



## Boaters' Update 16 December 2016

So, here we are. It's the final edition of the year and I was, before I wrote the annual round-up, sat wondering where 2016 went! But, [as you'll see](#), a lot has happened over the last 12 months and now I know where it went...

Whether you're a regular reader or just dip in to Boaters' Update every once in a while I do hope you've enjoyed them. We'll be returning in 2017 with our usual metronomic fortnightly frequency – if there's a particular topic you'd like to see, or a regular feature you think will be useful, then please [get in touch](#).

So all that remains for me to say is that I hope you have a very Merry Christmas (you may want to read Debbi Figueiredo's blog about [Festive Spirits](#)) and an even better time afloat in 2017! In the meantime, click on the links below to jump to the article of your choice:

- [News round-up and the fortnight ahead](#)
- [End of year messages](#) from our chief exec and head of boating
- [2016 on the cut](#)
- [Maintenance, repair and restoration work](#) affecting cruising this weekend
- [Bits and bobs](#)

Happy boating,

Damian

### News round-up and the fortnight ahead

Since the last edition you may have heard, or seen, that:

- 2 Dec – Huddersfield Narrow Canal is in the process of receiving a [£400,000 winter makeover](#) as part of our annual repair and restoration programme.
- 6 Dec – The 200-year old Maida Hill Tunnel, which carries the Regent's Canal under Edgware Road for more than 250 metres, had [a crucial check-up](#).
- 7 Dec – Work recently started on a [£1m project to repair and restore](#) six historic lift bridges along the Oxford Canal.
- 12 Dec – A [£1m dredging project](#) focussing on areas along the Kennet & Avon Canal where boaters are having difficulty mooring, navigating through bridges or getting stuck on the approach to locks got underway.

And if you're wondering what you can enjoy on or by a canal in the next couple of weeks then you might be interested in these events... (of course, just walking off a festive feast by a canal is rather lovely too!):

- 3 Dec to 8 Jan 2017 – Presented with marionettes and shadow puppets, special effects and dramatic lighting, you can catch an exciting and magical '[A Christmas Carol](#)' experience at the Puppet Theatre Barge in Little Venice.
- 17 to 24 Dec – Alternatively, Chalice Media's live performance of '[A Christmas Canal](#)' is making a festive return to The National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port.



## Canal & River Trust

- 10 to 24 Dec – Step aboard the 'King Arthur' to see Father Christmas come down the chimney into his floating grotto and enjoy a 45-minute [festive cruise on the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal](#).
- 3 to 23 Dec – Father Christmas won't just be found in the South West though. I have it on good authority that he uses his festive cruising as a bit of a warm up for his main event on the 24<sup>th</sup> so he'll also be found dashing between the [Shropshire Union](#), the [Anderton Boat Lift](#), [National Waterways Museum Ellesmere Port](#), the [Chesterfield Canal](#) and the [Dudley Tunnel](#) among others...

Of course there are plenty of other activities and volunteering opportunities around the network so please visit the [events section of the website](#) to find the perfect one for you.

---

### **End of year messages from chief exec and head of boating**

*Richard Parry, chief exec*

So another year draws to a close and, on the global stage, it has been a year that has defied predictions, with many of the impacts yet to be fully revealed... Brexit may mean Brexit, but what it might mean for us has yet to fully emerge, though I'm pleased to report that our commercial income has continued to perform well so far, to continue to fund the works and services you depend on.

Of course, we've endured our own share of unexpected events, not least at the turn of last year as we suffered the severe flood damage across large sections of our canals and navigations in the north of England. By January we had started on the major response to repair, re-build and re-open that, for some people, continued for most of the year. With our works at Elland bridge about to complete, we can look back with pride on how much excellent work has been achieved – much of it by our volunteers, and thank all those boaters and boating businesses caught up in it for their forbearance whilst we have got our work done.

During the year, we've seen growth across a whole range of activities – our volunteer and Friends numbers continued to rise, our Education 'Explorers' reached record numbers of children, and new partnerships blossomed. We saw striking evidence of the deep-rooted pride that communities have in their canals as we celebrated the bi-centenary of the Leeds & Liverpool canal in fine style, with tens of thousands turning out to see 'Kennet' re-creating the famous first journey across the Pennines from Leeds.

Internally, we've sustained our efforts to improve how we engage and respond to your concerns, to make things better for our customers. We're spending more money each year on the core network and try to prioritise to deal with the things that matter to you. We know that, whilst there is progress to celebrate, there is more to be done in the year ahead.

We hope you've enjoyed your boating in 2016 and we want to make your boating even better in the year ahead.

*Mike Grimes, head of boating*



## Canal & River Trust

As the end of 2016 draws near, it's hard not to reflect with fondness on my waterway memories of the year. Granted, my first week back after the Christmas break was spent touring the devastation wrought by the Boxing Day floods...

I had journeyed up to the region feeling depressed but left uplifted – it was clear that those boaters I met were determined to do whatever was needed to mend and reopen their beloved waterway. And so they did.

Thankfully, from that point on things improved (they couldn't have got much worse!). My personal highlight was Crick Boat Show at the end of May. It was my first show as head of boating and I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I needn't have worried.

I must have met, and chatted to, hundreds of you over the course of the three days. It'd be wrong to say that every conversation was brimming full of positivity and praise. However, there were two undeniable qualities that they all had. Passion and enthusiasm.

My hope, in 2017, is that we can continue to talk, share ideas and tap into your seemingly boundless passion and enthusiasm for boating to make it the best experience possible.

Wishing you and your family a Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy 2017.

Mike.

---

### 2016 on the cut

It's certainly been a busy year! Over the course of it somewhere in the region of 3.6million lock movements will have taken place. We've also removed around 115,000 tonnes of material in the course of our dredging work, the equivalent of around 280,000 concert grand pianos. In 2016 we also welcomed over 23,000 people to various events and open days, during which you may have seen the installation of one of the 150 or so lock gates that we've manufactured in our workshops.

What follows is a gentle canter through some of the news of the 12 months. No doubt you'll have your own boating memories and, if want to while away a couple of hours, you can [browse through the entire news archive](#).

#### January

Things didn't get off to a great start in January as [damage from the Boxing Day floods](#) continued to slowly reveal itself. It took several months of hard graft from local teams, volunteers, boaters and the local community before the navigations returned to their former glory.

Later in the month, a 600-mile, two-year, [hedgerow survey](#) made possible by £50,000 funding from players of People's Postcode Lottery, came to a conclusion. It identified areas for improvement and where they needing 'gapping up' to help provide important nature corridors for a diverse range of wildlife.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-network/calder-and-hebble-navigation>



## Canal & River Trust

February

At least there was cause for celebration as the Leeds & Liverpool Canal entered its bicentenary year. To help more of you enjoy the delights of central Liverpool new procedures were put in place to enable up to six boats to travel each way along the Pier Head Canal Link every day except Tuesdays. It [gives boaters more flexibility](#) over arrival and departure days into Salthouse Dock compared with the old system which had designated 'in' and 'out' days.

More good news came in the form of [the lesser horseshoe](#). These tiny protected bats were found for the first time hibernating in a lime kiln-turned-bat cave beside the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-wildlife>

March

We started work early in this month to [dredge around 7,500 tonnes of debris](#) from the Rochdale Canal. The £350k operation, which lasted six weeks, enabled the flood damaged waterway to reopen to boats between Hebden Bridge and Sowerby Bridge.

Knowing how passionate you are, we put out a request for volunteers to [help teach school children](#) near Stoke-on-Trent about the wonders of their local canals.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-work/education>

April

In a bid to encourage better behaviour on the most popular stretches of the nation's towpaths, we called for the reintroduction of [old-fashioned manners](#) to preserve the peace.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSduEHApvns>

This year was no different to previous ones as the [Anker Valley Canoe Club did its annual spring clean](#), by canoe, along two miles of the Coventry Canal.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canoeing-and-kayaking>

May

Over 2,000 metres of dry stone walls along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal in East Lancashire were [brought back to tip top condition](#), thanks to a £44,000 repair project involving over 130 volunteer days.

In the same month, we reported that [volunteers gave nearly half a million hours](#) of their time (thanks!) during the previous financial year – carrying out a huge range of tasks from building walls (above) and lock keeping through to fundraising and manning welcome stations to name just a few.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer>

June



## Canal & River Trust

So many of you showcase your gardening skills with pots lining your cabin roof full of flora and fauna so we were delighted to be working with BBC Gardener's World Live to create a fantastic [Canal Boat Garden feature](#), complete with a full size narrow boat, for its live event in Birmingham.

While our collective thoughts were turning to a, hopefully, warm summer ahead our engineers were [completing investigations](#) to assess the stability of a landslip that has been blocking part of the Rochdale Canal at Todmorden following the Boxing Day floods.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-work/engineering>

### July

As summer started to get into swing we reached the half way point in an eight-month project to dredge sections of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal - from Tixall Lock in Staffordshire to Falling Sand Lock near Kidderminster.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWnorkIWviw>

As custodians of one of the largest collections of industrial heritage in the country we were thrilled that [a heritage trail](#) was launched to encourage visitors to explore Bath's secret industrial history along the Kennet & Avon Canal.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/our-work/caring-for-our-heritage>

### August

Our collection of historic boats numbers sixty-eight nationally important boats – the majority of which are on the historic ships register. And with an Arts Council England (ACE) award of over £300k, we announced that future generations will be able to [enjoy the historic boats](#) in our care at the National Waterways Museums Ellesmere Port and Gloucester.

An altogether different type of preservation was also carried this month as [two monster invasive catfish](#), more commonly associated with the rivers in Northern Europe, were hauled out of the Grand Union Canal at leafy Soulbury Locks in Buckinghamshire and relocated to a more suitable habitat.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/fishing>

### September

We announced the introduction of an [online booking service](#) for passage through some of the network's most famous landmarks including Anderton Boat Lift, Standedge Tunnel, Liverpool Canal Link, Ribble Link and Frankton Lock. You can even use it to [book time and space](#) at Wigan and Ellesmere dry docks!

While the weather remained warm, we teamed up with Bounts, the fitness app, to reward local people who [exercise along the Grand Union Canal](#) in Milton Keynes with vouchers for a variety of national high street shops including John Lewis, M&S and Starbucks.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/walking>



## Canal & River Trust

October

After months of combined, often voluntary, work local businesses, communities and waterway enthusiasts were celebrating as the [historic Rochdale Canal fully reopened](#) for the first time since the devastation of the Boxing Day floods.

We announced an exciting new arts project for 2017, '[The Ring](#)'. It will be an 18-month long series of events and commissions celebrating Worcestershire's canals and rivers, focused around the 21-mile circle of waterways made up by the Worcester & Birmingham Canal, the Droitwich canals and the River Severn.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/waterway-arts>

November

The cabinet secretary for environment and rural affairs, Lesley Griffiths, announced over [£2.5million funding for Glandŵr Cymru](#), the Canal & River Trust in Wales, to make improvements to the environment and habitat of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal.

Canal enthusiasts from the Shropshire Union Middlewich Branch Adopters (SUMBA) celebrated their [100th volunteer canal work party](#) with a special cake, followed by vegetation clearance at Aqueduct Marina, Church Minshull, Cheshire.

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer/ways-to-volunteer/adopt-a-canal>

December

The Bard of Barnsley, Ian McMillan, wrote a poem to celebrate the special bond between Yorkshire people and the county's historic waterways, reflecting on the role that local communities have played in improving them for people and wildlife.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMOuBOaPGIQ>

And, finally, do you know something we don't? As winter settled we reported that more boaters than ever before were taking up moorings for the season, with the number of winter mooring permits sold rising 15% year-on-year. Are we set for a big freeze?

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/boating/mooring-your-boat/winter-moorings>

---

### Maintenance, repair and restoration work affecting cruising this weekend

Now that we're deep into this winter's major restoration and repair programme the list of works that may affect your cruising is quite long if you actually planned to traverse the whole of the network!

So as your cruising may be confined to a particular region of the network I've provided links below to the respective stoppages. Just click on the one where you'll be and a webpage will open listing the stoppages for that region. If you're not quite sure which region your planned



## Canal & River Trust

cruise falls in to please take a [look at this map](#). If your region isn't listed below it just means that there are none planned this weekend that will affect your cruising.

- [London](#) (Please note that the stoppage on the [Regent's Canal at St Pancras](#) has been brought forward to 9 January.)
- [Manchester & Pennines](#)
- [North Wales & Borders](#)
- [North East](#)
- [North West](#)
- [South Wales & Severn](#)
- [South East](#)
- [West Midlands](#)

When any restrictions to navigation happen we get them up on to our website as soon as we can – always best to [have a scan](#) before you set off for a cruise.

---

### Bits and Bobs

- While we may be mostly looking back on 2016, why not let your mind roam free and think about late Spring 2017? I don't just mean the warmth, or the early blooms, I'm talking about Crick Boat Show! [Tickets for next year's show are now on sale](#) and with a 20% Early Bird discount, you could bag yourself your first bargain of 2017!
- Over the last few months we've been working on a new version of our boating guides – basically downloadable guides giving navigational and stoppage advice and maps showing local facilities. We're now at the stage where we have a working draft and we'd like to hear what you think. So, if you're interested in sharing your thoughts please [drop me a line](#) and I'll send you a couple of versions for you to critique.
- If you're planning a visit to central London and want certainty that you will have somewhere to moor when you arrive you can now [pre-book a mooring](#) for a small charge all the way up to 31 October 2017.
- We're just a few days off the winter solstice, giving us the shortest day of the year, and if you, or someone you know, suffers from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) then do take the time to read our welfare officer Sean Williams' latest blog containing [useful information and advice](#).
- Many of you will have seen that over the last few months I've included an invitation in this section to anyone who wanted to help us keep our [online maps](#) up to date ([which I blogged about](#)). Thanks to those of you that have! Your help is still needed though – just have a read of the blog linked above and there's a link to the sites that we'd like boaters to cast their eye over.

Happy boating!

Damian