



Boaters' Update 24 March 2017

It's official. Spring has arrived regardless of the measure you use (meteorological or astronomical). And don't forget, this Sunday 26 March, it's Mother's Day and the clocks go forward. Although snow is falling in parts of the country as I type...

While we at the Canal & River Trust may not be able to control the weather, we can suggest some things you can do to make the most of the warmer months ahead.

You might want to take a leaf out of colleague and boater Debbi Figueiredo's book. Debbi has been learning more about engine maintenance, and nothing short of a major malfunction will prevent her summer cruising, as you can [read in her blog](#).

It's not just the hands-on stuff you can plan for though, below we talk to a [Crick Boat Show](#) volunteer about his involvement in building the UK's biggest inland waterway festival, and why you might also want to plan your visit.

Along with that you'll find the usual mix of your views, recent news, this weekend's stoppages and an array of other articles. If there is something else you'd like to see in a future edition, then do [get in touch](#).

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Happy boating,

Damian

News round-up and the fortnight ahead

Over the last couple of weeks you may have heard, or seen, that:

- 13 Mar – We are on the lookout for [volunteers to tell the story of Claverton Pumping Station](#), serving the Kennet & Avon, one of the oldest and most iconic pumping stations along the nation's waterways and the only working water wheel-powered beam engine in the country.
- 14 Mar – We invited local boaters, walkers, cyclists and heritage lovers to come and enjoy our work following the completion of a [project to transform the Grade II Listed Tame Aqueduct](#).
- 16 Mar – Alongside the Angling Trust, we announced details of this year's popular angling [Stillwater Championships](#).



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- 17 Mar – We responded to the Government’s consultation on the next phase of the HS2 high speed rail line, and [set out a series of measures to protect](#) the nation’s historic waterways.

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:

- Mar – Only a week left to take advantage of the Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust’s discounted [45-minute trip into Dudley Tunnel & Limestone Mines](#).
- 11 Mar – Perhaps a nice Sunday afternoon stroll is the best way to celebrate the arrival of spring? If so, join a [walk along the original course of the Wey & Arun Canal](#), including two stretches of the former Guildford to Horsham railway line.
- 26 Mar – [Treat Mum to something unique this year](#) with a guided boat trip into Britain’s longest, highest and deepest canal tunnel followed by a delicious afternoon tea overlooking the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.
- 31 Mar & 1 Apr – Everyone’s welcome to come along to Fenny Stratford Lock to take part in the [IWA’s clean up from Fenny Stratford to Wolverton](#).

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.

Generating a discussion – your thoughts

Thanks to all of you who took the time to send in your thoughts in response to last edition’s [article about generators](#). Two main themes came through strongly. Firstly, you said that, yes, more consideration needs to be given to where fumes go when you’re running a generator near other moored boats.

The second theme was one of energy consumption. The original article also asked whether the perceived increase in generators being run while moored was down to insufficient batteries or too many power-hungry gadgets.

Some who got in touch said that with the addition of a couple of solar panels most would find that running a genny was a thing of the past:

“We have a couple of solar panels (130watts output) and were able to moor at Crick Boat Show last year for five days running a fridge, LED lights and occasional TV without running the engine. We have three leisure batteries (110amp/hr). Our neighbour was running a generator every morning. However, he noted our performance and planned to buy panels before the show finished! I hope he did – then I can enjoy a longer lie in if moored alongside the same boat this year!”

“I use solar to fill two leisure batteries and that does my lighting and charging phones, iPad, computer, radio etc. plus my vacuum. I don’t have a fridge (which can be difficult) and no TV. I watch catch-up of what I really want to see on my iPad.”

This correspondent also agrees that too many gadgets are to blame but also has a handy tip for those without a fridge:



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“As to gadgets or batteries, I'd suggest it's down to more gadgets. And perhaps lack of time/confidence/knowledge/access to properly review a boat's electrics, and optimise the set up. E.g. wiring in a 12v socket for charging phones and small appliances. Also, a lack of reliable monitoring equipment to check state of charge doesn't help. One item I don't always use is the fridge, especially in winter. Outdoors is certainly cold enough for a few months of the year. Compensates well for the lack of solar energy.”

Considering that a decent proportion of those who wrote in suggested solar power I'd like to include an article, in the near future, to give readers a 'How To...' guide. So, if you're an expert in the field or would like to share your experience of sourcing or fitting your own solar panels, do [please get in touch](#).

What went wrong in February

One word. Doris.

For those lucky enough to be overseas when Doris had her Day, I'm referring to 23 February when Storm Doris, [a weather bomb](#), hit the UK. With gusts up to 94mph hundreds of trees were blown down, including a fair number in to our canals and rivers.

As you can imagine, this led to several unplanned closures which we fought hard to clear to the canals and rivers fit for you to cruise and enjoy. Of the 109 unplanned stoppages, where we had to close navigation for more than four hours, over a third (41) were directly attributable to Doris.

The remaining stoppages were a real mixed bag – 36 were due to investigating and repairing a leaking Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal, 17 were to repair damaged bridges, nine to do the same to locks and the final six for the demolition of the wonderfully named Cincinnati Bridge over the Birmingham & Fazeley.

If you've [signed up to receive stoppages](#) you'll notice that we categorise them in to general reasons, such as repair, inspection or vegetation.

Of course, when we're dealing with such old structures, it's not always as straightforward as 'repair' so we offer more detail in the body of the stoppage notice. But, in case you were wondering, here's a [handy guide](#) to what we classify as a repair, maintenance, inspection and so on.

Crick – big show, big fun

Last year was my first at [Crick Boat Show](#) as an exhibitor. I'd been before and had wandered past the Canal & River Trust marquee but never had that behind-the-scenes perspective that you only get as an exhibitor. The mammoth set-up was a real eye-opener!



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However, if you visit the site at any other time of year it's hard to imagine what scale of effort is needed to build the UK's biggest, and thriving, inland waterway festival. What better way to understand than to ask someone who actually does it:

60 Seconds with Danny Clarke, volunteer at Crick Boat Show

Danny is a tractor restorer and retired forklift service engineer, aged 69 from Rothwell in Northamptonshire, and has been volunteering for the Crick Boat Show & Waterways Festival for the last three years.

Q: How did you first become interested in canals?

A: My first canal boat experience was a holiday hire boat from Market Harborough with three friends. We travelled around the Leicester Ring and, since then, we have taken various canal boat holidays and eight years ago we bought a Sailaway hull, then spent three years fitting it out. It was put into the water in 2012 and we have now have over 1,000 cruising hours on the clock.

Q: How did you first get involved in Crick Boat Show?

A: I was reading Waterways World Magazine and saw an advert asking for volunteers for Crick Boat Show in return for a free subscription. As I had just retired and had some free time, I thought I'd give it a go, so I sent in my CV and the rest is history. This will be my fourth show so I think must be enjoying it!

Q: What's your role at the show?

A: I help build it and then break it back down again. There's a multitude of tasks - operating a forklift, fence building, mending machines and plumbing, anything practical really.

Q: How many other volunteers do you work with and how long does it take?

A: We have a three-person team at the start, with work beginning five days before the show opens. Our numbers build up to ten by Friday morning, the day before the show opens. I try not to do show days, but if it's bad weather or there's something that requires my help, I get roped in. On the Monday evening, after the show has closed, we help load lorries for exhibitors, then from the Tuesday morning, four or five of us help break the Show down, which takes three days.

Q: What's the best thing about volunteering at Crick Boat Show?

A: We have a good crew and we have a great time, even though it's hard work.

Q: What's the worst bit about it?

A: Undoubtedly when the weather is bad - but being in an open field when it's bucketing down means we have to go to The Wheatsheaf to dry out in the evening!

So now we know what Danny will be doing in the five days leading up to the late May Bank Holiday weekend (Saturday 27 to Monday 29). All that is left now is to let you know what will be going on in the space he and his team creates.



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Actually there's far too much to list here in detail but among others you'll find [music](#), [food and drink](#), [display boats](#), [free boat trips](#), the [biggest range of boating paraphernalia](#) in one place and [a broad range of seminars](#). Of course, we'd love for you to stop by our marquee for a natter too! You'll find full details of all the above on the [Crick Boat Show website](#) along with how to order your [early-bird discounted tickets!](#)

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Alien invaders

From 27 March – 2 April organisations across Britain, including us, are coming together for Invasive Species Week. Although it sounds like a celebration, it's not, we're raising awareness of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and, hopefully, inspiring people. Including your good selves, to take action to prevent their spread.

Animals and plants from around the world have been introduced to Britain by people for hundreds of years. Most are harmless, but 10-15% spread and become invasive – harming the environment and our wildlife. They also impact the economy and some can even pose a risk to our health and the way we live.

For our waterways Japanese knotweed and signal crayfish cause serious damage to structures; floating pennywort blocks navigation; and giant hogweed can cause harm to people.

INNS come at a cost to us at the Canal & River Trust. We have to control their growth and repair the damage they cause. Some, such as Japanese knotweed, can seriously increase the complexity and cost of a simple maintenance job. Sometimes we also have to put in place special measures or restrictions such as temporarily closing a navigation so we can clear away something that shouldn't be there which, for you as a boater, can bring added frustrations.

As you may know the spread of many INNS is due to human activity. This can be as seeds or bits of plant on people's clothes, through dumping of plants in the wild, or seeds or bits of plants getting caught on equipment and boats. Often, it's done without even noticing.

Of course it is difficult to clean a boat as it usually stays on the water the entire time. That said, there are some general rules you can follow while moving around and especially if you go on to other waterbodies. You can help stop the spread with the 'Check, Clean, Dry' philosophy:

- Check your equipment and clothing for live organisms - particular in areas that are damp or hard to inspect.
- Clean and wash all equipment, footwear and clothes thoroughly. Use hot water where possible.
- Dry all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

The video below helps explain what can be done when taking boats out of water.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_KG4h31NOM



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If you ever do take an INNS out of its habitat, under the law it is illegal to put it back. This applies even if that INNS is common in the area. An INNS taken out of its habitat must be placed in a location that prevents it getting back into that habitat or another e.g. floating pennywort will quickly dry out if left on dry land and Himalayan balsam will quickly die if pulled out and placed on a hard surface. With animals there is no requirement or expectation to dispatch them, just to stop them spreading or returning to the water.

For lots more information on INNS and Invasive Species Week visit www.nonnativespecies.org/invasivespeciesweek

Maintenance, repair and restoration work affecting cruising this weekend

Most of the winter's major restoration and repair programme is now complete but, some of you have told me that the format I've been using to report the weekend's stoppages works better for you than listing each individual one so I'll keep it as is...

Just click on the one where you'll be and a webpage will open listing any stoppages for that region. If you're not quite sure which region your planned cruise falls in to please take a [look at this map](#).

- [East Midlands](#)
- [Kennet & Avon](#)
- [London](#)
- [Manchester & Pennines](#)
- [North Wales & Borders](#)
- [North East](#)
- [North West](#)
- [South Wales & Severn](#)
- [South East \(not including London, see link above\)](#)
- [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

- The Boat Owner's Views survey is now live – about a third of boaters will have received an invite to take part in the survey so if you're one of them, make yourself a cuppa and settle down to let us know your thoughts on a wide range of boaty subjects. The survey closes on 9 April.
- If you're yet to plan something for Easter then why not consider venturing to the Chesterfield Canal? Retford & Worksop Boat Club and the Chesterfield Canal Trust are putting on boat trips and Easter Egg hunt trips to name just a couple of the fun things you and your family can enjoy. More information can be found [on its website](#).

Happy boating!



Damian

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