

WATERWAYS NEWS

The latest stories • Events • Restoration • Carrying & freight news

East London Waterways Festival 'smashing' say boaters

Over 50 narrowboats, 700 boaters (mostly using paddles or pedal craft) and 10,000 visitors were drawn to the first East London Waterways Festival, held over this year's August bank holiday.

The festival, organised by the London Legacy Development Corporation (which controls the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park) and the Canal & River Trust, celebrated the long-awaited reopening of the waterways in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the newly restored Carpenters Road Lock.

The powered boats all went through the new lock – simply because they could, of course. The event means that over 3 miles of the old Bow Back Rivers is now navigable, and the weekend saw three major flotilla cruises organised by the St Pancras Cruising Club.

On the Saturday, eight boats with less-experienced crews participated in a 'tideway taster'. This flotilla went through the massive Three Mills Lock, down Bow Creek, then turned in the tideway and returned to Bow Locks.

Later, 16 more adventurous boats made the same trip to the Thames, but continued around the Isle of Dogs and up to Limehouse Basin where they overnighted. The next day, the boats returned from Limehouse and went through the Thames Barrier to Barking Creek, before returning to Bow Creek.



Waterworks River in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, with swan pedalos and a trip-boat.

"It was smashing, lovely, a cracking weekend," said Andrew Phasey of the St Pancras Cruising Club. "We were well looked after by CRT and Legacy." He also commented that he hopes it can become a regular fixture.

"We're really happy with how the festival went," CRT told *WW*. "It was part of the Heritage Lottery Fund conditions for the Carpenters Road Lock restoration. We'd love to hold another, but there is a lot to consider in terms of organising and funding something of that size again. We'd like to thank everybody

who helped support the event and make it such a success."

One question yet to be answered is the lack of visitor moorings. Although the 3 miles of Olympic Park Waterways is now 'open for business', stopping is not permitted, and CRT is aware of demand from boaters for at least some bookable moorings.

A further issue is the half-mile of navigable water on the River Lea, north of Carpenters Road Lock, and controlled not by CRT but by the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority. Powered craft are currently not permitted here.

But most people are likely to take to these waters either on the daily boat tours (running until 31st October) or on the new fleet of 'swan pedalos', available every weekend throughout the winter, but suspended on football match days. More information is available on the Legacy website: queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/the-park/things-to-do/park-tours.

Boating the new Stadium Island Loop is free, seven days a week, but needs to be booked in advance by calling 0303 040 4040 or emailing enquiries.london@canalrivertrust.org.uk. Online booking will also be available soon.



The River Lea north of Carpenters Road Lock, where only unpowered craft are permitted.

CRT begins new asset management strategy

The Canal & River Trust is appealing for volunteers with civil engineering experience to help it reclassify its assets – the physical items that make up the waterways such as locks, bridges, buildings, installations and facilities.

For some years the assets have simply been graded from A to E, with A being in perfect or 'as-new' condition, while D is poor and E is at risk of failure. Since the scheme began under British Waterways, the number of D- and E-grade assets has fallen from 29% to around 14%.

Now CRT wants to fine-tune this, by grading assets on a scale of one to 100, and by factoring in their importance to waterways users, the consequences of failure, how they will degrade over time, and the cost of replacement.

One aim is to improve investment decisions over a longer period. Previously they were geared to one to three years, aligned with the old BW funding plans; now the aim is ten years or more. The new scheme should also make failure less likely, reduce unplanned stoppages and their duration, and give better value for money. Above all, CRT says, it gives "more focus on customers".

However, this is initially very labour-intensive; CRT says it could take five to ten years to fully move to the new system. So it is appealing for volunteers to take on much of the work. Engineering students could 'beef up their CV' by learning applicable skills, gaining experience and receiving mentorship while studying, and retired engineers could share their wisdom and contribute to the preservation of the waterways.

Details are available at canalrivertrust.org.uk – search for 'asset management research assistants'. Expenses would be paid, and the project is part-funded by the People's Postcode Lottery.

New bridge over MSC and Sankey

A new bridge across the Manchester Ship Canal is expected to be built after Warrington Borough Council unveiled its preferred route for the new Western Link Road, to ease long-standing traffic congestion.

The new 2-mile road would also create bridges across the nearby River Mersey and the Sankey Canal restoration. None of the bridges appear to pose a threat to navigation, and the MSC crossing would be high-level, avoiding the need for another swing-bridge. Part of the problem with existing congestion is that the two nearby MSC swing-



Close to the site of the new bridge over the Sankey Canal (and Sankey Brook) restoration.

bridges can cause long hold-ups when ships pass through.

The new route would link the A56 Chester Road at

Walton with the A57 in Sankey Valley Park. Subject to final approval, construction will begin in 2020.

There were only around 100 boats at the IWA Festival of Water at Erewash, but they crowded the narrow navigation.



Campaigning theme to Erewash IWA Festival

The Erewash Canal saw a rare influx of boats over the August bank holiday as the Inland Waterways Association's 2017 Festival of Water came to this normally quiet backwater of the network.

Over 100 boats and 15,000 visitors attended the event, which drew great interest from the locals and encouraged them to recognise the canal that's right on their doorstep.

This year's festival was noticeably a campaigning event. Many of the stalls highlighted problem areas on the waterways and restoration schemes, with the HS2 high-speed rail project also being a major concern.

While navigation of the Erewash Canal itself will not be obstructed by HS2, the waterway will be seriously affected by the proposed line. A 52ft-high viaduct at Long Eaton is planned, and the M1 will probably be diverted across the canal.

Another campaign promoted at the event

was from the Friends of Bennerley Viaduct who are advocating for the reopening of the structure. This notable piece of engineering, which runs across the river valley close to the Erewash Canal, was built in 1877 and has a lightweight wrought iron latticework design to avoid subsidence problems caused by local coal mines. It carried a branch of the Great Northern Railway, and is one of only two wrought iron viaducts that have survived.

The viaduct was closed to rail traffic in 1968 and was only saved due to the high cost of dismantling. Now Sustrans hopes to find a practical use for the quarter-mile-long structure, as part of its new Great Northern Greenway, which will run between Nottingham and Derby.

Next year's festival will be back on an EA navigation, in the riverside park at St Neots on the Great Ouse.

Rupert Smedley



Bennerley Viaduct – centre-stage for preservation at the festival this year.

GONDOLA IN LITTLE VENICE

Real Venetian gondolier Maurizio Ulliana is currently using one of his native city's iconic gondolas to ply his trade in London's not-quite-so-real Little Venice.

The Gondola Love (LONDON-VENice) project is an attempt to raise awareness of the Traditional Venetian Boats Association which supports the preservation, restoration and maintenance of these beautiful craft in Padua, where many are built.

Maurizio is offering gondola rides around the Regent's Canal, giving lessons in 'voga veneta' (Venetian rowing) and hiring the gondola out for special occasions. Meanwhile, he is also recruiting members for the TVBA, or simply encouraging donations to the charity.

Regular readers might recall Maurizio from his sponsored row between Stratford and London, which we covered last year (*WW*, December



Maurizio hard at work in Little Venice.

2016), intended to honour the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death (Venice being the location of four of his greatest plays).

Maurizio's gondola, *Marisa Cristiano*, was built in Venice in 1986, but has been in the UK since 2003, first in Birmingham

and then Oxford. For more information, email traditionalvenetianboats@gmail.com or call 07391 031298.

Canal boat-building healthy, says industry body

A report released in September says that British canal boat-building remains healthy.

British Marine, the marine industry association, says that last year canal boat-building was worth around £10m to the economy. However, unlike overseas and European boat-building, British canal boats are a closed market, catering to a domestic inland boating customer base with finite mooring space and limited capacity to hold additional traffic. As a result, waterway capacity and licensing are as much a factor in British boat production as customer demand.

After a sharp fall in production of almost a third in 2008/2009, this has hovered around 175-200 boats per year for most of the post-recession period. In 2016, 200 canal boats were manufactured in the UK, a slight decline of 2% on 2015.

Canal boat production is dominated by a small number of specialist boat-builders making bespoke narrowboats and Dutch barges.

British Marine claims the growth in the number of people actually participating

in canal-boating has climbed steadily to almost 315,000 in 2016 and there are now over 25,000 canal boats in the UK, with an increase of 1,096 in the number of boat licences since 2014.

Inland marinas market also healthy

Another report from British Marine concludes that the UK canal and river marinas and moorings sector is healthy.

Revenues in the year to spring 2017 were up 3.6% on last year, at £70m, with a total of 266 marinas supporting nearly 1,000 full time jobs, a slight increase on the previous year.

The report says the average marina size is 130 berths, and operators are reporting 88.7% occupancy, the highest since 2013.

Of the planned 1,158 new inland berths this year, 1,028 are coming from new marinas, rather than the expansion of existing ones.

The sector has a high proportion of family-run businesses, and has benefited from TV programmes like *Carry on Barging* and *Great Canal Journeys*, says British Marine.



The rebuilt Crowther Bridge.

FLOOD-HIT CALDER & HEBBLE BRIDGE REOPENS

Crowther Bridge, the last major construction repair on the flood-hit Calder & Hebble Navigation, has reopened.

The original bridge, near Brighouse, was destroyed in the Boxing Day floods of 2015 after the foundations were undermined by the deluge and a runaway boat collided with it.

It has now been returned to its elegant 19th-century external appearance, but with a completely modern internal construction. The Canal & River Trust says the new bridge has a design life of 120 years, but has been

built with piled foundations and a concrete core to make the structure more resilient against flooding.

Local natural stone has been used to face the bridge and the 'voussoir' (outer arch) stones have been re-used from the nearby Elland Bridge, which was damaged at the same time and reopened earlier this year.

Both Crowther and Elland bridges were rebuilt by Kier Construction and Calderdale Council in a joint project with the help of £5.5m from the Department for Transport's flood recovery fund.

NEW COMIC BOOK FOR LANCASTER 'TOWPATH TRAIL'

The Lancaster Canal is the subject for what's said to be the first canal comic book, capturing the flavour and history of its 27 miles from Kendal to Lancaster.

Called *Lanky*, the book is the work of Manchester artist Oliver East, perhaps best known for his album covers

for the band *Elbow*, but also for several walking books.

The 50-page publication was commissioned by the Lancaster Canal Regeneration Partnership, with sponsorship by Arts Council England and the National Lottery. It's the latest manifestation of the plan to



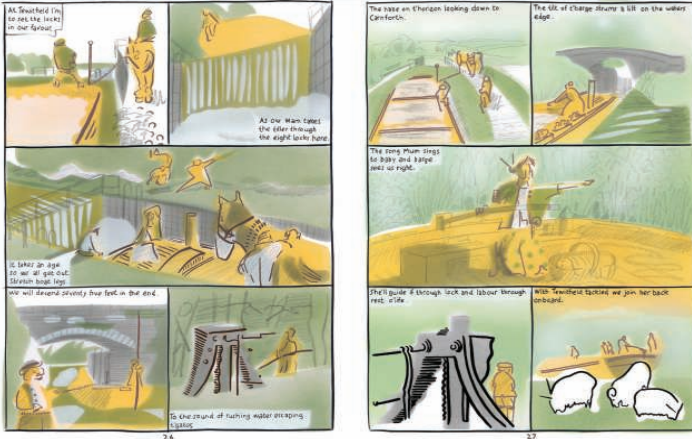
Oliver East sketches the Lune Aqueduct for his comic book *Lanky*.

create a 27-mile towpath trail, 'knitting together' the northern navigable section to the unrestored Northern Reaches.

Oliver walked the canal towpath between Kendal and Lancaster several times, collecting stories about local people and places, and

weaving them into a fictional tale about two centuries of the 'black-and-white canal', so named for its two main cargoes, coal and limestone.

The book will be launched at the Lakes International Comic Arts Festival in Kendal in October.



OLIVER EAST



An impressive scene at Batchworth Lock as volunteers gather with the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire.

Queen's Award for Ricky volunteers

Dozens of volunteers from the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust gathered at Batchworth Lock over the August bank holiday to receive a formal presentation from the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

The charity has for 20 years operated the waterways educational programme 'Learning at the Lock', which now hosts around a thousand schoolchildren every year. In the years since, the volunteers have also restored and operated the historic

wooden narrowboat *Roger*, and RWT has now adopted Batchworth Lock from the Canal & River Trust.

Perhaps its biggest volunteer-run event is the annual Rickmansworth Festival in May, which draws around 25,000 people each year, one

of the country's largest and most distinctive canal-based community festivals.

RWT is now in the process of raising £250,000 for a purpose-built education centre at Batchworth Lock to host Learning at the Lock. See rwt.org.uk for more details.

CRIMEWAVE ON THE OXFORD

In late June on the Oxford Canal, on the outskirts of Braunston, a small Sea Otter narrowboat went up in flames and two youths were spotted running away.

Because of intense heat, the boat's aluminium hull actually burned down to the waterline, melting the hull identification number in the process and making determining ownership of the craft difficult. Aluminium will melt at around 660°C, which is about half the temperature of steel. Even so, to have reached this heat it seems likely the boat was doused with a flammable fluid.

Curiously, for two months, no owner came forward. It was finally found to be *Otter's Moon*, owned by an elderly boater who kept it at a marina on the Oxford Canal, had not

visited it since March, assumed it was secure, and only found it missing when he returned in late August. The marina apparently thought he had taken it out for the summer.

Marina staff said that in June two other boats were broken into, and damage was caused to their engine control panels in unsuccessful attempts to start them without keys.

Another narrowboat, *Dawn Treader*, was stolen in August, from a visitor mooring near Long Itchington on the Grand Union Canal. It was found just three days later, 10 miles away on the Oxford Canal, and reunited with its owner. However, it had suffered over £2,000-worth of damage, including - again - the destruction of the engine control panel where an attempt



The remains of *Otter's Moon*, burned down to the waterline at Braunston.

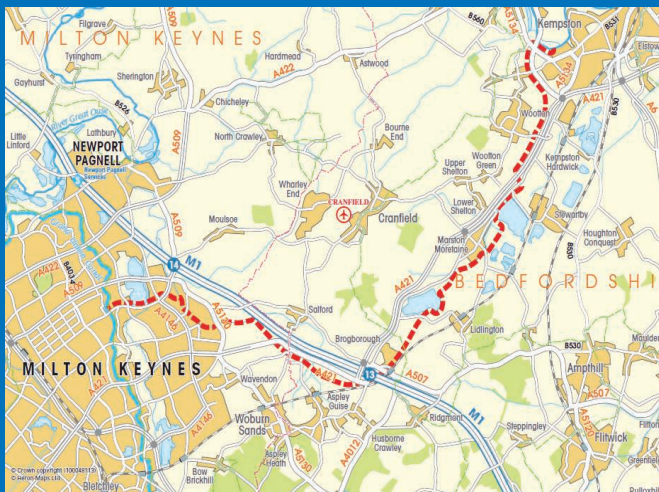
TIM COGHLAN

had been made to bypass the lack of a starter key.

Evidence found on the latter boat suggested its intended

destination was London, where boats are bought and sold quickly as rental accommodation. **Tim Coghlan**

B&MKW TRUST



Grant to mark out Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway

The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust has been awarded a grant of £8,300 to mark the route of the long-proposed link from the Grand Union Canal to the Great Ouse.

The grant, from Central Bedfordshire Council, will help fund various artworks, benches and marker posts, including thematic wood carvings and information points. The work will be completed by local artist Carrie Yuen, who is noted for her chainsaw sculptures.

The trust hopes the art trail will draw the public's attention to the route. The latest plans are for a waterway park

that would link a number of new villages south of Milton Keynes and in the Marston Vale.

All local authorities are under pressure to find new land for housing, and the council's latest idea is for a string of new villages in the Marston Vale and near Aspley Guise, on either side of where the proposed canal route would cross the M1 motorway.

Since the concept of planning these villages is still at such an early stage, the art trail project could be a significant marker for both the waterway route and future housing locations.



CRT winter stoppages begin

The annual round up of winter stoppages on the Canal & River Trust canal network was announced in September.

One standout this year is that there are no full navigational stoppages across the Christmas/New Year period, so winter cruising enthusiasts shouldn't be too inconvenienced.

It's interesting to note that all stoppages on the Rochdale Canal are scheduled before Christmas, while the Huddersfield ones are earmarked for the spring - allowing for at least one through-route on the South Pennines throughout the winter.

A similar approach has been taken on the Welsh waterways, in order to offer a north-to-south route during stoppages. Llangollen Canal enthusiasts, however, will be hampered during the spring, as the UK's most popular canal will see one of its busiest stoppage seasons in several years.

Stoppages, of course, are only part of the winter works programme. CRT will also dredge more than 35 sites in the coming year at a cost of £8.5m, including spot-dredging on the Coventry and Lancaster canals, along with the Montgomery's SSSI.

CRT also announced its lock open days programme for the winter, with 11 locks being open to the public. After five years of these events, it's possible the public's curiosity has been sated, although special events, such as theatrical performances put on in drained lock chambers last year, proved a big draw.

The highest profile lock open days are likely to be in Manchester's trendy city-centre at Deansgate Lock, and at the popular tourist spot of Foxton Locks on the Grand Union Leicester Line. For the first time, one of the massive Severn locks - Lincomb, near Stourport - will be emptied and open for public inspection.

Willow Wren complete reopening of Nelson's Wharf

Willow Wren Training reopened the old Nelson Cement Works arm on the Grand Union Canal at Stockton in August after two years of restoration and repair.

This is the final stage of the reopening of the 220-yard arm, now officially named Nelson's Wharf. The arm was originally used to bring in coal from the Warwickshire coalfields and take out lime and cement products.

The site retains the ruins of the original lime kilns, although these were superseded in later years by more modern kilns. The cement works closed in 1949, a few years after it had been taken over by Rugby Portland Cement, and lay derelict until it was demolished in the mid-1960s. Part of the demolition process was to bulldoze the buildings into the canal arm, thereby burying it from sight. It was this action that probably saved the structure of the arm and prevented the walls from crumbling.

Willow Wren Training bought the land in 2013 and relocated there in 2014 after building a new training facility and restoring the main canal bank. Around 16,500 cubic



Steve Vaughan steers training boat *Millie* to the end of Willow Wren Training's newly reopened Nelson Wharf at Stockton.

metres of earth, brick and concrete have been removed.

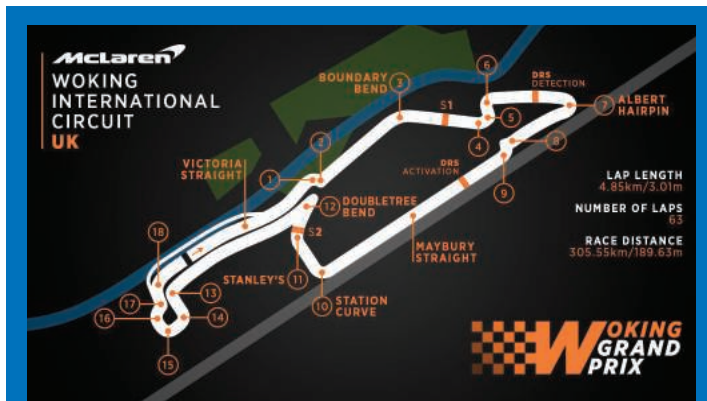
As each section of the arm was excavated, the channel walls were repaired using as many of the original bricks as possible. Concrete coping was installed to match the

original structure of the towpath. The arm will be used only for single-file moorings.

Willow Wren Training owner Steve Vaughan said: "This is a historic setting in 40 acres of open countryside, part of which is a SSSI. The

moorings are within walking distance of the village of Stockton, a local canalside pub, and bus routes to Rugby and Leamington Spa."

For more information about mooring at Nelson's Wharf go to nelsonswarf.co.uk.



Formula 1 racing for the Basingstoke

A self-confessed "absurdly ambitious" plan by the motor racing team McLaren Honda has proposed bringing Formula 1 to a stretch of the Basingstoke Canal.

The team, which has long roots in Woking, has proposed a 3-mile racetrack be created around the streets of the town. This would include "floating paddocks" on the Basingstoke Canal and a starting grid alongside the waterway, creating what it calls "a unique waterside F1 village vibe". The team said that a street race would raise the town's profile, putting it alongside Monaco and Singapore as a city racetrack.

McLaren Honda appears to be half-serious – the idea was floated in June, not on 1st April, and the team is intimately familiar with the town – but it has yet to formally present its plans to Woking Borough Council. However, the amount of money involved in Formula 1 could potentially turn council heads. And why not?



Powerability will give training to boaters with disabilities.

NEW POWERBOAT QUALIFICATION FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) has launched Powerability, a new qualification in motor-boat operation for people with disabilities.

The scheme has been created in conjunction with the Wheelyboat Trust, and for the first time allows disabled people to acquire official skills in motor-boat skipping. It's an extension of Sailability, the RYA's disability boating programme.

Andy Beadsley, director of the Wheelyboat Trust, says: "For people with a disability, it's

not just about getting on and off the boat that's important but being able to have full control. We're delighted to be able to support the RYA to roll out this important scheme to a large number of organisations operating Wheelyboats across the UK."

The scheme was launched at the 2017 Southampton Boat Show, where the Wheelyboat Trust was demonstrating its latest purpose-built powerboat, the Coulam Wheelyboat V20.

WHEELYBOATS

Red Wheels for Dundas Basin and Hawkesbury Junction

The historic Dundas Basin on the Kennet & Avon Canal, outside Bath, has been honoured with a Red Wheel plaque from the Transport Trust. It marks the significance of the basin, and the associated Grade I-listed aqueduct, built by John Rennie, which formed an important junction with the old Somersetshire Coal Canal.

Dundas Basin joins the Caen Hill Lock Flight and the Claverton and Crofton pumping stations in being thus honoured on the K&A. The plaque is mounted on the front of the canal company toll house facing the wharf.

Transport history buffs who attended the unveiling were also lucky enough to see the new *Tornado* steam locomotive pass under the aqueduct shortly afterwards, pulling the Belmond British Pullman on a London-Bristol journey. The aqueduct provided a grandstand view of the whole event.

The Transport Trust also unveiled another Red Wheel plaque at Hawkesbury Junction, the meeting place of the Coventry and Oxford canals, on 9th September. There are now 30 such plaques marking waterways sites. **Robert Coles**



Sir William McA Alpine, chair of the Transport Trust, with David Viner of CRT and Cherry Beath, chair of BNES council, unveil the Red Wheel at Dundas.



The Angel Canal Festival 2017. From left to right: Pearly Queen Phyllis, Sasha Mears, Islington Mayor Una O'Halloran, Beryl Windsor and Pearly King Bobby.

ANGEL CANAL FESTIVAL GETS REPRIEVE

The 31st Angel Canal Festival drew the usual large crowds to London's Regent's Canal on 3rd September, against a background of fears that it would be the last because of the retirement of its main organisers.

But at the last moment, the Canal & River Trust agreed with Islington Council to take over the planning of the one-day event for next year, and says it has found local businesses that are willing to support it.

Originally called Angel Day, the event was started in the 1980s by the late Crystal Hale as a fundraising event for the local community narrowboat *Angel*.

Beryl Windsor and Sasha Mears took over the event in 1999, but have both had to retire from organising duties due to ill health. The one-day event requires "a year of careful planning and takes an intense amount of work," Beryl told *WW*.

Part of its success might be due to its one-day Sunday format, which has been copied successfully by Banbury Town Council for its Canal Day for over 15 years. However, attempts to repeat the formula a couple of years ago in Nottingham failed after lack of support from the city council.



Addi and Athina on the Lancaster Canal on *Pontiki*.

C-RAFTY LANCASTER CANAL ADVENTURE

A mother-and-daughter team have paddled the 41 miles of the Lancaster Canal on a raft built from recycled materials.

Addi and Athina Man took six days in August to complete their trip, on a raft built from water pipes, old office chairs, a broom as a mast, and a pirate mouse sail. The pair raised money for the Jane Tomlinson Cancer Appeal, and collected litter from the canal along their journey.

They carried out a similar feat last year, paddling the entire 127-mile length of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal in only seven days

on an inflatable kayak.

The duo carried out their journey with a supreme sense of fun and whimsy. Addi, 37, and a super-fit triathlete, was pushing the project, though her nine-year-old daughter, Athina, seemed to be equally devoted to it.

Their raft, *Pontiki* ('mouse' in Greek, but with a nod to *Kon Tiki*), is so imaginative it's worthy of a review of its own. Read their story on teamaa.co.uk, particularly the blog section 'Mouse Trouble', which chronicles the building of their quirky vessel with the help of developers Redrow and Barratt.



Titford feeder before dredging.



The work should not only alleviate water shortages on the 'Crow' locks but may also encourage the restoration of the BCN's feeder streams.

THE ROTHEN GROUP



Canal boaters appeal for company at London Boat Show

British Marine is relaunching the 2018 London Boat Show as a shorter five-day event, and partitioning it into three sections, including a 'Boating Watersports & Holiday' show. The new format hopes to give more attention to inland boating, particularly canal and river cruising, which in recent years has been overshadowed by ocean sailing and watersports.

The St Pancras Cruising Club, which has organised an annual cruise to the show since it moved to London's docklands, says that for 2018 it has negotiated a special discount from the Canal & River Trust for a full week of mooring in the Royal Victoria Dock, alongside the Excel exhibition centre.

The club currently has eight boats attending, but hopes to attract up to 20. The passage involves a 9-mile tidal journey through the Thames Barrier, so isn't for the faint hearted, but represents a unique way of attending the show. There may also be spaces for those without boats who would like to experience the passage.

The show runs from Wednesday 10th until Sunday 14th January 2018. For more information visit spancrascc.co.uk or call 020 7278 2805.

TITFORD POOLS FEEDER DREDGED

The feeder streams to the highest levels of the Birmingham Canal Navigations have received a long-overdue vegetation cutback and dredging from canal contractor, the Rothen Group.

Few boats venture up the 'Crow' lock flight to the Titford Canal, originally built

as a reservoir and feeder for the BCN and only expanded to full navigability in 1837.

The work is hopefully the start of more attention being paid to Titford Pools, whose channels in recent years have become clogged, dried and overgrown. Today the bottom is very close to

the top, no boats can enter, and it is fast turning into a nature reserve. It's hard to believe now, but Titford Pools, in the noisy shadow of the M5 viaduct, was the location of two Inland Waterways Association festivals in 1978 and 1982.

New plans for Sankey Canal in St Helens

St Helens Council has announced ambitious plans for the development of St Helens town centre, including a major transformation of the canalside to create a waterfront environment for retail and residential development.

The Sankey Canal Restoration Society is keen to get involved, not least to ensure that boating is central to the proposals but also to encourage redevelopment of the rest of the 15-mile canal.

"The Sankey navigation was the first canal of the industrial age, and the young town of St Helens was the terminus," said a spokesman for the society. "It is right and proper that the borough not only recognises its unique place in history but also now aims to use this precious asset to regenerate the town centre."



St Helens Town Centre - overdue for redevelopment.

The Canal & River Trust, which still owns much of the canal route, hosted a one-day seminar on the future of the canal on 28th September as part

of the launch of a Sankey Canal Partnership.

More information is available at investinsthelens.com or from the Sankey Canal Society at sankeycanal.co.uk.



The owners of *Waternimf* are uncertain about their future after EA put their moorings up for sale.

Keith Jones

PROTESTS AT SALE OF EA ELY RIVER FRONTAGE

The Environment Agency has received criticism after advertising for sale 350 yards of the Great Ouse riverbank at Ely in three lots.

The Inland Waterways Association has suggested the move is "extremely short-sighted", pointing out that the sale would affect three long-established businesses on the site: Bridge Boatyard (the only hire-boat company on the river), the hotel-barge *Waternimf*, and The Boat Yard, a company that specialises in boat restoration.

EA claims that the land is "surplus to operational requirements" and is not

suitable for development, but IWA contend that the moorings on the site provide an important revenue stream that contributes to the upkeep of the river.

In response to this criticism, a spokesperson for EA said: "We are currently reviewing all the representations received in connection with the proposed sale of the three lots at Ely. We received a number of bids by the closing date of 8th September, and now need to consider those bids before making any further statements."

NEW TRUSTEES AT CRT ANNUAL MEETING

The annual public meeting of the Canal & River Trust was held in Birmingham on 21st September. The trust's annual report, issued in August, expressed a generally positive outlook (*WW* October 2017, p.31), and no new surprises were expected to be announced.

However, the meeting did see the retirement of the two longest-standing trustees – John Dodwell and Lynne Berry – who were first appointed when the trust was founded in 2012. Moreover, the names of the two new trustees

who have been appointed to replace them on the 11-strong board were also revealed.

The first new trustee, Sir Christopher Kelly, is a former senior civil servant who chaired the Committee on Standards in Public Life, was a trustee of the NSPCC and currently also chairs the King's Fund healthcare charity.

The second, Sue Wilkinson, was formerly the National Trust's director of supporter development, and is this year's chair of the Living Waterways Awards.

Late-season closure of the Leicester Line

The Canal & River Trust announced a temporary closure of part of the Grand Union's Leicester Line from 27th September, after reports of nearby reservoirs reaching their minimum levels.

The closure of a 5-mile length, from Kilby Bridge to King's Lock, on the southern outskirts of Leicester, follows a prolonged period of dry weather in 2016. Although average rainfall in the Midlands in July and August eased the situation, the Leicester Line continues to be affected. CRT hopes that by closing the section now, near the end of the boating season, it will give more time

for the reservoirs to refill.

Water supply varies on the network from a low of 41% on this section of the Leicester Line, up to 89% on the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal. While there's not a formal drought, CRT says it is monitoring water levels carefully. The monthly reservoir levels can be seen on the canalrivertrust.org.uk website – search for 'reservoir watch'.



King's Lock, the bottom lock of the Leicester Line section closed by CRT on 27th September.



The first WRG family camp, on the Uttoxeter Canal, with seven children aged between nine and 12.

Alison Smedley

WRG FAMILY CAMPS PLANNED FOR 2018

The Waterway Recovery Group says the success of its first ever family camp, on the Uttoxeter Canal in July, has led it to plan a number of similar family events for next year.

The camp, at Crumpwood, near Denstone, was hosted by the Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust, and supported by the Inland Waterways Association's North Staffordshire & South Cheshire Branch.

It saw six families, with seven children aged between nine and 12, spend a weekend carrying out a variety of tasks along the Uttoxeter Canal,

such as removing Himalayan Balsam, dislodging vegetation from core stones, and making and installing bat boxes.

There was also an exploratory dig to discover the base of the old towpath bridge across the River Churnet.

Jenny Black, WRG's volunteers coordinator, said: "WRG intends to organise a number of family camps next year, and we would like to hear from any canal society interested in hosting such a weekend. Families interested in booking a place should look out for details being announced early in 2018."

BOATS IN BLOOM WINNERS

Back in May, the Canal & River Trust launched its inaugural Boats in Bloom awards to recognise the many people who bring the waterways to life with plants and flowers. Thousands of people have voted for their favourite flower-filled boats and waterside gardens, and in August CRT announced the winners of the scheme's

six different categories, which are listed below.

Commenting on the awards, CRT boating manager Matthew Symonds said: "If you walk along any towpath you are likely to find a beautiful boat festooned with flowers, bringing a little bit of extra joy to the waterways. We wanted to say thank you to these gardeners with our Boats in Bloom awards."



Most flower-filled boat

Imojean in Blisworth Marina, Northampton.



Best wildlife-friendly garden

Trespassers Watch in Cosgrove Marina, Milton Keynes.



Best towpath business in bloom

Herbacious (The Herb Boat), travelling in the south-east.



Most imaginative use of space

Dreamcatcher, travelling in London.



Most edible boat

Lucky 13 in Watford.



Best towpath garden

Meg Merrilies in Hockley Port, Birmingham.