

Moorings boycott by boaters?

Across the country boaters are telling The Floater that the Canal & River Trust's latest winter moorings plan is not earning them much income – despite the Trust's claim that they are happy with the results. C&RT has established many more paid-for winter mooring sites than in previous years and hiked the cost by around 30 per cent whilst cutting the length of time the moorings are available by a whole month. The result has been a distinct lack of enthusiasm from boaters, at least in the early stages, along with lots of confusion over a national signing programme for the moorings that contradicted their stated policy on their website. Several boaters have told The Floater they are boycotting even the most popular mooring sites, like Llangollen, because of the price hike to around £250 a month for a long boat. The same is certainly true in central Birmingham where winter moorings in Cambrian Wharf have stood empty of permit payers through November. In London, Victoria Crabbe tells us that at Alpertons there are just three boats with permits moored along what she describes as “a big old stretch, mostly empty,”



Signs conflicting with online advice from C&RT which says winter moorings CAN be used by passing boats. Changing 'only' to 'have priority' would have been clearer



Empty winter moorings at Kinver on the Staffs and Worcester - picture Lucy Griffiths



Just three winter moorers at Alpertons, left, on the Paddington Arm, with plenty of unpaid for space - picture Victoria Crabbe - and totally empty at Merry Hill on the BCN, below.



while online C&RT says clearly anybody can moor but permit holders have priority. The Trust explain this by claiming: “There has been some trouble with non-permit holders refusing to move in the past, hence why we try to keep the signs on the ground more focused on that aspect.” Do C&RT think they have priced their winter moorings too highly with 30 per cent hikes in some instances? The Trust runs out its standard excuse when it comes to mooring prices – that it has to ‘ensure we stay in line with the pricing of both private operators

and our own long-term mooring sites’ because of ‘competition law’. It is certainly true that marina operators seem to have successfully undercut C&RT’s winter mooring prices despite offering many more facilities such as electricity, water to each berth and car parking. Their public relations department goes on to claim: “We’ve kept the lowest price band comparable with that of the cheapest general towpath permit last year.” It adds that: “The revised pricing should be cost-neutral.” Asked why the Trust had established cheaper winter

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Happy Christmas to all our readers

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Strategy to keep water flowing

More boats moving through locks, uncontrolled leaks, climate change bringing warmer weather and even restored canals opening – all put pressure on the supply system but the Canal & River Trust claims it has a long-term water resource strategy aimed at maintaining a reliable supply.

Its ‘Putting the water into waterways 2015-2020’ document details how C&RT will plan for a reliable supply of water to meet the growing demands on the waterway network.

The document raises again the possibility of bringing side pounds back into use on some lock flights – something boaters enthuse about but British Waterways and now C&RT treat with great suspicion.

It also looks at the role of dredging in improving the amounts of water held in the system itself and the impact of decreasing flows, as global warming develops further on flows from natural rivers and streams into the canalised system.

Adam Comerford, national hydrology manager for the Trust said: “The canal network is supplied by a complex system of reservoirs, aquifers, rivers, feeder streams and back pumping.

“It’s important that we don’t rest on our laurels and take this supply for granted. Our climate is changing, there are more boats on our waterways than ever before and exciting plans are in place for miles of canal to be brought back into use.

“This strategy is all about taking time now to properly understand all these potential future pressures and planning effectively to ensure that we stay ahead.” The strategy also commits to providing clearer definitions of key water management concepts and explains the Trust’s position on a number of issues that are commonly raised by boaters, including lock leakage, side ponds and dredging.

Mike Carter, chair of the Trust’s Navigation Advisory Group said: “The strategy helps to explain some of the key concepts of water management, debunk some common misconceptions and sets out a clear plan for assessing future challenges.

“The net result is that those interested in the waterways will hopefully have a better understanding of the issues and how the Trust plans to manage them. This should give us all knowledge and confidence to make decisions, plan cruising and run businesses successfully.” The strategy has been published following an eight week consultation period which received 169 responses from a range of individuals and organisations including canal societies, local authorities, waterway associations, water companies as well as the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM). To read a copy of the strategy go to www.canal-rivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/blogs/the-water-management-team or Google ‘Putting the water into waterways 2015’.

moorings on sites miles from anywhere and in areas where nobody currently moors for safety reasons. Apparently the sites were where boaters had moored last year using the general towpath mooring permits. The PR department says: “We don’t think any of the moorings we’ve identified are unsafe although of course what feels like solitude to one person may

feel isolated to another.” They go on to add: “We welcome feedback from customers and will be reviewing this alongside our winter mooring sales over the coming weeks. This information will help us when making plans for future winter moorings.” Perhaps Floater readers can help by letting C&RT know what they think of its winter mooring spots and prices.

Flaming row over closed fire leads to apology



By Peter Underwood

John and Judith Emery - boaters of 40 years experience - were waiting to pass through Harecastle tunnel from the eastern end - but a C&RT official had other ideas.

After arriving during early October this year they were given the standard safety briefing by an apparently new member of staff they were almost entering the tunnel when another C&RT person, previously seated in a Trust vehicle, leapt out and told they could not go through.

He had seen a wisp of smoke from their chimney and began to make the extraordinary claim that their enclosed and damped-down multi-fuel stove constituted an 'open flame' which was banned by the tunnel signs.

Despite a series of phone calls in which they were passed through several people and eventually back to the man who had issued the diktat, he continued to insist.

Insistent

They pointed out, in vain, that they had been through earlier in the years with a fire in the stove and that they had never heard of anyone else being stopped on the same grounds. However the man from C&RT was insistent. Judith said: "He first suggested we removed the ash from the fire, which, as any boater knows, causes it to burn more strongly.



The Harecastle Tunnel decision on extinguishing fires might limit Adamant's journeys if it became policy.

"We pointed out that the only way to extinguish the fire was to empty the burning coals and that would involve carrying them through our boat and tipping them in the cut. "Even though we pointed out that doing so would be considerably more danger-

ous than passing through the tunnel with a damped-down stove, he insisted." They were eventually obliged, at his insistence, to remove the burning coals from the fire and carry them through the boat. After reluctantly completing this dangerous manoeuvre

they were allowed through two hours later. So what was going on? I asked C&RT several questions:

1. Is it now C&RT policy that all stoves must be dumped in the canal before entering a tunnel?

2. If so, when did it come into operation and why weren't boaters told? (The same couple passed through Harecastle in the spring with their stove alight, as did many other boaters)

3. How does C&RT plan to enforce this new ruling on unmanned tunnels like Preston Brook, Netherton, Braunston etc?

4. Or was this one official going over the top because Harecastle has become a health and safety hotspot after the death of a boater? The answer that came back wasn't exactly detailed but it was clear.

C&RT's press officer Fran Read said: "This certainly isn't our standard policy. It's always been the case that open flames aren't allowed because of the safety risks, but a properly damped-down stove is not a problem - this hasn't changed.

"I think in this case the team was being over-cautious as there had been some problems with smoke build-up in the tunnel the week before (now sorted out).

"We send our apologies to John and Judith for the inconvenience caused."

Judith said: "We are pleased to have an apology, at this late stage but we did attempt to sort it out with someone senior at the time and it would have been nice if C&RT had paid attention

Gold Licence ain't what it used to be



By John Quinlan

John Quinlan, cruises in the boat he built and has CC'ed for 15 years

Gold licence holders know that the Gold Licence - giving access to both Environment Agency and C&RT waters - runs from January to December and is not refundable.

This is mitigated by the fact that it is transferable should you sell your boat, leave it as an inheritance, or transfer your boat in any other way.

At least it used to be, but the Canal & River Trust new Terms & Conditions mean that may no longer be true.

The transferability is no longer your right as it has now disappeared completely from the Terms and Conditions, although the non-binding explanation on the website suggests that it is still the case.

That could mean, if the boat is in your name only and you are married and die on the 2nd of January, your widow/widower will have to buy a new gold licence.

I have correspondence from CRT that says they will look at such a situation with sympathy and probably allow my widow to remain on the boat.

However, that's a clear sign that your survivor would have no rights - as previously there was no probably about it, it would have been his/her right.

So what went wrong?

C&RT's T&C changes earlier this year stated that a licence was personal to both you and your boat.

I wrote to Mr Parry protesting this and was assured, by him, that separate T&C's would apply to Gold licences, and shortly afterwards there was a change in the T&Cs which included the licence being transferable when sold, rather than just being transferable.

Vanished

Some months later that transferability has just vanished as

far as C&RT is concerned, but not as far as EA is concerned. Boaters have to obey the regulations for the navigation authorities water they are cruising. That means C&RT's terms and conditions apply when on C&RT waters and that's where licences are no longer explicitly transferable.

Personally, I will be changing the legal ownership of our boat as of January to ensure that the boat has licence continuity in the event of my demise, something that used to be guaranteed. Until C&RT re-state as part of it's T&Cs that it is transferable, everybody buying a Gold licence should be aware that it may well not turn out to be transferable.

Canalside glass business serves boaters

Despite the old glass factories that line parts of the BCN you might think there is no clear link between canals and stained glass - well there is now.

The Old Stables on the towpath at Stoke Bruerne was an abandoned building, last used over 50 years ago to shelter narrow boat horses. Since the last horse left, it had fallen into disrepair. But Martin Farrant took over the building last May and is turning it into a stained glass studio.

Much of the past months have been spent on lime wash and carpenters' nails, but gradually he's breathed new life into this 19th century stables and both locals and visitors alike seem delighted this building has a use once again.

Ark Stained Glass is run by Martin Farrant who makes custom-made glass items. He also repairs and restores, as well as making glass gifts. Martin has worked in this field for nearly 25 years now, but he has finally settled at The Old Stables at Stoke Bruerne



As the Ark studio is on the towpath of the Grand Union Canal, it is a perfect for boats to moor outside and Mart has made several commissions for the narrow boat community too, including cratches, port hole glass and suncatchers. Martin's mobile is 07779 513167, but he has no signal at the Stables so please leave a message if you phone Email: martinfarrant07@aol.com

Martin at work, above, and a stained glass cratch window, right.



The Floater

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Dealing with the C&RT enforcers - advice from NBTA

The National Barge Travellers Association has produced some advice for boaters caught up under the Canal & River Trusts new enforcement regime

It looks at some common scenarios and tells boaters how to respond.

Unable to move after 14 days

1. Inform CRT

If a boater needs to stay longer than 14 days in one place, they should let CRT know immediately why they need to stay longer and, if they can, when they expect to be able to move. They should inform CRT in writing (or follow up with an email if they phone or speak in person).

2. Complain

Boaters may be refused permission to stay longer than 14 days or be challenged if CRT does not believe that the circumstances are reasonable. If this is the case the boater can complain.

Boater has received a 14 day reminder text or email

1. Is it accurate?

If their boat has been moored in one place for more than 14 consecutive days, then the boater should move to a new place or inform CRT of any



What to do when a ticket is attached to your boat

At BW's AGM in 2011, CRT Marketing Director Simon Salem promised to ensure that the enforcement team do not serve patrol notices for overstaying during ice or other severe weather conditions. However if a boater does get a reminder for overstaying in severe weather, they can complain about it in writing, quoting his promise.

CRT has refused to renew boater's 12 month licence and is offering a restricted licence

1. Buy the restricted licence and complain
The safest way for the boater to deal with this is

necessary.

It is likely that CRT will expect them to move at least 15 – 20 miles, which means ensuring that their boat is recorded between two points that are at least 20 miles apart by water during the 3 or 6 month restricted licence period.

2. Obtain sighting data
If the boater believes that they have moved far enough and/or often enough to comply with the Guidance, obtain the boater's sighting data from CRT and check it is accurate.

To get the data, first try requesting it from the boater's local Enforcement

land@canalrivertrust.org.uk), asking for:

"all the information that CRT holds about me and my boat _____, registration number _____, including the SAP records of sightings of my boat and any associated SAP notepad notes."

3. Refuse the licence

If the boater has a cruising pattern of moving at least every 14 days and feels they will be unable to comply with a minimum 15 – 20 miles cruising range, they can refuse the restricted licence.

CRT's new enforcement policy is unlikely to be considered lawful if it is challenged in the courts, as the law does not specify a minimum distance that boats must travel during their licence period. However, the process of legal action is likely to be drawn out and stressful so the boater should think carefully before going ahead.

The NBTA may be able to advise them, or if the boater lives on their boat and is facing homelessness, it is likely they will need a solicitor and may qualify for Legal Aid. The Community Law Partnership represents boat dwellers in Section 8 cases throughout England and Wales.



If you want to challenge make sure you have good evidence - like dates pictures of your boat in indentifiable places

extenuating circumstances. If there are reasonable circumstances for a longer stay, ask CRT to withdraw the reminder so that it does not count towards three valid reminders in three months, which would trigger enforcement action.

2. Make a complaint

If their boat has not been moored in one place for more than 14 consecutive days, challenge this in writing by making a formal complaint. This will be more effective if the boater can provide evidence of the boat's movements. Ask for the reminder to be withdrawn and to be recorded as "Created in error".

3. Severe weather

to buy the restricted licence in time to qualify for the Prompt Payment Discount. They can then make a formal complaint about the lack of warning, the lack of opportunity to remedy the situation and the retrospective application of the policy.

If the boater chooses to take the restricted licence and change their cruising range, remind them to look out for the mid-point reminder which will be sent to their postal address halfway through the licence period. This will let them know if CRT considers their new range to be compliant with the Guidance, and gives them time to make changes if

Team.

Subject Access Requests

There have been reports that CRT will now only provide sightings data in response to a Subject Access Request (SAR) under the Data Protection Act 1998. The Data Protection Act entitles boaters to access all the information an organisation holds about them and have it corrected if there are any errors. SARs can take up to 40 days to process and CRT can lawfully charge up to £10 for them. Send an email clearly marked 'Subject Access Request' to CRT Head of Boating Enforcement: Denise Yelland (denise.yel-

Ask a boating man

Some tales from around the network

No pictures please - we're C&RT

One well-known boater to be accused of being unremittingly negative about the Canal & River Trust - but he claims he comes under fire even when he's trying to be nice.

Tying by a bridge in Rugeley he noticed part of the bridge wall had been knocked down with large piles of rubbish on the access path.

Reporting it to C&RT he was impressed when a young engineer arrived swiftly and chatted to him about the problems of lorry strikes on bridges.

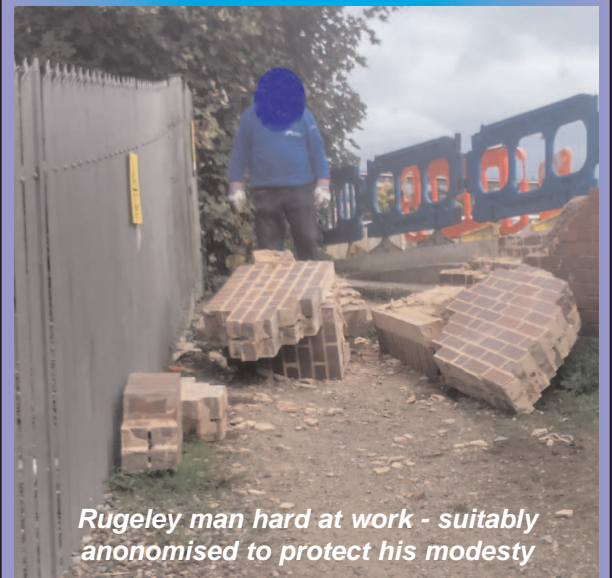
He was even more impressed when a CRT crew of two arrived and started throwing loose bricks into a truck.

'I'll post something on Facebook and Twitter praising the working men of the Trust,' he thought, raising his phone for a picture of one of them in action.

The result was a bellow of "You can't take my picture," from one of the crew.

Despite explaining anyone could photograph them in a public place, the shouting continued and the man used a mobile phone to contact his boss.

"I was then subject to nearly half an hour of the man in the office attempting to persuade me not to publish the pictures, despite agreeing I had every right to take them, and me making it clear I was trying to give C&RT a public pat on the back," he said.



Rugeley man hard at work - suitably anonymised to protect his modesty

Chainsaw man keeps canal open

Passing through Birmingham you might think a local, complete with bandana around his head and wielding a chainsaw would not be a welcome sight on the tow-path.

In fact, just such an individual, called Dave, turned out to be a knight in shining armour for one boating couple trying to pass a fallen tree on the Birmingham and Worcester Canal.

He popped out of nowhere when they found they couldn't pass the fallen tree.

"What we need is a chainsaw," he declared and returned with one a few minutes later.

Using their boat to pull the branches to the side, the tree was almost all on the bank before a C&RT man arrived.

"They're a resourceful lot in Birmingham," said the boater. " Dave insists his father dropped him and his brothers offer nearby canal bridge when they were children, telling them to sink or swim."

If you have any gossip that might interest a boating man email the details to TheFloaterUK@gmail.com

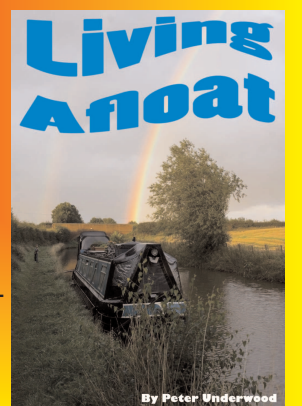
Full-time afloat?

Living Afloat is another guide by author and journalist Peter Underwood that draws upon his experience of living on his narrowboat for the past 12 years.

Whether you plan a liveaboard life in a marina or constantly travelling the 2,000 miles of canals and waterways, this book will help you become an old hand.

An unromantic look at the realities of living in a steel box just 60 feet long and seven across should help the novice discover whether they are yet ready for a 1950s lifestyle. **Living Afloat** is only available in e-format and you can buy it here:

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B006Z57LUQ>



Roundhouse restoration set to start

A project to restore Birmingham's historic Grade II* listed Roundhouse has won a £2.2million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The project is a partnership between the Canal & River Trust and National Trust and will transform the Roundhouse into a city base from which to explore Birmingham's revitalised canals on foot or by bike. Situated next door to the newly re-opened Fiddle & Bone Pub, the Roundhouse is owned by C&RT.

Built in 1874 by the Birmingham Corporation it was originally used as stables and stores. The horseshoe shaped building is now an iconic and much loved Birmingham landmark but for the last 10 years the majority of the building has been disused and has been steadily falling into disrepair. As well as offering a base from which to explore the canal network, plans for the Roundhouse include a cycle hire and repair workshop, volunteering oppor-



The Roundhouse just before the restoration of the adjacent Fiddle and Bone pub began.

tunities and a shared working space for conservation organisations. HLF has awarded an initial £225,000 development grant which will be used to work up these plans into a larger £2.9 million scheme that will see the full restoration of this unusual building. The grant is designed to help when the cost of repairing an historic building is so high that restoration simply is not commer-

cially viable. Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: "Distinctive and highly adaptable, investing in historic industrial buildings like Birmingham's Roundhouse, has been proven to deliver economic benefits for both business and local communities. "This vital National Lottery investment is helping to unlock that potential and promises to ensure the

building has a sustainable future whilst triggering wider investment and job creation." Lizzie Hatchman, General Manager for the National Trust in Birmingham, said: "This funding will allow us to start fully developing plans on how we can breathe new life into the building, and how we best showcase it to Birmingham's residents and visitors alike."

Ex Labour Leader opens fish pass



Ed Miliband MP with the new sculpture at Sprotbrough Weir. Also in the picture are Neil Trudgill (EA), Tim Kohler (Natural England), Jonny Hart Woods (C&RT), and Anthony Downing (EA)

Former Labour Leader Ed Miliband, has officially opened a special fish pass at Sprotbrough Weir on the River Don designed to help migratory salmon and sea trout up and downstream.

The £500,000 project has been completed by the Environment Agency, working with partners including the Canal & River Trust. Ed Miliband unveiled a specially-commissioned sculpture recognising the history and ecology of the

River Don and Don Gorge. The 4ft limestone sculpture depicts a salmon, a barbel and an eel, species which will be able to move more easily up and down the river thanks to the new fish pass. Originally built to power industry or to regulate water levels for navigation the weirs on the River Don, are an obstacle to fish and eel migration to essential spawning gravels and habitat to feed, breed and shelter. Installing fish passes enables the fish to swim around the weirs and make their way safely up and down the river.

Canal activist dies

Geoff Setchfield, an activist on behalf of the canals on the West Midlands for more than 50 years has died at the age of 82.

Geoff worked tirelessly (alongside his sister and brother in law Olive & George Andrews) for five decades to raise the profile of the waterways as well as badgering British Waterways for a better deal for the boating fraternity. He was a founder member of both the Staffs & Worcs Canal Society and Wolverhampton Boat Club, He was Chairman at Coombeswood Canal Trust too and a long-time IWA member.

Boating Basics - this month - carbon monoxide perils

Keep warm but avoid the silent killer

It may seem extreme but I now sweep the flue on my boat every two weeks. Quite frankly I scared myself earlier this year when the same flue clogged up completely.

Despite my efforts to sweep it with a standard flue brush every couple of months the flue had become so clogged up with layers of tar over a period of years that only a tiny hole remained in what should have been a four inch diameter flue. Tied at Milton Keynes I was reduced to trying to enlarge the hole with a drain rod – and I even got one of those stuck.

When I asked a boatyard to clear it it turned out to be a day's work, removing the flue, attempting to burn it out with diesel and eventually using an oxyacetylene torch to heat up the steel whilst banging it with hammers and using steel rods to remove the layers of rock-hard tar. It was a costly experience but it could have been costlier – it might have cost our lives as Carbon Monoxide builds up from a fire that can't vent to the outside.

There will be those who tell you that certain fuels cause less tar build up and wood is worst of all – and it may be true – but the reality is that all fuels cause a build up of tar deposits in your flue and if you don't sweep regularly the available air space will get less and less.

I find ordinary flue brushes OK for a final polish but I have now adopted a trimmed-down brush that came with a set of drain rods to do the heavy work. It only just fits the cleared flue so that ensures, with a fit of heaving and pushing that the flue is kept clear.

At the same time the Canal & River Trust is getting rightly exercised about that liveaboard boaters favourite – the generator with the Boat Safety Scheme issuing a blunt warning about the risks.



Keep those flues clean and care for your chimneys

It may be tempting to run a genny to power heaters on bitterly cold nights, or simply to snuggle down in front of the telly but C&RT says 10 boaters have died and another 10 have been badly injured by fumes from generators entering their boats. Carbon Monoxide (CO) is being pumped out as a component of the exhaust fumes and even if it



isn't in the cabin the fumes can enter, especially if you've got it on the external deck or even on the bank near one of your boat's vents or wind-dows. Too many boaters die because they make mistakes with fires or generators. A little knowledge and forethought and you needn't be one of them.

Three boaters get NBTA backing for C&RT Council

Boaters, especially continuous cruisers and live-aboards may be influenced by National Barge Travellers Association recommendations for the boater section of the C&RT Council.

Polling ends on 11th December at midnight and the NBTA says there are two candidates who are live-aboard boaters without home moorings they believe are likely to support the interests of Bargee Travellers. These are firstly Ruth McCabe, who also runs the very boater-friendly and environment-friendly Save The Date cafe in London, which has hosted NBTA London events. The second candidate is trade unionist Stella Ridgway who travels in the north west. Stella Ridgway is a member of the National Association of Boat Owners (NABO) Council.

The NBTA adds a third live-aboard candidate, Jim Owen, who resigned as Chair of the Residential Boat Owners Association (RBOA) early this year, says that CRT should scrap its minimum distance for boaters without home moorings. Jim Owen lives in a marina in the north west.