

# THE FLOATER

Issue 4

January 2016

The only paper for boaters produced by boaters

## Battling to save island boat homes

**B**oaters across the country have rallied to the cause of liveaboard boaters under threat of eviction from long-standing moorings on an island in the River Wensum in Norwich, with thousands joining a Facebook crusade.

The moorings, housing around 25 boats in a basin on Thorpe Island, have been in place for many years but there has been a long running dispute with the Broads Authority, which has planning jurisdiction.

Now letters have been sent to residents on Thorpe Island, demanding they move on or face court action, but some have vowed not to leave.

The moorings have been at the centre of a lengthy legal wrangle between landowner Roger Wood and the Broads Authority over its historic planning rights.

The case has already been aired before two planning inspectors, with a High Court judge deeming the development unlawful but allowing some development and the Court of Appeal refusing permission to appeal that decision. Now the Broads Authority has written to those living on 25 boats on the island to say it is a criminal offence to fail to comply



**Thorpe Island on the River Wensum in Norwich where boaters are threatened with eviction by the Broads Authority**

with the enforcement notice now covering the whole site. They had until December 18, to stop any planning breach – meaning move their boat homes out of the basin – or the authority would apply to the courts for an injunction and eviction notices could be issued.

That was widely regarded as an attempt to make the boaters homeless just before Christmas and the Broads Authority hastily back-peddled, insisting: “The application process for the injunction will take some weeks after the date stated in the letters so no Thorpe Island residents are being made homeless before the new year.” The boaters don’t take great comfort from that. In a statement they said: “In a letter to Mr Wood, the

Broads Authority have ordered that all services be withdrawn from the residents, including water and electricity.

“This comes as a major blow for those residents just before Christmas.” Mr Wood said “This is very upsetting for those who live here and typical of The Broads Authority who only last week granted permission to one of their Members for ten house-boats.”

Residents of Thorpe Island have set up a support group on social media. ‘Save our Island’ on Facebook is quickly gathering momentum as local people and boaters around the country express their anger and disgust at what the Island’s residents describe as ‘the high-handed actions of the statutory authority.’

There are many theories as to the real motive for The Broads Authority campaign against Roger Wood and the boaters; the most common being that the land is earmarked for a brand new marina.

“Whatever the reason, we believe their action constitutes social cleansing,” says Gary Barnes, who is co-ordinating the social media campaign on behalf of the residents. He said “This is a picturesque corner of Norwich and house-boats have been moored here for as long as anyone

can remember.

“We’re an integral part of the community and contribute to the local economy. All we want is to be able to live our lives in peace.”

The Authority says it has no power to discontinue services to the site and wasn’t aware any were on the site. “These accusations possibly relate to solar panels which were unlawfully installed on a large green container on the site,” it continues. In fact those solar panels provide electricity through a battery bank and power a pump to provide well water to the boaters.

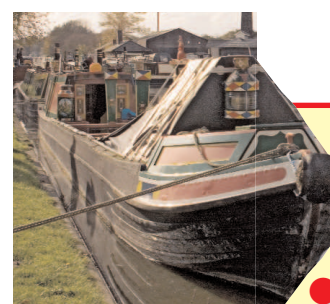
Gareth Jervis, 47, who moved onto a boat in the basin at Thorpe Island four-and-a-half years ago told the local newspaper he feels unfairly treated by the Broads Authority.

“I think the Broads Authority are trying to bully us to move,” he said.

“They just want to scare us with the legal costs and financial threats, to try to price us out. But we are not going anywhere.”

Mr Wood, the site’s owner, who maintains planning permission remains from previous owners, will get an oral hearing at the Court of Appeal on February 2 next year to appeal the latest ruling and his boaters feel the Broads Authority is trying to prejudge that hearing.

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## C&RT vote turnout is just 6.8%

**E**lections to the Canal & River Trust Council have not been a prime example of C&RT democracy nor a showcase for the efficiency of the Electoral Reform Society.

After a week long extension of the deadline for the Canal & River Trust’s election of council members - due to a failure of the Electoral Reform Society to include boaters on time-restricted licences in the ballot - the results are in.

However, the whole process has become a something of a farce with just 1,860 out of 27,280 boaters bothering to vote - a turnout of just 6.8 per cent, which may reflect a recent poll of boaters showing the majority did not see the Trust as representing their interests.

In the Boating section there were eight candidates for four places.

The boater representatives elected, in order of their share of the 1,860 votes actually cast, were:

**Phil Prettyman**, who comes from the Historic Narrowboat Owners Club and has been an active IWA man, serving on the Central Shires Partnership. The HNOC campaigned for him and he said in his election address: “I believe CRT Council must represent the whole waterways community, with boaters’ members striving to ensure that waterways remain fit for navigation, including depth, original features and vegetation management.”

**Stella Ridgway** continuously cruises on NB Gracie and was one of the candidates promoted by liveaboard and continuous cruiser groups. She wants more maintenance and to get boaters views heard on cycling, facilities, moorings and consistent enforcement

She said in her address: “I would encourage CRT not to affect the enjoyment of the vast majority when trying to manage the irresponsible behaviour of the few.”

**Andrew Phasey** told voters he served as Commodore of St. Pancras Cruising Club for seven years, and is on National Executive Committee of the Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs; as well as the Technical Committee of the Boat Safety Scheme. Andrew will be seen as representing the boat owners who don’t live on their vessels.

**Vaughan Welch** was a surprise candidate as the Inland Waterways Association now nominates a member of the C&RT council after complaints that the IWA swamped the election four years ago.

He is a very active IWA man and chairs their restoration committee and it seems that the IWA vote, even if only a small proportion of it, turned out to see him squeak home in fourth position.

Stella has promised to keep boaters in touch with her actions as a Council member through social media.

As in many cases where boaters homes are under threat the land-based community have complained that the moorings are ‘unsightly’ and spoken out about their “nightmare” of living close by. Jacquie Burgess, Chairman of the Broads Authority and member of the Planning Committee said: “The case around this uncontrolled and illegal development is difficult not only for nearby residents, who have been caused significant stress over a number of years, but also for those living on

Thorpe Island who are now unfortunately caught up in the action that we - as a planning authority with a responsibility to look after a protected area for the wider benefit - have had no option but to take. “We have tried for a long time to conclude this case in a different way and had the landowner accepted the planning inspectorate’s decision last year relating to permission to keep 25 boats on the island neither we, nor those living on the island, would be in such an unwelcome position now.”



**Gareth Jervis, 47, who moved onto the island four and a half years ago, feels the Broads Authority are ‘bullying’ boaters**



# Licence refusal for 'shuffling' is swiftly reversed

 **By Peter Underwood**

**C**ONFUSION reigns as the Canal & River Trust makes it's first attempt to deprive a boater of his home because, it claimed, he was 'shuffling'. The term 'shuffling' first surfaced when the Trust introduced new Terms and Conditions to its licences and was roundly condemned and even ridiculed by several boating organisations, including the National Association of Boat Owners, at the time. That hasn't stopped an attempt by C&RT to use it as a reason for refusing a licence and a consequent Section 8 enforcement order to remove the boat from the Trust's waters. Despite the fact that teacher Jeff Zedic travelled over a 60 mile range in six months – three times the distance C&RT has indicated as the minimum – and didn't overstay anywhere C&RT refused to renew his licence, telling him in an email that it was because he had been 'shuffling'. Once the attempt to make Jeff homeless was challenged by the National Barge Travellers Association, which also launched an online campaign, swiftly supported by hundreds of boaters, C&RT reversed their decision within six days and granted Jeff a six month licence. That will be Jeff Zedic's second six month licence –



**Teacher and liveaboar boater Jeff Zedic who has just won his battle with C&RT.**

making him one of more than 800 boaters affected by the new Terms & Conditions – although he doesn't accept he should have been restricted at all. The first restricted licence came when C&RT enforcers refused to accept that a dangerously damaged tiller was a reasonable excuse for overstaying, despite difficulties in getting it repaired. He was given his first restricted licence and his subsequent journey started in Denham Deep Lock and ended in Hertford. He turned round at Dalston and then went to Paddington for coal and turned round again to carry on to go to Hertford. That, it seems was what the Trust decided was 'shuffling'. Jeff, a teacher who has lived on his boat for over six

years was then refused a licence as C&RT refused to accept his payment. The Trust claimed in an email, that this was because Jeff was 'shuffling'. The National Barge Travellers Association say: "This is an ambiguous and generally misunderstood term with no legal grounding. C&RT seems to be using this term to describe moving back and forth between the same places on the canal. Jeff had simply turned round to get fuel and turned round again to finish his 60 mile journey at the times that C&RT accuse him of 'shuffling'." Even after the six-day boater campaign led by the NBTA, which persuaded C&RT to give Jeff a licence it was only for six months. The NBTA said: "C&RT gave

him a six month licence because they are still saying that he did something wrong but 'has made some effort to improve'. But improved what? He did nothing wrong! "Although Jeff has accepted the six month licence this is not to say that we agree with C&RT that he did something wrong. And we must be clear that NOT travelling in a straight line is NOT a reason to punish boat dwellers. "From May to October this year, CRT has issued 826 reduced licences and there are many more boats that could be getting a reduced licence in the upcoming months. Of these, many will be refused a licence and we will need to be there to support them." The Trust's response was to

refuse to discuss Jeff's case, citing Data Protection as an excuse. It first issued a statement saying: "We expect boaters to demonstrate a genuine cruising pattern over the course of their licence. If a boater chooses to spend most of their time in a small area, undertaking one longer journey that is outside this pattern may not satisfy us that they are bona fide navigating within the spirit of the Act." When asked how it justified 'shuffling' as a reason to refuse a licence under the 1995 legislation and pointing out that every continuous cruiser would be concerned that turning back on a journey could cost them their home, the Trust claimed: "Every case is taken on its own merits and we'll contin-

ue to take new information into account if a boater can provide evidence that they're genuinely trying to meet the requirements of their licence. It went on to say, in apparent contradiction to its decision in Jeff Zedic's case, that "making diversions (eg: going back to get fuel, visit a friend etc etc) are perfectly fine as part of a continuous journey that meets our guidance. "While we can't comment on individual cases, we will only restrict a licence if a boater has repeatedly broken the terms they signed up to. "We always talk to boaters who look like they're running into trouble and try to sort things out in a way that works for everybody involved. "We'll also continue to take new information into account if a boater can provide evidence that they're genuinely trying to meet the requirements of their licence. Refusing to renew a licence is the last thing we want to do: we'd prefer boaters to play by the rules and we will continue to monitor boaters to ensure fairness. "We have always been consistent about all of these things." From most boaters' perspective there would seem to be a considerable distance between the words coming from the C&RT Press Office and the reality on the water, something Jeff Zedic would certainly agree with. **Read about the app that can challenge C&RT on page three.**

## Life & Times runs out of time

**C**anal Music has just lost one of its mainstays as Life & Times presented their last ever show 'Where the Working Boats Went' at Abbots Langley Village Hall, in Hertfordshire in November. The show has now finished because Barry Goodman has decided that, at 65, he wants to retire from the song stuff – as his partner of more than 32 years, Graeme Meek put it. Graeme's traditional idiom songs form the mainstay of a Life & Times performance. With over 30 years in folk behind him, he has been described as a Folk Polymath. Although Graeme has been the main songwriter for the duo, Barry has also contributed songs and tunes; a growing number since 2006 and the duo have been performing their show Where the Working Boats Went since 2009. Celebrating 250 years of British Canals it has been performed around the country. The CD is still available if the duo are no longer performing and it is a worthwhile addition to your boat collection.

A promotional image for the 'Life & Times' CD. It features a CD case titled 'WHERE THE WORKING BOATS WENT' with a picture of Barry Goodman and Graeme Meek. Behind it is a poster for 'PAST FESTIVAL APPEARANCES' listing various locations like Fylde, Bromyard, and Towersey. Text on the right says 'The Life and Times CD of Canal music'. At the bottom, there is a URL: 'https://www.youtube.com/user/LifeandTimesUK?feature=watch'. On the left, there is more text: 'Even an old rocker like me found himself tapping his feet and somehow folk and canals seem to perfect fit, when you're in that mood. The CD is still available for £11 (incl. P&P) from Barry Goodman, 54 Ickleford Rd., Hitchin, Herts. SG5 1TR (01462 456811). You can hear some of the songs and music here: https://soundcloud.com/life-and-times-uk/sets/from-cd-where-the-working-and-see-four-parts-of-the-show-complete-with-live-performances-of-songs-and-music-here: https://www.youtube.com/user/LifeandTimesUK?feature=watch'.

## The Floater

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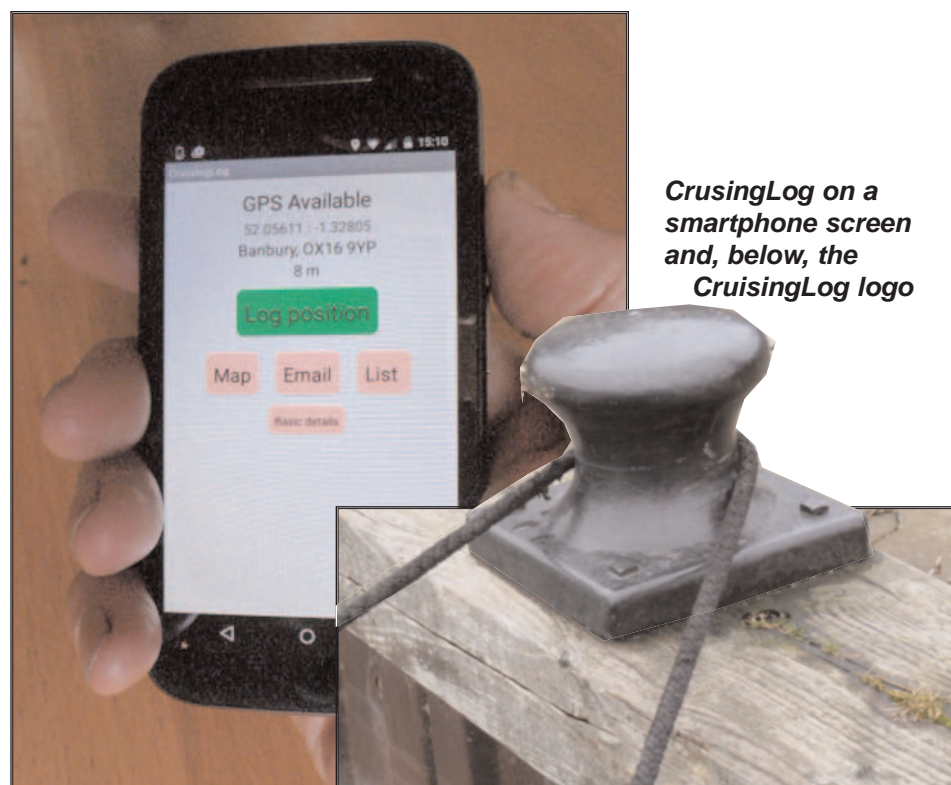
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# GPS phone app gives continuous confidence

**W**ith nearly 900 boats on short term licences as the Canal & River Trust uses its new Terms & Conditions to ensure boats move over what it regards as a sufficient range, boaters may want to get their retaliation in first, writes Peter Underwood

Continuous cruisers report a lack of effective monitoring by C&RT that makes them vulnerable to false accusations based on inadequate data, especially if turning back in the course of a journey. A data-logger may record a boat in one place and record it again three weeks later in the same area but pointing the other way. If the boat hasn't been spotted in the three or four places further along the canal it has visited in the intervening period there can be claims of overstaying by C&RT. One cheap and simple answer is a GPS based app on a smart phone which will record your location to within the length of your boat. Tie up at a mooring spot – step off the boat and push one button on your phone. The app I have been using for nearly a year is CruisingLog (all one word) and it will use GPS to pinpoint your location to within a few metres. Once it has you nailed down you can take a timed and place stamped picture and upload the record to a public site, if you wish. It also produces an email which can include up to a year of recorded positions which can be sent to yourself or anyone else – like



*CruisingLog on a smartphone screen and, below, the CruisingLog logo*

C&RT enforcement – and a map showing your travels. The latest version uses National Grid References on the main report (email) as they are more valid in British courts than GPS co-ordinates. If you want to check it out in more detail you can see the user manual here: <http://gpslogs.com/cruisinglog/cluser.html> and it costs, says the creator John Quinn, himself a boater, the price of an average pint. John says: “If you look at the enforcement angle, photo logging, and presenting the public display link to enforcement so they can check up on you from their office, you can probably see that there is little room for misunderstanding.” The pictures captured by CruisingLog are retained on the device's SD card or other memory. They are loaded into a separate top

level directory and identified by date. This identity is stored within the CruisingLog database. John adds: “Obviously photos would not be used as the first level of rebuttal, that would be the list and email functions. The photos would only be needed if things got serious. Then they could be printed off, or emailed.” He went on: “While a boater could replace the actual photos, it would not help him/her as the date and location information is held within CruisingLog, where it is tamper proof, and it would no longer match. “This is much more secure than having date/time/GPS coordinates in the photo information as that is very easy to edit. “Photos are the antidote to Denise Yelland's “they could just get on a bike

and ride up the towpath” comment. That is not so easy to dismiss if the photo includes the boat and recognisable scenery/architecture. “Ultimately it is CaRT's own sightings that verify the CruisingLog reporting. Where they match, or diverge, or are simply missing are the points that will need resolution. “CaRT retain their GPS co-ordinates and that is important here. In reality they store exactly the same data as CruisingLog, so matching is, indeed, possible.” I have been using the older and newer versions of the app and I have to say, as a continuous cruiser it gives me absolute confidence that I could challenge the inefficiencies of C&RT's data recording at the push of a button on my phone's screen.

# Best boating festivals for next year?

**By Peter Underwood**

**B**oating festivals are events that bring the boating community together for a few days. Whether it is a small gathering of Facebook friends or a large two or three day event with stalls, boat traders, even bands and a funfair, these events punctuate the boater's year – starting for some with Cavalcade in Little Venice through the boat selling bonanza of Crick to the historic boat gathering in Braunston. But for me the less commercial the better and my regular



favourites – although quite big events – are much more personal, with opportunities to spend time with boating friends. The Rickmansworth Festival is a long-term favourite, sited alongside the water park and a glorious mix of townspeople and canal people. The tug-of-war between traditional boats draws crowds of thousands

and the two stages provide music and entertainment for most tastes – as does the real ale bar. In 2015 I discovered Blisworth, which must rate as the fastest growing festival on the waterways, run by Alan Andrews and his team. It too brings the local community and the canal community together with the whole village

*Rickmansworth tug-of-war, left, Blisworth boat traders, below and the Black Country Boating Festival, right.*

taking part. Finally there is the lovely friendly Black Country Boating Festival at Bumble Hole on



## Ask a boating man

Gossip from around the network

What do you think of it so far?

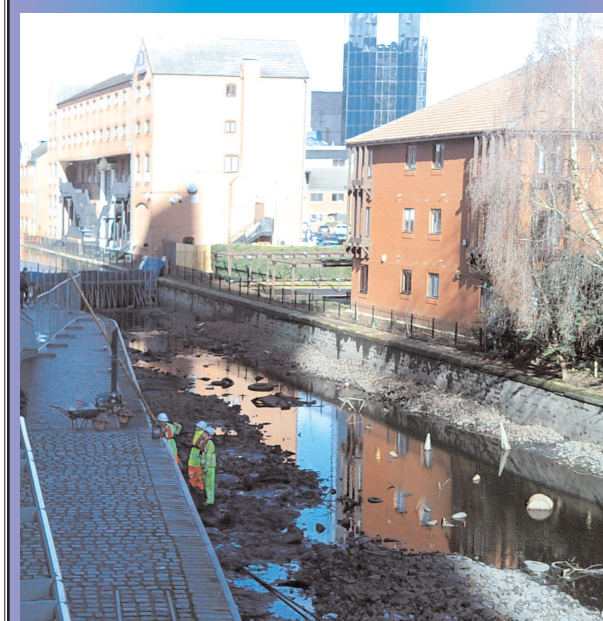
Despite years of prettification most of our canals, especially in urban areas are used as dumping grounds by the lazy and ignorant and just beneath the surface lurks all sorts of rubbish.

So the question is what is the worst you have dragged from the shallows? I would have said depths but that would be inaccurate.

On the Huddersfield Narrow Canal local volunteers, working with grappling hooks, managed to pull out three van loads of bikes, scooters and 24 shopping trolleys. On a different stretch the haul was even greater and also included road work signs, a fence panel, a wheelchair, a suitcase and two prams. Regular clean-ups around Milton Keynes have produced similar hauls and I once found a 900cc motor-bike sitting upright behind my rudder when I tied at Fenny Stratford - stolen and dumped.

An entire three piece suite graced the Leeds and Liverpool for some months a few years back and I know boaters who have found bodies.

What's your worse rubbish tale? Drop us an email at [TheFloaterUK@gmail.com](mailto:TheFloaterUK@gmail.com)



*The bottom of the canal in Birmingham's Gas Street - complete with debris*

## The Ice man cometh

I suspect that at some time in the next month or two we shall see plenty of my least favourite boating types. There is something about a frozen canal that makes some boaters determined to smash their boat through it.

The faux working boat people will insist it is harmless and that the old boaters had to do it all the time. And that is true, but these days the coal and fuel boats are the only real working boats and the only ones with an excuse.

Even though most narrowboaters know that a sheet of thick ice, weighing a ton or more, being forced to break against your hull is unlikely to cause damage the same is not true if your boat is made of GRP and not designed to deal with such stress over a small area.

I accept that sometimes boats need to move through ice, but a lot more consideration for other people's vessels would be more than welcome.

If you have any gossip that might interest a boating man email the details to [TheFloaterUK@gmail.com](mailto:TheFloaterUK@gmail.com)



the Birmingham Canal Navigations. With great food, cooked and served to boaters by the organisers and a real ale bar with live bands it attracts thousands and has just celebrated its 30th year. Join some of these great festivals in 2016 and you will find fun, friendship and lots of talk about moorings, toilets and some great ales.



# In my crystal ball - what's in store for 2016 on the water

**What will the coming year bring for boaters on Britain's waterways?**

Well, we have been prognosticating, navel-gazing and casting the runes and – when all else failed – using our well-informed imagination.

Boaters are used to making the best of what's available, and the best thing to have happened to continuous cruisers in 2015 was the whole system following the South East region and making almost all time restricted moorings 14-days in the winter months.

But enjoy the next eight or nine weeks because we reckon Canal & River Trust will scrap that idea for next winter.

Why? We suspect it will be blamed for the empty paid-for winter mooring sites around the country, where boaters have refused to pay C&RT hundreds of pounds for the privilege of mooring their boats on over-priced and poorly sited moorings, usually many miles from any facilities. It won't be the Trust's



*Winter moorings on the Shropshire Union where you can't get within a metre of the bank.*

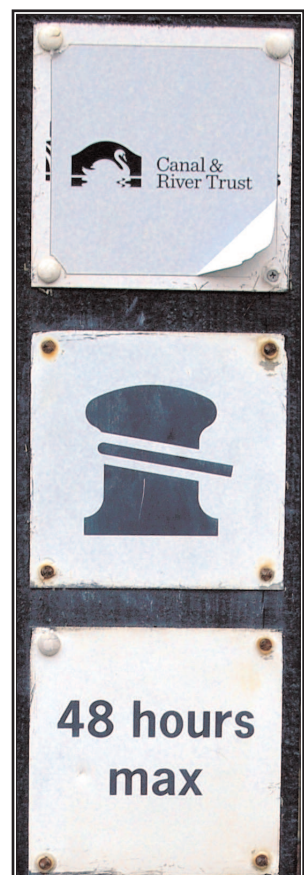
greed in hiking winter mooring prices so far it is considerably cheaper for boaters to go into a marina with all the facilities by their boats. It won't be the waterway managers who decided to site winter moorings in places nobody in their right mind would want to leave their boats unguarded, or on banks where a deep-drafted boat has to tie up a metre or more from the edge. It won't be that there have been far too many winter mooring sites, even based on the number of boats

using the system before the price hike. Instead C&RT will, as usual, blame the boaters and decide that they can force more of us to pay for winter mooring sites if they keep unnecessary time limits in place on visitor moorings that are empty most of the time. The war of waterways authorities on liveaboard boaters will continue. In this issue we look at the attempt by the Broads Authority to evict liveaboard boaters in Norwich, apparently in part because well-heeled

house-owners don't like the view. Earlier in 2015 it was boaters on the Thames and, of course, C&RT currently has more than 800 boaters on short licences because they are, allegedly, in breach of the Trust's new, legally suspect, Terms & Conditions. We also predict that we will see more examples of boaters rallying round those being targeted by navigation authorities and more crowd-funded court actions and mass petitions, using the media to highlight the sharp practis-

es being attempted by the authorities and their lawyers – perhaps the most effective way to fight back.

There will certainly be even bigger holes appearing in the budgets of both C&RT and the Environment Agency in the aftermath of the floods as emergency repairs have to be made across the north of England. The losers, we predict, will be boaters who will see essential maintenance being cut back as severe weather finds all the weakest and least maintained parts of the waterways and causes damage on a predictable and substantial scale. What we will NOT see is: A C&RT maintenance budget that maintains a 'steady state' of repair; Any real growth in charitable income for the Trust; Any reduction in the charitable overhead – the ever-growing cost of volunteers, partnerships, the Trust Council and all the other paraphernalia of being a charity; The Environment Agency waters passing to C&RT with a sufficient income to keep them going; Enough effective dredging



*The rash of 48-hr moorings across the system may be back next winter, we predict*

to make parts of the system less of a trial for boaters, and, An end to C&RT's attempts to bully continuous cruisers and liveaboard boaters by inventing spurious offences like 'shuffling' Never mind – the good news is that boaters are winning some of these battles, thanks to the more militant organisations, like the National Association of Boat Owners and the National Bargee Travellers Association – and we predict more will be won in 2016.

## Bridge repairs use a novel water by-pass

**Engineers repairing worn out underwater brickwork on bridges on the Llangollen Canal have an unusual problem to deal with - a swift flow of water heading from the Welsh hills to a reservoir where the canal meets the Shropshire Union.**

The constantly flowing water, 35 million litres or more each day, aided by hundreds of passing boats, erodes the brickwork of the bridges below water level and many are now in need of repair. Before Christmas the Canal & River Trust tried out some new ideas to carry out the work without impeding the flow of water too much.

At bridge 15 the contractors installed a limpet style dam which didn't fill the whole bridge hole so that water could continue to flow, uninterrupted, through the remaining space while the eroded brickwork was repaired behind the dam.

It didn't work quite as planned as the dam structure wasn't as watertight as they had hoped – however, C&RT says that the



concept is going back to the drawing board and it will be improved for next year and beyond as a whole programme of bridge repairs is planned. At bridge 18 the contractors were more successful, using a series of temporary flumes to channel the water through a dammed bridge-hole whilst they worked on the brickwork – no pumps were needed as the water flow was enough to keep the flumes – large pipes in effect – flowing strongly. Both techniques will be used

on the Llangollen next year and may well find other uses around the system, especially on a navigation with constant flows of water.

*Flumes carry the water through bridge 18 on the Llangollen Canal to allow repair of worn out brickwork.*

*A limpet dam system was not as successful but will be improved for next year.*



## A CCer as a C&RT Trustee?

Trustees, unlike elected Council members do have some day to day in fluence over the senior management of C&RT. But how likely is it that a liveaboard, continuously cruising boater would be chosen as a Trustee? The Trust is currently advertising for replacement trustees and says: "Applicants with experience in operations and infrastructure management; charitable trusts, the heritage sector, people management and community and government relations are especially welcome. " The Trust is particularly interested in applications from candidates with strong networks in, and connections to, Wales and London." No mention, you may notice, of boats, canals, rivers, boating or anything core to C&RT's activities. Look around the current Trustees and you will notice, as with the Chairs of regional Waterways Partnerships a distinctly shortage of boaters and no liveaboard boaters - the closest such people have come is membership of the Navigation Committee. One full time boater as a Trustee wouldn't seem unreasonable - would it?