

# R Newsletter R

Issue 118  
Summer 2023

The journal of the Russell Newbery Engine Owners & Enthusiasts Club

**Fund Britain's Waterways  
Braunston Rallies Reports  
1990s Troubles & Cures  
Mystery Squeal  
Ancient Mariner**



[www.rnregister.org.uk](http://www.rnregister.org.uk)

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Web site: [www.rnregister.org.uk](http://www.rnregister.org.uk)

The Russell Newbery Register is a non profit distributing company limited by guarantee.

Founded: 1994 Registered in England No: 346943

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[Steve Whetnall]

Back cover: A Braunston Miscellany.

[Steve Whetnall]

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### Next edition

All contributions for the Autumn edition will be gratefully received. Do not worry about format — in true RN fashion the editorial team can cope with [almost] anything! Please supply photographs as separate JPEG or GIF files.

Copy deadline 15th October 2023

### Autumn Gathering at Huddlesford Junction

Deadline for receipt of entries is  
26th August.  
See page 16.



**FUND BRITAIN'S  
WATERWAYS  
MEMBER**



## Editor's Ramblings

Since I started boating, I have navigated the Hatton lock flight on numerous occasions, ascending or descending all twenty one locks. However, in November 2006, I only descended the top six locks, then ascended them again. Furthermore, descent of three locks was in reverse!

This was to take part in one of the protests against the cuts to UK Government funding of British Waterways. For an hour, every lock in the flight was occupied by boats.

Now it looks like we will have to repeat this and similar protests. It is the Government's funding that is now going in reverse.

Many believed, or hoped, that the creation of CRT in July 2012 would end the repetitious cycle of funding negotiations. At the time, I had reservations over the issue of funding. In the small print of the agreements, the Government insisted that as a charity, CRT must progressively reduce its dependency on public finances. So the recent funding announcement was not unexpected, however the size of the reduction was.

The formation of Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) is very timely and apt. I am delighted that the Register is a member organisation. Although sparked by the CRT grant issue; FBW is raising the funding issue for all waterways in England, Wales, and Scotland. Government funding of the Environment Agency has been in decline for over a decade. Consequently they have difficulty meeting their statutory obligations, leaving a lot less to spend on their navigations. The same situation applies to the Basingstoke Canal, owned by Surrey and Hampshire County

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Councils. In Scotland, the publicly owned Scottish Canals have had to curtail spending on maintenance of the lowland canals.

Suggestions that as a charity CRT should be like the National Trust are often made. These usually overlook the fact that the National Trust owns hundreds of properties for which visitors are willing to pay an entrance fee or an annual subscription to visit. CRT and other navigation authorities have very few buildings or structures which can operate in this way. The Anderton Lift and the Falkirk Wheel are perhaps the only two. The National Trust would have problems funding maintenance of its open spaces without the income that the building portfolio generates.

Navigable waterways are an integral part of the social, economic and environmental fabric of the country. They provide benefits to a large majority of the population. To continue to do so safely requires adequate funding. Any cost cutting or other austerity measures may well lead to bigger problems in the long term. Just look at what happened with Toddbrook Reservoir. Intermittent maintenance over the last fifty years and poor design of alterations lead to the near collapse in 2019. The consequences and cost of such a failure would have vastly exceeded any savings. An extreme example of such folly is the Grenfell Tower tragedy. 'Saving' a few hundred thousand pounds caused 72 people to die and has led to extra costs of nearly £1.2 billion; mostly from the public purse.

Such disasters must never be allowed to happen again.

*Andrew*

## Chairman's Chatter

Here we are, late again! I'm sitting in the boatman's cabin on board *Lothlorien*, moored at Saltisford Canal Centre getting ready for a jaunt up the Hatton Flight. Hopefully I've a crew member turning up to give a hand. Well, he said he would but if it's raining he may well not turn up and I wouldn't blame him. I'm en route to Gas Street Basin for the Fund Britain's Waterways protest rally. Hopefully, I will see Meg & Paul Bartlett there, together with the Comerfords. It is going to be highly embarrassing if we are the only three boats in attendance! Whilst it is too late to extend an invitation to join us, there is something you can do to help. Follow this link, sign the petition and talk to as many people as you can about it: <https://chng.it/5nZyxsvmXW>

The canal system is under threat (again) and the situation is as bad as it was 60 odd years ago. Already underfunded, the current Government decided to cut a further £30 million from the annual grant to CRT (aka the Cycling and Running Trust in my opinion). As boaters, we don't need anyone to tell us about the dire state of the canal system and the lack of basic maintenance which can be seen everywhere. Enough is enough and it is time to take action as did the previous generation of boaters. Some say that the CRT is a failed experiment (well, it was suggested by government). It is difficult to argue against that point of view, an organisation, strapped for cash, decides to go through a totally unnecessary "re-branding" exercise so that the corporate colour scheme is blue and white. Typically, illustrative of the half-cock nature of it, the scheme did not reach as far as repainting all the locks blue and white.

All those years ago, canals and navigable waterways were saved by the actions of many individuals acting in concert, applying pressure wherever they could.

Quite a few local authorities were shamed into taking action or, in some cases, doing things differently. Such as Warwickshire County Council, wanting the Stratford Canal

abandoned and closed so they could fill in part of it to build a road, instead of building a bridge. Since those times, canals have usually been taken into account when building any kind of infrastructure. The aqueduct built over the M6 toll road near Lichfield, for example, or the new moorings being built by the HS2 contractors for the Lichfield Cruising Club (site of our Autumn Gathering).

Please sign the petition and also write to your local MP, County Councillor and District Councillor. It is the least we can do. Let's not go down without a fight.

I'll round off with a few words about this year's Rally. I thought it was brilliant, both in terms of the location and the entertainment. Activities were also excellent. I hope you all enjoyed it as well. Good to see some new faces and some younger ones, too, although that may be down to my eyesight. I think next year's Rally might be a bit special seeing as how we're designating it our 25th and I'm sure Andrew will be unveiling plans before long.

Keep safe and don't forget – sign the petition!

*Bob*



## Membership Matters

A fantastic Rally at Braunston and a huge thank you to Andrew and everybody who helped. As always, it was brilliant to catch up with old friends (meant in the nicest possible way!) but also a good number of new faces came and learnt first-hand what a great bunch of people make up the Register. If you've not come to a Rally, or haven't made it for a while, I really do suggest you try it next year. I can only say that we first tried it in 2014, having assumed it was 'not our sort of thing', but now wouldn't miss it.

Next year will be our 25th Rally and, as you'll read elsewhere in this *Newsletter* [page 23], we have decided to make it free entry for boat and one crew, so do come along and give it a try. It really is all about getting together to enjoy ourselves. There's not a hint of boat or brass inspection and you can get involved, or not, as much as you want. There's also a wealth of experience on hand for help with those big or little problems.

## RN Engines for Sale

We recently recovered some engines from two tug boats that were being scrapped due to modern replacement. Each boat had on board two D3 generators and a D2 air compressor. So we have 6 engines in total.

We have decided to offer some of these for sale as they came from the ships. They were running when they came out of the ships and were brought straight to the factory. We will sell the engines with a 30% discount on any parts that may be needed to refurbish them.

D3 £2,500      D2 £3,000

Any further information or any questions please call me on 07812 039110.

*Dave Bixter*

I'm pleased to say that we had three enquiries at the Rally from prospective members in addition to six new members who have joined since the last *Newsletter*. A very warm RN welcome to: Felix Parker-Smith, Iver nb *Ark Angel* Steve Price, Widnes Roger Flavel, Nuneaton nb *Tommy* Nigel Wright, Market Deeping nb *Isaac* Alasdair Rogers, Irchester nb *Arabia* David & Chris Wilson, Edenbridge nb *Time No. 1*

On a sadder note, we are sorry to learn of the death of Ansie Earle following a short but severe illness. We extend our condolences to Steve Burt, her partner of the past few years.

*Andy*



## Fund Britain's Waterways warns against the Government's latest Canal & River Trust funding offer

Formed in June this year, Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) brings together a wide range of organisations with the sole purpose of campaigning collectively for an increase in government funding of Britain's inland waterways to avert their decline, and to promote awareness of the huge economic, environmental and social wellbeing value they provide.

The following text is from an FBW press release issued on 11th July.

After months of waiting for Defra to announce its decision on future grant funding for the Canal & River Trust (CRT), and less than a fortnight after the launch of FBW, the Secretary of State has now confirmed that the Government plans at least to continue providing grant funding to CRT beyond March 2027 when the current grant comes to an end. Whilst this is welcomed, FBW members are deeply concerned that the Secretary of State has only gone as far to offer "over £400m" for the ten-year period from April 2027 which marks a further dramatic cut. (Defra's Written Statement is available to view at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-07-10/hcws924>). According to CRT it will equate to at least a 40% reduction of funding in real terms compared to recent levels.

The current funding, which has been fixed at £52.6m per annum since 2021, is already failing to keep up with inflation and the physical toll that more frequent severe weather is having on the waterways' infrastructure.

Defra's offer is simply not enough to avert the decline of CRT's network, particularly given the charity already faces a deficit of

£12 -15m. The grant it receives from Defra makes up almost a quarter of its income and is critical in helping it lever in other sources of income and fund its essential maintenance programme. As Richard Parry, Chief Executive of CRT, has said the proposed funding cuts from 2027/2028 will have a potentially "devastating impact".

FBW is campaigning to ensure that beyond this Parliament there will be sufficient grant funding to retain the huge environmental, economic and social benefits that Britain's inland waterways provide.

That includes the 2,000 miles of waterways managed by CRT which alone contribute £6.1bn per year in economic and social value (see "Valuing Our Waterways" (November 2022) published by CRT / Simetrica-Jacobs, with all methodology aligning with 2022 HM Treasury Green Book valuation techniques, <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/valuing-our-waterways>).

This is why, as part of FBW's broader campaign, it will continue to work with CRT and others to encourage the Government to rethink this funding announcement.

Les Etheridge, Chair of FBW, said: "The Government must take heed of CRT's warnings. Otherwise, these proposed cuts will result in the closure of waterways, harming businesses and placing communities at risk as the condition of CRT's waterways inevitably deteriorates."

IWA's CEO, Professor Sarah Niblock, added: "The waterways renaissance has

been one of the UK's biggest success stories of the past 50 years on all levels. It is actually hard to find the words to express how devastated we feel and how fearful we are for the future in the wake of this decision.

## FBW membership

Following a discussion at this year's Register AGM; the Register has joined the FBW Umbrella group.

We are in good company. Other members of FBW include:

- Accessible Waterways Association
- Aqueduct Marina, Church Minshull
- Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs
- Aylesbury Canal Society
- Basingstoke Canal Society
- Bradley Canal Restoration Society
- Braunston Marina
- British Canoeing
- British Marine Inland Boating Association (formerly the Association of Pleasure Craft Operators)
- British Marine Passenger Boat Association
- British Marine's Broads Hire Boat Federations
- British Marine London and Thames Valley Regional Association
- Chesterfield Canal Trust
- Commercial Boat Operators Association
- DBA – The Barge Association
- Electric Boat Association
- Fox Narrowboats, March

### Please take action by writing to your MP

You can use this online form on the CRT website, <https://action.canalrivertrust.org.uk/page/129216>

Sadly, the Government don't seem to have even referred to their own data on the sheer scale of benefits offered by the waterways to our economy, ecology and wellness. I urge everyone to express their concerns to their MPs as a priority."

- Foxhangers marina, K&A Wiltshire
- Great Ouse Boating Association
- Historic Narrow Boat Club
- Inland Waterways Association
- Kennet & Avon Canal Trust
- Kennet & Avon Trade Association
- Lowland Canals Association
- National Association of Boat Owners
- National Inland Navigation Forum
- Newbury Boat Company
- Norbury Wharf, Shropshire Union Canal
- Residential Boat Owners' Association
- River Thames Society
- Roving Canal Traders Association
- Royal Yachting Association
- Shire Cruisers, Yorkshire
- Shropshire Union Canal Society
- Thames Motor Boaters Association
- The Baldwin Trust, Leicestershire
- The Boating Association
- Torksey Yacht Club
- Trent and Mersey Canal Society
- TrentLink
- Wendover Canal Trust
- Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
- Your Helmsman, helm instructor

With a general election due next year, writing to the prospective candidates in your constituency will ensure they are aware of this important issue.

# DON'T STOP THE BOATS

## Troubles and cures from the 1990s (part 1)

Reading Brian Farrant's article on Automatic Air Vents (AAV) [Winter 2019/2020, edition 104] brought back memories of the early days of the Register when I used to go out on engine repairs with Allister. This was a time when we were feeling around virgin ground, the Register had less than twenty members and every fault was a challenge.

We had been to see Dennis Searle and his engine builder, Barry Crickmore, at the Vero works in Southampton. One of the many things we discussed was Graham Booth's remarks in a *Waterways World* publication that Russell Newbery engines built by Vero were not as good as they used to be. Dennis had been out personally to see boat builders who had reported difficulties, He saw the problems were with the boat builders and there was nothing further he was prepared to do; he was making the engines and that was enough.

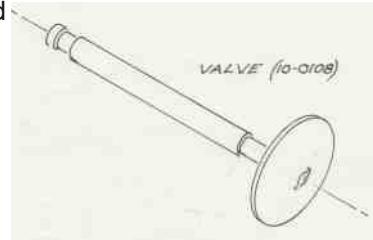
Some engines we saw were noisy with dark exhaust. Bill Lambert of Dagenham fame (who Allister had met in the 1980s when John Gould had taken him to Upminster to get some spares) told us that this was likely to be worn exhaust valve guides. Confirmation was removing the rocker cover and examining the amount of soot inside the cover — thick and black means trouble.

Working out why some engines suffered and others did not required some head scratching. Why was it just the exhaust valve guide and not the inlet? Was this something that eventually happens to all engines, if so after how many hours running? The inlet valve and guide are cooled by air going into the cylinders and engine water. But the exhaust valve and guide were being subjected to hot exhaust gas and only being cooled by engine water.

We both came to the cause of the

problem at the same time! I had read stories from old boaters relating how if the raw water cooling became clogged the exhaust valve stuck up. Allister, whilst working on a water manifold, was

surprised not to mop up a puddle of coolant on an engine with



worn exhaust valve guides. We had been thinking that missing vanes in the water pump had something to do with the troubles, but it was trapped gas stopping coolant circulation.

The AAV solution was Allister's and he fitted many batches of them. If I remember correctly, after fitting the black washer/ring the red screw cap had to be removed to get the air to vent automatically. Also it was advisable to have a vent on the skin tank to prevent air locks stopping circulation there, unless the skin tank is under the engine and the header tank directly above it. If you have one of these, like many Colecraft installations, think about fitting a vertical swim tank and re-plumbing.



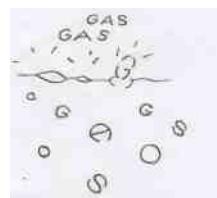
Brussel sprout eaters will know that trapped wind in the human body finds its way out of the system one way or another. Trapped gases in coolant can only escape at the top of an engine by travelling upwards to a header tank or radiator. With the troubled engines the gases became locked in because the pipe work from the water manifold went down, often to the floor before turning up to the header tank on the bulkhead. The trapped gases stopped the flow of coolant, the result being over heating.

The cause of the worn valve guides can now be seen as 'bleeding obvious' — but it took myself and Allister many hours of pounding the towing paths, visiting lots of boats, examining engines, thinking, talking and analysing before the common factor and the root cause was found.

We were approached by the owner of a newly built boat with a brand new DM2. The engine was performing badly, poor power with lots of noise and smoke. Could we look at it? In retrospect, we should have declined the request — we only had part of the story and unknowingly we became a fourth party. A few days after our very thorough inspection, I had a telephone call from an angry Dennis Searle. He made it very clear he did not want to know the conclusion of what we had found and further more he did not want to know me. This was followed by a vicious banging and lots of humming.

Later we learnt that the engine had been taken back to Southampton by Dennis before our conversation, and shortly after my failure to explain our simple solution required to save the engine, and possible to go some way to regain the Russell Newbery reputation, the engine was taken apart and its construction removed from the records.

I was left with a sense of disappointment. My original intention had been to work with Vero, promote Russell Newbery, make tools and jigs and a few parts for owner servicing combined with some expert advice at the end of telephone. But as Allister was often too ready to point out, working with Dennis was not going to be easy. He had not gone out of his way to be helpful. But we had now been given carte blanche to move forward without the shadow of Vero



hanging over the Register.

Concerning the dismantled engine we had some interesting questions. Had any one person been the cause of this particular engine's problems? Was it the boatyard for installing the engine? Was it the engine builder not explaining how to properly install it? What had we learnt and what were we going to do about it?

I had known about the breaking vanes on the Jabsco pumps before I met Allister, but I had not started to work out the reason for it happening. Why should an engine builder fit something to their engines that had known problems? Allister and myself went around the boats with this one. We did at first think it was something to do with temperature. Russell Newbery marine engines, according to my handbook, were to run at 60 Celsius. Many engines with badly damaged neoprene impellers had 80 Celsius thermostats. I had a batch of five 60 Celsius thermostats made by a company in Reading, these went onto engines with new impellers.

Magic, great, fantastic — solved the problem! As with many situation just as you are feeling really pleased with your self the wet haddock of reality gives you a good slap round the face! Later investigation revealed that the new thermostats had not made the slightest bit of difference in reducing impeller damage.

I used to say to my students, "Now pay attention and listen to Mr. Pearson's words of wisdom concerning design and technology. There is always a minimum of six solutions to a problem/brief and one of these will always be Don't." Time to take my own advice!

**Graham Pearson**

*To be continued in the next edition.*



*Rally boats moored at the end of the  
Canal Arm.* [AJ]

## Our Braunston Rally Report

A one word summary of this year's Rally at Braunston — Dynamic!

With several boats from the previous weekend's Historic Rally still moored on the Grand Union and some very late boat entries, the mooring plan changed frequently. The final boat count was 28, four of which were on their own moorings in the marina. Harbour Master, Neil Mason, skillfully fitted the others into the Marina's canal arm and along the GU between the marina entrances.

Due to increased interest, a second guided tour of 78 Derngate was added at short notice to the Thursday 'away-day' visit to Northampton. Plus the weather dictated a change to the order of one evening's activities, as initially the sun was too bright to properly see the projector screen!

78 Derngate, Northampton, the only Charles Rennie Mackintosh building in England.



*(Left top) Dr. Sylvia Pinches, reveals its history.*

*(Left lower) The 1917 modern kitchen. [AL]*

*(Above) The main room.*

*(Right) The guest bedroom.*



*Alan, our guide in the Northampton  
Museum, invites Jeremy and Jean to  
listen carefully with big ears.*

*Just one of the  
5,000+ pairs  
of boots and  
shoes in the  
museum.*

All photographs in  
the Rally report by  
Steve Whetnall,  
except those  
marked [AJ] by  
Annie Jenner and  
[AL] by Andrew  
Laycock.



For five parties, this was their first RNR Rally. Encouragingly, their feedback was positive. Together with our guests, all the attendees enjoyed the diverse activities that took place.

We thank Tim Coghlan, and his staff at Braunston Marina, for the generous provision of the marina facilities and the use of the infrastructure held over from the Historic Boat Rally the previous weekend. Tim waived any facilities fee, instead requesting we make donations to help two of his favourite boats. So, with the inclusion of the proceeds of the Rally raffle, we have donated £470 each to the friends organisations of *President* and *Raymond*. Friends of *President* are using this to assist with the provision of *President's* new boiler; thus helping that historic boat return to steam. Whilst for *Raymond*; the donation will help with the ongoing costs of stopping a wooden boat rotting away.

*Andrew*



*(Left) Eric McDowall enthrals the audience with tales of his involvement in commercial narrowboating in the 1970s.*



*(Above) Visit to the Royal Oak works of the RN Diesel Engine company. Chris Lake (left) and Brian Jarrett explain the assembly process. (Far left) Chris Halliwell demonstrates rope splicing. (Left) Quiz masters John & Vee Potter. (Below) The glass decoration craft session was enjoyable and produced some stunning results.*





*The combined space of the two marquees was larger than some halls we have used for previous Rallies.*

*Guest boats Raymond (the last wooden butty built at Braunston in 1958) and Nutfield (former GUC large Northwich motor, originally fitted with a 2DM engine).*



*During the Rally, Robbie Cummings, of Canal Boat Diaries (YouTube and BBCtv) visited to film a sequence for a future episode. Note the drone camera operator by the marina bridge.*



*Tim Coglan relates the history and highlights of the Braunston Historic Boat Show.*



*King's Gambit, an energetic English folk band, entertained us on Saturday evening with original tunes filled to the brim with melody, spirit and banging beats. Band leader, Chris Startup, on left.*



*Andrew led a walk on Saturday afternoon to the disused Wolfhampcote Church, stopping on the way to look at the remains of the abandoned loops of the Oxford Canal, two dismantled railways and the building which once was the Castle Inn on the trunk London to Holyhead road.*



*Unfortunately, the Friends of Wolfhampcote Church had a mix up over the Rally date, so the church was not open. Perhaps we were the largest potential congregation for many years!*



*Quality control in action at the bar: Chris May checks beer clarity; Jim Comerford anxiously looks on.*



*Four hands better than two during the paracord craft session. All the resulting dragonflies turned out well.*



*The ace bar team: (left to right) Jean, Chris, Mazz. [AL]*





*Neil Mason shows how to dismantle a DM2 cylinder head, and more importantly how to put it back!*



*Andrew introduces Richard Milligan (seated left) to start the Technical Forum session. Oil was a major topic.*



*The Register Directors at the AGM.*



*Congratulations to Mick and Babs Judd who celebrated their 40th Wedding anniversary on the Sunday.*



*A new Rally activity was a rope skills competition. The winning team were Martin & Di Long. This throw by Tim Doyle was declared a foul; we have VAR!*

*The traditional end of Rally home-grown music session. Meg leads the musicians colloquially known as the RN Ensemble.*



## Autumn Gathering

Our Autumn Gathering sees a return visit to Lichfield Cruising Club, at Huddlesford.

The dates are Wednesday 6th to Sunday 10th September. Please do not arrive to moor before Wednesday morning.

This year's gathering is going to be slightly different, as it will be a joint rally weekend, with Lichfield Cruising Club. On the Saturday evening in the marquee there will be a BBQ, probably starting around 4.30pm. Following this there will be a live band for the evening, playing all the well-known numbers. The cost per head, for the BBQ and evening will be about £10 per head.

The Cruising Club have kindly offered to open their bar for us from Wednesday

evening (if there are a few of us that would like it open). From Thursday it will be open every evening and some lunch times.

The weekend will give us all a chance to catch up with each other, once again and chat about what we have been up to over the summer.

Mooring will be along the towing path opposite the Club. There is easy access to the Club House across the footbridge.

Please email me at [neilamason@btinternet.com](mailto:neilamason@btinternet.com) before the 26th August to book, even if you have already told me verbally, in order to confirm. Also state if you would like to join the BBQ evening. Thanks

*Neil*

## Defibrillator at Huddlesford

The Lichfield Cruising Club, have just had a defibrillator fitted to the bridge gate and it is for community use. This follows the incident last year at our Autumn Gathering, when two of our members performed CPR on a passing boater, and despite everyone's efforts, the boater sadly lost his life. Following this the club members of Lichfield Cruising Club felt they should do something.

The defibrillator has been funded by Lichfield Cruising Club member Mac (on the left in the photo), who sadly lost his wife Sheila earlier in the year.



*Neil*

## Bristol Spring Away-days postscript

My original intention was to go by boat to Bristol, only a day and a half from my mooring at Bradford on Avon. I didn't like the look of the River Avon level and weather forecast, so decided to stay in an hotel instead. A wise decision as it turned out, the Avon was closed to navigation the day after our visit and I'd have been stuck there for 5 weeks. Don't let this put any of you off boating to Bristol, it is a lovely trip and river levels are quite

predictable.

I was very sorry to read that there was a disastrous fire at Underfall Yard on 6th May which destroyed some of the workshops and some of the historic wooden vessels moored alongside when we visited. The fire was started by an arsonist.

*Chris Halliwell*

## The Braunston Rally and The Phantom Mystery Squeal

Bearing in mind *Ebony*'s long and very notable association with both the Register and Annual Rally, thanks to Kevin and Trish, it was with a slight degree of nervousness that both Jill and I approached our first Rally. During our enjoyable leisurely cruise from our home moorings at Mercia Marina, along the Trent & Mersey, Coventry and the North Oxford, we gave *Ebony*'s paintwork an extra polish and ensured that her bright work gleamed and that her DM3 looked similarly at its best! Moreover, the RN on the run to Braunston sounded as sweet as a nut!

Upon arrival by the entrance to the Marina Arm we were directed by Neil Mason, the Harbour Master, into the arm so yours truly nicely lined *Ebony* up to go in beautifully bows first. It was only then we realised that she needed to be in the arm stern first! So with a good deal of manoeuvring plus, in retrospect, far too many revs (I think the phrase is "Poor helmsmanship") I was just backing her onto her moorings when, as the engine room passed under the bridge, her engine started to make the most awful and troubling loud squealing noise which we had never heard before! My first panicked thoughts were with all those revs have I run out a bearing? After reassuring conversations with experienced Register owners, especially Jim Comerford who was moored on *Iona* behind us, I somewhat calmed and assured myself it was probably the alternator belt or at worst the water pump making the racket of a squealing noise! To further calm the nerves and resolve the problem, Brian Jarrett kindly came onboard at our request to take a look. We changed the alternator belt, but sadly the squeal persisted, so Brian very reasonably diagnosed the water pump as the cause of the noise. Richard Milligan was then contacted on the Friday

morning, who confirmed yes he would be at the Rally's



Technical Forum on Sunday morning and kindly agreed to take a look at the engine at the end of this session. Now on Friday afternoon I found myself, feeling slightly sorry for myself, looking at the engine and at the alternator belt / water pump area in particular. It should be said at this point that prior to examining the alternator belt its large guard of necessity was removed. At this point with the guard off I had noticed on the engine bilge floor a fairly large diameter reticulated plastic pipe, but thought not much of it because quite a lot of wiring runs around the engine are covered by, albeit smaller diameter, pipe of this type. So when on Friday afternoon I saw this pipe again, I consciously decided to take a more detailed look at it under the engine. The pipe was, I found, the wet vacuum suction pipe and it had been badly eaten up, but by what? QED - although this pipe was normally securely stored (I thought) behind a steel drawer, with all the high revs "shunting" about into the marina arm, it must have come loose only to drop into the engine bilge and then I concluded been eaten up by the large alternator pulley wheel! But was I right? With the wet vac pipe removed I ran the engine and it ran sweetly, without a squeal, for half an hour. Phew problem and the mystery solved!

Finally, both Jill and I would like to thank all of our fellow attendees at this year's Rally for making us feel so very welcome and for their generous advice which was very much appreciated!

**Mark Tittley**

## Steady As She Goes for the 2023 Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally

Despite the cost of living crisis, this year's Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally, held in its traditional slot over the last weekend in June, remained as popular as ever. A total of 82 historic narrowboats attended, versus 81 last year, with the boats coming from all corners of the waterways. And the numbers would have been much higher, but for mechanical problems, perhaps to be expected with these old canal leviathans. Indeed the Coventry Canal Society's working narrowboat *Panther* failed to attend for the second year running, due to mechanical problems, which happened shortly before its intended departure. With fine weather, attendance by the public was also very encouraging. Car park takings were fractionally ahead of 2022. Now successfully revived, the annual Braunston rallies remain by far and away the largest rally of historic narrowboats anywhere on the inland waterways.

Most disappointingly for this year was the absence again of *President*, the last surviving steam narrowboat, where the problem of building a new steam boiler to modern standards continues. *President* with its butty *Kildare* were to have been the stars of the Rally, leading the opening parade. Instead by way of 'Plan B', *Kildare* did come, and was towed in that opening parade by the replica steam canal tunnel tug *Hasty*, with music legend and steam enthusiast Pete Waterman at last at the helm.

The opening took the now well established format of the chosen pair of boats entering the marina from the canal under the famous Horsey Ironworks bridge to a peal of bells from Braunston Church – 'the Cathedral of the Canals.' Serenading the pageant was fine music



*Getting ready for the opening the 2023 Rally: Music legend and steam enthusiast Pete Waterman seen steering the replica steam tug *Hasty*, with a little help from the Friends of President. *Hasty* is towing the FMC butty *Kildare*.*



*Formal presentation of £1,000 cheque by Pete Waterman to the Friends of President. The Friends of President and the Friends of Raymond received that same amount as joint main beneficiaries of the Rally.*

*[Victoria Jane Photography]*



*Poirot back on the case. Sir David and Lady Suchet joined the special guests in the hold of Raymond for the formal opening.*



*Crowds at the entrance to Braunston Marina watching the opening of the Rally. Nutfield and Raymond follow behind Hasty and Kildare.*

from Daventry Brass.

Following *Hasty* and *Kildare*, were the Braunston based historic pair of boats, *Nutfield* and *Raymond*. In their holds were a number of celebrity guests, including actor and canal enthusiast 'Poirot' – Sir David Suchet and his wife Lady Sheila – both Vice Presidents of the IWA. Also Richard Parry, CEO of the Canal & River Trust, and Tony Hales OBE, retired Chairman of the Canal & River Trust. Tony still continues his passion for the waterways and has attended every Rally since 2009, and hopes to continue doing so for as long as he can.

The winning historic narrowboat for this year's 'Nurser Award Buckby Can for the Best in Show as voted by the historic narrowboat owners', was to David Ross and his partner Tracy Pear Pearce, co-owners of the magnificently re-restored *Dory*, with its Bolinder engine. The 70 foot boat was built by Yarwoods of Northwich in 1934 for Fellows, Morton & Clayton. As well as that Buckby can to be held for a year, Pete and Tracy also received £250 worth of Midland Chandlers vouchers, generously sponsored by them.



*Colours of the Cut: Historic narrowboats packed to the gunnels and waiting to parade.*

The Guild of Waterways Artists were again provided with their own marquee, sponsored by Braunston Marina, and ten of its members had their works on display, including the great canal artist Dusty Miller, who was also book-signing his new book on his life as a waterways artist.

There was also a trade marquee shared with a number of canal societies. Leo McNeir, novelist and canal crime writer had a stand, where he signed copies-for-sale of his very latest book *Ivory Tower*. Amazingly this book is the 14th in the Marnie Walker series, which has included greats, like *Death in Little Venice*. Canal societies were also outside, as were a number of good causes like the RNLI, which were given free space.



*Brassed off! Malcolm Burge polishing the brasses on his historic narrowboat Jaguar.*



*Cygnus and Otley waiting to parade together in the first parade. Otley was voted Best Boat in Show at the 2022 Rally.*



*Organised chaos in the parade of boats out on the Grand Union Canal.*



*Motorboat Cepheus and butty Cygnus reunited for the first time since they were built as a pair of the GUCCC by Harland & Wolff in 1935.*



*Lady Sheila Suchet assists Roger Golder in steering the wooden butty Raymond.*



*Octogenarian boater Ian Jackson steering his former ice breaker tug Oxford No1.*



*Morning is breaking: Brainston's new vicar, the Rev. Kathryn Evans, leading her first waterside service, with musical accompaniment from Daventry Brass.*



*Dory – voted Best in Show by the historic narrowboat owners.*



*Performing a graceful tight turn. Motor Nutfield, steered by Nick Lake towing Raymond.*

The Rally is also billed as a canal festival – in the fine tradition of the first IWA Rally held at Market Harborough in 1950, inspired by its co-founder Robert Aickman. Entertainments included the canal-travelling Alarum Theatre, with their new play, 'Rats, Ropes & Revolution', billed as 'A woman's story of the Boatmen's Strike.' The play marked the centenary of that 14 week event in 1923, which only hastened the end of canal carrying forty years later. The Rally's resident music-impresario for some years now, Janul, produced the amazing musicians she finds each year for the beer tent – a mini-Glastonbury, without the mud. Children were entertained by Professor Diamond's Punch & Judy Show.

On the Sunday evening, to close the event, the Rally sponsored a candle-lit choral concert by Fiori Musicali of William Byrd's music to mark the four hundredth anniversary of his death in 1623. The venue was across the meadows from Braunston at the ancient church of Wolhampcote. This was to raise awareness of this redundant church and

the funds needed for its preservation.

The Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally is sponsored by Braunston Marina and Towpath Talk, and is supported by the Canal & River Trust. Braunston Marina will be hosting the event again next year on the same last weekend in June, with David Suchet opening it on hopefully the restored *President*.

**Tim Coghlan**

*[Text and pictures in this report © Braunston Marina Limited. Unless otherwise credited, photographs by Tim Coghlan.]*



*Let there be no moaning at the bar! Music legend and steam enthusiast Pete Waterman with the Best Bar None mobile bar team.*

## I'm an Ancient Mariner, not a Grumpy Old Boater!

The article by Dave Martin, "Ruminations of a Grumpy Old Boater", in the Spring 2023 issue prompted this 'Ancient Mariner' to respond to his challenge to be a GOB by inscribing another epistle to add to my earlier 31 contributions to the RNR newsletters, well probably 28 articles, as one about navigating the Huddersfield Narrow Canal was serialised into three. I was a 'late starter' compared to Dave, as my sadly departed wife, my beloved Julie and I, didn't get involved in canal boating until 1974. So by comparison a mere 49 years, and then purely by accident. As has been the case with Scuba Diving; Long Distance Walking; flying an aeroplane; maintaining an ancient local church dating back to 1150AD in the village of Wisley, Surrey; Captain of a fund raising swimming team to raise funds for many charities; liaison appointee for a Royal Navy Class 23 Frigate, HMS Richmond; enjoying from on board my second helicopter flight; to name but a few, several of which have featured in my numerous earlier articles.

Where do I start without avoiding too much of a gloom and doom outlook reflecting the current overall shambles of abounding despair, very fortunately sidetracked by the joyous uplifting Coronation of our new King Charles the Third. So let's try and look on the bright side, despite the current gloomy prognostications as to the canal system surviving for future generations to enjoy getting away from the trials and tribulations of what we very fortunate boaters probably regard as 'the real world'.

The pace of life is unbelievably hectic, with the expectation of everything requiring to be done instantly, exposing everyone having to comply therewith. My

former employment was in the Financial Sector in the City of London, working in a manic Money Broking Dealing Room. We were under very high pressure to meet targets of achievement, exacerbated by the dramatic change of circumstances associated by the 'Big Bang'. This set aside all the old principals, such as 'My word is my Bond', for the 'dog eat dog' scenario. Under such circumstances having some means of relieving the pressure was to find a 'hobby' to relieve the overwhelming strain of such a workload.

In those hectic days it was firstly my Scuba Diving, exploring the inner depths of our numerous lakes, quarries and the wonderful under sea world of the UK coast line and the Mediterranean, as described in some of my earlier articles, such as "Don't Forget the Diver", in January 2011, and part 2 in Autumn 2012. Alternatively my exhilarating long distance walks, some six National Trails, including the West Highland Way, and many others, such as the 77 mile long Wicklow Way. That was in hindsight a "Guinness Drinking Expedition", with a lot of walking between the pubs! Well such occasions do necessitate a degree of prioritisation. I've walked miles in the lovely Surrey Countryside, a happy blessing to be local to me. What a wonderful way to remove oneself from the 'Rat Race', and regain your sanity!

I was made redundant from my City of London Money Market employment on Friday the 13th January 2009, which basically 'saved my life', as had I stayed I'm that job the pressure would have killed me, I was on medication for the last four years to cope with the pressure.

At that time, on Saturdays I was assisting in turnarounds of a Canal Boat Hire Fleet at a local boatyard in Guildford in Surrey. So on being made redundant I asked if they would take me on full time, to which they agreed. From then on I had no targets of performance to meet, I was just one of the lads with very limited responsibilities. Basically doing my hobby, which was boating, and actually being paid to do something I really enjoyed! I took all the exams to become a qualified Boatman Skipper, I was out in the fresh air, instead of a smoke filled dealing room, doing a manual job, with limited responsibilities, lucky me! My wife constantly reminded me of what my doctor said, 'If you were still in that job in the City the stress would have killed you!' Here I am at 87 years old still going strong and very fortunately enjoying life to the full, with many plans to keep doing

so, health and God willing.

Let's end on an optimistic note, away from all the gloom and doom of a very sadly declining canal network, to make the most of, and enjoy to the full what's still available. Hopefully our wonderful waterways will survive in some form, but make the most of what we have, use it, or lose it. Or perhaps use it before we lose it? The motto by which my late wife and I abided, and still mine is, 'Do what you can, When you can, Whilst you can', if an opportunity comes up, grab it, it may never come up again! I think the worst thing in life is to say, "Oh I wish we had done that."

Remember, 'life is for living', we only get one shot at it, so make the most of it! Cheers to that, I say!

**Norman Woolley**

## Notes from the Register Board meeting of 30 June 2023

Present: Bob Scott, Jim Comerford, Andy Todd, Andrew Laycock, Meg Bartlett, Neil Mason.

Neil had been co-opted to the board and his appointment would be ratified at the AGM. The minutes of last meeting were approved.

Under matters arising, the Ian McKim Thompson memorial bench unveiling is scheduled for 19th September. Dudley Canal & Tunnel Trust have offered a cruise and we have agreed to a tunnel trip with bench unveiling after.

Archives and preservation of engineering drawings. Jim agreed to review the work Kevin McNiff started. The drawings are owned by the RN Diesel Engine company.

Register finances are in a healthy state. The 2022 accounts were ready for the AGM and were unanimously approved. Andy explained that although our core activity is still breaking even with members' subscriptions covering Newsletter and general administration costs, this will probably not be true for 2024 given the

last postage increase and we haven't yet seen a price rise from the printers which must come sometime. It was agreed that an increase of £3 to the subscription starting in 2025 will be proposed.

The board thanked Andrew for all the hard work which he had put into this year's Rally. Andrew emphasised the need for a larger organising team, other directors offered help with various tasks. (*Subsequently there were two more offers of help following the post AGM Rally discussion.*) Three potential sites for the 2024 Rally were discussed, all in the Midlands. Andy suggested marking what would be the 25th Rally with free entry as a way of using the surplus funds generated by past Rallies. It was agreed that it would be free boat (or camping) entry and one person.

Andrew explained that the volume of content for the *Newsletter* was very variable. Given we have a significant turnover of members, it was recommended that a 'From the Archives' feature should be used to help fill space if needed. *[Not required for this edition. Ed.]*

