020 8940 8723.

# H&S – A bridge too far?

**Paul Monahan** thinks historic structures should be exempt from health and safety legislation.

**T**his started life as the Health and Safety at Work Act. As enacted, the legislation covered places of work, with some extended coverage to ensure the safety of members of the public visiting such places. It is indeed right that people should expect to return from work without any intervening accident.

Ensuring that people are safe from the (in)actions of unscrupulous employers or incompetent public authorities is entirely laudable and an aim which I fully support. However, as is so common with originally sensible legislation, those responsible for administering the law cannot resist building an empire upon it. Regrettably, 'Health and Safety' has now become not only an industry in itself, but also in many cases a by-word for the more repressive aspects of Puritanism, the padded room and the nursery. CRT and its predecessors unfortunately have not proven to be above this tendency.

If, for example, a person falls off an aqueduct, then everyone from James Brindley to Richard Parry would be blamed, lawsuits would follow and the media would cry: "fence it off and fill 'em in." However, if the same person were to fall off a mountain, then neither the mountain nor the landowner would be considered at fault.

## There is another way.

Put simply, it is that historic structures over a certain age should be treated for H & S purposes as if they were natural features of the landscape.

This new approach would need draughting correctly, perhaps along the lines of: 'Historic structures of over 100 years in age which are maintained 'as built' are specifically exempted from any requirement to be modified or added to in order to comply with current or future H & S legislation. Owners, trustees and lessees are indemnified against any action which may result from this exemption. This exemption shall not Put simply, it is that historic structures over a certain age should be treated for H & S purposes as if they were natural features of the landscape. This new approach would need draughting correctly, perhaps along the lines of: 'Historic structures of over 100 years in age which are maintained 'as built' are specifically exempted from any requirement to be modified or added to in order to comply with current or future H & S legislation. Owners, trustees and lessees are indemnified against any action which may result from this exemption. This exemption shall not negate the responsibility to maintain such structures in good order as originally constructed, nor shall it remove the requirement to maintain operable items such as locks, paddle-gear or movable bridges in such condition that they may be operated safely in so far as the original design permits.'

This would not remove the requirement to maintain structures, but would remove the requirement to modify them to protect people against the consequences of their own foolishness. In short, if I fall off a canal bridge through my own ac-



tions, then I am at fault; if the bridge collapses under me, then CRT is to blame.

I am certain that such a change would be hugely popular; with English Heritage, with the National Trust, with every heritage and preservation society and even with much of the population, who can usually recognise the spectre of nanny lurking at every turn. Indeed, the only group opposed would be the public-injury lawyers, although some officials may need to temper their judgements with a little more understanding. I do not think that this change would need primary legislation; with the support of the major heritage bodies and acceptance by the insurance companies, then any necessary amendment to the law could be achieved through the appropriate orders.

I am convinced that this is the way forward; it is potentially far-reaching, not just for heritage, but in that it could herald a return to a time when people have the ability to understand and evaluate risk properly, so are safer overall as a result. CRT is well-placed to lead this change and should do so.

## New Heritage Advisory Group

CRT is responsible for the third largest collection of listed buildings in the UK, and has appointed a new Cultural Heritage Advisory Group. The group will provide the Trust's management with specialist advice and guidance on effective conservation and interpretation of the built and cultural heritage of the waterways, and promoting their use, enjoyment and value for wellbeing. It will be chaired by architectural historian, Nigel Barker-Mills and the group will have an initial term of up to three years. Richard Parry said: "Waterways are part of the fabric of our nation and remain amongst the finest examples of industrial heritage in the world. The Trust is charged with protecting and conserving this heritage for future generations."



## TECHIE'S



## CORNER

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

**B**atteries are at the heart of a power system on a boat. They are also probably the single most expensive consumable on board but, for some reason, don't seem to get anything like the attention they should to keep them in good condition and consequently have a long life.

This article is only going to go into the most basic battery husbandry. If, after reading this, you are inclined to dig deeper there are the joys of power audits, battery management systems, charging systems and much more! Here I'll consider lead acid batteries, the most common at present. In another article I'll talk about Lithium batteries.

## The dark art of battery maintenance

**John Devonald** has some wise words to keep the power flowing

So, to batteries on a boat: I have six on mine; four leisure, one starter and one bow-thruster, and I suspect that is a pretty common combination. Replacing them would cost me about £600 and that's not the most expensive batteries. Because I am a leisure boater and my boat spends most of the time on a marina, plugged into a power supply with the batteries on a float charge, I can get away with mid-range quality. If you are a liveaboard with high-use Trojan or traction batteries, your costs could be very much higher, which brings me nicely on to battery construction.

Starter and leisure batteries are not the same. The starter battery is

designed to supply high Amperes quickly over a short period of time. The leisure battery is the opposite; low Ampere discharge over long periods, and the internal construction of each differs. Then you have sealed and 'wet' batteries. There are differing versions of these but for the purposes of this article that's as deep as I am going to go. Of course, you can use one type to do the other's job. I've jumped my starter from my leisure batteries more than once, but it will have a detrimental effect on them if you do it too much. Sealed is the standard for starter batteries as they are just standard car batteries. Wet batteries, where you top up the electrolyte with distilled water, are popular for leisure batteries because you can replace the evaporated water and also check the state of the battery with a hydrometer. However they require a maintenance schedule in a way that sealed batteries do not.

### Guidelines for battery health

Lead-acid batteries like to be fully charged. They will sit happily for years on float and be perfectly good when you come to use them.

They don't like being discharged (their lifetime is measured in cycles) and they absolutely hate being flattened. Some batteries, Trojans and traction (forklift and invalid trike types) are much less susceptible to damage from large discharges than sealed leisure batteries, but they are not immune. In a marina with a hook-up, this isn't so much of a problem, but if you are moored on the canal, what can you do to protect your batteries?

First, and I appreciate this is easier said than done; don't let your batteries fully discharge. Yes, it's a bit late when all has gone dark, so how do I tell the state of my batteries without a hugely expensive battery monitoring system? The simplest

check is to monitor Voltage: a 12-Volt system is nominally 12 volts, but in reality it is anything but. When charging from your engine alternator, it can be around the 14.5V mark. On float from an external charging supply, it is around 13.6V. When you measure the voltage is critical to understanding the condition of your batteries. To do this you do need a meter that measures in 0.1 units of a Volt—these tenths make a difference. Now comes the important bit: you need to measure your battery voltage when there is no load on it. That TV or fridge running will make the readings invalid as your voltage will be much lower.

### Charge level and voltage

A fully charged 12V battery, in good condition, will read >12.6V with no load. A battery at around 50% will read 12.1V.

Continued use below 50% charge will result in permanent damage. I would suggest that, after you have cruised or charged your batteries, wait half an hour with nothing turned on and then check the voltage. If it's above 12.4V, then your batteries are in good condition. If you are checking a bank of leisure batteries and you get a low reading, disconnect each one and test them separately, as it is not uncommon for a cell in one battery to fail and drag down the voltage of them all. Also it is critical you give your batteries time to fully charge. Think of it as: the fuller it gets, the longer it takes to 'push' the amps in. Many times I have seen people on social media say they had their engine running for an hour to charge their batteries and why are they going flat so quickly. It's just not long enough.

### Battery Safety

The BSS says your batteries must be secured and with a non-conductive

VOLTAGE	≈ CHARGE STATE	
>12.6	100	Note that these voltages are approximate and are influenced by temperature etc. Batteries just taken off charge will have a significantly higher voltage until the 'surface charge decays over 30mins or so.
12.5	90	
12.4	80	
12.3	70	
12.2	60	
12.1	50	Repeated discharge to these levels will shorten battery life
11.9	40	
11.8	30	
11.6	20	Permanent Damage will occur
11.3	10	
10.5	0	

*If you smell rotten eggs, that is an indication of a failed battery.*

lid or covers over the terminals. You really don't want to drop a spanner over the positive and negative terminals!

When checking your batteries, have a feel around the cases to see if any are warm or bulging. If they are, disconnect them and get them out. If your CO alarm starts going off, check your batteries among your other checks, and if you smell rotten eggs (hydrogen sulphide) that is another indication of a failed battery.

Power auditing, balancing your battery bank to your needs, and even which terminals you take your power supply leads from, can make a difference to keeping your batteries in good condition. But the one big thing with lead-acid batteries is don't let them go flat; that way you can kill them very quickly and that can be very, very expensive.

# Rewind

Issue No 3, 2006

Howard Anguish explores NABO News from 15 years ago

INLAND NAVIGATION ISSUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS



Unusually, this issue starts with an apology, saying that the magazine is 'a bit thin', with little to report because a number of active problems had either been resolved or were pending decisions. However, there are one or two items which I have selected but let's hope for meatier subjects in future editions!

**NABO and its successes.** The Chairman, in his usual column, was keen to remind members and potential new recruits about the many achievements that had come about in recent years through the concerted efforts of the Council and more

particularly by pressure from members. This had helped to keep British Waterways up to date with boaters' opinions and had played an important part in bringing changes about. A small list of just a few significant changes shows how effective NABO had been in improving facilities etc. for boaters: the success of the Diesel Campaign; Safety & Taming of the BSS; the Veg Pledge; changes to EA while working on its Harmonisation Forum to ensure its powers were used in the best interests of its navigations and those who use them; and NABO Waterways Reporting to log problems on the waterways. These were among many others outlined in his column. Sometimes working in conjunction with other organisations and sometimes alone, NABO had become a significant voice in waterway matters and it is very gratifying to see that the momentum has continued to the present day. The chairman's final remarks are worth

repeating here—their relevance is as valid today as it was then!

*"Providing we give due respect to our Constitution, NABO should seek to become the leading inland boat owners' representative body in terms of size as well as expertise and enthusiasm. We have the respect of the authorities, we need to gain more respect from the boat owning community as a whole."*

An approach had been made by BW to experiment with a **Stoppage in Season** which elicited a response from NABO that *"As NABO maintains there is no such thing as a 'cruising season', we cannot really object to BW closing the canal for maintenance during it."*

**NABO Guidance Notes.** As many members will remember, NABO went to a lot of trouble to publish a series of Guidance Notes, providing specialist information on many boating topics. In 2006, these covered a wide range of topics from specific cruising guides to use of VHF radio, boat registration, flags, trailer boat notes, and so on. In issue 3, there is encouragement for members to ask for advice notes on any waterway subject that may interest them.

I remember being involved in contributing to one or two of them during my stint on Council and many boaters found these publications extremely useful. Maybe there's a case for some of these publications to be resurrected/updated, although I suspect that great care would have to be taken in avoiding any problems arising from increased awareness of liability and litigation!

# Letters to the Editor

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

## Anglia Pass

I wonder if you are aware that the EA is bringing in a new Anglian Pass to enable local boaters to visit the River Cam and the Middle Level. The idea is sensible, but the cost is ridiculous. Last year I could visit Cambridge on my narrowboat by paying an extra 3% surcharge on top of my EA licence—that is, about an extra £30. The proposed charge for this year is £100.

David Simmons

## Eco-toilets

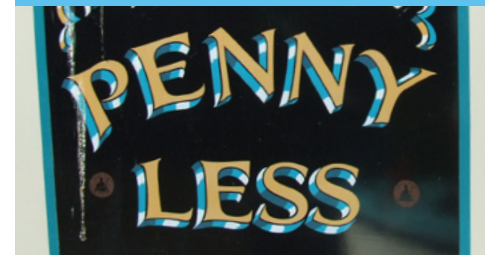
Thank you for a very informative and up-to-date article on eco-toilets by Helen Hutt, but I must take issue with her comment about 'Composting is exactly what it isn't'. Some of the 1000+ users of separating toilets are getting decomposition of the contents within the toilet, which is reflected in condensation and temperatures of 40-50°C. It's composting not composted, which is only achieved much later while still on a boat. Our latest developments are the use of hot composting and wormeries, both of which have been part of mainstream composting for gardeners for many years. All these developments towards better and faster breakdown of toilet material will help any initiatives by CRT, marina owners and boating cooperatives to provide facilities to receive this new boaters' toilet material.

The majority of users of separating toilets are strongly committed to the environment and would not consider bagging and binning. Since the change in CRT policy, those binning are being supported to find alternative methods, but they would never go near a smelly Elsan to put a valuable resource in it as suggested by Helen. If you would like more information about separating toilets and techniques there is a Facebook site 'Composting Toilets for Boats and Off-Grid Living'.

Tony Sulman

## 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 Brian Holt.



Helen Hutt replied: *"I'm glad we've got a dialogue going and to hear that better systems are being developed. Please keep us informed! Of course, the process of composting starts with the first 'deposit' but, as you point out, 'humanure' may need to be stored elsewhere on the boat for a while to fully decompose. My concern is that potential purchasers are not being told this. NABO has received a letter from a disgruntled member who bought a separating toilet last year on the supplier's advice that poo could simply be bagged and binned—no mention of storing it for later disposal. I'm sure this can't be an isolated case. While most users are undoubtedly very responsible, it's a fact that some people do dump their 'humanure' into Elsans—presumably because they see no other option—and CRT has to spend thousands of pounds unblocking them."*

## London overcrowding

After the consultation on the overcrowding on London's waterways, I really thought CRT was committed to doing something about it. This issue of *Waterfront*, CRT's magazine for its Friends, contains an article entitled *Living aboard in London*, almost entirely supportive of this lifestyle—the final paragraph asks: "What would you say to young families considering life on the water?" "There is this real sense of freedom." Kim replies. "Living on the canal gives you so much space in a city that's so packed and busy." If CRT wants to solve this problem, they need to dampen down demand, not publish irresponsible articles like this.

Brenda Ward

NABO News back issues are available online at [nabo.org.uk/index.php/reference/nn-back-issues-2](http://nabo.org.uk/index.php/reference/nn-back-issues-2)



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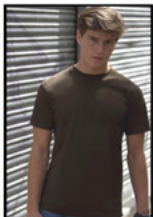
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