



Canal & River Trust

Making life better by water

Boaters' Update 13 July 2018

Welcome to the latest edition. Who would have thought that, after writing about the heatwave two weeks ago, that we'd still be slowly melting in it now?

So whilst half the nation watches the World Cup or Wimbledon, why not take advantage and experience a warm summer's day with very little waterborne or towpath traffic! What better time could there be to appreciate the benefits of being on or by the water?

So, before all that, what can you read about in this edition? As well as the usual news roundup, events and summary of this weekend's major stoppages, you'll find a couple of articles on water – the first about the steps we're having to take to preserve water on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and the second about boat water tank hygiene. Along with that we also continue the environmental boating discussion. If there's a particular topic you'd like to see in a future edition then please [drop me a line](#).

Happy boating,

Damian

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News round-up and the fortnight ahead

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

- 29 June – Our [latest Boat Owners' Views survey](#) has recorded that mental and physical wellbeing are the biggest motivation for boating.
- 3 July – This year Britain's waterways [celebrate 50 years of renaissance](#) – turning from a national disgrace into a national treasure with the power to improve the happiness and wellbeing of millions of people across the nation.
- 3 July – Staff and volunteers have undertaken a [mammoth clear-up project](#) in Melling and Bootle this week, removing several skip-loads of fly-tipped rubbish from the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.
- 6 July – A local Nordic walking group is using the Grand Union Canal towpath in Hemel Hempstead as a way to keep fit and help local people [walk themselves back to health](#).



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Below I've picked out some highlights to see and do over the next fortnight. Of course, there are plenty of other activities and volunteering opportunities around the network: visit the [events section of the website](#) to find the perfect one for you.

- 14 & 15 July – [Northwich River Festival](#) is back! With a weekend of dragon boat racing, street theatre, live music and an artisan market there's something for everyone.
- 15 July – Decorate your bike and join the parade from Whitby Park, Ellesmere Port to the National Waterways Museum where there will be lots of [bike and boat activities](#) going on.
- 21 & 22 Jul – Come and see boats, trucks, cars and motorcycles in the grounds of the spectacular Anderton Boat Lift for the [Anderton Transport Festival](#) which is a celebration of transport through the ages, both on dry land and in the water.
- 22 July – Come down and [see us at Lune Aqueduct](#) to discover more about visitor destinations, volunteer opportunities, days out, fishing, canoeing. Or, if you'd prefer, just enjoy the amazing location and have a free ice lolly on us!

Keeping your water tank clean

It's been a couple of editions since we [talked maintenance](#) so here we pick up that thread with help from the experts at [River Canal Rescue](#). Given the recent weather, and the need to stay hydrated, the following article about water tank hygiene is rather timely:

'Leisure marine domestic water tanks are typically constructed of three types of material; plastic, stainless steel or mild steel, each with differing maintenance requirements and associated risks.

'The highest risk material is mild steel - it reacts with oxygen to produce rust which drastically depreciates the water quality and creates an environment for bacteria to develop. While the bacteria is not known to be dangerous, if a bacterial infection takes hold, it can give the water a foul smell and taste. When inspecting the tank, the bacterial infection will take the form of slime attached to the sides.

'Plastic tanks offer greater protection from bacterial infection however, dependent on material and age, they will start to release toxins into the water when they begin to break down so it's important to replace plastic tanks in accordance with their shelf life.

'They're also more likely to absorb or hold any chemicals added to purify the water. For example, the chemical in purifying tablets used to flush the system may remain in the water for a year or so and while these toxins are not dangerous, a chemical smell and taste will persist.

'The lowest risk material is stainless steel – this offers protection from rusting and bacterial infection and as it doesn't retain toxins, it avoids persistent foul smells and tastes.'

Domestic water tanks – match your maintenance to the material



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'Stainless steel tanks require a purification cycle of at least once a year. To do this, add a purifying tablet to a full water tank and leave to activate for the advised time period. Once purification has occurred, turn all the taps on and drain the system as much as possible. This will ensure purification flows through the system. Next, refill and flush the tank twice more to evacuate any residual chemical within the system (with the taps on and a running hose pipe in the tank).

'Mild steel tanks require the same purification cycle as a stainless-steel tank but they also need deep cleaning every three to five years. This entails removing the inspection cover and power washing the inside. Do not sand down or rub the rust off - rust is not dangerous and the power washer will remove any loose rust and debris build up. Do not paint the inside of the tank (unless specialist paint is used) as this will leach toxins into the water.

'Plastic tanks also require a yearly purification cycle, but instead of using chemicals, they should be cleaned out manually using hot water. If the tank is inaccessible a hot water flush will suffice. If a chemical is the only method available, regularly flush the system with fresh water. Furthermore, do not allow water to stand in the tank for long periods of time as this will increase the build-up of toxins in the water.

'Finally, filtration is advisable for any domestic water tank. A filter will remove any debris or sediment, drastically improving the water quality and consistency, and there are also filters that can remove toxins. Filtration however, does not replace the need for tank maintenance and if this is neglected, water will be foul smelling/tasting water even if filters are installed.'

Leeds & Liverpool Canal water conservation

If you've been on the Leeds & Liverpool recently, or are on it now, you'll know that we've been working hard to conserve water. It's not only us though: thanks to boaters who've also been diligently doing to their best to help us make every drop count.

Local rain gauges show that some parts of the North West have received as little as 30% of the Long-Term Average rainfall in May and June – with no rainfall received at all in the first week of July - placing extra pressure on reservoir holdings over the past few months.

Last month we announced restricted opening hours on part of the Leeds & Liverpool, a small part of the entire 2,000 network, to make the available water last as long as possible. Use of locks at Barrowford, Greenberfield, Bank Newton and Gargrave was restricted to 10am – 6pm. Unfortunately, with the continued drawdown of the reservoirs, the prolonged low rainfall and with the forecast for further dry weather, the Trust is restricting opening hours further to between 10am and 4pm.

Although reservoirs were full in April a number of them in the North West, particularly those feeding the summit of the Leeds & Liverpool (which has a unique set of water resource issues), are relatively small and rely on regular inflows from rainwater during the spring and summer to add more water to them as usage increases. The below average rainfall in recent months has meant that the reservoirs haven't been able to recharge at a sufficient rate to provide for the summer's boating.



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The restrictions, taking effect from today, 13 July, will help to conserve some water however we will need to reluctantly close part of the canal to boats, between Wigan Flight (from below lock 85) and Gargrave (from below lock 30). This temporary closure will start on Monday 30 July.

It's not clear how long the closure will last for but it's likely to be throughout August and potentially beyond if there is no significant, sustained rainfall. While the closure will prevent use of that stretch of canal by boats the towpath will remain open for visitors and the local community alike to enjoy.

Arrangements are also being made at Bingley Five Rise and Three Rise with passage down the locks restricted to between 8am and 12pm and up the locks limited to between 1pm and 5pm.

Elsewhere we're having to also introduce restrictions on parts of the Rochdale Canal and Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

The Rochdale Canal summit will be closed on Mondays and Fridays between locks 34 and 44. In order to conserve water the section will also be closed between 4pm and 9am on the other days of the week. Moorings are available immediately below these locks for people arriving after 4pm or during one of the closed days.

The East Lock flight on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal is also being closed overnight to prevent water loss. The canal between lock 1 East and lock 8 East will be locked up between 4pm and 9am and, again, moorings are available immediately below these locks.

Jon Horsfall, Head of Customer Service Support said; "Despite the prolonged dry weather and current heatwave the vast majority of our 2,000 mile network is available for boaters and holiday makers to enjoy as normal but some very localised parts of our network in the North West are starting to feel the heat.

"In particular the reservoirs which feed the summit of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal have seen very little rainfall over the past few months and so we've been monitoring the situation closely and working with boaters and boating businesses to make best use of the available water. We've taken the decision to temporarily close part of the canal to boats very reluctantly and can assure everyone on that stretch of the canal that we'll reopen for navigation as soon as we possibly can.

"People can keep abreast of the situation by looking at the [Reservoir Watch](#) section of our website and, as we do every summer, boaters across the country are asked to play their part by helping to make best possible use of water. Every time we use a lock 200,000 litres of water are used and so we all have a role to play."

Boaters can help conserve water by:

- Sharing locks where possible and making the best use of the water available.
- Ensuring paddles are fully closed once they've passed through a lock.



- Aiming for minimal contact when navigating through locks by ensuring gates are fully open as they pass through. Pushing gates open using a boat can damage the seal between the gates, increasing its leakage.

Composting toilets – turning sewage into sustenance

Thanks to all of you who got it in touch after the [last edition's article](#) on environmentally friendly boating. Without doubt, the most talked about subject was composting toilets.

Hopefully you're not eating your dinner while reading as what follows is, let's say, not what you'd consider appetite-inspiring.

What and how

In simple terms, a composting toilet on your boat will not be that different the compost in your garden. The big difference is what goes in to the mix – human waste. Most models, if not all, have two openings. One for solids and the other for liquid.

Once you've made your deposit in the 'solids' compost bank, microorganisms get to work helping it decompose. Some designs (actually most I've come across online) recommend the addition of a carbon additive. This can be in the form of sawdust (pet bedding), peat moss or coconut coir to name a few.

There are a few reasons for this; the air pockets it creates helps with aerobic decomposition, it improves the carbon to nitrogen ratio (which is important if you plan to put your compost to work) and, perhaps most importantly if you've a sensitive nose, it reduces odour.

On that subject, and possibly the most asked question, is whether there's a stink. Anyone who's been to a festival that's used composting toilets would be forgiven for thinking that the smell would drive you off the boat. That's not the case, apparently, with one you'd install on your boat. Due to a tiny fan (like the one in a computer) air is always being drawn out of the 'solids' bank and vented outside the boat.

Depending on your, erm, frequency of use it's difficult to say just how often you'll have to empty the 'solids' bank. It is, however, highly likely that your waste won't be garden-ready. What you'll need to do is move it to a second location (such as your boat roof or warm engine bay – mesophiles, the teeny tiny organisms that do the composting, are a bit like Goldilocks – they like it warm but not too cold or hot) and regularly aerate it until it reaches it's ideal humus state.

Do remember though, if you can't keep it stored until it's ready to use, it will still need to be disposed at an [Elsan](#)/sanitary station – if not properly composted it may still contain dangerous bacteria such as E Coli. Liquids go into the Elsan unit and solids should be bagged in a nappy bag and placed in the [domestic waste bins](#). Please don't dump liquid and solid waste on the towpath or into the water, knowing that it hasn't composted properly.



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For completeness here's a few simple dos and don'ts for everyone using onboard toilet facilities. To avoid blockages and problems, no matter what type of toilet system you use, you need to remember just a couple of simple rules.

- If you haven't eaten it or drunk it, it doesn't go into the toilet.
- Only use a small quantity of toilet paper, not half a rainforest!
- Only use smallest amount of chemical recommended, try and use a 'green' [chemical](#) if you can (in pump out/cassette toilets).
- The longer the better! Solid waste can take up to 12 months to compost. If you can't store it for long enough, bin it!
- Never pour urine [into the canal](#) nor at other random locations along the canal – it may contain undigested medicines such as anti-biotics!

If you'd like to know more and have a few minutes to spare then why not watch this boater's [rundown of his composting set-up](#) and how he uses the finished product. Of course, nothing is always plain sailing so, in an effort to get a balanced view, you might also want to [watch this video](#)...

To give us, at the Trust, a better idea of the proportion of boaters using, or considering, composting toilets it'd be great if you could spare a few minutes to [complete this short, four question, survey](#). Thanks!

If there are any composting or horticulturing experts out there who'd like to give advice on boating compost uses and how to produce the best mix then [please do get in touch](#).

More ways for you to get involved

Many boaters go the extra mile in helping to keep canals and rivers in good condition by [volunteering](#) or [donating](#). As you're such an integral part of what makes waterways so wonderful I thought you'd like to know about other ways you can get involved:

- Are you a proud owner of a wide beam boat? If so, do [please get in touch](#) and let me know just what is so great about having a wide beam – we'd love to run a feature on the pros and cons of being a wide beam boater to help others decide if they should go big...
- As a Boaters' Update reader you're likely to be a passionate boater who loves nothing better than being out on the water. As a 24/7 presence we'd love to have your help - if you spot any behaviour that may be damaging locks, bridges or anything that's associated with the waterways then [please report it to us](#). The sooner we know about it, the sooner we can help those doing the damage – the video below shows what happens when you use your boat to open a lock gate - understand that they are harming a national treasure and spoiling the boating experience for their fellow boater.

<https://youtu.be/pW53ygARfml>



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Maintenance, repair and restoration work affecting cruising this weekend

As someone who's out, or by, the water more often than most you'll know that there are times when we need to fix things that unexpectedly break. Or when [it doesn't rain](#) as much as usual. So, below, you'll find a list of anything that's happening that may affect you if you're planning on a cruise this weekend.

- [Bridge 10 \(Holmes Swing Bridge\) to Stanley Lock Flight / Eldonian Village - Leeds & Liverpool Canal](#)
- [Lock 1 to 12. Macclesfield canal](#)
- [Lock 2, Belan Locks, Montgomery Canal](#)
- [Huddersfield Narrow Canal, Lock 9 East, Isis Lock](#)
- [Glasson Flight, Lancaster Canal](#)
- [Camp Hill Top Lock to Knowle Top Lock, Grand Union Canal](#)
- [Lock 4, Aston, Birmingham & Fazeley Canal](#)
- [Marsh Lock, Weaver Navigation/Manchester Ship Canal](#)
- [Stainton Aqueduct - Lancaster Canal](#)
- [Standthorne Lock to Wardle Lock, Middlewich Branch, Shropshire Union](#)
- [Teeses Bridge \(Stoney Lane Little Bloxwich\) Wyrley & Essington Canal](#)
- [Three Mills Lock, Prescott Channel](#)
- [Bridge 46 Bevans Lane Bridge, Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal](#)

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. If you have any questions about a specific closure then you'll find the email addresses for our regional offices [on our contacts page](#).

Bits and bobs

- If you're a budding gardener then you'll already have seen ecologist Paul Wilkinson in his starring role on BBC Gardeners World (12/7/18) as he and the Trust's volunteers showed viewers how we're 'greening-up' Birmingham's city centre waterways. It's well [worth a watch](#) – forward to 07:00