



**Canal &  
River Trust**

Making life better by water

# Rehoming the boats

## National Waterways Museum Collection

### Further information

closing date 18 May 2020



## Why is the Museum looking for new homes for some of its boats?

The Canal & River Trust is responsible for the most comprehensive and important collection of inland waterways material anywhere in the UK. It has been Designated by Arts Council England as a collection of national significance and includes 68 historic vessels of which fourteen are listed on the National Historic Ships Register and 12 form part of the National Historic Fleet.

Despite dedicated staff and volunteers striving to find sustainable solutions, the challenges of looking after the Boat Collection have dogged the Museum for many years. In 2015 a report funded from the Esmée Fairburn Collections Fund reviewed the options for the care, conservation and display of the Boat Collection. Following rigorous conservation processes developed by National Historic Ships UK to better understand vessel significance, the report recommended disposal of a number of craft (either by re-homing or documented deconstruction) whilst maintaining the Collection's integrity in terms of its quality and representation. This would then allow the Canal & River Trust to better look after its collection by focussing future resources on caring for the most significant vessels.

## What boats are you removing from the Collection?

The boats identified for disposal are:

Aries – Star class wooden motor narrowboat ('small ricky') c1935

Birchalls – butty boat 1913, converted to a shortened tug in 1957

Dugout Canoe – A moder carved dug out canoe c1950

Chiltern - wooden motor narrowboat (stern only) c1946

Marlyn – wooden motor gigboat c1940

Marple – iron hull of ice breaker c1850

Marsden - iron hull of ice breaker early 20thc.

Minstrel – small boat, c1940

Reed Punt – a lateral-planked punt in poor condition

Scorpio – dumb barge, known as 'long boat' built in 1890 as Helena

Shirley – small powered leisure boat c1930

Speedwell – wooden dumb barge c1925

Spindrift 3 - Royal Navy "Jollyboat" c1910

Stratford – small iron riveted boat from Stratford Canal c1930

Ulla – clinker-built salmon fishing boat c1952

Whaley Bridge – iron hull of ice breaker c1900

## Why can't you just sell the boats or give them to anyone who will take them on?

The Museums Association Code of Ethics, to which as an Accredited Museum we adhere, supports the *responsible* removal of items from museum collections so long as this meets legal and ethical requirements. In addition, there must be a clear rationale for each item to be re-homed.

As an Accredited Museum there is a responsibility on the Trustees to care for the Collection in such a way that it will be a benefit and inspiration for future generations to enjoy. Museums also frequently consist of objects which have been donated or bequeathed and naturally there is an expectation on the part of the donor that their gift will be seen and enjoyed for many generations to come.

All museums, have a duty to behave with due diligence in looking after their collections and any decision to remove an item must take this responsibility into account and ensure public confidence is maintained in the individual museum and the Museum Sector as a whole.

### **Who has agreed to this?**

The Canal & River Trust Board of Trustees approved a policy for the National Waterways Museum to dispose of twelve historic boats in the National Collection. Next, we established an expert panel to rigorously consider each boat proposed and consider what might be the best option. The panel members are:

- Graham Boxer, Head of Collections & Archives, Canal & River Trust.
- Margaret Harrison, Collections Manager, Canal & River Trust
- Piran Harte, National Historic Ships UK,
- Phil Prettyman, Chair, Historic Narrow Boat Club
- David Viner (Canal & River Trust)
- Emma Chaplin (CEO, Association of Independent Museums & former Curator at Ellesmere Port)
- Rachel Mulhearn (Interim Director, Preston Museums & former Director of the Merseyside Maritime Museum)
- Mike Turpin – Museum Volunteer and past Chair of the Waterways Museum Society.
- Mike Carter (Consultant Marine Engineer and member of the boating community)

Once a new home has been identified, the Trustees will have the final say on the recommendations of the Expert Panel.

### **How will you go about finding new owners for these boats?**

In the first instance, under the Trust's Policy and Museums Association guidelines, these vessels will be offered to accredited museums. The purpose being that as much as possible, museum collections should remain in the public domain. However, should a home not be found in another museum or relevant public body, then they can then be offered to individuals and private interested bodies.

However, for historic inland waterways vessels, the Canal & River Trust recognises that there are many enthusiasts – some of whom are members of the Historic Narrow Boat Club – who love and cherish their boats and who could provide the right loving home for these displaced vessels. The Trust also recognises its responsibility in finding the right home in a fair and transparent way and to achieve this we have set out criteria that have to be met by individuals when submitting an expression of interest form.

### **Can't the boats go back to their original owners?**

The boats in our collection have come to us over the past 40 years. Many date back to the museum's opening in 1976. We will do everything we can to contact the original owners to tell them of our plans. Boats often come to us because their owner is no longer able to look after them. So it is unlikely that, even were we to be able to contact them, the original owner would be willing, or able, to take the boat back.

## **Why are you giving the boats away and not selling them?**

The priority for the Canal & River Trust is to preserve as much the waterways heritage as possible. Many of the boats are in a very poor condition and are likely to be expensive to look after appropriately. In addition, the new owner will be expected to pay for the transport costs of the vessel. The Trust want to ensure that the new owner has the capacity to take on this responsibility without the vessel remaining a burden to the waterways.

## **What will you do, if you can't re-home any of the boats?**

It may be that no other Museum or individual will be interested in taking them on or able to afford the costs in looking after them. If no interest is expressed, the boat will be recommended for *documented deconstruction*, a process by which the item is carefully recorded before being broken up so that any important information held by the boat, or parts of it, can be saved to broaden our knowledge and to hold that knowledge for future generations.

The Museums' curatorial team has specific expertise in recording historic vessels. Their recording project on Gwendoline is used by National Historic Ships as a case study in best practice and we have been shortlisted for a Living Waterways award for conservation. Their expertise will ensure a comprehensive record of each vessel is created.

## **What about some of the other boats in the Collection? I might be interested in one of those.**

The current boats identified for re-housing have been selected because they are not integral to the collection and because we have sufficient documentation gathered together to enable us to continue with the disposal process. Later, there may be other boats that we are able to offer for re-homing.

## **How do I express an interest in one of the boats in the current round?**

An Expressions of Interest Form can be downloaded from [canalrivertrust.org.uk/nwm](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/nwm). Should you require more information, please contact the museum at [nationalwaterwaysmuseum@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:nationalwaterwaysmuseum@canalrivertrust.org.uk).

All applicants must show what the plans they have for the vessel, how they will be care for it over the long term, what public benefit there might be, how these plans will be funded and what, if any, support will be needed from the museum. All expressions of interest will be considered anonymously by the panel before the final recommendation for the new home will be made to the Board of Trustees for ratification.

**Expressions of Interest should be returned to the museum by 18 May 2020.**

Images of the boats



Aries – Star class wooden motor narrowboat ('small ricky') c1935



Chiltern - wooden motor narroboat (stern only) c1946



Marple – iron hull of ice breaker c1850



Marsden - iron hull of ice breaker early 20thc.



Minstrel – small boat, c1940



Speedwell – wooden dumb barge c1925



Spindrift 3 - Royal Navy "Jollyboat" c1910



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