

Rehoming the boats

National Waterways Museum Collection

Further information

closing date 22nd January 2021



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 rehoming 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.

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 rehomed.

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 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.
- Becky Peacock, Collections Manager, Canal & River Trust
- Victoria Wallworth, 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 Museum's 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. Should you require more information, please contact the museum at 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 **midday on 22nd January 2021**.

***NEW Boats for disposal are:**



Birchills – butty boat constructed in 1913. It was converted to a shortened tug boat in 1957. In this form it worked on the Birmingham Canal Navigation. It is of composite construction, with iron plate sides on forged iron frames with a timber bottom. The engine is of uncertain provenance and

is incomplete. Current dimensions 17.4m x 2.1m x approx. 1.2m draft.

Dugout canoe – a modern dugout canoe possibly originating in the Indian Ocean area in the 1950s. 4.8m x 0.55m. Cracked at one end and not in floating condition.



Coxless Four – wooden, clinker built, 14m long. Unknown age. Possibly in floating condition but cannot be confirmed due to currently inaccessible storage.

Racing Skiff - clinker built





Reed punt – lateral planked punt in extremely poor condition, partly broken with some evidence of pest infestation. Original dimensions 5.2m x 1.5m. Could possibly be used as the basis of a replica.

Scorpio - Leeds & Liverpool wooden dumb barge of the type known as “long boat”, built in the 1890s as “Helena” for the Wigan Coal & Iron Co. The sole survivor of her type, she was used for carrying coal, most recently for the British Fuel Company until 1971. Dimensions 21.9m x 4.3m x 1.5m (underside of keel to top of gunwale). Carvel built with a mixture of oak & larch planking on oak framing and steel knees. Currently in very poor non-floating condition.



***Boats for relisting are:**



Aries - is a wooden motorboat, built by Walker Brothers of Rickmansworth in 1935 for the Grand Union Canal Company. She was paired with the buttty Ariel and carried general cargo. Has undergone extensive rebuilding in the past. Dimensions 22m x 2.14m. Poor / non floating condition. No engine.

Marlyn – wooden motor gig boat, used on the Mersey at Liverpool. Build date unknown. 6.5m x 2.19m. Has undergone extensive rebuilding in the past. Floating and in fair condition, complete with engine.



Minstrel - rowing boat, probably pre-1950. 4.1m x 1.5m, Very poor condition, incomplete, non-floating.

Shirley - small motor launch believed to be a hire boat from the River Dee. Build date unknown. 3.9m x 1.4m. Very poor / non floating condition. No engine.





Speedwell - built in 1925 and is an example of the wooden wide boats used in Southern England. Worked for William Stevens of Guildford on the River Thames and the River Wey. Her principal traffic was carrying grain from docks in London to mills on the Wey. She carried grain to Cox's Mill at Weybridge until 1969. Dimensions 22.3m x 4.22m x 1.07m draught. Oak frames, oak planking, and pitch pine decks. She is of carvel construction. An interesting design feature is the ability to fold back the rudder against the transom to enable it to fit in a lock. Currently in very poor non-floating condition.

Ulla - a Conway Salmon boat, built by John Phillips of Conway in 1952-3. 1.64m long, very poor, incomplete, non-floating condition. No engine.



Whaley Bridge – iron hull of an ice breaker c1900 from the Peak Forest Canal
6.4m x 2.1m