

PUNNET

The Magazine of Strawberry Island
Boat Club in Doncaster



WINTER 2025



In your Winter 2025 edition of Punnet

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Front cover - See if you can identify this bridge over a navigable tidal river connecting two distinct canals - Agatha knows all.



EDITORIAL



Welcome to the Winter edition of Punnet

Season's greetings to you all,

Here we are again in the 'silly season' (which I have to say is one of my favourite times of the year) and at Strawberry Island we do celebrate it in style. It is also a good time to reflect on the past year, to take stock, have a bit of time out from boating and cosy up with family and friends. Also, to check in on our more vulnerable members of our community, as Christmas is not a barrel of laughs for everyone.

This edition, Captain Slog has made a comeback and as usual has plenty to say regarding Christmas. Aunt Agatha's post bag has been bulging with tricky challenges, one of which has caused her to have a lie down before she could work out how to advise.

If you are interested in the Wash crossing Duncan has written an article which describes a very exciting day at sea. Anne has also sent in a very interesting piece on the Coffin Works in Birmingham. To be honest I did not realise that there was such a place.

See the Social report from Mandy which just highlights what an amazing Club we have; how many events have already taken place, and what is to come. We really need volunteers to ensure that these events are able to run smoothly and we owe it to the Social Team to help, as they are putting in so much of their time to keep us entertained. There is also the Rally report from the Rally Team which reiterates this.

Thank you to everyone who attended the Macmillan Coffee morning and 'bought' a Christmas greeting, your donation is much appreciated. If you have asked for a greeting but not donated, please pop your £1 donation in one of the charity boxes on the bar.

All that remains for me to say is have a fabulous Christmas and good wishes for the new boating year.

Donna Ward



Commodore's Column

Greetings Everyone,

I find myself with a little time to write my report as I am stuck halfway between England and Wales (unfortunately an RTA is blocking the road).

What a Summer we've had at Strawberry Island with many events and of course a brilliant rally.

We also welcome back those lucky enough to have been away boating.

Thank you to all the Fund British Waterways cruisers and for the time you have dedicated to the cause, having been on a short cruise myself recently we certainly need some money for maintenance on our ageing system.

While Winter is upon us, the excellent Social Team have a full schedule of events for our enjoyment so there will still be plenty of fun to be had.

I'm sure everyone will agree that the Island is looking great. Thank you for all the work that goes into making the jewel in the waterways system stand out. Also, please be understanding of the members going the extra mile to make this happen as at the end of the day a good volunteer is better than ten pressed men.

It's that time of year again as the Awards Team are getting into gear to work their magic. Please get your nominations in so the team can get stuck into the task ahead. Forms are located around the clubhouse and if you can't find any, just ask.

May I take the opportunity from Lesley and me, to wish each and every member

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Thank you

Chris

STRAWBERRY ISLAND BOAT CLUB

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Malcolm Dawson and Ken Shaw	Work Party Coordinators
John Southcombe	Maintenance Manager / Awards / Health and Safety
Derek Wildsmith	Health and Safety
Paul Mellors	IT / GDPR
Carole Malpass	Administration / Club Compliance
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Keith Brough	Showers / Pool Table / Social Shed / Grounds Management
Donna Ward	Punnet / AWCC Rep / Safeguarding and Welfare
Mick Hirst	Website
Sharron Lomas	Membership / Safeguarding and Welfare
Colin Whitworth	Assistant Harbourmaster
John Robinson	Slipway / Hardstanding

Harbourmaster Matters



Throughout the Summer the Moorings Team has been as busy as ever and moorings E8,9 and 10 are now complete. The area opposite the cottage now appears much better and has provided the much needed moorings for longer craft. We will continue with mooring repairs throughout the Winter, as always prioritising repairs and trying to improve the standard as we go. On behalf of the club, I would like to thank the Moorings Team for their sterling efforts.

A big thank you to our members that have worked to improve their moorings, however there are still other moorings and boats that need a little attention. If this is you, in the spirit of the club please respond. If you need help or advice speak to us.

We have managed the pennywort problem quite well this Summer but it still persists, Pennywort often harbours wood, branches, wire, rope, plastic bags and other material that will damage a propeller or a bow thruster. If there is some weed around your boat that cannot be accessed or removed by work party or participation teams, please push it into the transit area that your craft is moored on, it can then be collected with the work boat and moved on. Please don't just rely on frost killing it off.

Ken

*Strawberry
Island
Loo Blue*



**5 litres for £10
Please ask at the bar
for further details**

SOCIAL 2025



It's been a lively and action packed end to our Summer season here at SIBC! The Social Team, together with our wonderful volunteers, have been hard at work making sure there was never a dull moment, and what a line-up it's been.

We took off on more Global Feast Nights, with Strawberry Island Flight 7025 whisking our taste buds away on culinary adventures filled with bold flavours and exciting new destinations. Our Speed Quiz Night kept everyone on their toes with fast paced fun and plenty of friendly rivalry. Then, for one dazzling evening, the club was transformed into a glittering Casino, where blackjack, roulette, and poker tables brought out the inner gambler in us all.

We also showed our pride in the county we call home as we marked Yorkshire Day in true boating style, taking the celebrations to the towpath with "By 'Eck! It's a Reet Proper Yorkshire Cruise" to Sykehouse - a fantastic weekend filled with food, music, laughter, and lasting friendships.

Our Laying Up Supper, with its Super Sleuths and Villains theme, saw everyone embracing their inner detective (or dastardly rogue!). Fabulous food, great live music, and even better company wrapped up the 2025 boating season in fine style.

Ladies Night was another standout - an elegant and glamorous evening where the SIBC gentlemen treated us to a fine dining experience courtesy of Brian Sharples and his talented galley crew. Their entertaining "waiting service" added plenty of laughs, while an acoustic guitarist provided the perfect soundtrack. A wonderful night - thank you, gentlemen!

As we now head into the winter months, there's still plenty to look forward to:

- Christmas Celebration and Singalong - a fun, festive evening to kick off the Christmas season

- Christmas Party - join the celebrations with live music from Razor Holler and our very own DJ Johnny 2 Decks
- Christmas Lunch - always a sell out, so make sure you get your tickets early
- Christmas Draw Night - that eagerly awaited evening when members have the chance to win fantastic prizes (see Ashley and Anne for your tickets!)
- New Year's Eve Party - we'll ring in the new year with style, live music from the rockabilly trio, Tombstone Buzzards, and wonderful company - the perfect finale to 2025!

We hope everyone will join us for this festive and celebratory end to the year. As always, if you'd like to lend a hand or get involved, please do let us know - these fantastic events wouldn't happen without your help.

Here's to another fabulous season of fun, friendship, and unforgettable memories on Strawberry Island.

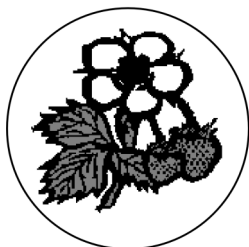
Mandy Atkinson

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Dates for your Diary

(All may be subject to additions or change)

2025	
6 th December	Christmas Celebration and Singalong
13 th December	Adult Christmas Party
14 th December	Christmas Lunch
20 th December	Christmas Draw
31 st December	New Year's Eve Party
2026	
1 st January	New Year's Day Cruise
17 th January	Race Night
31 st January	Wine Tasting Evening
14 th February	Valentines Night
28 th February	Awards Night
7 th March	Annual Dinner
8 th March	Annual General Meeting
28 th March	Fitting Out Supper



Rally Report 2025

Well, wasn't that fun!

We're going to remember the Strawberry Island Boat Club Rally 2025 as a year of vibrant team spirit, fantastic new attractions, and one truly unforgettable squall that tested our nerve! It was the culmination of a year's planning but the real success came from a record number of members coming forward to volunteer, whose sheer hard work and creativity created something truly special.

We were absolutely thrilled to welcome a great number of visiting boats, including Sectan in the historic barge section, that drew admirers all weekend.

The weekend kicked off in the best way possible with our traditional Pie 'n' Peas supper. We all enjoyed a cracking quiz, warmly welcomed our visitors and spent a lovely evening buzzing with excitement for the fun ahead.



Saturday was an absolute joy. The sun shone brilliantly for most of the day (ahem!), then came the moment nobody will forget! Belying the beautiful blue skies, an ominous storm cloud cracked on the horizon and a squall raced through. Members and visitors alike ran for cover and in a heart-warming display, everyone pitched in holding the gazebos down whilst the storm raged. Unfortunately, a few of the visitor stalls weren't strong enough and one did make an unexpected landing on the ice cream van roof! The indomitable club spirit shone through as our brilliant food and drink stalls carried on serving those who were sheltering and holding up the structures. The storm passed as quickly as it arrived and the upbeat festival vibes returned with even more gusto. The sight of soaked but smiling faces conjured up images of high jinks and mud-caked boots at major festivals – our very own 'Glaston-Rally'!



The entertainment all weekend was superb. Jamie Rosser kept us all enthralled from learning to make huge bubbles to his fiery magic. We sang along with our own Rickety Rockers, got in the groove with Mick Pattison and threw some shapes on the dance floor with Johnny 2 Decks. It was brilliant – thanks guys!



Visiting entertainment also kept us hooked, the Morris Dancers taught us some moves, the dance groups kept the energy high, interesting stalls, interactive games, balloon art, Birds of Prey... what a weekend!

... And we have to talk about the fabulous food and drink offerings. No one went hungry, and a round of well-fed and watered applause must go to the hard-working and non-stop Galley teams, the busy Paradise Cafe, the fantastic Street Food team, and incomparable Island Grillas. Let's not forget all the delicious cocktails, beers, and great drink selections from the tireless Main Bar, Island and Cocktail Bars. What great teams! Thank you.



In addition to the great range of visitor stalls, our own members shone. Long-time club favourites such as Model Boats, Kids Corner, Tombola, Boat Bits, Books and Bric-a-Brac were joined this year by the Bottle Stall, Crazy Golf, and stalls run by our junior members. The larger set-ups of vintage motorcycles and vehicles drew the crowd's attention, and everyone enjoyed having a go at Axe Throwing! Absolutely everyone loved the Duck Race, and again it was the highlight of the afternoon. A whopping 600 ducks were released – a fantastic effort from Duck Central!

Saturday evening saw us dance the night away to the incredible Razor Holler, fuelled by delicious slow-roasted pork rolls. The raffle with a mountain of prizes, was a marathon of excitement! The Big Breakfast and the Commodore's Reception on Sunday were as popular as ever. Our lovely four-legged friends stole many hearts at the Crusts Dog Show, and our weekend came to a close with the brilliant Island Auction. Great fun.

We can't end without recognising all the teams that work so hard behind the scenes to make the Rally happen: the Mooring Team, Galley Teams, Electricians, Set-up and Re-Set teams, and everyone who rolled up their sleeves and dug in on the work parties.



A huge thanks to the planning and safety personnel, Car park teams, Stewards, Runners, and Buggy drivers. Thank you!

To close the Rally year we held a Wrap Party, a special evening to bring everyone together to celebrate the volunteers, share stories and start dreaming up ideas for 2026. A fantastic evening was held and we're excited with all of the great feedback and suggestions that were offered. It's now time to take a break to enjoy the Winter social events on the Island and the Rally Organisers will look forward to sharing lots of news with you in Spring 2026.

The remit to the Rally Organisers was to host a brilliant weekend at no cost to the club. We are delighted to report that collectively, we not only achieved this but we have also raised a significant sum for club funds. It was an unforgettable weekend and the Rally Team's sincere thanks go to every volunteer, member, and visitor who made it so. Here's to Rally 2026

From your Rally Team

A Wash Adventure

There are a number of tidal reaches that are deemed to fall within the scope of what is considered narrowboat territory. The Ouse, The Douglas and the Thames are often used by boaters and as Strawberry Island Boat Club members our summer adventures regularly will include the Tidal Trent.

There are however a few other tidal crossings that are a little more adventurous and require greater derring-do in their undertaking. These include the rivers Severn and Mersey and of course the crossing of the Wash.



The earliest record I can find of a narrowboat making the Wash crossing was in 1972 when NB Ohio made the journey from Boston to Kings Lynn. Pilot Daryl Hill says he believes that narrowboat crossings of the Wash have been happening in small numbers ever since they started to be fitted with

engines. The largest flotilla making the crossing prior to our own was 11 boats in 2019 and again in 2020, and Daryl has personally piloted over 600 narrowboats across the Wash.

Early in May 2025 a number of Strawberry Islanders took part in the Fund Britain's Waterways campaign cruise, outside the Houses of Parliament on the Tidal Thames. Five of these SIBC boats along with several other campaigners then headed north to Boston where we joined them to form a second campaign flotilla, 14 boats in all, with the intention of crossing the Wash.

It's important to plan the journey properly, weather, tide and tide time play an important role, so must be taken into account. Our first tide window, the original plan, had to be cancelled since the Environment Agency were carrying out maintenance on the Boston Tidal Barrier, through which were needed to pass. The second window



opened on the 23rd of June, lasting 6 days, hopefully the weather would be favourable.

We had nothing but hot windy days in the run up to our departure. Daryl, our pilot, had already stipulated that a forecast of force 4, or 18mph winds would be the maximum acceptable. Finally, the forecast showed that Wednesday 25th June would give us the conditions we needed and word was given. A get together and sumptuous meal at the very excellent Boston Lock Cafe allowed us all to meet our leader Andrew who, with military precision, outlined the procedure for our departure from Boston, the details of the crossing, and our arrival at Wisbech. The days leading up allowed everyone to prepare their boats for the journey, nav lights working, anchor at the ready, radio charged and life jackets in good order. Many of the boats were proudly sporting their Fund Britain's Waterways livery in the form of flags and banners. This was, after all, a campaign cruise.

The morning of our adventure dawned bright, clear and calm. An expected locking out time around 8:30am subject to exact tide times and water levels.

The interesting thing about Boston Lock is that it is only 45 feet long. On each rising or falling tide boats over this length only have a brief window of opportunity, when the Witham and the estuary are at a level, to pass through, with both sets of gates and the flood gates all open at the same time.

Andrew had us all marshalled at the lock in plenty of time, radio checks were carried out and we sat, rafted up, waiting for the Lock keeper Ali to open up. The tide was late and tension building, but finally, at nearly 9am, we were off! A goodly number of spectators were lining the roads and bridges in Boston to watch our departure. With the outgoing tide we soon passed the Stump, Black Sluice Lock and the docks, and once beyond the Boston Barrier the buildings faded away and we said our goodbyes to Boston.



To complete the journey in daylight it's important to have an early start when crossing the Wash in a low powered craft, such as a narrowboat. Since it takes place over the course of two tides. Firstly,



on a falling tide you pass through Boston Docks and follow the estuary to the open sea. Once clear of the sand banks a north-easterly course is set, taking the deeper channel of the Boston Roads. Green buoys to the starboard and red to port on departure. The swell was light, the sun was shining, we were blessed with great conditions and we

enjoyed seeing seals basking on the sand banks to the south.

After around 3 hours we made a turn to starboard and a southerly course was taken for another hour or so. Nearing low tide there isn't sufficient water to be able to steer a direct course to Wisbech, so we had to wait for the tide to turn and water levels to rise enough to complete our journey. Killing time here is best done by beaching the boats onto a sand bank. Thief Sand, which is visible only at low tide was the destination for our break. Disturbing a couple of seals sunning themselves on the sand, we gave a brief burst of power to get the bow up onto the beach, and then walked the anchor out, just in case. This gave us a break of around 45 minutes, a chance to disembark, walk the dog, and take a few photographs.

All too soon it became apparent that the tide had turned. The last boats to arrive were soon being swung around by the rising waters and were re-floated off the sand. Retrieving our anchor we climbed aboard started the engine and one by one the boats were backed out into deeper water. At this time it became clear there was a problem with the engine on Rum 'a' Gin, she had to be tied alongside Paradigm Shift for the second half of our journey.



The plan had been to have some food on the beach, but the problems with Rum 'a' Gin had delayed Richard and Hazel's preparations. An impromptu drive-through was organised with each boat swooping like



a seagull, in turn, to snatch sausage or bacon butties from Hazel's waiting hands. It beats MacDonald's any day.

It would still be some time before the water was deep enough for us to make our approach to Wisbech. We cruised steadily north for around an hour to the Nene Roads Buoy north of Thief Sand. Rounding it we then set a southerly course, this time with green buoys to port, towards Wisbech. We were joined for a short while by the Wisbech Port Authority pilot boat which disgorged a couple of crewmembers onto two of our flotilla to gain some understanding of what it is to be on a narrowboat on the sea. Care must be taken on this stretch since stray currents push the boats where they will, such that at one point we were pushed far too close to a port channel marker buoy, which we gently kissed as we passed...

After an hour or so of meandering, following the Nene Roads channel, we finally entered the tidal reach of the River Nene proper. At this time the incoming tide was giving us a hefty shove inland, we quickly left behind the paired West Nene and Sir Peter Scott lighthouses, Port Sutton and Sutton Bridge, the only road crossing before Wisbech. During our approach to Wisbech town, which lies some 11 miles or so inland from the Wash, we were buzzed by some drones courtesy of The Drone People, filming us for their excellent Facebook video: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1732QcXSbQ/?mibextid=wwXlfr> Finally we entered Wisbech, winding the boats in turn we allowed the tide to carry us back to the Yacht Club for our overnight mooring. We were soon moored against the pontoon with three boats rafted up alongside. Fish and chips and a celebratory drink rounded off the day.

The following morning on the rising tide, we had to make an early start to get under the bridges at Wisbech, a steady plod at tick-over, and often in neutral, to allow water levels time to rise to get us to Dog-in-a-Doublet Lock and onto the non-tidal section of the River Nene. A TV interview with Look East and cheers! We had done it. Our Wash crossing was complete.



Duncan Wright



Wishing everyone an amazing Christmas and peaceful new boating year.

**Donna and Mick
NB ArMutch**

Happy Christmas to one and all.

**Sue and John McBride
Mr G**

Merry Christmas and all the best for 2026. Best wishes,

**Jane and Dougie
NB Yorkshire Rose**

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

**Sheila and Brian Murray
NB Aegir**

Wishing everyone at SIBC a very Happy Christmas and 2026.

**Alan and Linda Neech
NB Aladin**

Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year to all our friends at SIBC.

**Barbara, Steve and Bella
NB Rioja**

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all at SIBC.

**John Lindsay
Alassio Miss**

Hope the festive season is full of fun for all and the New Year brings many moments of joy!

**Julie and Oliver Brian
NB Sweetpea**

Merry Christmas everyone, have a great time.

**Helen and Don
NB Rosedale Lady**

Wishing you all a very happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.

Van and Shirley
NB September Sapphire

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Happy boating.

Ernie and Chris Painter

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Liza, Paul, Harriet and Charlotte Allen
Wildy

Merry Christmas to all at Strawberry Island and a Happy New Year.

Malc and Ang
NB Trent Weaver

All the best for a Merry Xmas and Happy New Year.

John and Linda Clark
NB Blue Moon

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and prosperous and healthy New Year.

Tracy and Paul Crompton
NB Rosebud

Seasons greetings and a healthy New Year.

Theresa and Derrick Marsden
Trekker

Merry Christmas and a happy boating New Year.

Anne and Simon
NB Moon Dancer

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Anne and Ashley
NB Dreamweaver

Merry Christmas and a happy New Year to all at Strawberry Island.

**Mick and Heather
Matilda**

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Sharron and Wayne Lomas
NB Be Reyt**

Christmas wishes and New Year cheer to all at SIBC.

**Jean and John
NB George Henry**

Happy Christmas to all members.

**Phil and Sheila
NB Starlight Express**



Wishing all Strawberry Island a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

**Brian and Jo
NB THATSIT**

Merry Christmas everyone

**Gaz and Dawn
NB Bagpuss**

Merry Christmas to everyone at SIBC.

**Col and Phyllis
Lady B**

Happy Christmas to all our friends at SIBC.

**Anita and Phil
Argyll Princess**

Wishing all members a very Happy Christmas and great boating in 2026.

**Hazel and Richard
Rum 'a' Gin**

Wishing everyone at Strawberry Island a prosperous New Year.

**Andrew and Amanda Murch
Hugh Zack**

Merry Christmas and all the best
for the New Year.

Judy and John
NB Candolim

Seasons greetings to all members
new and old.

Steve and Jill
NB Two Loiners

Happy Christmas and a happy
and healthy New Year, to all
members old and new.

Mick and Pam
NB Drunken Duck

Christmas greetings and a Happy
New Year to all.

Chris, Lesley, Olly and Lucy
NB Faith, Hope and Charity

Ian and Ally on Purple Emperor
wish you all a very merry
Christmas 2025.

Merry Christmas to everyone at
Strawberry Island. Have a happy
Hollybobs one and all.

Duncan and Ellen
NB Ramble Gamble

We wish you a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year.

Sue and Frank
NB Paddywack

Nollaig Shona!
Merry Christmas to all our friends at SIBC,
with many good wishes for the coming year.

From the Irish Folk on Mister Jingles.
John and Sharron

The Punnet team would like to wish our members, contributors, advertisers
and all who support us a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year

A Day Out With a Difference!

Or what to do when you are moored opposite Legoland in Birmingham, in the exact same spot as the year before and when you have already done a lot of the 'normal' attractions.

So on the Friday afternoon after we had moored up Angela Dawson said to me, 'What are we going to do on Sunday when Simon goes to the climbing wall?' Before I could answer she was on Google looking.

'Well,' she said 'We did the roof top secret garden, the jewellery quarter, Bull Ring and the Roundhouse last year'. She then went quiet (believe that or not) yes quiet! Then said, 'I've found something we have not done...THE COFFIN WORKS'.



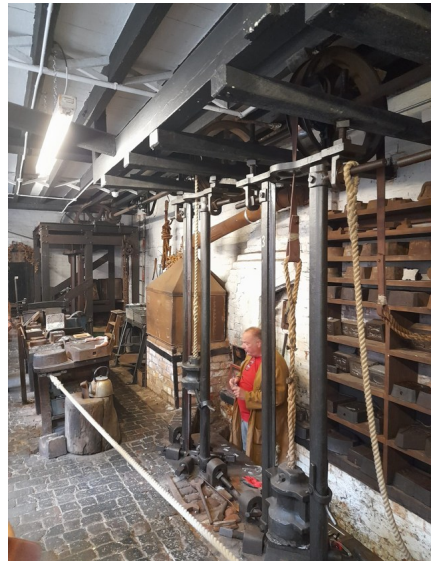
Malc's response was, 'Well I'm not going'. My response was, 'Ok then, go on, it will certainly be different!'

So 10.30 on Sunday morning we set off having already booked via the internet. It took us about 10 to 15 minutes to walk to as it's about half way down the Farmers

flight. What I expected I did not know but I was sure it would be very interesting.

The place itself is not about the making of coffins but what they call the furniture that goes with them. Meaning the plaques, handles, linings and shrouds plus much more. What is even more interesting is that it is laid out exactly as it was the day the factory closed.

The shelves and workbenches at Newman Brothers are full of the



original stock and tools of the trade. We also saw some of the original machinery working, and were able to go in the sewing room and view all the different shrouds that they made including ones in football team colours.



They produced some of the World's finest coffin furniture including the fittings for the funerals of Winston Churchill, Princess Diana and The Queen Mother.

I was very dubious about going but must say we both enjoyed the tour and the guide was very informative.

Ticket Price £10 pp and is open Wednesday to Sunday.

Anne Mitchie

Notice of Annual General Meeting

**The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Strawberry Island
Boat Club will be held on:**

Sunday 8th March 2026

starting at 10:00 am in the Clubhouse.

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If you would like to order garments, please call my mobile 07505 787722 or e-mail me on elaineab@btinternet.com

The garments come in various colours and sizes from children to adult sizes up to XXL. Kid's garments are cheaper.

Cheques or cash only please with cheques made payable to E A Chambers. Please note I have to order 8 garments at a time therefore, you might be waiting a while for your garments. I normally order about three times a year and your cash/cheques will not be banked until your garment arrives.

Please feel free to call or e-mail me if you have any queries. Please note that all prices are subject to change in January.

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Please note that ALL prices are plus VAT at the current rate.

Baseball caps and acrylic ski hats can be purchased from the bar.



Licence YOUR Boat through your Club

You should *all* know that SIBC gets 5% commission on your Boat Licence if you renew through the club.

Unfortunately, 40% of members do not use the club to renew their licence. This means we are losing out on a considerable sum of money each year, which could help to keep our mooring fees down!

This year we have 'lost' around £2000.

It is unfair on the Members who do use the Club to renew their licence as they are contributing to Club funds and the others are not.

You are probably already aware that when you licence your boat, the Canal and River Trust give an early payment discount of 2.5%. Another 2.5% discount is available if the licence is purchased online.

If you license your boat through the Club, you will still get the 2.5% discount for purchasing on line as we license your boat via an agency website i.e. online.

It is easy to renew your Licence:

I will license your boat at the club or you can ring me on 07831 169880 and I will do it over the phone. All you need is your boat index number and your up-to-date insurance details. Payment is by credit or debit card only.

Please license your boat at SIBC as we earn 5% commission on each licence, which helps to keep your mooring fees down.

Just a note of caution. CRT will automatically renew your licence when it is due if you have registered your card details with them and the Club will lose out on the commission! You need to log in to CRT and uncheck the automatic renewal box. Ring me if you need any help with this!

Peter Harbon Treasurer & Trustee

A Silver Propeller Challenge and a Doggy Rescued

The skipper of THATSIT is collecting the Silver Propeller Challenge awards. If you do not know, the challenge is to visit as many of the nation's underused waterways as you can. All you have to do is visit twenty different places on the IWA list, take a photograph of yourself and your mode of transport at each location. Everyone who completes the challenge will then receive a Silver Propeller Challenge plaque.

Well, as we had planned to go to Lechlade at the head of the navigable River Thames, the skipper was determined to bag another photo in front of the Round House to add to his collection. On approach to the photo site, we became aware of a frantic woman with two Hungarian hunting hounds being chased by a large herd of cows on the bank side. The skipper in his 'knight in a steel boat' mode called out, "I will pick you up, I'm just about to turn the boat around and can take you past the cows". Famous last words! It wasn't to be so easy as ahead was a sign warning of 'shallows beyond this point'. No chance of this stopping the avid Silver Propeller geek! Onwards past the sign, with the lady on the bank following us and looking to see how she could get on board, the cows now left behind.

One should always take notice of written warning signs, that is my philosophy but who dares wins according to the skipper. We grounded inevitably.....out came the long bargepole and with much huffing and puffing we managed to free our boat and simultaneously smile for a photo at the designated Silver Propeller point. Then the tricky task of picking up the promised passengers.

Having turned around and trying repeatedly to get close enough into the sloping bank, the only solution was to get the boarding plank out.

Now imagine this scenario: A damsel in distress with her two canine companions cavorting on the steep muddy bank. They are in desperate need of rescue and the logistics of transferring all three safely on board via a short gangplank is minimal. The vessel is half grounded and rapidly disappearing under a canopy of overhanging foliage.

We hatched a plan. I walked the plank to relieve the lady of one of the dogs while she tentatively attempted to cross the drawbridge with the other. As she stepped onto the plank it lifted and tipped, she was like

an acrobat at the circus, her dog all legs akimbo, slipping and sliding but they made it to the stern deck. Next, we had to coax the second dog onto the plank. Dogs all aboard and after more bargepole action, our hair decorated in leaves and blossom, we were on our way.

The dogs were nervous having never been afloat before but soon settled and our new friend was more than grateful for our help. We deposited all three safely at the other side of the river. This time only a pub garden full of gongoozlers watching as the lady disembarked by climbing a wall and the dogs jumped from the stern deck to the pub terrace.

Expect the unexpected all you boaters out there. At least our life on water is never boring!

Jo Sharples



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The Boater's Kitchen



The aim of the Boater's Kitchen is to provide you with tasty food which can be easily made on your boat. In lieu of submissions from club members this month, our gallant publisher's assistant has come forward with his fallback lunchtime fayre for when he has to fend for himself. This recipe serves two people.

Ingredients

- 4 slices of bread - cheap white sliced is preferred
- Some butter (margarine and spreads are not acceptable)
- 1 large can of baked beans (preferably with a ring pull top)

Method

- Turn on the grill to the highest setting. Those of you with posh toasters may use them in lieu of the preferred method following the manufacturer's instructions and move directly to step 5.
- Arrange the bread evenly on the grill pan (on top of the silver stripey thing) and place it under the heated grill.
- Watch the bread carefully. When the bread has changed to an even golden colour take the grill pan out, turn the bread over and replace the pan beneath the grill.
- Continue watching. Once the second side has turned golden in colour the bread has now magically become toast. Remove from grill pan and place evenly on two plates.
- Whilst the bread is being changed to toast, heat the beans through in a pan, following the instructions on the can (microwaving is also acceptable provided the beans are removed from the can first).
- Spread the toast with a thick smear of butter.
- Pour the beans over the buttered toast sharing them evenly between the four slices.
- Serve and eat immediately. A nice strong cuppa complements this gastronomic delight perfectly.

Ask Agatha

Our Resident Agony Aunt - Always there to help with your boating conundrums and worries.



Dear Agatha,

I hope it's ok to write to you being a bloke like? My name is Reg and I'm looking for a hearty wench. I've tried all the usual online sites; Bouncing Boating Belles, Narrowboat Naughtys (came off that one pretty quickly, I had no idea how many places you could shove a windlass) and Pontoon Perkies.

I'm not bad to look at. My mates; Sweatbox, Spok and Tampon Ted reckon I'm a catch. Admittedly, we were 13 pints and 4 pickled eggs in at that point and I'm sure Spok muttered something about whaling trawlers and blubber.

I'm not keen on all this fancy shower stuff either apart from Lynx Marmite. The pub dog spent the night licking my legs but my date seemed very distracted and kept asking when the BBQ was starting.

The love of my life is my beloved 25 foot narrowboat, 'The Love Shack'. It still needs a bit 'o' work after the fire. I've duck taped three of the windows back in and I've bought one of those lilos from Lidl to kip on.

Fortunately, I don't need the washing up bowl anymore. (It's quite impressive how many flavours of pot noodle there are) so if the wench is desperate like, I've got the bowl to hand. I'll even hold the lilo up to give her a bit 'o' privacy. It can get a bit whiffy but I do offer to help the ladies carry it to the Elsan point.

I really can't understand what's wrong with these wenchies Agatha. You're one of them, so what would you do?

Reg of Rotherham

Dear Reg of Rotherham,

I'm not easily shocked, but after reading your letter I felt quite faint. It took a cup of strong tea with five sugars and two of my special tablets before I felt up to dealing with it. After all, I am here to help everyone, even an uncouth scoundrel like you!

Firstly, I would advise you to stay off the dating websites you mention. They are full of low types with absolutely no morals. As you have a boat, have you ever thought of joining a boat club? You will meet some very superior ladies there. They may even have their own boat which would be a great advantage. Frankly, a 25ft narrowboat with no conveniences is not conducive to romance!

Secondly, I would recommend that you avoid the term 'wench' as many well-bred ladies find it offensive. Of course, some may be flattered to be called a buxom wench but I wouldn't risk it until you know them better. My dear hubby calls me Bunnykins in private, but we have been married for many years.

Remember personal hygiene is very important in a confined space such as a boat. As Lynx Marmite was last sold in 2020 I can only conclude you are using it very sparingly and perhaps you need to bathe more often. Please don't be tempted to use actual Marmite instead, as this will only make the problem worse. Cleanliness is next to godliness, although you seem to be a stranger to both!

Finally, I suspect from the names of your compatriots that you are keeping very bad company. I strongly advise you to make some new friends as soon as possible! Boat clubs are full of swanky, upmarket types who would have a positive influence on you.

Good Luck in your search. They say there is someone for everyone but in your case, I have my doubts.

Agatha

Front cover - The Samuel Beckett Bridge over the River Liffey in Dublin. The Liffey connects the Royal and Grand canals.



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Well, here we all are then, coming up to that time of year again, the season of love and goodwill! Wot a load of old rot, have you been to the supermarket lately? Every man and his dog (or should it be reindeer) descends on the very supermarket at the very same time as yours truly.

Now as both you and my other follower know very well I'm the most tolerant of people but I do have my sticking point and there he is right in front of me, sauntering along the aisle, hands in pockets, blank expression, not a care in the world.

I try and pass on the left, he shuffles that way. If I go right, he's there again and then there's the sudden stop as he tries to marshal his two or three brain cells into some sort of order. He takes no part in the shopping, makes no attempt to pick articles from the shelves, he doesn't even push the blinking (do you notice how I cleaned that up?) trolley, in short his whole purpose in life is to annoy me.

Meanwhile, his poor harassed wife is struggling with a trolley piled high, but wait a minute wot am I thinking? It's your own fault ladies (I use the term loosely of course) why if you have such a creature don't you leave him sitting in the car? He should be ok if you open the window a bit and leave him a magazine to read, after all you don't want someone breaking a window thinking some poor dumb creature is distressed.

But now you've got me thinking, and yes I do think from time to time especially when I've nothing better to do, you ladies are no different. A woman and a shopping trolley can block about fifteen feet of supermarket shelving thus keeping me from the bananas. The speed that you can veer from one side to the other (without indicating I might add) whilst slewing the trolley diagonally across the aisle is quite outstanding. The way you cling doggedly to the trolley, outstanding, but a complete waste of time as no one is going to steal your shopping because YOU HAVEN'T PAID FOR IT YET.

It's my opinion and after all wot opinion matters more, is that instead of sending battle tanks to the Ukraine we should be sending a parcel of women with shopping trollies, half a dozen could block a major road for days and I wouldn't answer for the carnage if one of the Russian storm troopers dared to gently move one aside. I've got the bruises to prove it!

I did happen to ask 'that one of mine' the other day, do you know wot annoys me? Do you know wot she said, "Hold on a minute I've got a list somewhere...". The cheek of it. Aah well as a US president once said (no not him, the other one) if you can't please everyone all the time I might as well please myself. I think I'm quoting correctly.

Any road up, I hope Santa brings you wot you deserve if not wot you want. I'm off to hibernate until Spring.

Slog Out

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