

The Ditchcrawler – Spring 2023



Looking Towards the NCCC Club Arm Entrance 10th October 2021.



The same view sixteen months later, on 12th February 2023.

A big **THANK YOU** to all who made this transformation possible! See also Pages 3, 4 & 5.

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

There is an **OPEN MEETING** at 2-00pm on Sunday 12th March 2023. This is intended to offer the opportunity for all members to have their say in how the Club is run, both at the present time and in the future. The meeting is proposed to commence after the conclusion of the Sunday Lunch session. Other Chairman related information will be released through the Postmaster subsequently.

COMMODORE'S ADDRESS

The **Pancake Night** is to be held during the Club Night on Friday 24th February 2023. This is usually a popular event featuring kitchen volunteers!

The **Fitting Out Supper** is to be held at 7-30 for 8-00pm on Saturday 25th March 2023. Please book your places on the notice board next to the Kitchen Serving hatch.

Our **Easter Week End Cruise** to Bugsworth commences on Good Friday 7th April 2023 running until Easter Monday 10th April. Further details to follow.

Other Commodore related information will be released through the Postmaster subsequently.

John Fenton, Chairman & Commodore.

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES NEWS

Membership Services Director's Report

A successful '**New Members Evening**' was held on Friday 17th February 2023, see Page 10.

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members to the NCCC:

New Members

Patrick Beirne
Gordon & Pat Letij

Boat name

Cobweb
Sweet Pea

'Newish' Members

Michael Dempsey
Mike Hodgkinson & Val Lipworth
Ken and Andrew Bellis
Philip Chadwick
Edward & Henry Doust
Chris & Deborah Kelly
Ron & Kathryn Moores
Alan Stabler

Moomin
Bliss
'Castaway'
'Sandpiper'
'Hirondelle'
'Sandpiper 1' **N.B. this is a different boat to 'Sandpiper'**
'Winnies Destiny'

The Club is remaining open each Friday Evening, thereby offering our new members the opportunity to meet with the other Club members over a 'drink and a chat'.

Pam Russell, Membership Services Director.

Please note, Pam is doing what she can to support her partner John in his Chairman and Commodore roles during his rehabilitation, following his prolonged stay in hospital. Ed

Ongoing work in the Club Arm

Our hardy piling/dredging/boathouse dismantling team have made much progress during the past couple of years. The 'before and after' photographs below bear testimony to their work.



8th October 2022



12th February 2023



10th October 2021



12th February 2023



Mike, Ian and Eric all hard at work on Thursday 8th December 2022, a bitterly cold day!

To date over 70% of the piling has been completed and the Arm is looking far better than in recent times. Our thanks go to all involved to make this transformation possible. Ed.



The 70th anniversary memorial hand crafted by Club member Ian Spooner in 2013

Next year heralds the eightieth anniversary of the NCCC! Come the 11th September 2023, the date coinciding with the inaugural meeting, piling may well be completed. Let's hope so!

Brian Lilleston

Long standing Club member Brian Lilleston passed away recently following a stoic battle with ongoing illness. He was a quiet, thoughtful man, who was not well known to many Club members as rather than cruising, he found solace during the many hours spent in the Club yard where he undertook the painstaking restoration of his yacht 'Karina'. In some respects, he was a 'throwback' to the era when most pleasure boats were made of wood, thereby requiring extensive time 'on the hard' to keep them useable, resulting in several long-term restorations occurring at any one time. Fellow 'restorers' would help each other on their week-ends off work, in effect generating a 'Club within the Club'.

Being an accomplished engineer blessed with both academic ability and practical skills, Brian relished this challenge and warmed to it. Those acquainted with his skills were aware that he possessed the ability to replace the intricate members one finds on period wooden craft, often requiring much in the way of initiative and imagination. Brian had hand crafted a steam box to achieve the desired effect. Had he achieved his ambition, in the not-too-distant future he would have been sailing his boat on Lake Windermere, reverting to an electric power source of his own design were he to be 'becalmed'.

He hailed from Merseyside, where he developed a life-long interest in the fortunes of Everton Football Club, becoming a good friend of the late Brian Leslie Labone, a cultured and talented 'one club' footballer who played for both Everton and England, winning major honours at the highest level during the 1960's.

Beside boat restoration and football, Brian was also interested in high performance cars, being the proud owner of an Aston Martin which he used regularly.

Those acquainted with Brian will no doubt feel privileged to have known him during his time at the Club. Our hearts go out to Brian's family at what must be a difficult time for them all.

John Suggitt, narrow boat 'Evenlode'

Mike's Autumn Poem

I'll gift you with some golden leaves,
And get them swimming in the breeze,
Floating, chasing, swirling round,
Then gathered again on frosted ground,

Natures gift from summer's heat,
A carpet of wonder beneath your feet,
To dance right through without despair,
While the swirling wind restyles your hair.

Thanks to Mike for this very welcome contribution. Perhaps we could persuade him to create a similar poem for the Spring, Summer and Winter seasons also! Ed.

Memories from Holidays 1984

During 1984 we were caught up in the miner's strike, which was very active especially in the Potteries, owing to the large collieries in the area.

We had enjoyed a very good cruise to Boston and Lincoln. On our return journey we had travelled that day from Great Haywood and had moored for our overnight stay at Hem Heath Bridge, Trentham. At approximately 1-30 am on Wednesday 15th August, we were awakened by three loud explosions in the near vicinity and shortly afterwards by somebody banging on the side of the boat. The police were asking us to move down the canal and away from the bridge. We were informed that the miner's pickets had blown up the local bus depot, setting fire to three coaches which were being used to ferry non striking miners to local coal pits. The situation was critical because the coaches were parked behind the local Esso garage which was adjacent to the canal, containing thousands of gallons of fuel. They feared an explosion at any minute and a leakage of petrol into the canal, though fortunately by this time the fire brigade was on hand.

As I worked for a national newspaper and this was prior to the era of mobile 'phones, I chased around looking for a public 'phone box. I managed to contact the main national newspapers and the story was printed in the Daily Mail, the Daily Express, and the Daily Telegraph, but made the front page in the Daily Mirror, see below.

Bryan and Babs Roberts

Thanks to you both for some interesting reminiscences resulting in a 'scoop'! Ed

The clipping is a front-page article from the Daily Mirror. The headline is 'Pit buses bombed' in large, bold, black letters. To the left of the headline, the byline reads 'By TREVOR REYNOLDS'. Below the byline, the text describes the investigation into the bombing of a fleet of buses used to ferry miners to pits. It mentions road-blocks, police with tracker dogs, and a gang of strikers hitting the coach park. The explosion was at the Dawson bus depot off Longton Road, Trentham, Staffs. It also mentions holidaymakers on the Trent and Mersey canals being awakened by exploding fuel tanks. Brian Roberts, 40, of Marple Hall Road, Marple, Cheshire, who was on a boating holiday, is mentioned. The article is dated '3a.m. NEWS'. The text continues with a quote from a police officer: 'Suddenly all hell was let loose. About eight coaches were blown up or sabotaged. The whole place went up in flames and there were terrific bangs.' Firemen, police, and ambulances raced to the depot to search for anyone trapped or hurt. A senior police officer at Staffordshire police HQ said: 'We are still investi-'. The article concludes with a quote from a police officer: 'gating this attack on the coaches. We do not think anyone has been injured but a search of the area is still going on. The coaches are a fleet used to ferry miners in several counties. The coach firm is thought to have been the target of striking miners. Early this morning the police hunt for the coach bombers was still going on.' The article is signed 'PIT JOBS SHOCK—Page 2'.

By TREVOR REYNOLDS

Pit buses bombed

3a.m. NEWS

POLICE were early today investigating the bombing of a fleet of buses used to ferry miners to pits.

Road-blocks were set up and police with tracker dogs searched the countryside after a gang thought to be strikers hit the coach park.

The explosion was at the Dawson bus depot off Longton Road, Trentham, Staffs.

Holidaymakers on the Trent and Mersey canals were awakened by exploding fuel tanks.

Brian Roberts, 40, of Marple Hall Road, Marple, Cheshire, who was on a boating holi-

day, said: "Suddenly all hell was let loose.

"About eight coaches were blown up or sabotaged. The whole place went up in flames and there were terrific bangs."

Firemen, police and ambulances raced to the depot to search for anyone trapped or hurt.

Later a senior police officer at Staffordshire police HQ said:

"We are still investi-

gating this attack on the coaches.

"We do not think anyone has been injured but a search of the area is still going on.

"The coaches are a fleet used to ferry miners in several counties."

The coach firm is thought to have been the target of striking miners.

Early this morning the police hunt for the "coach bombers" was still going on.

PIT JOBS SHOCK—Page 2

The Newspaper article inspired by Bryan and Babs

North Cheshire Cruising Club



The Wharf, Canal Street, Buxton Road, High Lane, Stockport



*Bring your friends, have a great.
time, everyone welcome*

BIG SCREEN RACE NIGHT

Saturday 18th march 2023.

First race Starts 7.30 PM

Entrance **£3** Including Program

Bar open **7** pm — Refreshments available



NCCC



PANCAKE – NIGHT



7-30 FOR 8-00 PM, FRIDAY 24th FEBRUARY 2023



Please support these Work Parties and help contribute to the 'Big Push' required to get the piling finished prior to our 80th Anniversary this coming September. Who knows, you may enjoy the 'camaraderie' in the Club Bar afterwards! Ed.



WILLIE WALKERS



FILM – NIGHT



7-00 FOR 7-30 PM, SATURDAY 1st APRIL 2023



New Members Evening Friday 17th February 2023

A big 'Thank You' to all who made this event possible



**AWCC News, including a Summary of the AWCC N.W.
meeting, held at the Watch House C.C. Stretford, on
Thursday 12th January 2023**



The AWCC NW regional Meeting was attended by 17 people, representing 11 of the seventeen North West Region Boat Clubs, apologies being received from one person. This, the third meeting held following the summer recess is summarised as follows:

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed Alan Finch, Douglas Valley C.C.

1. **Apologies from:** Jenny Budworth (Lymm), Mike Williams (MMBC), Eddie Revell (WMBC), Geoff Hollies (WHCC), Ken Ogg (Worsley CC)
2. **Minutes of the last Meeting** - Agreed
3. **Chairman's Report**
 - At the recent NEC meeting, all Region reps complained about the same problems regarding poor standards of towpaths, with muddy lengths, uncut grass, overhanging branches which can catch pedestrians and children on bicycles.
 - We are still awaiting to hold a planned trip through Barnton and Saltersford Tunnels with C&RT staff on board to show the risk to canoes and paddleboarders.
 - We have raised several items with C&RT, see **Par.9** below.
4. **Secretary's Report**
 - Worsley Toilet Block: I have been in contact with Salford City Council officer, Alex Cox. He has opened dialog with Peel Holdings and making progress. The water is back on, but the Elsan disposal is still u/s.
 - Montgomery Canal Restoration. There is progress and hopefully the canal should be open further by March to link up to Crickheath basin, one and half miles from the Welsh border.
 - Sale of Navigation Yard, Northwich to generate money for C&RT. It is being challenged by the Weaver Strategy Group as it leaves nowhere to store items such as the safety booms for the weirs on the Weaver and ignores the historic elements on the site.
 - AWCC Handbooks – updates and sales. Members were asked to check the data for their clubs on the AWCC website.
 - Anderton Lift: The shoot bolts which hold the guillotine gates open when craft pass underneath failed a safety test, so all must be replaced. The plan is to reopen the Lift on Easter weekend, 6 April 2023. There will be further significant maintenance of the Lift in future years.
 - Preston Brook Tunnel. There was an obstruction in the tunnel which has been removed but an inspection is expected first before it is classed as open.
- 5 **Treasurers Report**

Total £5273.70 (including Club National Subscriptions).
6. **Council Tax of boat clubs**

Jack Kershaw, Treasurer of Lymm CC, raised great concern by an approach from Cheshire Council to significantly increase the value of the Club site, which will in turn raise the Council Tax the club will be required to pay. The Club sent off the relevant form to the council but waited 3 months for a response. The council want to include the valuation of the moorings, but boat owners cannot be charged by the council themselves. Lymm CC are taking specialist advice.

7. Club Magazines

Clubs are invited to submit their Magazines for the best magazine event to Byfleet Boat Club, The Boat House, 4 Old Parvis Rd, West Byfleet, Surrey, K&14 6LE and mark it for the attention of the Club Magazine editor. Those with digital magazines can email them to the club Secretary, honsecretary.bbc@gmail.com who can pass it on to the Editor.

8. Joint Meeting of FBCC & AWCC with Bridgewater Canal Co.

Phyllis Greenough, Chair of Federation of Bridgewater Cruising Clubs has proposed that a joint meeting of FBCC and AWCC be held to discuss the following:

Overhanging trees; Walton Towpath; 'Ringing the Ring'; Wide beam boats;

Visitor Moorings (including the Old Number 3 pub which is now shut)

Paddleboarders – insurance cover and licensing

Toilet Blocks at Worsley, Preston Brook Marina, and Butts Basin.

Please advise Nick Culliford of any other issues to be raised.

9. Meeting with C&RT 18 November 2018

- Unpowered craft transiting tunnels, particularly on the T&M: We have asked for a joint trip on Bryan's boat to demonstrate our concern.
- Wide beam (9ft or more beam) craft on narrow canals: Boat builders/sellers must advise the new owners of the regulations. Owners can go on a private cruise provided they have a person on the bank to advise oncoming boats of the presence of the wide beam craft.
- Broad beam craft on wide canals. The Leeds & Liverpool Canal channel is not maintained to provide for such craft passing. C&RT was asked if there was any intention to dredge the junction of the Wigan locks and Poolstock locks.
- Weaver Flood Control: C&RT regarded the raising of the riverbank, as has been seen, to be a matter for the Environment Agency and/or Cheshire West and Chester Council. Mark Heath will substitute for C&RT Hydrologist Adam Comerford in a promised meeting soon.
- Lock restrictions on the L&L: Poolstock locks, like others, are still leaking which has added to the water shortage.
- C&RT were asked to remove the obstruction at Bridge 18 on the L&L. This has been there for many years.
- Swing bridges. New information signs have been provided at the bridges, but it is not always in view. When and where possible, it would be better if the control were sited on the towpath side. If the landing stage is on the offside, the stage should be long enough for full length craft. At Cox Bridge, the only place to secure the boat is blocked by a non-used C&RT boat.
- Vegetation control: Some work has been done better than in 2021. C&RT has hired a boat from land & Water. Weevils are used to eat pennywort.
- Dean Lock: There is an absence of mooring bollards so there is nowhere to moor. C&RT will see if rings can be installed.
- Water Shortage: We asked if there would be inspections to check for leaks at locks and along the canals. Limitations on passage started earlier in 2022 but still resulted in lock closures. C&RT stated that they are not permitted to divert the water which would normally go into Todbrook Reservoir to go directly into the Peak Forest Canal.
- Boaters passing up Bosley bottom lock to access the winding hole part way up. It was requested that the winding hole before the flight be signposted to encourage boaters to turn there.
- Future of Boaters Facilities: There was no decision at the time of the meeting by C&RT.

- Dee Branch: There is no plan to restore to working condition locks 2 & 3.
- Access to Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal: There is no agreement yet between C&RT and Peel Holdings. C&RT licensed craft have to pay to transit Pomona Lock.
- Promised jobs not actioned on the Weaver due to Bank staff being put onto Weaver locks as insufficient seasonal keepers recruited for the season.
- Boating Buddies. C&RT asked Malcolm to make a willing list of boaters.

10 Any Other Business

- Would a daytime meeting of AWCC NW clubs with Mathew Symonds, National Boating Manager, be welcome by clubs?
- Furnace Vale BC would welcome any assistance in establishing a H&S Policy.
- Reminder that the FBCC Rally will be held at Worsley from 26 to 29 May 2023.
- A picture was made public of a paddleboarder crossing the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct which is dangerous.
- Saturday 18 February is the day of the Annual Rowing Event on the Bridgewater.

Date of next meeting, which is AGM, Thursday 9th March 2023

Next CRT-AWCC meeting Early May 2023, Next CRT User Forum 23rd March 2023

John Suggitt, Vice Chair AWCC North-West, AWCC Rep. for NCCC, N/B Evenlode

N.C.C.C.LTD. - FEES FOR OCTOBER 2022 TO OCTOBER 2023

Moorings..... £2-45 per foot per month

Winter Moorings..... £3-00 per foot per month

Hardstanding up to 30 feet..... £18-50 per week

Hardstanding over 30 feet (or wide beam)..... £37-00 per week

Slipway Charges

1 week (Members)..... £65-00 (including use of pressure washer & Poly Tunnel)

1 week (Members under 12 months)....£130-00 (inc. use of press. washer & Poly Tunnel)

2nd week on Slipway (only if available).....£65-00

1 week on Slipway (Non-Members).....£350-00

In and Out Slipway Charges

Members (within one day).....£25-00

Non-Members (within one day).....£200-00

All Boats using the slipway must be under their own propulsion

Crane Charges (Wharf usage)

Members £50-00; New-Members (under 12 months) £100-00;

Non-Members £240-00

Paint Shed Charges

Members 2 weeks free then £30-00 per week if available

New-Members (under 12 months) £50-00 per week (if available)

Members (2 free weeks) only once in any 12 month period

By the order of the Board of Directors

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



NCCC



OPEN MEETING



2-00 PM SUNDAY 12th MARCH 2023

Spring Edition Brain Teaser

Though James Brindley is regarded as 'The father of British Canals', they were already in existence in modern times some years before he commenced the Bridgewater Canal, the Romans having built the Fossdyke centuries earlier. Where was our first modern canal (traversing a watershed) built and who was responsible for it?

Solution to Winter Edition Brain Teaser

The renown canal builder James Brindley served an apprenticeship in a workshop located on Byrons Lane / Hall Lane which runs beneath the canal at Gurnet. This is visible from the elevated section of canal and the building is blue plaqued in Brindleys memory. This building and the nearby 'Kings Head' public house pre-date the canal by many years.

Club Director Willie Walker, together with a small team are in the throes of arranging the '**NCCC Eightieth Anniversary Event**'. If you have any ideas or wish to contribute in any way, please contact **Willie on Telephone number 07900 897846**.

Moorings within the Arm may be coming available. Please contact our Moorings Officer **Dave Hood, telephone number 07825 335146 / 07837 542115**.

When re-licensing your boat, would you kindly do so through the Club as we will benefit financially. For further information on the current procedure, please contact our Licensing Officer **Jaqui Kilburn, telephone number 0161 442 6353 / 07714 352991**

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