

More of your feedback in response to our recently published article on [waterside graffiti](#)

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Some graffiti art work does take some skill - the work sometimes pleasing, and it has its place in modern society. It can actually improve some large concrete bridges! Like most art you either like it, it does not grab you or you just loathe it. But is the canal the right place?

How long before "artists" decide it's acceptable to decorate boats moored on the canal. Would some owners embrace that as art? On balance therefore I think it has to be resisted or given the right platform - where it can be celebrated.

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Re. your discussion on graffiti, whilst the poor ones are an eyesore, look at these that I had to photo by lock 42 below Leicester – brilliant brightening up of a potentially dismal area.



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How can we worry about a bit of paint that might be better than was there before get concentration on getting water ways open.

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I'm slightly surprised by the overall negative views of graffiti, I'm putting it down to the fact people love to complain. To me the waterways are a series of connected micro cultures without marked borders, much like districts in a large city, graffiti at each location is a reflection of these small cultures and thoughts offering a spectrum of views on life. Sometimes this results in junk and sometimes beauty.

You should simply appreciate the bits you like and accept or ignore the rest, or if you can't accept it, maybe join in and cover the graffiti with something you appreciate.

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Ascending Camp Hill locks in Birmingham a few years' back, the locks were covered in graffiti but there were no security locks on the paddlegear. It seemed to us that the locals preferred painting to vandalising the operation of the locks, which was somehow reassuring.

We do long cruises and came across the following graffiti which I thought was a bright view of the canal (obviously don't like rude/lewd/abusive/foul language stuff).



Most graffiti is vandalism - if it stays, like in Oxford, it reflect the local authority's and probably the locals' lack of care for their environment. Sometimes, as at Alrewas, it is art and of interest. Occasionally, it may be art even if it is not sanctioned.

Generally, it does work to warn us not to moor - but that's not a reason to leave. Generally, I admire local authorities that make an effort to remove it. Our own mooring area, Burton-on-Trent in East Staffs, is one of these.

I've had my boat for 10 years and have taken her over much of the southern waterways network, including central London. I think some graffiti can be beautiful and a case in point is this photo which I took at the junction of the Hertford Union canal and the River Lea navigation in 2008.



However, my narrowboat has the unfortunate distinction of being the only boat I have ever seen that has been "tagged" by a vandal. This spray paint tagging is not art, I think it is the human equivalent of a dog peeing on a lamp post to leave its mark.



As if to underscore the randomness of this incident, it occurred at Lower Heyford on the Oxford Canal - a beautiful rural spot - and the same vandal tagged the back of a nearby CRT sign at the same time. I didn't even bother reporting it to the police, because they did not attend when I had a metal theft - the domes of my mushroom vents were stolen - nor indeed did they attend

subsequently when I had a fuel theft - the fuel tank had been pumped out because it was emptied even below the water line.

The police did attend for 2 burglaries, both by the same person judging by the method of entry, and on the second occasion the thief left perfect finger prints. When tracked down, he was already in prison for other burglaries, he was charged with my theft, pleaded guilty and was given a conditional discharge by the magistrate despite having wrecked the mahogany doors which cost £800 to replace. I have no confidence in the criminal justice system.

In the 10 years, I've also had a hatch cover, barge pole, mooring pin and fenders stolen and have had my mooring ropes slashed and the boat cast adrift. There's roughly one incident per year on average, always when unattended, never when I'm on board. I thus don't perceive graffiti to be an isolated problem in its own category but as part of a wider societal problem of disrespect for others. It amounts to violation of someone, it is never victimless. In the case of CRT property, the victims are the boat licence holders including me who pay for the clean-up at the expense of infrastructure improvements.

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If it's done well, it looks good. However, graffiti 'tags' are simply ugly. If you've got problem areas where graffiti is a problem and consists of ugly tags and poor quality work, why not invite real graffiti artists to do a proper job?

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Graffiti is rarely ever a good thing, on buildings, under bridges, or on boats and trains. Where companies or organisations have paid for graffiti style murals, these may be acceptable as street art, but usually they get adorned with other bad art in due course.

It would be good if someone could invent a surface coating which is impervious to spray paint. I've seen people cleaning off graffiti by the canal; it doesn't look easy, and it's a drain on the Trusts resources.

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