

# R N R Newsletter

Issue 126  
Summer 2025

The journal of the Russell Newbery Engine Owners & Enthusiasts Club

**AGM weekend report**  
**New Administrator**  
**Three Obituaries**  
**FBW Campaign Cruise**  
**Canal ware auction**  
**Braunston Historic Rally**



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

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*Front cover:* The Tent & Mersey canal at Willington. Even with boats moored for our AGM weekend, there was plenty of room for others. [Steve Whetnall]

*Back cover:* Sunset and sunrise at Norton Junction - six hours apart. [Andrew Laycock]

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### **Contacting the RN Register Board members by email**

Please note the email contact addresses for the members of the board are those in the top left panel on this page.

Particularly that for the Administrator, which is **[administrator@rnregister.org.uk](mailto:administrator@rnregister.org.uk)**

To send a email to all the directors, use **[directors@rnregister.org.uk](mailto:directors@rnregister.org.uk)**



*The new top gate at Wolverhampton Top Lock; just four days after installation.*

[Andrew Laycock]

### **Next edition**

All contributions for the Autumn edition will be gratefully received. Copy deadline 15th October 2025. 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.

## Editor's Ramblings

I have never known a boating summer quite like this one. On my month long trip to and from the AGM weekend at Willington, we only experienced two wet mornings. Dealing with consecutive warm, even hot, long sunny days was a welcome and unusual challenge. Our techniques included some very early starts (before 6am) and early finishes (just after lunchtime on a couple of days). On one very hot day we stayed moored, whilst on another the only movement was to turn round. Utilisation of high factor sun cream doubled, and wide brim hat wearing was essential. Deployment of portable fans and wearing of some unconventional boating attire kept us reasonably cool.

But of course the major effect of a long dry period is water shortages. I was not boating during the often recalled drought summer of 1976, so I can not directly compare this year to that. Since then, CRT and other Navigation authorities have implemented better water resource management, and of course with mobile phones and the Internet, information is much more readily available. This year, we were checking the stoppage list daily, to see what had changed. Our return trip from Willington had almost as many Go/No-go decisions as an Apollo moon landing! For a while our home mooring length was closed, with physical barriers preventing access from the nearest junction. Fortunately that was resolved before we arrived back.

A significant effect on cruising this year is the long term closures for major repairs – Little Bollington, Tardebigge Top Lock, Mossley, Bosley and Wilmcote Top Lock. Whilst the final two of those are now open again, the reopening dates were later than the original estimates. I am so glad we took the early decision to postpone the Rally at Stalybridge and to run the replacement AGM weekend at Willington.

Short term stoppages for fixing worn out, broken, or damaged items also appear to be far more frequent. However, we navigated through Wolverhampton Top Lock a couple of days after CRT had fitted a complete new top gate. A splendid

achievement to complete the manufacture and installation in just over a week. Other fixes seem to have taken a bit more time, and thus caused more disruption. The policies such as just in time or temporary fixes and reduction of spare part stocks because of funding issues are some of the causes.

Providing additional water supply capacity to enable canals and navigable rivers to cope with more frequent dry springs and summers is certainly not going to be cheap. But there are many instances where some small changes would enable the existing water supply to last longer. For example, it is leaking gates and paddles which cause the well known low water levels in the King's Lock and Aylestone Mill Lock pounds south of Leicester. We boaters can take action to reduce some of this. When entering or leaving a wide lock with just one boat, open both gates, particularly bottom gates. This prevents the boat rubbing against the gate mitre, which over time causes a groove to form and thus a leak when the gates are closed.

To me, the most frustrating and annoying low water situations this summer were those caused by deliberate vandalism. At the end of June, in an overnight incident at Trentham and Meaford Locks on the Trent & Mersey Canal, someone opened all the paddles on the locks. This led to the upstream pound being down by a foot or so, and to flooding of the towing path and footpaths in Stone. A similar incident in July occurred on the southern section of the Stratford Canal. Local boaters have a good idea who the perpetrators of that incident are. I hope that conclusive proof is obtained, so that the offenders can be appropriately dealt with. Similar actions on a public highway would now lead to prosecutions under the Public Order Act of 2023.

My parting thought this time comes from the 1962 Carole King song – "It Might As Well Rain Until September"!

**Andrew**

editor@rnregister.org.uk

## Chairman's Chatter

After a record-breaking dry, hot spell I'm now sitting in a National Trust cabin in Morteheo, Devon watching the rain and the grey clouds scudding across the sky. When I worked for a living it was common for people to ask me the dates I was going on holiday simply so they could avoid them. I was famous (at least in the office) for always having the worst weather possible when I went on my annual holiday with the family, usually to the North coast of either Devon or Cornwall. It seems I haven't lost the knack. As a special service to Register members interested, I am happy to let you know when I'm going away on holiday next year.

The plan B AGM weekend took place at Willington and, given the circumstances, was well attended. Family drama meant

that I had to cut short my time there on Saturday evening and leg it back to my temporary mooring at Kings Bromley Marina. I got as far as Hunt's Lock at the bottom of Fradley at about 1:00am and decided to call it a night or, more accurately, morning and, not being able to find a spare bit of Armco anywhere, moored on those handy little white bollards by the lock. Up at Ian McKim o'clock and a truly beautiful morning getting through the remaining six locks and back to the marina well in time for breakfast.

Keep on chugging,

**Bob**

chairman@rnregister.org.uk

## Membership Matters

This is my first piece for the *Newsletter* in my new role, so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your kind words of welcome and I hope I can live up to Andy's thorough, professional and very comprehensive standard.

We still have about 20 members who are paying their membership at the old rate of £12 by standing order. If you are one of these, then you will now receive your *Newsletter* by email. Please also check your inboxes/spam/junk email folders for an email with instructions regarding setting up a direct debit — please don't ignore it.

The WhatsApp groups ('*RN Rally 2025*' and '*RN Chatter*') continue to be proving popular. Obviously the *RN Rally 2025* is a forum for Rally only so we should have less traffic on that one now. We will update it to 2026 in due course, but obviously don't want to wish our time away — that goes too fast without our help! Any members not on the *RN Chatter* who wish to be added, please let me know and we'll get you sorted out.

We've had six new members join since

the last *Newsletter* so a very warm RN welcome to:

John Morgans    Camberley, nb *Osprey*  
Mark Onslow    Baldock,

Alex Watson    Oxford,

nb *Kingfisher No 14*

Stephen Batchelor    Telford, nb *Solitaire*

Gary Roberts    Syston, nb *Steadfast*

Cheryl Owen    Poole

**Rayne**

administrator@rnregister.org.uk



*Appropriate lock side vegetation for the July heatwave - a sunflower on the Leicester line.  
[Andrew Laycock]*



## Obituary : Tony Grattan

It would have been early in 1994 when I first met Tony. The early days of the Register brought me in to contact with many older members, like Tony who at the time was on the committee of The Saltersford Arm Canal Trust at Warwick.

At this time Tony had a few problems with the RN in *Dreamcatcher* which was moored there, namely the old exhaust system which was falling apart with rust. We reconstructed it with pipes and fittings over a couple of days. This was the start of Tony and I becoming good friends.

Tony was from the Manchester area and also other places we both knew. During the years we would socialise and boat together, mainly to the Register gatherings and on the Ashby Canal with David and Jane Brixey.

Tony would join us at family gatherings, birthdays and so on. When visiting his family in Glossop and Warrington he would sometimes call in and have a stopover.

Eventually he arrived by boat at Baddersley Wharf, which then became his home base, after spending some time round the Midland Canals, where I would visit him and stopover sometimes, doing odd jobs with him on *Moondara* having moved from *Dreamcatcher*.

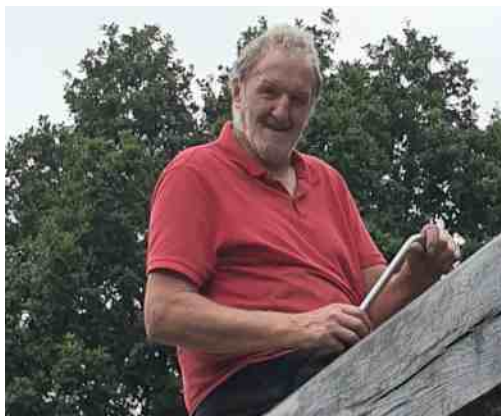
We re-engined his boat at Baddersley and in return he helped me at Kinglsey with building jobs in order to store our motorhome at the rear of our property. I valued his building and maintenance skills and reciprocated by helping him with his boat.

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Andrew,  
I enjoyed reading your recent editorial (*issue 125, Spring 2025*) – this event is really important in keeping skills alive. How many people can say they can steer a Joey (apart from my daughters!).

I just wanted to flag a small point for clarity: you referred to the Black Country Tug Gathering as being a Historic Narrow Boat Club event. My understanding is

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During COVID we spent three months locked down at Baddersley with Tony, along with other boating neighbours. We formed a small but close-knit community.

We never had a cross word, but always a laugh and a joke no matter what.

I spent a few days at the boatyard with Tony, before he went into hospital. He was not well. He had been so messed about with tests and scans and appointments at the hospital that it was really getting him down.

His nickname at the boat yard was Longlegs as to differentiate between Tony Hawkins the joiner and boatbuilder. They got on well, and always had a friendly attitude with leg pulling and joking.

His invaluable help and encouragement will be sadly missed. Longlegs, my friend you will always be with us.

R.I.P. Tony.

*Ian Crompton*

that it is not an official HNBC event, being privately run, but most of the participants are HNBC members.

Hope that's helpful, and keep up the great work!

With thanks,

*Marta Gunner*

Tug Oates, formerly ice breaker built 1854

## Obituary: Andy Todd

Just as this issue was due to go to the printers, we received the sad but not unexpected news that Andy Todd died peacefully at his home on Sunday 27th July. His partner, Jane Miles was at his side. Andy was diagnosed with bowel cancer five years ago. Subsequently he developed a brain tumour and more recently a brain infection. Last year it appeared that treatments had been successful, however earlier this year the symptoms reappeared and steadily worsened.

Andy was born in Hammersmith in 1952. Around 13 years later, his family moved to Poole in Dorset, where Andy attended the Grammar School. The reason for the move was that his father's business, enamelling parts for white metal goods, required larger premises. Whilst in the sixth form, he acquired his first car, a 3 wheeler Messerschmitt KR200. On leaving school, his ambition was to work as an Air Traffic Controller. However, lack of 20/20 vision scuppered that. So a change in direction saw him enrol on a Chemical Engineering degree at Loughborough University. Here through a mutual friend he met Jane, who at the time was studying at Loughborough College. A Mini replaced the three wheeler.

Part of the degree course was a one year industrial placement which Andy hated. So instead, he embarked on a career in accountancy, joining a London firm that eventually became part of KPMG. He and Jane set up home in Carpenders Park (famous or infamous as the real



location of Plumbers Wood in Leslie Thomas's novel *Tropic of Ruislip*). Later they moved to Hemel Hempstead; a more spacious property but within earshot of the M1 motorway. Noise of a different sort led to another move in the early 1980s - the young children in the adjoining property had been bought a piano! Andy and Jane moved to Sarratt, where they enjoyed the community spirit and peace of village life.

Andy used his accountancy skills for the benefit of several local clubs over the years – including Sarratt Care and The Grey Knights. The later organisation is a group of Sarratt villagers who manage and maintain a 1932 Bedford WLB 16-seat single deck bus, known as "Jenks". Andy drove this bus for a while until he no longer had the strength to fight with 'double declutching' but he continued to sit on the Committee to promote her ongoing conservation and operation.



*Jenks, the 1932 Bedford WLB bus with a Davies Body, once belonged to the fleet of Williams of Blaينا, South Wales*

Over the years, Andy was drawn to anything that was propelled by an engine. He drove go-carts and off-road vehicles and achieved his childhood dream of earning a single-engine pilot's licence, when he was 50. That made up for not qualifying as an Air Traffic Controller! After he stopped flying real planes, a friend turned his head and he

started to fly (and repair!) large models and drones instead.

Andy's first involvement with boats naturally took place during his time at Poole. Later, he and Jane accompanied some friends on a canal hire boat – and they thoroughly loved it. So, after a few more hirings, they bought a boat. This was a small Springer – powered by a very nosy air cooled Ducati engine. Andy hated that engine. Three boats later, Andy found the perfect engine, a Daventry built Russell Newbery DM2. This was fitted into *Apsley*, a 59 foot Stowe Hill Marine boat which Andy and Jane commissioned in 2005. Of course, Andy and Jane joined the Register.

After both Andy and Jane retired, they were able to undertake some longer and more adventurous cruises aboard *Apsley*. This included the crossing of the River Mersey, following our Rally at Ellesmere Port in 2014.

In December 2016, Andy assumed the role of the Register's Administrator – a post that covers membership management, treasurer and Company secretary. Andy's accountancy



## RN powered boats for sale

The following boats with RN engines are currently advertised for sale by Register Members.

**Apsley** 59ft Stowe Hill Marine boat built 2006 with 2005 Daventry built DM2 (serial 22F 2005). Offered for sale through Tollhouse Boat Sales - [www.tollhouseboatsales.com](http://www.tollhouseboatsales.com).

**Arabia** 70ft Roger Fuller narrowboat built 1992 with 1954 built DM2 refurbished 2016 (serial 22B 863). Offered for sale through Tollhouse Boat



*Andy and Jane at the Evesham Rally last summer. [Steve Whetnall]*

background meant he was a natural fit for the role, seamlessly taking over from the late Rob Davies who held the position for the preceding 18 years.

Andy's wishes are for a direct cremation, so there will be no formal funeral service. However, there will be some social gatherings later this year to celebrate Andy's life and achievements. It is very likely one of these will be at Stafford during Register's Autumn Gathering (Thursday 25th to Sunday 28th September, see page 9).

Jane thanks all the Register members who have sent cards and messages of condolence. She adds "When you are on the receiving end of them it is so uplifting to think that someone has taken the time to ponder." In Andy's memory, the Register is making a donation to the National Brain Appeal. They raise funds to advance treatment and research at The National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery and the University College London Queen Square Institute of Neurology.

**Andrew**

Sales - [www.tollhouseboatsales.com](http://www.tollhouseboatsales.com).

**Ben** 40ft 8in tug style boat with marinised RD1 serial 10DL 1657 (probably built at Dagenham early 1950s, rebuilt 2023) . Offered for sale through Ashby Canal Centre - [www.ashbycanalcentre.co.uk](http://www.ashbycanalcentre.co.uk).

For photographs and more details, refer to the broker's web site or the Register 'For Sale' page at [www.rnregister.org.uk/ForSale.html](http://www.rnregister.org.uk/ForSale.html)

## Obituary : John Dudley

On the last day of June, five Register members attended the funeral of John Dudley at the Fenland Crematorium near Peterborough. John died on the 24th May, having never regained consciousness following a stroke which occurred whilst he took an afternoon nap with his cat, Peanut, on his lap.



John was the youngest of a family of four, having two older sisters and a brother. From an early age, he showed an interest in all things mechanical. Some of his exploits did not go to plan, for example he managed to blow up the garden shed. He also got the blame for setting a Christmas tree on fire, however, later one of his sisters owed up to that. His school reports consistently stated he was enthusiastic but not academic – the subject he excelled in was woodwork. On leaving school he joined the London Brick Company as an apprentice fitter. He soon established a reputation for fixing anything mechanical and problem solving.

John's early passion was cars; a Triumph TR6 was an early pride and joy. As a Fenland man he naturally enjoyed fishing in the dykes and ditches. Another of John's passions, was real ale. He was a very active member of the Campaign for Real Ale. For many years he was responsible for site infrastructure of the annual Peterborough Beef Festival. This was one of CAMRA's largest festivals held in marquees beside the River Nene. One year the festival was almost flooded out, but John saved the day by arranging for many tons of straw to be spread on the ground.

John met his wife, Judith on a blind date and married her in 1971 after she proposed. A few years later they bought their first narrowboat – or rather a boat shell. Naturally, John undertook the

complete fit out. Over the years, John and Judith owned three narrowboats, all named *Trundlemere*. The final *Trundlemere* being powered by a 1950s vintage Russell Newbery DM2.

John joined the Register in 2003; attending every Rally from 2004 at Banbury to 2022 at Audlem. Judith died in 2011, but John still made the voyages up the River Nene until relocating his mooring to the Oxford

Canal. When, in 2007 the Register began running a bar at the Rallies, John was naturally very supportive. His experience of organising and running the Peterborough Beer Festival was a great help to the Rally bar managers. There were a few occasions when his knowledge of serving real ale helped us out of a tricky spot. Mind you, John had his particular favourite beers and beer styles. If we included one that was not in that category, we certainly knew it!

John made a major contribution to the fit out of the Daventry building which is now the engineering base of the RN Diesel Engine Company. Initially this was acquired by a group of Register members, as the RN Register Property Company. John was not only an investor in this, but masterminded the installation of the mezzanine floor which provides the parts store and archive area.

Besides CAMRA and the RNR; John was an active supporter of the IWA. He was also a founder member of the Middle Level Waterman's Club. John was not afraid to give his opinion on almost any subject – usually proving to be correct. He advised the Royal Engineers when they were working with the Middle Level Commissioners on navigation improvements.

John and Judith did not have any children, but their home life was taken up



with cats. They fostered many cats for Cats Protection. One of their own cats, Tiger, accompanied John to the boatyard when fitting out one of his boats. Thereafter each cat accompanied them on their boat trips. His last cat, Peanut, died just a few days after John. Peanut's ashes, together with those of Tiger, have been placed with John's.

## Autumn Gathering 2025

The Stafford Boat Club invite all RN Register members to their club house and grounds for our informal Autumn Gathering. The location is Stafford Boat Club, Maplewood, Wildwood, Stafford, ST17 4SG. The dates are Thursday 25th to Sunday 28th September.

The Boat Club have kindly agreed that we can use the clubhouse and bar, for the duration (dogs are allowed in part of the bar). The bar will be open every lunchtime and evening. The weekend will give us all a chance to catch up with each other once again, and to chat about what we have been up to over the summer. Please come by any means: car, caravan, train (nearest station is Stafford), bus (best to alight by

The funeral wake was held at John's local pub, the Vine at Coates. Fittingly all three of the cask ales they were serving that day would have met with John's approval. And the pub cat called in to pay its respects.

**Andrew**

the Radford Bank Inn and then walk along the towing path), bicycle, foot, or by boat (let's hope there is enough water). If coming by boat, please note there are no reserved moorings, so moor where you can, along the towing path and observe the CRT local mooring restrictions (14 days). There is easy access to the Club site across the adjacent canal bridge. There will be a McMillan coffee morning on Saturday. We hope to visit the work site of The Stafford River Link, over the weekend.

Please email me at [neilamason@btinternet.com](mailto:neilamason@btinternet.com) as soon as you read this to let me know you are attending.

**Neil**

## Where There's more Brass

If you missed our AGM weekend and wish to see Tom Kitching's *Where There's Brass* show (see page 13), some forthcoming performances are:

•21 September - Preston Brook Village Hall (part of 250th anniversary of the tunnel)

- 1 October - Fleece Inn, Bretforton
- 2 October - Rosslyn Court, Margate
- 4 October - Lewes Saturday Folk Club

For more details refer to [www.tomkitching.co.uk](http://www.tomkitching.co.uk)

## Richard Parry starts work at Hatton

Not the man, but the boat! CRT staff and volunteers based at Hatton have named



their new 30foot work boat and hopper after the former Chief Executive of the Trust. Richard admitted "I was taken aback when I realised that the team was giving me the huge honour of naming a boat after me. The work of the Trust continues to increase as we fight the unrelenting passage of time on our amazing but ageing canal network. I am very pleased that my name will be part of that effort as the team carries out important work to help keep the West Midlands' canal network open and navigable for boaters and all to enjoy."

Our choice of Willington for the AGM weekend venue to replace the postponed Rally at Stalybridge turned out to be a very wise decision. The eastern end of the Trent & Mersey Canal seemed to be one of the few waterways that did not suffer from low water levels or other unplanned stoppages. Even those who arrived or departed by boat from the River Soar and the Leicester section of the Grand Union only experienced minor issues.

The fifteen boats who attended were moored on the visitor moorings either side of bridge 23. Most were two abreast, so leaving plenty of mooring space for other boats.

Neil Shackles and his staff at The Rising Sun were exemplary hosts making us extremely welcome. In return we left his function room a lot tidier and swelled the bar takings over the weekend. At various times, weekend attendees made use of



Attending RN boats moored two abreast on the tow

Photographs by Steve Whetnall [SW], Jean Henry [JH] and Andrew Laycock [AL]



Meg, Caroline and Babs sprucing up the function room. [AL]



The Rising Sun from the station underpass. [AL]



John points out a free mooring space. [SW]  
10



Mick gets ready to welcome a boat to moor alongside Brunel. [SW]  
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## words and pictures



ing path side (right).

[SW]



Babs, Mick, Jane, Roger and Chris in the quiet corner of the Rising Sun. [SW]



Register Chairman, Bob Scott, gets the AGM underway. [SW]



AGM attendees all paying attention! [SW]  
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all the other facilities in the village. As Rally Organiser, I know it is a challenge to find suitable venues that offer mooring and facilities to meet our various needs. Willington, especially the Rising Sun, certainly exceeded all expectations. We will definitely return for another event there some time in the future.

The revised dates for the Stalybridge Rally next year are Thursday 25th to Sunday 28th June. Other than that, most of the details are the same. Moorings are on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal in the town centre; the St Peter and St Raphael Church Hall is the main venue. One change is that the Saturday evening entertainment is *Still Reeling*, a Lancashire based Ceilidh & Barn Dance Band. The dances and music will be a variety of English, Irish, Scottish, American and European.

*Andrew*



Mick Golds talks about the Derby and Erewash Canals. [SW]



Jeremy and Andrew enjoying the Wainwright beer. [SW]





Babs displays the end product of the two part craft workshop: a boxed greeting card with a quilling flower design. [SW]



Jane and Chrissy applying final touches to their cards. [SW]



Babs with the industrious crafters. [SW]



The stunning results of the craft workshop. [SW]



Sue and John get to grips with the strips of paper for the quilling process. [JH]



To keep the crafters nourished, Mick baked this fabulous chocolate cake. [JH]



Andrew chaired the technical forum. One of the main messages was 'read the manual', but make sure it is the correct manual for your engine! [SW]





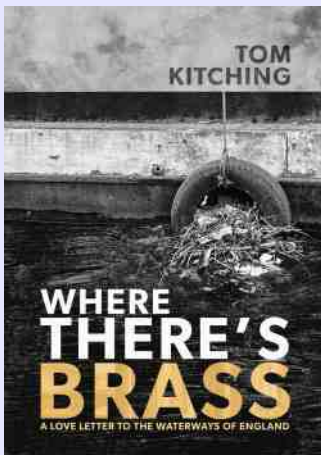


*Relocating from Stalybridge enabled attendance by Roger and Jane on Hineroa and Dave and Jane on Rowan. [SW]*



*A traditional feature of Register Rallies and Gatherings is a raffle. Andrew and Meg draw the winning tickets (above) and (below) is a selection of the prizes. The proceeds of the raffle were split between the Erewash Canal Preservation and Development Association, and the mental health charity MIND. MIND is one of the charities that Neil Shackles at the Rising Sun supports. Each organisation received £107.50. [SW]*

*For many attendees, the highlight of the weekend was the performance of Where There's Brass, by Tom Kitching. Stories of Tom's journey to London on the former Thomas Clayton Tar boat Spey, and six months spent as part of the modern waterway community in the capital, interwoven with a specially composed suite of music. Tom's accompanist was for the first time Danny (on the right in the photographs). Of course, every time Tom mentioned Spey's Bolinder engine there were jeers from the audience! If you were not present, you missed a real treat. [SW]*





*Single mooring required near the road bridge.*

[SW]



*Willington Wetlands is a nature reserve located between the railway and the River Trent. It is home to beavers and lots of birdlife, plus these Highland cattle.*

[SW]

**On the way to Willington ...**



*Four boats heading to the AGM weekend are seen moored at Shobnal Fields in Burton on Trent. But no sign of any of the crews!*

[AL]

**... and on the way back**



*Three boats heading from the AGM weekend are moored at Shardlow, just yards from both the Malt Shovel and the New Inn.*

[AL]



*Unsurprisingly all the crews were in the Burton Bridge Inn! (Not the closest pub to the canal, but definitely worth the walk).*

[SW]



*Brunel, Uranus and Antares then proceeded to the Erewash Canal, in convoy as far as Sandiacre Junction. A hot afternoon was spent watching carp and a grass snake in the canal.*

[AL]

# Abridged minutes of the Russell Newbery Register AGM held on the 27th June 2025 at the Rising Sun, Willington

The Chairman welcomed an excellent number of members to the meeting, 29 members attending.

1. Apologies: Received from Brian Jarrett, Helen Davies, Steve Burt, Dave & Nessa Martin, Andy Todd & Jane Miles, Ian & Cath Crompton, Norman Woolley, John & Hazel Sarkanen, Eric & Janet McDowall, Clive Henderson.

2. Administrator update: Andrew Laycock provided an update on Andy Todd's ongoing health struggles and his decision to stand down as Administrator and resign as Director, effective immediately. The Directors had co-opted Rayne Longhurst in his place. Rayne has taken over as Administrator, with immediate effect.

3. Minutes of Previous AGM: These were proposed as agreed by Rob Dickinson, seconded by Roger O'Dea and approved unanimously.

4. Chairman's Report: Membership numbers continue to remain at a constant level (around 190 subscribing members) with new members roughly equalling members leaving. Contributions to the *Newsletter* continue to be requested. A railway trip in October 2024 was a huge success, thanks to Jim & Val Comerford for their organisation. A second trip will be arranged for this year.

5. Finance: The Accounts for the year ended 30 November 2024 had been circulated, mainly prepared by Andy Todd. Andrew Laycock gave a brief run-down of the numbers which showed the Register continued to be financially sound. Some key points:

- A small shortfall due to lack of a Rally Bar at Evesham.
- Newsletter costs are down due to fewer printed copies with more electronic circulations.
- Merchandise stock is now written-off, so any remaining stock will be profit. Clothing items are ordered as requests received (no stock carried).
- Administration costs have increased, mainly due to adoption of Go Cardless system

applying charges for managing direct debits for membership subscriptions and Paypal charges for those members using this system.

The Board of Directors approved the accounts on 24th June. Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Barbara Judd, seconded by Mick Judd and unanimously agreed.

Work continues to try and persuade members to switch their standing orders to direct debit. Andrew requested anyone who has renewed by standing order up to June but doesn't think they have received an email about direct debit since then, to get in touch, as everyone should have had at least one email.

6. Election of Directors: Under the Memorandum & Articles of Association the Directors are not required to retire and seek re-election. The current Directors (except Andy Todd) are willing to continue in office which was proposed by Brian Farrant, seconded by John Potter and unanimously agreed.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 16.15.

*Any member wishing to see a full copy of the minutes and the presented accounts for the year ending 30th November 2024 should request copies from Rayne.*



*A soon to be historic view of Willington village, with the cooling towers of the now redundant power station in the background.  
[Steve Whetnall]*



## Fund Britain's Waterways Campaign Cruise Summary

This year's Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) 4-month campaign cruise is now complete, so it is timely to look back on what has been achieved, before the steering group meets to discuss next steps for the FBW campaign. In addition to the sheer distance covered by the campaigners and their unstinting commitment of time, what has been most striking has been the warmth and support they have received along the route.

On 29th March seven boats set off from Strawberry Island Boat Club, Doncaster, waved off by the Mayor of Doncaster Ros Jones CBE and other local dignitaries and led by this year's campaign cruise leader Hazel Owen, Chair of the Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs and a member of the FBW steering group.

Six of these boats journeyed for 278 miles and through 172 locks to London, being joined by others and attending events to raise awareness along the way. A reception for the boaters was held by St Pancras Cruising Club on 1st May, with a welcome from the Mayor of Camden Councillor Samata Khatoun and the Commodore of the Club Colin Parlett. The boaters encountered unplanned stoppages on their route including in London, but most managed to participate in IWA Canalway Cavalcade in Little Venice over the early May Bank Holiday weekend. The complete flotilla of 26 boats gathered at Limehouse, travelled in convoy up the River Thames and stood off the Palace of Westminster on 7th May, where they were viewed by Parliamentarians and FBW members from the terrace and cheered on by supporters on Westminster Bridge. From Westminster the flotilla had an overnight stay in West India Docks and then divided between different routes north, with one group going up the Thames and the Oxford Canal and the other back up the Grand Union Canal.

Events were held on each route, including at Tooley's Historic Boatyard on the Oxford Canal in Banbury and at Lichfield Cruising Club. After a two-week delay caused by an unscheduled closure of the Boston Barrier for maintenance the Environment Agency, a flotilla of 14 narrowboats embarked on a 50-mile, nearly 12-hour journey across the Wash from Boston to Wisbech, including a break on Thief Sands to wait for the incoming tide. The Wash is not natural territory for narrowboats and the convoy made an unusual and



*The FBW flotilla viewed from Westminster Bridge* [Liz Rayner]

impressive sight which was covered by both regional and national BBC television news.

In July a convoy of narrowboats cruised the Walsall Canal as part of an Explorer Cruise run by the Birmingham Canal Navigations Society (BCNS), flying the flags of the FBW campaign. This was the first time that such a large group of boats had visited the canal since its reopening by CRT after a 10-month clean-up of a 12-mile stretch following a toxic chemical spill in August 2024.

Ian Marr, one of the boaters from Strawberry Island Boat Club, summed up the experience of the campaign cruise: "After well over 1000 miles and hundreds of locks, we have arrived back at base. But what have we achieved? Well, certainly many more people have been aware of our campaign cruise efforts than last year. We have raised our profile further with key movers and shakers. We have experienced first-hand the challenging nature of our fragile and underfunded waterways. Every campaign boat has experienced stoppages in one form or another, tried to make plans that get scuppered, seen and used neglected infrastructure and trudged through canals struggling for water. Each year the challenges get worse and more frequent. There are plenty of excuses, but it is very clear the nation's special heritage is under the most serious threat since the post-war years. A step change needs to happen to halt the decline and turn things around. The writing is on the wall; hire boat companies are closing. It's not IF all three Pennine routes will close in any year, but WHEN. People are choosing to sell their boats. Thanks to every one of you out there who made us welcome, waved as we went by, signed the petition and joined in with our activities."

*From a FBW press release*



## Auction of John Dudley's canal items

John owned a collection of items related to narrowboats and canals. As John and Judith had no children to inherit this collection, the executors of John's will would like to see these items acquired by other boaters or waterway enthusiasts who would appreciate them. All the proceeds from the sale of these items are to be donated to the Stroke Association, in John's memory.

If you are interested in any of these items, please contact me for further details and pictures. We will auction all the items at the Autumn Gathering at Stafford on Saturday 27th September. You may submit bids in advance. Some of the more valuable items have a reserve price. Most of the antique lace edge plates are lettered "A Present from ...". Post and packaging costs for any items not collected in person are extra.

The items available are:

### **Birmingham style water cans**

- Lot 1 Brown decorated roses with brass base and handle
- Lot 2 Brown decorated roses with brass base and handle, part of pouring handle missing
- Lot 3 Black/red decorated with roses
- Lot 4 Blue decorated roses and castle



- Dipper** Lot 5  
Brown  
(matches cans 1 & 2)
- Framed narrowboat model**  
Lot 6 Highbank hotel boat,

frame size 23½" by 11½", 2½" deep  
**Mounted narrowboat model** Lot 7 "Highbank Carriers Ltd", 15¼" by 1½", 4" high

- Hurricane lamp** Lot 8  
Green, decorated
- Coffee pot** Lot 9  
Blue, hinged lid
- Brown decorated earthenware tea pots** Lot 10 Large  
Lot 11 Small
- Small Chair** Lot 12  
Black, decorated roses 12" by 13", back height 29½"



- 8" antique lace edge plate with ribbon** Lot 13 London St. Paul's
- 8" antique lace edge plates**  
Lot 14 Blackpool  
Lot 15 Blackpool North Promenade  
Lot 16 Great Yarmouth Wellington Promenade  
Lot 17 Great Yarmouth young maidens  
Lot 18 Weston-super-mare
- 7" antique lace edge plates with ribbon**  
Lot 19 Colwyn Bay  
Lot 20 Clacton on Sea  
Lot 21 Ramsgate  
Lot 22 Lowestoft  
Lot 23 Southend on Sea Pier  
Lot 24 Rhyl  
Lot 25 Blackpool The Sands
- 7" antique lace edge plates**  
Lot 26 Southend on Sea Promenade and West Cliffs  
Lot 27 Barry Dock  
Lot 28 Blackpool Tower & Wheel  
Lot 29 Blackpool Glorious Sea  
Lot 30 Blackpool Central Promenade  
Lot 31 Great Yarmouth  
Lot 32 Edinburgh  
Lot 33 Norwich  
Lot 34 Douglas Lighthouse
- 7" modern lace edge plates with ribbon**  
Lot 35 Guernsey coat of arms (1 of 2)  
Lot 36 Guernsey coat of arms (2 of 2)
- 6½" modern lace edge plate with ribbon**  
Lot 37 Oxford Canal (black)
- 6" lace edge plates**  
Lot 38 Lake District pattern (1 of 2)  
Lot 39 Lake District pattern (2 of 2)
- 6" modern laced edge plates**  
Lot 40 Cyprus  
Lot 41 Lake Tahoe
- 5" modern laced edge plate** Lot 42 Seattle

**Andrew**

editor@rnregister.org.uk

## Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally: as popular as ever

Despite so many other summer events going on, both nationally and closer to home, and threatened water shortages together with an emergency stoppage on the Grand Union Canal near Leamington, this year's Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rally remained as popular and successful as ever. Held in its traditional slot over the last weekend in June, a total of 79 historic narrowboats attended, versus 74 last year. Originally there were close to 100 booked – the best potential turnout for many years, but disappointingly a number had to withdraw.

The boats that have attended our Rallies over the years represent in total about two-thirds of the entire fleet of historic narrowboats now surviving on the waterways that are in reasonable-to-good order. The overall total is estimated at only about 250 of them, versus the 35,000 modern narrowboats. This emphasises the fleets' historic importance, almost an endangered species, and also the vital roles that museums, canal societies and private owners perform in their preservation for the future.

It is rewarding for the Braunston Historic Narrowboat Rallies that it continues to inspire new restoration projects with the intention of showing them at our rallies. Also that there are now a number of younger and very enthusiastic owners coming onboard, so safeguarding the surviving fleet for the future. The annual Braunston rallies remain by far and away the largest gathering of these historic narrowboats anywhere on the inland waterways, and the best place for gongoozlers to be seen in great numbers. And they come in droves, with about 5,000 attending the rally, coming from all parts of the UK and abroad.

Most disappointingly for this year was the absence again of *President*, the last surviving coal-fired steam narrowboat. The problems of building a new steam boiler to modern



*Nutfield and Raymond in the opening procession of historic narrowboats. Nutfield steered by Frankie Morini, assisted by Nick Lake, Chairman of the Friends of Raymond. [Victoria Jane Photography]*

standards have at last been resolved and reconstruction is now underway. It is hoped that the boat will be back in steam by the end of this year, and fully restored in time to lead the parade at the 2026 Rally. If so, music legend and steam enthusiast Pete Waterman will be onboard to open the Rally, something he has been waiting patiently to do since 2020. They say that things come to those who wait, so fingers crossed.

The Rally was opened jointly by the great actor Sir David Suchet, and his wife Lady Sheila. In her early youth, she had played many parts at the Belgrade Theatre including 35 performances as its romantic leading lady. That was before she was swept off her feet by David who was working at the RSC at Stratford, and in a gap between productions, came and worked as a bit-part-player in a Belgrade production. The rest they say is history! Once an item, they both continued with their acting careers and bought a narrowboat to live on, moored preferably at the mid-point between where they were each working. Once children were underway, Sheila retired from acting and the Suchets moved 'onto the bank' as the old boatmen would say. But they have always remained active canal enthusiasts - including both being vice-presidents of the IWA. In past years they have each opened our Rallies, but never together. So it was a very special occasion for all of us to enjoy their double act!

The Suchets opened the Rally on the Narrow Boat Trust's pair of boats, the motor *Nuneaton* and its buttie *Brighton*. In recent years both boats have undergone major restoration, thanks to two very generous legacies, which should give them a good few trouble-free years ahead, as they continue coal-carrying in the traditional way, and thus preserving the working boatmen's skills of boat handling.

As in the tradition of the canal-working days, David steered the motor and Sheila the butty, with not a little help from members of the Narrow Boat Trust. When in 1962, the young working-boatman Les Lapworth (age 21) proposed to the 17 year old Alice Wain whilst on a rural walk behind the Greyhound Inn at Sutton Stop, he romantically said to her 'Please marry me and steer my butty!' Ironically as a young girl, the late Alice had worked the *Brighton* with her parents in the 1950s.

Following the formal £1,000 cheque presentation by the Suchets to the Narrow Boat Trust – this year's principal beneficiary of the Rally - the breasted-up *Nuneaton* and *Brighton* proceeded from their overnight mooring to hove-to under the restoration-in-progress marina entrance bridge. Here before formally opening the Rally the Suchets officially renamed the entrance bridge 'Peter's Bridge' to commemorate Peter Andrews' £150,000 legacy to restore it. They then unveiled the new bridge plaque, temporarily fixed as works to the iron superstructure are as yet incomplete, whilst Daventry Brass play the boatmen's favourite funeral hymn, *Abide With Me*. And to add more theatre, the Suchets then declared the 2025 Rally open to a full peal of bells from All Saints Church, Braunston, the Cathedral of the Canals, and Daventry Brass Band playing their foot-stomper 'Floral Dance' to set the festive mood.

The opening pair were then followed by the Braunston based historic pair of boats, the *Nutfield* and *Raymond*, in the traditional parade though the marina and round to the Braunston Turn and back. In the *Raymond's* hold was a precious cargo of celebrity guests, including Richard Parry, the now retired CEO of the Canal & River Trust.



*Best seen from the water: The mass gathering of former working narrowboats – up to five deep in places.*  
[Tim Coghlan]

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*Paired-up Tadworth & Bordesley joining the parade, seen here making a tight turn beneath the renamed "Peter's Bridge".* [Tim Coghlan]

*Tadworth* and *Bordesley* won this year's 'Nurser Award' Buckby Can for the Best in Show as voted by the historic narrowboat owners'. Tom Stott of Midland Chandeliers presented the prize to the pair's young owners Andrew and Cathy Haysom. They live on their boats with their dog, and supply fuel to the boaters on the southern Grand Union between Bulbourne and Bull's Bridge.

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.

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 a new performance of canal musical from the Oxford based Three Idle Women. The Rally's resident music-impresario Janul for some years now, produced the amazing musicians she finds each year for the beer tent, a mini-Glastonbury, without the mud! On the Saturday, 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 Renaissance music. The venue was across the meadows from Braunston at the ancient church of Wolfamcote. This was to raise awareness of this redundant church and the funds needed for its preservation.

© *Tim Coghlan*



