



## Boaters' Update 21 April 2017

What a difference a fortnight makes! Two weeks ago we were all focussing our attention on how to make the most of the Easter weekend. Now, as you couldn't help but hear, we have 48 days until a General Election – our third nationwide vote in as many years.

With this in mind, there's some advice in this edition about how, if you live on your boat, [you can register to vote](#).

No doubt there'll be wall-to-wall coverage stoking up election fever. But, rest assured that you'll be able to use Boaters' Update as a place to escape to with the vast majority of column inches being devoted to the joys of boating and the wider canal and river network.

Along that theme, you'll find the usual mix of news and this weekend's stoppages as well as an update on the plans for this year's Crick Boat Show and also on the boat licensing review among others. 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:

- 5 Apr – Our National Waterways Museum Gloucester announced that it is [searching for an operator to run a trip boat service](#) that will show people the secrets of the city's historic docks from the water.
- 5 Apr – The [Peak Forest Canal in Marple reopened](#) in time for the main boating season following our £400,000 makeover.
- 10 Apr – Announcing [annual costs of £1 million cleaning up after litter-happy people](#), – from blow up dolls to shopping trolleys - the Canal & River Trust says enough is enough.
- 10 Apr – We launched the [first-ever 'Boats in Bloom' awards](#) to say thank you to the many people who bring the waterways to life with plants and flowers.



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It's a busy couple of weeks on and around the waterways so below you'll find some highlights but 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.

- 22 & 23 Apr – If you're thinking about buying a share in a boat then go along to [National Boat Share Show](#), where there will be a wide range of boats to get on board, with a chance to talk to existing share owners and to boat management companies.
- 23 Apr – With 20 locations across the country, the Drifters and Canal & River Trust [National Canal Boating Open Day](#) gives you the chance to try canal boating for free.
- 28 to 1 May – Another Bank Holiday and another chance to indulge yourself with some canal side shopping. Visit a floating market at [Market Drayton](#), [Alvecote](#) or [Berkhamstead](#) to buy a mind-boggling range of goods.
- 29 to 1 May – The ever-popular [IWA Canalway Cavalcade](#) at Little Venice featuring a pageant of boats, trade shows, stalls, live music, kids activities and competitions (among others) is a must-do if you're in the capital.

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### Vote from a boat

Here we are again. Another national vote and while those who've been living on a boat for a few years will have had the information when published prior to last year's EU referendum, those of you new to a life afloat (and those who didn't get round to it last year) may need to know how to register to vote. The clock's ticking and you have until 22 May so here goes...

Firstly, check that you fulfil the eligibility criteria:

- Aged 18 or over, and
- Registered to vote in the UK by 22 May; and
- A British or Irish citizen living in the UK, or
- A Commonwealth citizen living in the UK who has leave to remain in the UK or who does not require leave to remain in the UK; or
- A British citizen living overseas who has been registered to vote in the UK in the last 15 years; or
- An Irish citizen living overseas who was born in Northern Ireland and who has been registered to vote in Northern Ireland in the last 15 years; or
- A citizen of the Commonwealth nations of Malta and Cyprus.

All good? Then read on!

If you have a permanent mooring then you're effectively a resident of that area and the process is the same as for your land-lubbing neighbours. Just visit the Government's [voting registration website](#).

It's slightly more complicated if you're always on the move and don't have a home mooring. If this is your situation then you must register a declaration of local connection, which, when approved, will be valid for 12 months (or until you cancel it).

It's not too hard though, find your local electoral registration office via Google. You'll then need to pop along, explain your local connection and fill in a form. The 'local connection' should be at a place you spend the most time or where you have some connection. This



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could be where you were last permanently registered or any boatyard or marina you regularly use for maintenance.

Ta-da! If you didn't apply to vote by post, all you now need to do is turn up on 8 June at your nearest polling station...

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### **Saving water on the Grand Union (and your local canal!)**

Around the country we have [Waterway Partnerships](#), full of knowledgeable volunteers, to help shape plans, guide decisions about spending, and help develop local engagement. The [South East Waterway Partnership](#) has a dedicated boating group and one of its members, David Daines, offers some useful advice about conserving water as we head into the main boating season:

"There are currently a number of locks on the southern Grand Union Canal that, for engineering reasons, need to be left empty when not in use. Official Canal & River Trust instructions, on the balance beams, tell boaters to leave the lock empty as in this one at Lock 46, Cowroast.



"This usually requires a bottom paddle to be left up, though leaving a bottom gate open would actually be just as effective. All such official signs will give the reason for that instruction, as this one does. Unfortunately, and quite frequently, this raised bottom paddle is not being noticed, and numerous boaters recently have filled the locks (or tried to) with a bottom paddle still wide open.

"It takes a long while, and makes opening a top gate very difficult, yet people still don't realise why! Of course, this results in a serious waste of water and can lead to possible structural damage, or indeed physical injury, when the top gate being closed, 'bangs to', under the influence of the open paddle.

#### *The Golden Rule*

"Boaters are urged therefore always to look before raising any paddles at any lock, wherever on the system, in case a paddle has been left open, or not closed completely, whether inadvertently or intentionally. If you ignore an open paddle at a lock the fault is not only with the person who may have failed to lower it, but also with you for not noticing it.

"Another 'Golden Rule' is, before turning round any lock, look to see if another boat is approaching from the opposite direction, for whom the lock may well be set. If there is one, you will save copious amounts of water, and yourself much effort, if you let them through first, following which the lock will be 'set' for you.

"Then, when you have worked through a lock, any lock, anywhere, always look again to see if there is another boat approaching from the opposite direction. If there is one, leave the gate open for them as you leave the lock, it is atrociously bad manners to close a gate in



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someone's face, but it happens all the time. Why waste effort closing a gate that someone else is going to have to re-open in just a few moments?

“Water is the most precious resource we have on the canal and we should all strive to conserve it whenever we can. The old canal companies would heavily fine boatmen for wasting it...”

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### More ways for you to get involved

Many boaters help keep canals and rivers open for everyone to enjoy by [volunteering](#) or [donating](#). But, being such an integral part of what makes waterways so wonderful, there're always others ways you can get involved:

- [Boats in Bloom](#) – As mentioned in the last edition the Canal & River Trust has launched a campaign to celebrate the people whose green fingers and gardening efforts help make our waterways such pleasant places to visit. As you meander on a cruise or stroll along a towpath you may have appreciated some of the wonderful floral displays you've seen. Now's your chance to help say 'thank you' by volunteering to present Boat in Bloom certificates, [sign up to help](#) show your appreciation. It might be that you've seen displays that you'd love to mimic but not known quite how you could do it. Well, on 2 June you'll have the chance to get the answers, via a Facebook Live session with gardening experts, that could set you on the road to your very own blooming boat. [Send your questions in now](#) to make sure the panel have time to respond to any particularly specific potted problems you may have.
- This September, for the first time, the [Vintage Foxton festival](#) will be held in Foxton Locks. We're planning all sorts of vintage and classic fun so do keep an eye on its dedicated webpage. In the meantime, if you own or operate a vintage boat then do [get in touch](#) as we'd love for you to get involved!
- As mentioned back in [February](#) we've started the process of reviewing how we licence boats. The first phase, involving boating organisations, was to find out their views on how the consultation should work and what it should cover. The telephone interviews have been carried out by Involve, an independent charity specialising in public engagement. You can read the summary report of these interviews [here](#). In the next phase, Involve will host a series of in-depth workshops with boaters across the country. We want to ensure that participants will reflect the diversity in the boating community so we're inviting all boaters who would be interested in attending one of the workshops to register their interest. If you're a boat licence holder and we have an email for you then you should have received one earlier today to see if you'd like to take part. If you didn't get the email but are interested in attending one of the workshops please [complete this short online form](#) no later than 30th April 2017. We can't guarantee everyone a place but Involve will try and allocate places for different interest groups at each workshop. If you are not offered a place, please be assured that you will still be able to have your say on the detailed licence review proposals when we consult on these later in the summer and autumn.
- Following on from the [great news from the Cotswold Canals Trust](#) in the last edition there's another canal, the Montgomery, that's just about to embark on a restoration push. The '[Restore the Montgomery Canal](#)' appeal will be launched on Wednesday 26 April 2017 by Mr Charles Lillis, High Sheriff of Shropshire, at The Navigation Inn, Maesbury Marsh, Oswestry SY10 8JB. There will be an open meeting from 4pm to



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7pm when you are invited to hear the plans for restoration, to ask questions and to give their ideas about the restoration.

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### **Why go to the biggest boating festival in the country?**

We've just enjoyed a four-day weekend and, hopefully, many of you managed to get out on the water for a cruise. Failing that, most will have at least experienced the [curative effects](#) of a gentle stroll along the towpath with like-minded people.

Whichever one you did, or will do this coming weekend, you may also have spotted the boat of your dreams or learnt something new about boating or the waterways. Oh, and you may have had a bite to eat and enjoyed a little tipple in one of the many waterside pubs.

While it may seem like a bit of an odd way to start an article about [Crick Boat Show](#), I'm hoping that in the next few paragraphs I can convince you that you will be able to get all the above, and then some, at this year's Show.

#### *Out on the water*

There are [free boat trips](#) running from the marina every 10 minutes but, due to popularity, it's a good idea to book yours soon after you arrive at the festival to avoid disappointment. If you're looking to sharpen your boaty skills then, for a small price, you might consider an hour long [Boat Handling Taster Session](#) (filling up fast so book now!) as an ideal way to build confidence and get a feel for what's involved.

#### *Like-minded people*

Think of your boat club's last social event or the most recent evening in your local waterside pub when you bumped in to some other boaters and multiply it by a huge amount – there's a tangible feeling of being part of a passionate boating community that cannot be underestimated at Crick.

#### *A bite to eat, a little tipple*

With a specialist [food marquee](#) and the more traditional vendors all in one place you won't go hungry. It's worth noting that you'll also need it to fuel your dancing, as you [enjoy top-class cover bands](#) (such as T-Rextasy and Fleetwood Bac)! Far be it from me to suggest that you may also need to visit the onsite beer festival provided by Crick local The Wheatsheaf, to super-charge your moves.

#### *Learnt something new*

As in previous years, [Crick's seminar programme](#) returns. With subjects ranging from budget boating through to living on, and maintaining, a boat there's likely to be a topic of interest whether you're a novice or seasoned boater. Of course, alongside this you'll be able to interrogate some of the 200+ exhibitors about their boating products...

#### *And dream...*



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Despite the festival site nestling in a stunning backdrop of gentle, rolling, hills your eyes will be drawn inwards towards the dazzling array of showboats. Whether you're window shopping or looking to place your order you'll be able to see the whole spectrum of boats from budget boating through to top-end wide beams.

That should be convincing enough but, if not, don't forget that we'll also be there in our own marquee in day-glo orange t-shirts – surely you don't want to miss that?

Britain's biggest inland waterway festival, Crick Boat Show, is on the late May Bank Holiday weekend (27 to 29 May) and early-bird tickets, giving you a 20% discount, are [on sale now](#).

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### What we fixed, maintained and improved in 2016/17

Earlier this month Simon Bamford, director of asset delivery, gave an eye-opening presentation on the work the Canal & River Trust has been doing over the last 12 months to keep canals and rivers open for all to enjoy.

With such a broad range of things to mend, maintain and make better, you'll have to forgive the stat attack below but I think it's the best way to convey the sheer size of the job at hand:

- 166 lock gates were manufactured and fitted. With each weighing in on average at 3.6 tonnes that's nearly 600 tonnes – the same as around 373,000 ducks!
- 68 miles of offside vegetation cleared.
- 1,150 trees affecting customers dealt with, including 949 that Mother Nature decided to blow into a canal or river.
- 22 dredging projects
- 910 planned and 260 emergency construction jobs – all of which were completed – carried out. That means that in those 12 months, 3 new construction jobs were starting every day, for 365 days.

While the stats above give you the 'big picture' view of the huge undertaking, the article below examines the detail behind those things we didn't expect to be fixing...

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### What went wrong in March

This regular column looks back at the previous month to see what things the Canal & River Trust had to unexpectedly fix to keep canals and rivers open for you to enjoy. In March, thankfully not a lot!

In total there were 12 instances of a canal or river being closed to navigation for more than four hours. These amounted to a total of 37 days where cruising was affected. The biggest culprits were locks – on five occasions we had to unexpectedly repair a lock with damaged cills or paddles being the main reason. The only other unplanned events to cause more than one closure were fallen trees. Three fell, maybe after being weakened (yes, I'm looking at you Storm Doris) and blocked a navigation.



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The remaining four instances were a faulty bridge, a blocked weir, a leaky canal bed and a collapsed culvert.

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.

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

Keeping your canals and rivers ready for you to enjoy is a year-round job. From time-to-time this includes some major engineering that we need to temporarily close the navigation for. Below you'll find a list, by region, of anything that's happen that may affect your cruising.

Just click on the one where you'll be and a webpage will open listing any stoppages for that region (if your region isn't listed then, yay, there aren't any navigation closures there!). If you're not quite sure which region your planned cruise falls in to please take a [look at this map](#).

- [London](#)
- [Manchester, Pennines & Potteries](#)
- [North East](#)
- [North West](#)
- [South Wales & Severn](#)
- [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.

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### Bits and Bobs

- Did you know that, starting tomorrow (22 April) in west London, the Alarum Theatre Group is embarking on a 15-week ['The Idle Women; Recreating the Journey'](#) tour? It follows the 320-mile route wartime trainees working on the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company (GUCC) boats would have taken 75 years ago. Performers and crew will be on an historic 80-year-old working boat and a support narrowboat. It's definitely worth catching one of the shows and, don't worry that the historic boat might not make it to each venue – the production has free breakdown and emergency assistance from the lovely people at [River Canal Rescue!](#)

Happy boating!

Damian