



More boaters' views on best practice for cruising past moored boats

I really can't see what all the fuss is about. It has always been and will always be slow down to tickover before, during and just after passing moored boats.

So what is the problem? The problem is a lot of new boaters think they own the place and can do what they won't and screw everyone else - just like the push bikes are doing on the towpaths. As always it's going to take a few deaths before anything gets done.

Just think, you have just tied up, wife puts the kettle on, speeding boat passes just as she's pouring boiling water, the boat moves, she falls covering herself in boiling water. Who is to blame? It needs sorting asap. I have been on the canals all my life and my mum and dad before that. There was none of this hassle over 90plus years we know of when the canals were a lot busier back then and more than they are now.

As I was the person who raised the subject initially I have been following the responses with interest.

I agree entirely with your findings in that a handful of boat owners feel that they have little or no respect for other boats, and when challenged can be very abusive.

Although i feel there is a steady increase in these offenders luckily they are still in a minority.

Most boaters are very polite and pleasant and do slow down when passing moored boats and long may this continue.

Mooring on the river Ouse, near York, the majority of boats that are kept on the river tend to pass at a reasonable speed. Our biggest problem are the ribs that fly up and down more often than not on the plane or at a speed that keeps them just behind the rowers causing excessive wash and noise pollution shouting instructions to the rowing boats, we have measured the speed of some of these when so called training to be in excess of 7.5 knots.

When confronted we are told they are safety boats and can do whatever speed they like.

We have frequently reported the incidents to Trust staff only to be told they have to have proof but as there is a shortage of patrol officers and the times the clubs train varies there is little they can do.

A lesser problem is the "day boaters" that are caravaners staying at riverside camps that bring a boat with them and launch it for the day.

Totally agree that if a boat is securely moored and moves much then you were going too fast. Also that not tying up securely then accusing people of going too fast is unreasonable.



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However, I do occasionally get accused of not passing other boats at tickover (guilty!). The reason is that my particular configuration of boat has a 3:1 gearbox reduction instead of the more usual 2:1. Strict tickover (900 rpm) gives me a fraction over 0.6 mph which I consider to be unrealistically slow unless the canal is very narrow and shallow. 11/1200 rpm gives me a far more acceptable 1.5 mph and causes little problems to 99% of boaters. It is just the occasional 'rev counter' that complains!

I would like to add that a fully laden traditional working boat with historic engine at tickover could well be doing more than 2mph. At the end of the day it's all down to tolerance on all sides and only complaining on those rare occasions when behaviour is genuinely unacceptable.

We hire, almost every year over the past forty. We can afford one week per year during which we like to 'do a ring' or other route covering as much of the system as reasonably possible. We were doing this long before thousands of boats started to use the offside of canals to moor, or should I say to reside.

We see many boats which are obviously seldom if ever moved. Their owners' idea of using the canals is clearly not ours, in fact in our view many don't use the canals at all. Their boats are perhaps better described as floating static weekend caravans. Our view is that canals were made for moving boats, not for parking them.

Quite often to complete our planned route we need to move for up to 10 hours a day. We enjoy this and have just as much right to travel this way as the boat owner who has weeks or months to potter gently along. One of the stimulating things about canalling is that you never know what is going to delay you next - shallow pounds, fallen trees, damaged locks, breakdowns, wire round the prop, etc.

It is meeting such challenges that adds interest to the trip, but to get the boat back to the hire base on time we sometimes need to 'press on'. We don't break the rules, we don't speed, we don't batter locks or steal someone's lock or bridge hole. We are models of good behaviour. But we inevitably find it irksome when miles of moored craft can easily add an extra hour to a day when we have already been delayed.

Tickover speed for miles is tedious and frustrating at the best of times and although we always slow down when we meet long lines of boats we sometimes commit the heinous crime of not slowing down as much as some people think is necessary. But we seldom, if ever, see springs in use and we often see loose mooring lines attached to flimsy pins in soggy ground. In our view it really is up to moorers to moor effectively. It is often those using the lazy and least effective methods who make the most noise about slowing down.

Politeness and consideration are important but ultimately offside moorers have no right to demand our forbearance and certainly no right to utter verbal abuse.

One solution to these issues is never raised. It is simply for the Trust to limit the extent of offside mooring, either by restrictions on the numbers of craft that can occupy a given stretch of water, or by taxing the landowner or boat owner as a deterrent, thus raising some badly needed extra revenue.

Whatever, with the increasing number of boats on the system things surely cannot continue as they are.



Temporary moored boats is one thing. However, I have no sympathy for the endless lines of permanent moorings. If you don't like the passing boats then move to one of the ever expanding choice of new marinas.

I started to use springs to reduce movement on my mooring but then I found that the boat was grounding - the movement on the ropes was keeping the silt from building up. I now use just two ropes on the fore and back ends and accept that a bit of movement can be a good thing. It's a boat, it's on water, it moves.

The legal speed limit on the canals is 4 mph.

There are large sections of canal that are effectively linear marinas.

In many such places there are often boats not displaying a current license.

I pass such places at 4 mph. If the boat owners can't cope with that they should move to a proper marina. If they choose to live on the canal they must put up with the traffic.

I do slow down for overnight and lunch time moorers.

I will say that signs are disregarded by those who speed and are a waste of money. What they provide is a legal notification of what to do or not to do. My own boat is tied up at our moorings at the end of my garden so I can observe the problem the wash causes, it regularly damages the hull and causes erratic movement inside the boat, a real danger when cooking or working on the engine.

It is by a canal bridge the other side of which is a sign warning of canoes, rowboats, peddleloes and moored boats. This does not stop people speeding past. Neither do the private mooring, winter moorings signs, fishing restrictions, etc. Policing the situation shouldn't be the only answer but I can't see any other way round it!

It is both common courtesy and common sense to slow down when you pass moored boats, however, there is definitely a feeling of sympathy for many boat owners that have to tick along past literally miles of permanently moored boats.

On the stretch of canal close to my marina, the greed of yet another farmer has led to over an hour of slow tick-over cruising to get past them. It spoils the fun of boating for myself and many of my neighbours. Don't even get me started on the situation in many areas the South and close to major cities. Reason prevails that the Trust should limit the distance or number of boats permanently or long term moored next to one another.

Moored boats should be properly moored with tight lines and springs.



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Passing boats should slow down to pass at slowest speed possible consistent with safety to their own boat.

Apart from any rules and regulations this is just good manners.

I moor my boat at a permanent mooring at a farm and we do not have rings or armco to tie to. We use pins in the grass bank, so I use 4 ropes: 2 at the front and 2 at the stern. I use wagon drivers' dolly knots to hold the boat tight, we often have boats pass us on full throttle from a nearby marina. When you ask them nicely to slow down you get sworn at and abuse hurled at you, or they say we are on tick over then they slow down for a nearby bridge.

When I first got our boat (10 years ago) I was told when you pass moored boats slow to tick over well before you reach them and do not speed up again until you are well passed them as some body may be cooking chips in a chip pan. I always slow to tick over. If it's too windy to travel safely past moored boats I moor up till the weather improves.

Yes it is annoying passing lots of moored boats but you only put a minimal amount of time on your journey and these boats are people's homes or expensive property. I ask people how they would like me to pass them at the same speed they travelling and most look quite shocked and then slow down.

As for passing moored boats, the term "tick over" relates to a different speed for every boat, let's just all use common sense as I have for 40 years. Go past as slowly as is practical dependent on the conditions on the day, and that is never 3 or 4 MPH, if it is too windy for you to control your boat slowly, tie up, it is not safe to travel.

I do not agree with tick over as a rule, under navigation law the steerer must maintain control of their vessel and this is not always possible at tickover for several reasons mainly weather, manoeuvring, water movement and the competence of the steerer.

I do agree with slowing down as is reasonable and safe, but boats moored on slack ropes or springers only with no outward moorers will swing irrespective of speed tickover or not, it seems quite a fashion these days to moor only on springs.

It should always be in the back of your mind when on board that the boat can be moved or collided with at any time so when pouring the kettle etc. you should expect to be jolted so not get caught out, its why you're on water and not in a house on land.

Anything can go wrong at any time, bag round the prop, caught by a gust of wind, shallow spot, or plain got it wrong, these can all move a moored boat and should always be kept in mind.

There is no excuse for excessive speed but that is hard to quantify, I would advocate as gentle a speed as possible to reduce movement affects as much as possible in the circumstances whilst maintaining proper control of the vessel.



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Everybody seems to be missing the point. Irrespective of the speed passing and the tightness of the mooring the pull from a passing boat on the mooring increases with the speed. Over time the bank will become weakened thus resulting in collapsed banks and costly repairs.

As far as I am concerned it has always been mandatory for boats to reduce speed to 2mph. In reply to those who say that it's the fault of the moorer, it depends on the mooring. If there is no shuttering and you are on pegs and it's wet you will get pulled off your mooring anyway. The times that I have left my boat whilst going to the shops on 4 pegs, and returned to a drifting boat...

The answer is, if it's too windy for your boat then you shouldn't be moving. Having a heavy boat and 40 years on the canal I never have trouble passing boats at 2mph.

A big problem I find that does not appear to be mentioned is when a passing boat has passed the last boat and immediately accelerates, presumably to make up the time they have lost slowing down, a lot of boaters do not seem to realise that this action pulls the last boat or two on the mooring causing the same problem they were trying to prevent.

I would be most grateful if you could highlight this as my boat is constantly affected by this. My boat is moored to very strong metal posts but due to the increased 'traffic' on the Paddington Arm these posts have had to be reset many times. Incidentally this is a home mooring.

In response to the article about passing mooring boats whilst I agree some of the comments are sensible suggestions being consequent of course upon those moored boats to secure their craft adequately, sadly the rest of the comments I find quite remarkable!

I wholeheartedly agree with the comment about slowing down whilst passing mooring boats but the reality is given the miles of moored boats in the London Region alone to expect cruising boats to pass them all on tick over is quite unrealistic. I am of the opinion that whilst slowing down is good practice, slowing to tick over is too much to expect.

Surely the moored boats have to take some responsibility too as hardly any use springs or snubbers, something you might like to promote as part of the solution as this is clearly a moored rather than moving boat problem.

I used to instruct at a sea school and have noted some strange mooring habits on the canals.

I don't know why anyone would moor with lines at 90 degrees to the shore, but so many do! This guarantees fore-and-aft movement as even a duck swims by, there is no restraining force on the boat until the lines point at least a bit along the boat. Ropes don't work sideways!

Any sailing boat will always have warps out at about 45 degrees to the shore, this is partly to allow for tide but also to minimise surges along the harbour wall. I always moor my



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narrowboat with lines at 45 degrees (or so) and it hardly moves at all, even when heavy boats speed past.

Springs are a good idea if you can fit them, they needn't be heavy ropes (Aldi had some nice 12mm line for nuppence recently) and you can set them up to a middle ring or pin with a little bit of tension on them, making your boat almost idiot-proof. As mentioned, this also keeps you close alongside, making it safer for young and old to board and disembark.

I moor online, with fore and aft springs and warps, all at about 45 degrees, and this minimises wear and tear on the shore-side fenders, as well as guaranteeing that my boat will be there next time I want to go out!

There appears to be more people living on boats now my view is that canals were built for transport not linear moorings and they should make sure their boats are secure. Soon you will not be able cruise above 1 to 2 mph anywhere.

Passing moored boats with consideration combined with sensible mooring are the issues but speed is only a part of the problem. The profile of the cut will also affect moored boats, displaced water at the bow may cause water to flow to the stern moving the moored boat so the solution is to proceed at an appropriate speed for the conditions.

If your mooring suffers from inconsiderate passing boat's wash I suggest putting a suspended piece of scaffolding pole on a buoy with angle iron around it so it clangs when wash hits it. Even if no-one is about boats will usually slow down if they make it clang.

I have a boat propulsion system where tick-over is not possible. This is because it has a Hydrostatic drive system. The engine is kept at constant speed – approximately 1500 rpm and the speed is infinitely variable according to the position of the control lever which varies the amount of hydraulic oil which flows to the propeller motor. Hence the boat can be barely moving even at 1500 rpm engine speed.

The engine speed has to be kept at 1500 rpm in order for the hydrostatic control system to have sufficient pressure. I always cruise past moored boats at a snail's pace, usually much slower than most boats can do on tick over but still I get shouted at because most people are unable to judge the speed of another boat and hearing the engine at 1500 rpm jump to the conclusion that my boat is going too fast. Other than that it's a great system, but I just wish that people in moored boats would stop being so quick to complain!

All of the responses will work to a degree, but do not really address the fact that everyone seems to be in a hurry to arrive at a destination and moor up, and the pleasure of a cruise is seemingly secondary. It would be good to have input from the Trust, as one noticeable side effect is more accelerated bank erosion than occurred say 15 years ago. How much is that going to cost to rectify?

It would only take one official with a speed monitor at a couple of popular locations to make the towpath telegraph come alive and could slow things down a tad!



I'd just like to add my comments to this debate, I was told that when you pass a moored boat you should slow down. I have asked many a boater to slow down and get told regularly to "eff off".

I get boaters that fly past and tell me they are on "tick over", which they are but they think we are stupid.

Examples;

If I drive my car at 70mph in a 30 zone and take it out of gear past a speed camera am I now doing 29 or 70? It takes ages to slow down without breaks and it's an insult to moored boaters when you're still travelling fast.

Where I'm moored the pound is up and down like a yo yo (like many others). One minute I'm moored with tight ropes next minute I'm slack. Does that justify going past fast and if I tighten my ropes when slack I become sideways when the pound is high... Saying it's my fault for this is a cop out and ignorant of surroundings and repairs that need doing.

Overall it should be good manners to slow down 3 boat lengths before you pass a boat. You use/live in a fluid (there's a clue there) environment and should respect moored boaters as we all moor and encounter these issues. We live in the slow lane (clue 2), let's be considerate of this.

I am a master mariner [class 1] with 50 years' experience of shipping and boating. I have been an active user of the English canal system since 1962. Worked in many canal scenarios including Suez Canal, Panama Canal Europort entrance canal [from the North Sea] Gothenburg canal and many river systems. etc. I now live in Australia but spend many summers canal cruising in England.

The problems connected with cruising past moored boats is largely due to the original canals being used by far fewer barges than today, the speed of the barges being determined by the speed of the horse drawing the barge, and most importantly a propeller was not used to propel the barge.

At any point on the canal systems where there is a lot of width to the canal and also a good depth to the canal, there are no problems with boats cruising past moored boats.

The problems start when the canal is narrow and boats are moored at the bank in line with the canal.

The propeller of the cruising boat "Robs" water from ahead of itself to feed the propeller and push the boat forward. Water is drawn from ahead and from the sides of the cruising boat and this causes the moored boat to "Fall" into the lowered water level pulling sharply on the mooring lines, then being "Slammed" back against the bank once the cruising boat has passed.

The way to prevent this happening is complicated, largely due to the antiquated construction of the canals, but the following are some actions that can assist.



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Everyone [with the exception of a few considerate sailors] I have met on the canals is RIGHT, Hire boat users do have to meet deadlines and get back to base. They could have been held up at a lock outage and need to maintain close to 4 MPH to reach base on time.

Moored boats have a right to get angry when their boat is slammed against the bank by a boat cruising past at an inconsiderate speed.

Reducing the number of boats on the canals would be helpful in reducing the volume of traffic. Not a good idea because it would reduce the amount of revenue available to the Trust and thereby reduce the amount of maintenance and progress works on the canals and so has to be considered a non-pragmatic option.

Getting boats to avoid mooring in places where the canal is narrow and shallow is a good option, but most places, where the canal passes through townships where boaters want to stay for a while, the tendency is for narrow and cramped water.

So, with the existing infrastructure you would have to advise all canal users to avoid mooring where the canal is narrow whenever possible and to slow down when passing moored boats, especially at places where the canal is narrow.

You are already doing this, although the message that both moored and cruising boats have a responsibility to moor in an appropriate place and reduce speed when passing moored boats in a narrow section of the canal is not promulgated strongly enough by the Trust.

Quite honestly with only the existing infrastructure in place canal boaties are going to have to put up with the problem and learn to act in not only a responsible manner but in such a way that they can enjoy and allow others to enjoy the pleasure of canal sailing.

The real solution involves change to the infrastructure [and of course cost is involved, even using volunteers]

Boats moored in line with the canal suffer most from the wash caused by passing boats.

When a moored boat is at right angles to the line of the canal, or at an angle of about 45 degrees to the canal, the effect of the wash is sharply reduced. The moored boat may "Range" backwards and forwards on the moorings, but is no longer "Slammed" against the bank.

Digging a series of mooring bays along a canal so that boats can pull into the bays and moor at an angle of about 45 degrees to the line of the canal is the only real practical answer. Acquisition of land could be the job of a "Go Get" team with National backing. There are so many people wanting to save the canals and they are one of the very best things about Britain.

Envisage a "Bay" cut out of the side of the canal, angled at 45 degrees to the line of the canal, 80 feet wide by 80 feet deep, allowing 10 boats to moor on pole moorings, and so on wherever there is some room to do the same and land is available.

Lots of different possibilities here? Only needs the determination, support, and money to make it work.
