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Cover photo by Diana Grant: Carol & Dave Alder’s ‘La Tulipe’ in France

Contributions wanted

Blue Flag is always in search of good informative articles. If you have something which you think fellow members would like to read about, please send your article, letter or news item (or perhaps just the outline of an idea which we can develop) to the editor Chris Grant:
editor@barges.org
Or telephone on +44 (0)7791 512 643
We look forward to hearing from you.

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Spring this year has been overshadowed by a number of sad events. Guy Toye's increasing ill-health has brought to the end his term as Vice-Chairman and Board Director. We have lost two stalwarts - Bill Cooper and Paul Goldsack - both of whom passed away after sudden new illnesses and you will see more about all three here and further on in the magazine.

Annual General Meeting
The Annual General Meeting took place in the Dickens Inn, St Katharine Docks and was attended by about 70 of us. We changed the format this year and preceded the official business with a talk delivered by Jeremy Batch (sometime Limehouse lock-keeper) on historical events in the life of London's docklands and the River Thames. He proved to be an exceptionally knowledgeable and entertaining speaker and many of us were reminded of Thames history that we had forgotten and learnt new things about the London Dockland that we had never known! Jeremy does not charge for his talks but asks for a donation to his favourite charity, the waterway youth club Pirate Castle in Camden. The club was formed by Viscount St Davids in 1966 and is a well-known landmark on the Regents Canal. We donated £100 to their funds.

The official business of the AGM was over very quickly and the minutes are inevitably, toilets. Next year is our 25th anniversary and we are investigating a more prestigious waterside venue in early March to mark the occasion.

Guy Toye
In January Caroline and I visited Guy and Ruth in La Chapelle-Montillard. They were both in good spirits but age and infirmity have taken their toll of Guy after his brain tumour operation two years ago. They are clearly finding travel to be more of a challenge and Guy has to attend hospital regularly.

We discussed Guy’s role as Vice-Chairman and we agreed that he should resign from the Board at the 2016 AGM. I have written at greater length further on in this issue on his contribution to the DBA, Barging and European waterways. At our Board meeting on 6 March we agreed to offer Guy and Ruth Honorary membership of the Association which they both accepted.

Bill Cooper
In March we received the very sad news that the larger than life character ‘Old Bill’ had died after a short illness. The books of Bill and Laurel were a great inspiration to us and many other members to move afloat and tour the waterways of Europe. Bill was a prolific, and often controversial, poster to the Forum and more recently published a column in Blue Flag. His contribution will be sorely missed. Our thoughts and sympathy are with Laurel and family.

Paul and Val Goldsack
Paul suffered from lung conditions for years but in the end it was a cancer that took his life very shortly after diagnosis. He died at home on board his barge on the Medway. He edited 76 issues of Blue Flag during his 13 years as Editor and moved us from black and white to full colour. Throughout this time Val managed our bookshop maintaining an excellent catalogue of barge related publications, charts and guides and providing dedicated service despite her own health problems.

Our thoughts and sympathy are with Val and the family, and particularly Val, as she faces the upheaval of leaving their barge and moving to Wales to be nearer to her daughter.

UK VAT
I am very grateful to DBA member Jonathan Sheldon who has researched the zero-rating of VAT on moorings in Customs Ports and successfully challenged BWML management in Limehouse to accept that Limehouse is part of a Customs Port and thus zero-rating his mooring charge there. He has resurrected the links to the Statutory Instruments (SI) that define Customs Ports and there is a link to download the SI in the UK VAT pages on the web-site (Knowledge Base / Buying a Barge / UK VAT on Barges).

Blue Flag Editor, Public Relations and Marketing
I am delighted to welcome Chris Grant and Anna Chapman-Andrews as the new editorial team of Blue Flag. The magazine will now be overseen by an Editorial Board led by our new Vice-Chairman, Mike Gibbons, who will combine this with his existing responsibilities for Marketing and PR. Anna will be bringing her extensive experience to these fields as well and assisting Mike.

2016 Cruising
We continued our over-wintering stay in Veurne until nearly the end of May as various domestic and DBA issues arose. By the time you read this we will have set off through Belgium to Namur, and up the Meuse to France and then a gentle cruise to reach Briare for the DBA rally.

Currently we then intend to make our way back to UK via Paris, Dunkerque, and Chatham. The end of our second Grand Tour but not necessarily the end of our journeying on the waterways of Europe.

If you think our paths will cross do contact us and perhaps we can meet up. Enjoy your cruising or barge finding wherever you are!

Andy Soper
Chairman
Dutch customs and red diesel

Dear Blue Flag

This is a tale about Dutch Customs and red diesel.

A few months ago a UK friend of mine returned from Flanders and got stopped by Dutch Customs when he cruised on the Wester-Scheldt. When they questioned him, they found he had a tank full of red diesel, legitimately bought in Belgium. They then fined him €1,300 (fine and tax together).

As this surprised me greatly I have assisted my friend in querying the Customs Officer, being under the impression that indeed you cannot buy red diesel in the Netherlands for any purpose, but importing it for heating purposes is a different issue.

We then addressed the Customs Officer, asking him to elaborate on his arguments for fining. His reply was as follows (if the text appears to be a bit mangled it is due to literal translation, the Dutch original is below in Italics):

If the Belgium Customs allows the delivery of “marked diesel” (so called red diesel) into separate tanks (that are used for heating) on board pleasure craft and you can prove that the diesel is from Belgium, than you are allowed to have this fuel on board. This may only be used for heating the ship. These tanks may have no connection whatsoever with the tanks where the diesel is kept that is used for propelling the ship. Furthermore the bill must show that the tax on the red diesel has been paid.

(“Als de Belgische douane toestaat dat er gasolie voorzien van herkenningsmiddelen, de zogenaamde rode olie mag worden geleverd in aparte tanks (welke dienen voor verwarming) aan boord van plezier vaartuigen en u kunt aantonen dat deze gasolie uit België komt is het toegestaan dat u deze rode olie voorhanden heeft. Deze olie mag alleen worden gebruikt voor de verwarming van het schip. Deze tanks mogen op geen enkele wijze in verbinding staan met de tanks waar zich gasolie in bevindt die gebruikt wordt voor de voortstuwing van het schip. Tevens moet uit de factuur blijken dat de accijns voor deze rode olie is voldaan.”)

When this message was received we further questioned the Officer, stating that my friend had met these conditions in full. Indeed a few days later, an email came in, stating that the fine should never have been issued in the first place and that the money would be reimbursed. And so it happened.

Plainly stated the story says, YES, you can use red diesel in Holland, provided it is stored separately, it is used for heating only and you can prove it is legit (plus tax paid).

From other sources (a Newsletter issued by the Dutch Customs) I deduce that it would be wise to have the heating device(s) permanently connected to the tank holding the red diesel.

I hope this gives some members a good nights rest!

Michel de Lange

Editor’s note: Thanks Michel for this useful update but what about using red diesel for a generator or bow thruster as well? If anyone has more information, please let us know.

UK Boat Safety Scheme product recall

The UK Boat Safety Scheme (BSS), at the request of the two companies concerned, has issued two manufacturer product recall alerts.

Firstly, the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) is supporting Clesse Industries to make boaters aware of the immediate product recall on its Novacomet branded BP1803 LPG regulators manufactured between June 2010 and September 2015.

Following extensive field sampling and testing, Clesse Industries has taken the decision to implement a recall on its regulator product family BP1803 because of concerns about the potential of regulator failure in certain operational and environmental conditions.

Secondly, the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) is supporting Kidde Safety Europe Ltd to alert any boaters to the product recall on identified “Kidde” or “Lifesaver” fire blankets following concerns regarding their effectiveness in the event of an oil pan fire. Product identification is achieved by looking at the photos on the Kidde website or in the release.

Kidde Safety Europe Ltd has identified a potential safety issue with regard to specific fire blankets sized 1m² which may impact upon the fire blankets’ effectiveness in the event of an oil pan fire. Kidde states that no reports of any adverse incidents have been received to date, however, testing of certain fire blankets has identified a risk that the affected fire blankets may not fully extinguish an oil pan fire and/or may allow the fire to re-ignite very soon after application of the fire blanket. Accordingly, a recall has been initiated on a precautionary basis to ensure end-user safety.

Both Clesse and Kidde would welcome help with publicising the recalls.

Crew wanted for Dutch barge cruise through France this summer

I am bringing my 26m Dutch Barge, Maja, from St Jean de Losne in France back home to its mooring in Limehouse London, this summer. I am seeking a crew member to accompany me on the journey and help with mooring ropes, locks etc. I leave the second week of July, after completion of out of water survey and hull painting. I expect to take 6-8 weeks with a maximum 6 hours actual travelling per day. Own cabin provided. Flexible dates one week or more.

Applicant must be fit, sociable and self sufficient. Experience on the waterways will be helpful but not essential as full training will be given.

In effect, this is a free holiday through the beautiful waterways of France, your only expense being a contribution towards food. I will be in France most of the time from May 17th, servicing the barge so interviews will be over Skype, though you are welcome to pop down to sunny Gannay-sur-Loire where she is moored to see me and my barge in person.

Contact Tim Garrett
shoredithec2a@mac.com
+44 (0)7840 455 055
Inland Waterways Association of Ireland elects new president

At the recent Annual General Meeting of the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI) in Tullamore, Mr. John Dolan was elected as the Association’s 18th President, taking over the helm from Ms Carmel Meegan. John has been very active on the inland waterways over a great many years both at Executive and branch level. John has served as IWAI Vice President since 2014 and has previously held the role of Liaison & Lobbying Officer and PRO on the IWAI Executive.

At local level John is a member of IWAI Offaly where he has fulfilled numerous roles including Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. John has been instrumental in highlighting the potential of the Grand Canal for tourism development in recent years. This has resulted in the development of Tullamore as a focal point for major festivals including Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and the Johnny Keenan Banjo Festival.

John has also worked tirelessly with the local political and business community in Offaly to promote events including Discover the Grand Canal Cruise in Offaly to promote events including Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and the Johnny Keenan Banjo Festival.

On a national level, John has played a key role on the IWAI Canals Action Group. This subcommittee has liaised with IWAI members, canal communities, local businesses along the canals corridor and local and national politicians to ensure that Bye law changes proposed by Waterways Ireland for the Grand Canal, Royal Canal & River Barrow Navigation put user requirements, tourism development and local communities at the centre of the regulations.

In his address as incoming President John Dolan thanked the outgoing President and the IWAI Executive for all of their work in recent years. In looking forward to his own term of office, Mr Dolan cited several opportunities where IWAI can influence the governance and development of our Inland Waterways including Canal Bye-laws & Water Abstraction. He also noted that IWAI as an Association can develop over the next few years the preservation of the IWAI’s past for the future, attract future generations to become IWAI members & broaden the IWAI ethos and message to new audiences.

Also at the AGM Mr Alan Kelly was elected as IWAI Vice President, succeeding John Dolan in that role.

Alan is a native of Dublin and has been an active member of IWAI Kildare since 2003 and has served on the IWAI Executive since 2014.

For more information visit www.iwai.ie

Pet Passport Heads Up

If like us you bring your pets back and forth, be warned about our oversight and at least learn by my mistake.

We took our dogs to the vet’s to get their passport checks done. What is normally a straightforward process turned into a bit of a do.

Both the boys’ rabies vaccinations had expired which meant they needed to be redone. As this was a booster we just assumed this was good to go, but no! Because the original one had expired, this was no longer counted as a booster and so we had to wait 3 weeks before we could take them back to the UK.

A 3 week forced stay on the boat doesn’t sound too much of a trauma and normally it wouldn’t be except it was my brother’s wedding the following week and normally it wouldn’t happen.

Kevin Wade

And Andy Soper adds . . . . And to re- remind others, we were nearly caught out, in France, the rabies jab is only valid for one year against 3 years in Belgium and UK. When we queried this with the French vet his reply was - ‘but we have rabies in France’………..

AIS member discount scheme

Don’t forget, if you have a barge over 20m and have not yet installed your class A system, an arrangement still exists with Digital Yacht to offer the ‘Carbon Pro’ (the same as others badged as PROTEC-W or L3 from SRT) at a discounted price. This is the same specification as those fitted by most professionals in Europe and offered by the authorised companies in DE, BE, FR and NL at between €1500 and €1800 plus installation, mandatory certification, travel and VAT. Digital Yacht have agreed to a DBA price of £1,150 which can be rated at zero VAT on sight of your Qualifying Ship document. The list price for the ‘Carbon Pro’ is £1,795 plus VAT so this is a good deal. Full information on the DBA website Supplier Guide, search for ‘Digital Yacht’.

DBA member David Rothery kindly passed on to us information about a French company that will certificate a self-installed system. They are at Maisons Allfort at the junction of the Marne and Seine just south of Paris and are on the full list of approved installers.

FLUVIAL ELEC, 4 Quai Fernand-Sagué 94700, Maisons-Allfort, France. 0033 632 40 46 36 vincent.quenolle@fluvialelec.fr

The cost is thought to be about €450.

Dinant Moorings reduced

Due to major road and riparian works, above and below the bridge, on the right bank of the river Meuse in Belgium, moorings at Dinant are greatly reduced. It looks as if the work will continue for some time. The pontoons are no longer there and the numerous trip boats have occupied the quays by the casino and the Roche du Bayard.

The limited pontoon moorings by the Tourist Office remain. It might be possible to moor just above the Remacum barge, or for less than 18m boats, between the duc d’albes where the pontoons normally are. Watch out for the brackets on these at water level! It also may be possible to squeeze onto the Casino quay if the trip boats leave space.

Given the popularity of the town for boats heading up the Meuse, it is a pity suitable alternatives have not been provided. Anseremme and Waulsort are good possible alternatives.

John Wilson of Barge Johanna

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For more information visit www.iwai.ie
Pamela Klette tells of her and Rob’s search for their first barge.

Rob and I had spent months researching barges - firstly, why would we want one? It’s not as though we had barged before and loved it! Well, we were up for our next adventure and of course it sounded wonderful to have the freedom to cruise into the heart of a city or village, moor up, get a bike off the deck and ride down the road to buy fresh croissants for breakfast, a baguette and selection of cheeses. We were pretty sure we wouldn’t dislike the life, and what’s the worst that could have happened if we didn’t? We’d sell the barge and buy a yacht in Greece?

I found a fabulous blog about the travels of a ship called ‘Esme’ owned by the Grants, who had been barging for several years. After some weeks of emails flying backwards and forwards, Diana and Chris kindly answering endless 'nouveau' questions, Diana suggested we spend a few days barging with them on the river Meuse in Belgium, what kindness to take on board two strangers whom they knew little about.

We met in Namur and were warmly welcomed on their belle bateau. Esme was a luxe-motor, built in 1927 and converted to a pleasure ship in the 1990s. Esme's wheelhouse had double doors which opened out onto the aft deck, this was one of my criteria in looking for a barge. We slept in the old Captains aft cabin, I was amazed by what a small space can
contain, from hair dryer to sound system, delightful small bathroom, our own shower - what luxury! The wonderful old cabinetry told a story of the family that once lived in this space ninety years ago as they carted grain along the canals of the Netherlands.

We said a grateful goodbye to Diana and Chris for their generous sharing of Esme, their advice and guidance. They had helped us to go through with a tooth comb, the specs of barges we planned to see and had primed us with questions to ask... they told us ‘The One is waiting for you.’

Whew! The search is a process, a process of working out what we like and what we don’t. Rob started off wanting a ‘new build’, a ship built in the last decade, in immaculate condition. He wanted to cruise for a year or two, learning about the barge without having to treat rust, paint, fix bow thrusters, propellers and generators. He imagined an old hull springing leaks, cranky engines playing up on a fast current on the river Soane, and plenty of other horrors.

I wanted the sense of history, knowing that the vessel had worked and had families on her ...I wanted that aft deck... I imagined being moored on a bank in Paris, sitting out sipping vin rouge with friends from around the world, a view of the Eiffel Tower in the background.

Rob’s fears about an old barge had mostly been allayed after our stay on Esme, so off we went to see Sojourn, a 103 years old Tjalk, once a sail ship, originally carrying grain in Holland. We drove to Digoin to meet her. Our first live sight of her, of course she had been completely renovated and proved to be in immaculate condition. Lo and behold, she had an amazing aft deck, it could be zipped and closed up completely so that one could sit out there, even in the rain. After a few days viewing various other new and older ships in the locality we knew our heart was with Sojourn and we drove on to Roanne to meet her owners. We instantly took to each other, signed the contract of sale and then went out to dinner to celebrate.

We are so pleased to be the new keepers of Sojourn. Thank you Jeanette and Peter for handing her over to our care. By the time you read this, we will have set out on our first season and be on our way to the DBA rally in Briare.
Although crossing the Channel is not the same as undertaking a round-the-world voyage, it must be understood that our barges are, in the main, old ladies who were not designed for sea passages in rough weather. It is incumbent on us to ensure the safety of our crew, by making sure that all the on-board systems are in as good a condition as is possible and that we have taken all prudent precautions to ensure a safe passage. This is a non-exhaustive list of items that you should check before sailing which, in many cases, have been the subject of someone’s bitter experience!

Let’s start with engines
(no engine, no go!)
A diesel engine needs three things to make it run - fuel, air and going round. Fuel systems are the most likely to give trouble in a barge, especially those with old fuel tanks. The accumulation of rust and sludge over the years will, when stirred up in a choppy sea, get into the fuel lines, block the fuel filters and stop the engine, usually in the most embarrassing places. The ideal solution is to have tanks with sludge wells at the bottom with a drain cock, where all this gunge will collect, and which can be drained off. If you can’t do this, try and suck out any sludge and water with a small portable pump. The next line of defence is a good fuel filtration system - not just the one engine fuel filter, but pre-filters, preferably a sediment filter which will catch most of the sludge and water in a bowl, followed by a cartridge filter, all of which then feeds the engine filter, the last line of defence. If you have two sets of these pre filters, suitably valved so that you can change from one set to another whilst the engine is running, then you have a Rolls Royce system. You can then clean the blocked filters ready for the next blockage! With only one set you have to stop the engine to clean the filters, possibly bleeding the fuel system as well and then restart it, all of which drains your battery and puts a strain on a not-so-young starter motor. All of this has happened to people, which keeps the lifeboats in business!

Air - make sure that your engine air intake is so positioned that it can’t take in water if you take a sea aboard. Water is not compressible and the engine doesn’t like it!

Going round – if the engine is rotating and it is being supplied with fuel and air it will run. However stopping and starting it to clear fuel filters, or for other reasons, will strain the starter motor and possibly...
run down the battery. Make sure that your batteries are in good condition and if you have a generator on board make sure that it can be used to recharge your engine battery. A means of connecting your domestic batteries to the engine battery in an emergency, even by jump leads, could be a ‘life saver’. A barge being delivered to the UK had a ZF gearbox, which needs power from the battery to operate the clutches. The dynamo was not charging the battery properly and eventually the battery failed to hold the clutch in and the barge came to a halt! Although there was a generator on board they were unable to recharge the battery. You’ve guessed it - the low battery would not restart the engine, resulting in a lifeboat tow!

**Cooling systems** – if you have keel or skin tank cooling you have no problems, provided all of your water hoses are in good condition and you have spare ones on board - do you? Check the hoses where they cross another hose or a part of the engine, to ensure that there is no wear from the rubbing of the two surfaces together. If there is, consider changing the hose/s and prevent further wear by putting a length of larger hose over each hose, so that the wear is on these cover hoses. (This also applies to oil pipes, as below).

If you have seawater cooling, via a heat exchanger, you probably have a Jabsco type rubber impeller pump. Take out the impeller and check that it is totally crack free where the vanes meet the body. If in any doubt whatsoever, change it. A failed seawater pump impeller is probably the most frequent cause of engine failures in pleasure boats generally. Get a couple of spares (you’ll need them eventually) and also make sure that you have spare faceplate gaskets and faceplate cover screws. Dropping one of the latter into the oily swirling bilges at sea, ensures that it is lost forever. The use of an impeller removal tool will make the impeller replacement a far faster job than otherwise.

**Flexible oil pipes** – (normally between the engine and gearbox and the oil cooler) - check them for wear in the same way as the water hoses and change them if in any doubt. Remember that the engine oil system runs at around 50lbs/sq in and a hydraulic gearbox at around 350lbs/sq in. If you have hoses with a wire braided outer sheath be aware that you cannot see the condition of the actual hose. On my first trip out I had a gearbox hose of this type burst - luckily I had a spare aboard. Make sure that you have a set of spare hoses - take your existing pipes to a hydraulic firm and ask them to make you up an identical set - consider using hydraulic hose and make sure that the ends are crimped. They are not expensive.

**Fuel pipes** – make sure that you have suitable pipe and fittings and/or flexible hose and hose clips on board, to make a temporary repair in a broken fuel pipe.

**Gearbox**

As previously mentioned, ZF gearboxes have electrically operated clutches which are energized through brushes (koolborstels) onto slip rings. Check that the brushes are in good condition with plenty of wear left in them and that you have spares on board. They do wear down and fail in the most awkward places. If you have a hydraulic gearbox which can be locked into ahead drive if the hydraulics fail, make sure that you know how to do this. It saves having to be towed home. It’s also an idea to have the Morse type operating cable so arranged that if the cable breaks (and they do - have you spares?) you can obtain astern power when the cable is pushed - even if its the broken ends pushing against each other. If it’s arranged the other way round you are pulling the broken ends apart instead of engaging astern. With the former way, you have a chance of stopping if it breaks as you enter a lock! It’s happened, believe me. (See Geoff Bradshaw’s article in Blue Flag No.7 www.barges.org/library/blue-flag).

**Inspect drive-belts for cracks or fraying.**
Drive belts
These belts, in many instances not only drive your alternator, but also the engine cooling water pump. Inspect them for cracks or fraying and renew them if in any doubt. Make sure that you carry spares of each type used.

Finally make sure that you have spare engine and gearbox oil aboard, sufficient fuel, plenty of spare fuel filters, spare water pump impellers, spare drive belts and a good set of tools and the knowledge to use all of them.

Bilge pumps
Ensure that your bilge pumping systems are working and that any compartment can be pumped out if necessary. Normally your insurance company will require you to have an automatic, a manual and an electric bilge pump on board.

Fire
Make sure that your firefighting equipment is in good order and that you know how to use it. The engine room is the most likely place for a fire, especially if silencers are not lagged. Do not stow any inflammable materials in the engine room, such as spare oil, fuel or paint - these all have caused or contributed to engine room fires. Make sure that your firefighting equipment is in good order and that you know how to use it and ensure that your lifebuoys are stowed ready for immediate use. It is essential that you fit a radar reflector as high as possible. If you only have a short stumpy mast try to rig up a taller one if possible for the passage. Barges may be steel but they have a very low profile and their radar return is easily lost in the clutter caused by waves. It's better to be seen early, when a ship is bearing down on you at 20 knots.

Finally brief the crew on your plan for the passage and on emergency drills in case of fire, man overboard or abandon ship.

Below decks
Stow all gear, either in secured cupboards or on the deck. I have seen a saloon floor with the television and computer well secured, but carpeted in 500 CD’s, which had been left on their shelf! Stow everything liable to slide, jump or fall off its stowage, so that they cannot be broken. In the galley secure all cupboard doors, including the fridge, freezer and oven, so that they cannot open and deposit the jar of mayonnaise or the jar of marmalade when you roll back to starboard. All this I have seen! All free-standing kitchen appliances should be secured so that they cannot fall over in a heavy roll. If you use a carpet to protect your highly polished dining table and keep all kinds of knick-knacks on it, remove them. The carpet will slide off and deposit everything on the deck! Make sure that the furniture cannot slide about in a seaway and cause damage. If possible either fill all your tanks with water or whatever, or alternatively empty them. This will reduce rolling in a seaway due to the surge of liquid in the tanks.

Insurance
Talk to your insurance company well before your departure date, so that you are aware of any special requirements that they may have. To quote mine, the additional premium for two Channel crossings and approximately 4 months cruising on Continental waterways was £78; for the crossings a qualified skipper and two crew must be aboard; that the passage should not take place in an actual or forecast wind speed of more than Force 4; that the vessel is seaworthy and that 3 working pumps (as detailed above) are aboard. If you are not happy with their requirements, talk to them and negotiate a better deal.

Making the passage
It is not my intention to tell you how to actually make the passage. If you don't have the knowledge and experience to do it on your own, you must find a skipper who will take you across. This is not only for insurance purposes, but for your own safety and, more important, the safety of your crew. Even if you sail in the company of other barges, it must be realised that the skipper of each must be able to make it on his own, as if alone.

However, do try and sail in the company of other barges making the crossing - there’s a comfort in having another barge about if something goes wrong.

See also 'Taking your Barge to Sea' in the DBA website KnowledgeBase

Chris Ries
Flag conventions on inland waterways

For the conventions for use of flags on inland waterway boats, the two important ones are the ship's ensign at the stern and a courtesy flag for the country you're visiting. The rest are mostly for decoration - but when a convention carries a meaning, it may be better to follow it than look ignorant or give the wrong message.

**Ship's Ensign**
The ship's ensign identifies its country of registration and must be flown at or near the stern. This is a legal requirement in many countries and no other flag should be flown at the stern.

The ensign does not show the skipper or crew's nationality but that of the boat. The sole exception is the Netherlands, which allows the skipper's national ensign on a Dutch-registered boat in the Netherlands.

For almost all countries the ensign is the same as the national flag. A major exception is the UK. UK-registered boats use a Red ensign**. It is illegal in UK law to fly the UK national flag (Union Jack/Flag*) on a civil craft - anywhere!

There are 'special' ensigns in many countries, like the UK White * Blue ensigns**

**Courtesay Flags**
A courtesy flag is flown to acknowledge that you are subject to your host country's laws. It is the Ensign of the host country, generally the national flag (as above), except for the UK - the Red Ensign should be used by foreign visitors, not the Union Jack. If you have a mast a courtesy flag should be flown from the starboard cross-tree. If not, then as a 'jack' at the bow.

**'House' Flags**
'House' flags represent the owner or skipper or a club and are normally flown at the mast. They are often used to indicate the nationality of the skipper on a boat with a different ensign, e.g. an English skipper on a Dutch-registered boat.

**Other Ensigns**
By convention, the starboard (right) cross-tree is the 'senior' flag position, hence its use for the Courtesy Flag. Personal or club flags should be flown on the Port cross-tree or elsewhere below the Courtesy Flag.

So a USA skipper on a Dutch boat in Belgium could fly flags on crosstrees:
- Dutch Ensign at the stern
- Small Belgian flag on the starboard cross-tree, the courtesy flag
- Small USA flag on the port cross-tree as a 'house' flag

Swapping the small flags would indicate a Belgian skipper visiting the USA! Note that the British ensign is normally the Red Ensign, whether as ship's ensign or courtesy flag. The Pilot Jack (see below) may be used as a 'house' flag by a UK skipper or crew.

(For the pedants, the ‘seniority’ of the cross-tree flag positions is S-outer, P-outer, S-inner, P-inner)

**Pilot Jack**
The Pilot Jack is a UK flag surrounded by a white border. It is commonly used to indicate a UK skipper on board a non-UK-flagged barge - and can be flown as a Jack on the bow or as a 'House' flag at the spreaders.

**DBA Flag or Burgee**
A flag for a boat club can be flown either at the mainmast top (typically on a sailing boat) or on the port cross-tree ('below' the courtesy flag) or on a jackstaff at the bow.

**EU Flag**
The EU flag is NOT a legal ship's ensign or courtesy flag, even with a national flag in the corner! It is only for decoration - but it can make a handy Blue Flag.

**Blue Flag**
An alternative to a Blue Board. Signifies that a ship wishes to pass Starboard-to-Starboard (instead of Port-to-Port) - or (for us) to acknowledge another boat that has initiated 'blue-boarding'. An EU flag or T-shirt will do!

**Red Flag**
Normally indicates a dangerous cargo but is recognised as 'keep clear', e.g. if you are in difficulties (dead engine, rope round prop, etc. and drifting). A T-shirt will do! [NB The correct flag is the red-over-white flag signalling 'Do not make wash'.

*Union Jack/Flag. Commonly called the Union Jack, some insist that it should be called the Union Flag (except when used as a Jack on a naval boat!). Recent authority is that either name is fine and insistence on 'Flag' is just pedantic.

** Those entitled to use the UK Blue or White ensigns will know the rules for their use, so they are not detailed here!
Scott Hudman reports on fitting a propeller tunnel and ‘fishtail’ rudder on his 24 metre Tjalk.

First the usual disclaimer: This is simply a description of what I did on my barge and the results of those modifications on my barge’s performance. All barges are different and your mileage may differ - no warranty is given or implied!

**In summary I installed:**
1. A tunnel over the propeller in an attempt to improve water flow and to increase thrust and reduce aeration and cavitation.
2. A fishtail section rudder with balance plate to improve steering response.

**Tunnel**
I initially intended to install the standard type of straight metal half-pipe over the propeller and directly back to the hull. However, conversations with several commercial skippers in France and Belgium indicated that I should consider the conical type prop tunnel common on French Freycinet gauge barges and Belgian spits. This was claimed to increase water flow and to increase thrust and reduce aeration and cavitation.

However, conversations with several commercial skippers in France and Belgium indicated that I should consider the conical type prop tunnel common on French Freycinet gauge barges and Belgian spits. This was claimed to increase water flow and to increase thrust and reduce aeration and cavitation.

Hazy memories of past studies of jet engine installations on several Belgian spits and of aeration. Inspection of the propeller itself. This is to facilitate replacement of the final section around the propeller if and when it becomes eroded by blade tip effect as was observed on some commercial boats.

**Rudder**
As with the tunnel, I inspected a large number of rudders and talked with the vessels owners. Invariably commercial skippers insisted that a fishtail rudder was absolutely imperative for low speed manoeuvrability especially as I can only swing my rudder 45° either side of centre. Some skippers advised an articulated rudder but this proved too difficult to install on a tjalk hull without rebuilding the entire rudder assembly. Also I did not want to lose the appearance of a traditional rudder. I compromised by cutting off the rudder just below the waterline and constructing a new bottom section.

This “simple” activity turned into a major operation when it was discovered that the steel box section rudder had in fact been fabricated around the remains of the old wooden one. This led to some interesting smoke signals from the interior of the rudder and serious use of French expletives by the yard workers when their grinders became stuck in the timber. However the work was otherwise completed without serious incident.

The new bottom section comprised a fishtail shape contained between an upper and lower thrust plate. In addition an additional balance plate was fabricated and inserted forward of the rudder axis up to the propeller boss.

The main “fishtail” part of the new rudder consists of two 100mm vertical tubes joined by vertical steel side-plates. The forward tube is placed in line with the rudder axis and the aft tube is located in line with the existing trailing edge. Vertical side-plates are welded between these tubes, one on each side to make a rectangular box section with rounded ends. The fishtail effect is obtained by forcing the side-plates together at the centre of the “box” and welding them together forming an elongated hourglass shape.

The horizontal thrust plates are then welded flat onto the top and bottom of this structure. These thrust plates are to contain the propeller wash and direct it aft along the rudder rather than allowing the thrust to flow up to the surface and down off the bottom of the rudder as will naturally occur due to prop hydrodynamics. The rudder could possibly be improved by addition of a more hydrodynamic trailing edge but considering the operational parameters of tjalks this was not considered to be of significant benefit. One side benefit of these top and bottom thrust plates is that they provide a useful place to stand if you need to access the prop and lower rudder area.

As the pictures show, my propeller extends a small way below the bottom of the rudder which reduces steering and prop efficiency somewhat. However it was considered too complex and expensive to extend the rudder. In addition the current...
rudder base was in line with the keel of the boat any benefit gained by extending the rudder deeper would be outweighed by the dangers of having it exposed to impact and grounding.

The leading edge balance plate was fabricated simply by welding two plates to the sides of the forward rudder tube and bringing them together to a point just behind the propeller. This plate was extended as far as possible so as to gain maximum benefit and the leading edge was cut out to clear the propeller boss. The balance plate was also trimmed at the forward upper corner to prevent fouling the prop tube section when the rudder was hard over. There are some precise design calculations for determining the correct relative size of this balance plate and a search of the internet found that it must not be more than approximately 1/6th of the size of the total immersed rudder area.

On the photo you may observe bungs top and bottom of the fish tail rudder section between the balance plates. These were installed to allow the rudder to be filled with oil to prevent internal corrosion. The rudder section has been filled with approximately 30 litres of cooking oil in an effort to achieve corrosion protection without the risk of adverse environmental contamination should it leak.

As a final note: I would urge anyone contemplating this work to take the opportunity to install steps down the side of rudder if these do not already exist. I installed rudder steps when I bought the boat and they can be seen on the photo. I believe Belgian Canal Regulations require a boarding ladder to be deployed at all times on moored vessels and these rudder steps should cover that requirement.

**Results**

Steering - the initial results were startling. The previously large prop effect (prop walk) has now almost disappeared. Steering is vastly different at cruising speed with the barge commencing to turn at much lower rudder angles, such that I had to re-learn how to steer the vessel. This resulted in having some problems with maintaining course initially, but this disappeared once I became used to the sensitivity and recognised the rudder's smaller "dead centre" location. A major benefit is that the barge now holds its course much better and does not require constant attention at the wheel. This is especially evident when entering locks as the barge now holds direction at much lower speeds without that typical "mindless wandering" effect that emerges on a tjalk as soon as power is reduced.

Overall the manoeuvrability at cruising speed has improved significantly such that the barge's steering capabilities impressed the examiner during our TRIWV certification manoeuvres. Manoeuvring at low speed has also significantly improved probably due to the directional thrust from the fishtail shape rudder. This has improved to the point that the barge can now easily turn 180° while remaining almost stationary. A series of short bursts of almost full power alternatively in forward and reverse with the rudder held hard over can accomplish a complete turn in almost its own length with minimal use of bow thruster. The only downside is that if too much power is applied for too long the barge can spin at alarming speed due to the tjalk's flat bottom and complete lack of keel.

**Mooring and unmooring** - now also much easier, especially in tight spots; with the rudder providing more directional control at lower engine RPM. This also allows mooring approaches to be made at much lower speeds. The "ferry glide" manoeuvre is also much easier to perform with the boat able to squeeze into mooring spots only marginally longer than its 24m even without the benefit of a spring.

**Reversing** - this showed a most impressive result. With the barge having lost almost all of its prop effect it can now be steered in reverse with comparative ease as long as power is applied gradually from a standing start. In reverse the rudder has minimal effect as is common with barges and steering is primarily achieved by use of the bow-thruster with the rudder remaining centralised or slightly offset. This loss of prop effect has made reversing almost a pleasure instead of the usual source of dread common amongst tjalk owners. If it is necessary to reverse without a bow-thruster an occasional short burst of forward power can be used for directional control due to the improved effect of the "fishtail" rudder.

**Thrust (Tunnel effect)** - This is very hard to quantify although I feel that the propeller develops significantly more thrust since the tunnel was installed. This is supported by the results of our TRIWV certification process when the barge achieved approx 14kph through the water with some power still in reserve; a result that the examiner remarked was rarely obtained by a tjalk of this size (24m x 4.8m).

**Reverse power** - improved markedly and this was demonstrated by the 60 tonne barge coming to a dead-stop from 14kph in approximately 50m during the certification manoeuvres.

Some increased prop and wash noise is now evident during reversing especially at higher RPM. I attribute this to the impact of thrust wash under the tunnel and hull due to the more effective control of the prop wash which no longer splashes up the stern of the boat. Aeration still occurs in reverse as you would expect, but this appears to be significantly reduced and tapers off as speed increases.

**Prop noise** - in forward is now significantly reduced unless full power is used and this produces noise that I attribute to propeller tip effect and possibly some cavitation impacting the thrust tube section.

Aeration in forward (originally caused by drawing air down alongside the rudder stock) has been completely eliminated and cavitation seems to have been removed except where noted above at full power.

**Downside** - a view of a tunnel that was expressed to us is the possibility of an increased tendency to trap rubbish in the prop and tunnel. However this has yet to happen and I see this as a small price to pay for all the benefits.

**Conclusion** - all in all this is considered to have been a very beneficial exercise and well worth undertaking. This is especially so for tjalk owners as these were originally designed as sailing vessels and need assistance in this area when converted to power.
This is the story of Rijnstroom IV since my wife and I purchased her from Mr & Mrs Tucker in 2006. Elaine and I met on the Isle of Wight. I was attending the UKSA in Cowes, retraining to become a Yachtmaster Ocean having spent most of my working life in the construction industry as a carpenter. I knew I wanted to work in the yachting/boating world but at this stage was not sure where I would fit in. In October 2004 I was already 51 and would be pushing 52 by the time I finished the course, and the UKSA careers officer was doing her best to politely tell me I was too old!

When I completed my studies in June 2005 with 3 Yachtmaster certificates to my name, I contacted a company based in the Caribbean called Tradewinds, whom I had come across during one of my training passages earlier in the year. They specialised in luxury yacht charters using catamarans, and employed qualified couples as crew. I asked Elaine if she was interested in being my First Mate if I was able to get a job as Captain with Tradewinds.

Although she grew up on an island, the only boat she had ever been on was the ferry but to my complete surprise she said yes! She was divorced with grown up children and looking for something new in her life having spent most of her adult years working in the care industry. Having spent the last 15 years looking after one elderly lady until she recently died, she was driving a cab when I met her, so she jumped at the chance to do something completely different, and begin an adventure that would take the two of us all over the world sailing luxury catamarans.

The company were interested in us, even if they did think we were a little long in the tooth for such a job, but did not have a vacancy at that stage, so we decided to have a look around to see if we might be able to buy our own boat and try doing our own thing. We decided that holiday letting might be a good venture and started to look around for a suitable vessel.

One evening we were with an estate agent who had taken us to view a boat that was moored on the River Medina in Newport, but the thing was a wreck and we were looking for something much better. On the opposite bank, laid up at the Odessa Boat Yard was a Dutch barge called Rijnstroom IV, whom the agent believed was for sale but thought it was not officially on the market. So we thanked him for his time, drove round to the boat yard, and went and knocked on the door.

Mr & Mrs Tucker were glad to show us around, and tell us all about her. They had owned her for 14 years, and had been using her as a private dwelling firstly on the
River Hamble, and later on the Medina. They had done much of the conversion work themselves, which had been started by previous owners after she had been imported into the UK from Holland in 1974 as an empty hull.

They told us of the history, as had been passed to them when they bought her, and gave us some of the original paperwork that had been with the barge since she was first built in Rotterdam in 1922 to be used as a bulk carrier on the rivers and waterways of Europe. Constructed from iron and steel, she is 29.5m long, 5.48m wide, and weighed 140 tons.

The most interesting part of the history passed to us is that she was commandeered by the German Navy in 1942, and used for the transportation of munitions on the River Rhine. She had apparently been decommissioned by the Dutch Captain at the start of the war, and hidden away. All her running gear had been removed in an attempt to render her useless, but by all accounts, the navy needed as many carrier vessels as they could get hold of, so she was given a new engine by the German Navy, and pressed back into service. The power unit chosen for this task was one of Manchester’s finest Gardner diesel omnibus engines, along with an array of German equipment, some of which still carries the Kriegsmarine insignia, which was the standard Nazi German Navy emblem from 1935 to 1945.

Despite our efforts we have never been able to find any supporting documentation or photographs, but the fact that the emblem is embossed into the ends of the fuel tanks, and Gardner did not supply engines to the Dutch in 1922 when she was built, seems to us to give the story some credence.

The irony of a vessel powered by a British engine built in Manchester, being used to carry munitions for the Luftwaffe to drop onto British towns and cities, including Manchester, must have given all involved quite a laugh!

After we completed the purchase, we moved Rijnstroom to Island Harbour, just a little further up the River Medina, and began the conversion work needed to be able to give her a new lease of life as a specialist holiday destination. By January 2007 with much work done and much still more to do, we were offered the crew position with Tradewinds that we really wanted, so we arranged for some friends that needed a place to live to move in and take care of her until we could get back.

After that we came home for “holidays” and continued to work on her, eventually setting up a business for holiday letting. In spring of 2010 the Island Harbour Company went bust, and the liquidators refused to renew our mooring licence, and we were forced to relocate to Bembridge Harbour on the east of the island. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise as we had a much better location, and still has a stunning vista. With the barge now converted to a 5 cabin, 2 bathroom set up, we decided to try our hand at B&B letting, and this was an instant success.

We continued to work with Tradewinds, crewing luxury catamarans in Antigua, British Virgin Isles, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Greece, Egypt, Belize and Tenerife, whilst taking whatever time we could manage to keep up the work on Rijnstroom, adding an extra bathroom and converting the forepeak cabin into an owners/managers accommodation. We eventually dropped the holiday letting and concentrated just on the B&B; we had great managers whom we met in the Caribbean and the business was doing really well. We got great reviews and lots of repeat business; people just loved the place because it was so different. At peak times we could have let each of the cabins 3 times over and this led to return guests booking months in advance in order to make sure they got a cabin when they wanted it.

In 2012 after attempting to retire from Tradewinds, we were persuaded to switch from crewing to base management and agreed to give it one more year before deciding what to do next. By the summer of...
2013 it was time to sell Rijnstroom and stick with our new home in St Vincent but before we could do that I knew that I would have to do two things: re-paint the barge externally and purchase a permanent mooring plot. I came back to the UK in March 2014 for a month and began the process. By March of 2015, with the plot purchase complete and a buyer waiting in the wings, I took 3 month's leave of absence to complete the renovation and decoration of the exterior, move her to her new plot in the same harbour and close the sale.

We had agreed to sell the barge and the business to a new owner, who for now only wanted to rent our mooring plot as she was interested in exploring mooring options on the Thames. The deal was effectively done until disaster struck! My wife and I were visiting her brother on the island when we got a call . . . . . to say the barge was on fire.

You'll have to wait until next time to find out what happened . . . .

The enormous task of refurbishing Rijnstroom has been completed at Solent Refit in Hythe, Hampshire. For more details see page 36.
European Boating Association (EBA) General Assembly – April 2016

This lively conference was attended by boating members from 12 European countries representing 28 different associations. We are the only pan-European / International club. Conveniently all papers and the meetings are in English. The Royal Yachting Association provides the Secretariat support and one of their elected Council is the UK representative – currently Giles Paxman – a keen sea-going yachtsman.

The Association has 4 ‘communities’ or common interest groups – Baltic Sea, Atlantic/North Sea, Mediterranean and Inland Waterways. Along with Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and France we are members of the latter group. Unfortunately the French representative was unable to attend.

Discussion in the Inland Waterways group covered:

- Transfer of waterways operation from government to others – currently being considered in Germany and in UK transfer of Environment Agency waterways to Canal and River Trust.
- Inland AIS and its extension of use to all Class I waterways and above for ships over 20m. AIS B acceptable for use in small ships.
- There has been no further activity by authorities on Skipper qualifications or the European Certificate.
- No progress reported on aligning the German 15m limit for qualifications with the CEVNI 20m break point for small ships.
- Invasive Alien Species and their impact (limited) on Inland Waters.
- The new VNF designations of class of waterway into Commercial, Seasonal and On Demand.
- TRIVW and ES-TRIN – harmonisation of EU and CCNR rules for vessels over 20m or over 100 m³ – EBA has observer status and will attend appropriate meetings.

The Main meeting included:

World Canal Conference - This will be in Aberdeen, UK in September 2016. EBA will not be sending a representative.

Youth
Optimists on Tour – in 2015 a fleet of Optimist dinghies toured NL visiting a dozen sites and introducing youngsters to dinghy sailing in safe constrained waters, mainly inland.

RYA’s Push The Boat Out’ campaign in 2015 resulted in 24000 people visiting sailing clubs and most experiencing a dinghy sailing trip. Some 3000 new members were enrolled into sailing clubs. RYA provides the marketing and advice with the clubs providing volunteers and dinghies. A copycat event in Ireland was reported as similarly successful although RYA appeared unaware of the heist of their plans and material!

A German scheme to encourage motor boat racing for youngsters has run foul of the green lobby.

Pollution
Extensive surveys and investigation are taking place in Sweden, Germany, Finland, and Norway on pollution of the seabed and hard-standings by boats including Invasive Species. The Secretariat was instructed to examine the subject more closely as delegates agreed that we needed to know more as the green lobby will only increase its demands and we must be prepared to act and respond appropriately.

Lifejackets
Discussion resulted requiring the Secretariat to produce a draft position statement that supports the compulsory carrying of life-jackets but leaves the requirement for wearing them to the discretion of the skipper. (Only Ireland has a compulsory wearing of life-jackets)

AIS
The Finnish representative suggested that it should be possible to filter out AISB signals in crowded waters. It was agreed that as AISB, by design is at reduced power and repetition and ship radars can already filter out AISB then no further action was needed.

Pyrotechnic Flares
These are hazardous cargo and difficult to dispose of when out of date. But the new LED flares are still much more difficult to see. It was agreed that there is still a place for pyrotechnic flares in SAR at sea.

UNECE
United Nations Economic Council for Europe, Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC3) is attended by the Secretariat for EBA. UNECE have asked whether their EU waterways map should be enhanced. It was agreed that the map is little used at present but it could be improved to show waterway authorities and the transitions from sea to inland.

River Information services are also under discussion. I made the point that there is no common standard between countries and the Numericanal project that was supposed to improve ease of access for recreational boaters has ended with no result in this area.

Andy Soper

Founded in 1982, the EBA aims to ensure that boat users are informed and consulted about EU legislation and to make their views known to relevant European Institutions. They work on a wide range of issues that impact upon boating within Europe and when necessary make appropriate proposals to national and European governmental organisations.

Their work embraces environmental, technical and regulatory issues together with specific projects such as the promotion of the International Certificate of Competence and representing the leisure interests of the inland waterways of Europe to the UNECE Inland Transport Committee.

DBA is fortunate to have Andy Soper representing us on behalf of recreational boaters at this important pressure group.
French Waterway Service Plans

Mme Matykowski – Assistant Director of the NPdeC region (Directrice territoriale adjointe) gave this presentation at a users meeting in March this year outlining the proposed changes to the service Voies navigables de France (VNF) will offer on the different waterways according to their use. This strategy plan was passed by the national board in November 2015.

The plan is designed to adapt the level of service to the use made by users. After ascertaining the frequency and distribution of users during the year, VNF differentiate three levels of service on the network, Red, Green and Blue (See map).

**Red: Permanent**
Defined as “Principal”, this network offers a freight service guaranteed all year round. For both merchandise and passenger commercial vessels, it constitutes the grand gabarit (> 600 t) and the smaller waterways where commercial traffic is preponderant. Navigation will eventually be possible 24/7. This will require remote control and one remote control centre at Valenciennes is already under construction. Rolling out of this service will be gradual and done in logical stages, batches of locks and routes. It is expected to be in operation by 2023 in NPdeC.

**Green: Seasonal**
Defined as “Secondaire” this network will offer a seasonal service to the tourist user. High and Middle season will be defined, passage will be free during the high season (Mid May to mid October, NPdeC) with a complete service e.g. 0900 to 1900 weekdays, 0900 to 1800 Sundays. For the rest of the year navigation will be on demand over 5 days per week or 7 days if the level of traffic warrants it. More details in minutes.

**Blue: On Demand**
Defined as “Water management”, service on this network is focused on water management to allow other water users (agriculture, industry, drinking water supply). Navigation is not dominant but still possible provided it does not require additional resources from VNF. Overall this new classification has little impact in NPdeC as many sectors are automated.

It is envisaged these strategic project service levels will be implemented by 2020 at the latest.

**Légende**
- Zone de compétence d’une subdivision ou d’une unité territoriale d’itinéraire (UTI)
- Zone concédée (CNR,EDF) sur laquelle VNF garde des compétences, notamment domaniales
- Siège de subdivision ou d’UTI (unité territoriale d’itinéraire)
- Autre ville
- Région administrative
- Département
- Rivière, fleuve
- Offre de service - Permanent (2300 km)
- Offre de service - Saisonnalisée à orientation touristique (3250 km)
- Offre de service - Passage à la demande (570 km)
- Rivière à courant libre (340 km)
- Réseau non géré par VNF
- Secteur concédé à la CNR
- Secteur concédé au CG58
- Secteur en convention expérimentale de transfert du DPF avec EPIDOR
- Scarpe inférieure fermée à la navigation
Main bathroom toilet ‘en panne’!

We had eight people on board including two special guests, Lindsay and Helen. Thank goodness for the second toilet - one that some partners wanted to remove. The toilet is always a busy morning place and this day was the usual. Michael was the last person in for the ‘after breakfast routine’ and bam - the toilet would not empty. It just kept filling up to the brim with water and would not expel the contents. Mon dieu! A delicate issue for us all, especially with guests on board.

Lindsay measured up to the task remarkably well and with great chivalry pitched in to help our partner John. The job was to empty the toilet with buckets out through the saloon and overboard. This slow procedure took some time during which the kitchen brigade found other tasks to do, such as dishes, hanging out the washing, any job which was well away from the aforesaid activity.

What to do now? Well firstly, as the main bathroom toilet was out of action, we had to commission the rear toilet in the ‘royal suite’ - previously deemed by its occupants ‘not to be used’ - except for major emergencies! This was a major emergency for us all. The main bathroom could not be used at all - neither the basin, the shower nor the washing machine in the laundry next door! We were quite devastated, especially with 8 people on board. We needed to give our mechanic Duncan a call but it was late on Sunday afternoon, so we decided to leave it until the next day.

All day, the men tried different possibilities - none worked. Lastly, the deck wash pump was considered as an option to flush out the blockage; so out with pump to no avail as it did not solve the problem and was our last resort.

We passed Lagarde, a nice little port, the home base of Navig France, a hire boat company and where we have stopped on a few occasions now. Once to pick the sweet/sour cerise aigue on our first visit to Strasbourg, once to re-fuel and fill up with water and another time to enquire about a new captain’s chair. We were sure the capitaine would know a plumber. But sadly no, he did not know a plumber - and furthermore he said we could not moor so close to the marina and lock!

We had to barge onto the next lock. It was now late in the day and the guys were tired. At last we moored just outside the port on the east side of the bridge and outside the lock so we would be ready to take off first thing in the morning. We met the co-owner of the port, the capitaine, Patrice, and asked him for help with a plumber. But sadly no, he did not know a plumber - and furthermore he said we could not moor so close to the marina and lock!

Our men thinking about the options

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We prepared for our daily aperitif, a relaxing champagne on the back deck with some nibbles of nuts and pretzels - what would it be? Our favourite, a vintage Château Boursault or a vintage Lanson? Or a bottle of both to savour and compare the flavours and to help us to forget our woes?

We relaxed, at last, with the lovely champagne after the day’s catastrophe. The galley staff thought about dinner and started its preparation.

Tomorrow we would deal with possible remedies for the blocked toilet - and work out what had caused the toilet to be blocked in the first place. That is another story in itself.

Then, for the final barge check of the day, John went down into the engine room. Chagrin! Horrors!

**Engine room filling with water; are we sinking?**

The engine room was filling with water; there was 30 cm already. Could we sink? Lindsay our guest donned a life buoy! Barges do sink and we have seen one almost sink in front of our eyes in our marina. Partner Michael knew that it was not possible on this barge and tried to reassure us. He knew that the engine room had a sealed bulkhead which would prevent the barge from sinking but it looked possible to me and there were some very concerned people on board. So we were all quickly back into action, champagne put aside!

The first job was to get the two bilge pumps working to pump out the water. They were put into action and the water started to flow back into the canal and out of the engine room; we started to feel we were going to be ok. What happened to cause this?

Now, we really did need to call for Duncan’s help, despite it being late on a Sunday evening.

This precipitated an amazing chain of events. Duncan made some calls and said he would arrive in an hour or so, as Toul is about 100km away from Lagarde.

Our situation started to get back under control. The water was pumping out, so we

Trying to relax with Champagne and in fear of sinking. Lindsay dons a life buoy!
thought we were out of danger of sinking. We could now resume our champagne and ‘relaxation’ and continue the discussion of just another day on this barge! After a short relaxation, while we were waiting for the firemen’s arrival, we removed the champagne and glasses from the deck, as we were concerned that the authorities may not be impressed with us drinking whilst the barge was in jeopardy!

However, by the time the ‘sapeurs pompiers’ and all the others arrived, we had actually sorted out the reason for the flooding ourselves.

Our barge partner John, an engineering expert and deep thinker, had been considering what had changed from earlier in the afternoon to now. Answer: we had used the deck wash pump to try to clear the toilet blockage. Could this be involved with the problem?

He climbed down into the engine room, walked through the dirty oily water, crawled over the engine and heard water gushing. He put his hand down under the water, felt about and found a valve which he turned off - that was it.

With the bilge pumps working and the water receding, John could see where the water had been entering. Using the deck wash pump earlier in the day had caused a bolt to blow.

Just as he thought, when the boat was winterised, a bolt from the deck wash pump - typically located at the bottom of the engine room, near the floor and below the outside water level of the barge - had not been tightened properly. On our first use of this pump today, trying to flush out the toilet blockage, this bolt had been blown out. Water had flooded into the engine room through the bolt hole and was above knee level before it was discovered.

The water flow was stopped and the water receded but the engine and engine room remained coated with dirty oil!

It was then that all the help arrived! And what a team appeared. Before leaving Toul, Duncan had called the Lagarde port who had called the local ‘sapeurs pompiers’ - the local firemen. They had called the water police - and so the fun began. Just like in a scene from Peter Mayle’s ‘A year in Provence’!

First to arrive was Patrice from the Port Lagarde, a lock back, with his friend. They were followed by 3 fire trucks with 12 firemen, then another van with 3 frogmen in their wet suits, a local police car with 2 policemen, a couple of local on-lookers, and finally a car with two water police from Metz, a 45 minute drive away! That’s 22 people, with Duncan still to arrive!

As seems to be the French custom, the people greeted each other, then they stood around, talked to us, then consulted with each other; they considered, looked and thought.

When the frogmen arrived, John took one of them, dressed in a red wetsuit, down into the engine room to show him what he had done in tightening the valve. This smart frogman, then rummaged around under the water and found the missing bolt which they then replaced. All now seemed to be sorted except for all the mess; everything was coated in oil, including the guys’ shoes and our carpets. Black oil everywhere!

We were now safe from sinking. The frogman, who had been in the engine room, appeared from below, in his tight, revealing red wet suit and for some reason, asked if we would like to see his dongle? We stifled our mirth – there was obviously something ‘lost in translation’!

Quite a crowd, plus the Water Police from Metz

What happened next was most unexpected. We faced an hour or so of polite but serious, investigatory questions from the two Metz water police. And they were very serious. One, a very attractive, slim, dark, young woman, asked a series of questions, in excellent English, the other was her older male colleague. Politely, she asked where were our captains’ licences? Where was the radio licence and the licence to use it? Where were the life safety vests? How many vests did we have on board? Were there any children on board? Finally, they checked the fire hydrants and decided all was good. The water police departed. The rest stayed.

None of these ‘sapeurs pompiers’ from the fire department of the emergency services could leave until our mechanic arrived and gave us the all clear. Eventually Duncan Flack, our marvellous saviour and dear friend from Lorraine Marine arrived and the team was able to depart. By now it was very late. Dinner was ready and at last we ate; Duncan joined us but did not dally, he was on the run and wanted to get home.

And so, for us, this was just another day barging in France. Unlike many other bargees and travellers, we love uneventful and boring days!

Tonya Jennings
G is for Goodbye

As Andy Soper mentioned in his piece, in March we received the very sad news that the larger than life character ‘Old Bill’ had died after a short illness. Laurel Cooper writes . . . .

Dear friends

This is for all those many people who could not attend the funeral, what with short notice, worldwide dispersal of friends and relatives, doctor’s appointments, and some of us being too old and decrepit to move far.

I thought you would like to know how it all went.

He fooled us, didn’t he. Being the indomitable, obstinate old so-and-so he was, he insisted on “Managing” up to the end, getting in and out of the bath, going to the loo, and walking as far as he could before getting too breathless, and his courage prevented us from seeing how ill he was. When we went to A&E on the morning of Friday 4th it never crossed my mind that he would not be back home after a few days on oxygen. His death has been an unexpected shock; For us, dreadful; but for him; probably good, as I cling to the positive elements.

Some of the things he dreaded about old age had not yet happened. Yes, his sight was getting worse, but he was still enjoying the Rugby even if he couldn’t see where the ball was; I watched the 6 Nations final on Saturday evening and thought how he would have loved that Grand slam win. He was still enjoying his food, though eating a lot less.

We all had a great birthday lunch for me a week before he left us. Shelley had to go back to the Caribbean three days later, (St Patrick’s day lasts a week in Montserrat and is a very busy time for Fly Montserrat, everyone comes back to the island to celebrate with bands, food, festivals and dancing, and getting extremely drunk. They are African Caribbean but convinced they are Irish.)

Had he come home they would have had to arrange a home oxygen service for him, probably entailing a wheelchair and carers as well. He would have hated it.

He was still in control of all bodily functions. Best of all, that brilliant mind was still working up to the end—we were all there with him (except the Caribbean contingent,) on Sunday afternoon, just a few hours before he died, and he knew us all and spoke lovingly to us. The lack of oxygen (though they were pumping it in as hard as they could - it just wasn’t getting to his lungs) was confusing him a little, and he wasn’t too sure where he was. “My cap,” he said “Where’s my cap?” (His battered old Breton cap he was so fond of,) “Must have my cap if we’re going to cross the Atlantic”

For the funeral (Shelley and Nigel flew back for it) we put his cap on the coffin with the Blue Ensign and a wreath in the shape of a compass rose. We sent him off with “Sailing by,” and the Skye Boat song, Allegri’s Miserere, and Eternal Father, and a rose. We sent him off with “Sailing by,” and the Skye Boat song, Allegri’s Miserere, and Eternal Father, and a bit from the Dream of Gerontius that would have hated it.

In due course we hope to persuade the Lowestoft Lifeboat to help us take the urn with his ashes to some deep place off the East Coast, and bury him at sea as he wished.

As for me, I am doing better than I expected. The ankle is fine, and my general health is good. I am sleeping and eating normally, and keeping my mind engaged as best I can. There is of course a huge gap that nothing can fill, but friends and the family have all been a wonderful support. Shelley got a huge amount of red tape sorted before she flew back - I don’t know how I would have coped.

Your words of comfort and good wishes have also been very sustaining.

My best to all of you

Laurel

Bill was a valuable and voluble contributor, DBA member David Beaumont kept a log of some of his extraordinary lifetime activities mentioned in his posts:

War victim, amateur appendectomologist (Bay of Bengal), ALGOL and COBOL programmer, Doctor (PhD, possibly in IT, not clear). Royal Navy Captain, RN Navigating Officer, British Masters’ ticket, Extra Master ticket. King’s Harbour Master (at Gibraltar), Master Mariner Deep Sea, Liaison Officer (lieutenant) to the French Far East fleet (Vietnam), Kriegsmarine officer in the 1956 film ‘Cockleshell Heroes,’ 2nd Navigator of HMS Implacable (1948) the biggest aircraft carrier in the world, Fighter Direction Officer, Gunnery Officer, salvage officer, lab electrician (plasma specialist), Protext (MS/DOS) expert, writing a paper comparing the variations of the underwater manoeuvring characteristics of the T class submarine with both the lengthened T and the Kriegsmarine high test peroxide HTP boat (aka the Lubeck U-boat), worked with many European seafarers in ocean towing and submarine hunting, involved in heavy research (as a user and FRIN) to maximise radar detection of submarine periscopes, won the Hammond medal for being the only yacht to survive hurricane Alberta (1982), designed a boat that could turn into a submarine. Before age 23 already had 2 tropical rev storms in a frigate, lost 3 uncles in one storm off Smith’s Knoll. Co-operated with an eminent architect to design houses sited on the marshes which would rise and float in floods. Picked up survivors from an E-boat (WWII), served in Naval Intelligence, sailed to 45 countries.

Editor’s note: We are very pleased to say that Laurel has offered to continue sending in anecdotes from the life she shared with Bill, so the story will continue but in her own hand and inimitable style.
Paul Goldsack 1939 - 2016

Paul Goldsack, who died on the 25 March 2016 aged 77, edited Blue Flag for 13 years. He had suffered from a chest complaint for many years but it was very shortly after he was diagnosed with cancer that he died at home, on board his Dutch sailing barge De Brave Hendrik moored in Upchurch, Kent.

Paul was a Man of Kent and his roots were firmly placed on the edge of the Medway. He was one of the last National Servicemen serving enthusiastically in the Parachute Regiment from 1957 – 1960.

He and Val brought up their family of four children. Most of his working life was as a journalist and author. Two titles linked to barging were the ‘River Thames Bradt Travel Guide’ and ‘Weather Wise’ – weather lore for sailors.

Everything he tackled was researched fully – reading everything he could find. At his funeral service his grandson Dylan spoke of Paul’s passion for knowledge and how this knowledge had been shared in sailing, fly-fishing and books.

Paul was an enthusiastic and experienced sailor with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Thames and Medway estuaries. As recently as the previous autumn he had taken his small sailing boat into the Thames estuary with Dylan as his crew.

I inherited Paul as Blue Flag editor when I took over as Chairman. I had been warned by my predecessor that I would need a firm hand to manage Paul. The working relationship soon developed into a friendship over the years but that did not stop some of our exchanges about Blue Flag becoming heated! He had strong views and was always willing to defend them. Paul and Val often stayed with us on our barge when attending DBA rallies and Paul’s fund of stories and barging knowledge entertained many of us – usually accompanied by a little alcohol.

His 13 years and 76 editions of Blue Flag brought us from black and white to colour, from quarterly to bi-monthly and for many years made sure that the advertising income was maintained. All of this was achieved from a small beach hut next to his barge – but always using the latest technology even if he sometimes found that frustrating rather than an aid!

Paul was a passionate supporter of the DBA, living afloat, barging and sailing. He will be missed by many of us and our thoughts are with Val and the family.

Andy Soper

Farewell to Guy and Ruth Toye

Guy has resigned from the Board this year after 15 years’ service and after such a significant contribution to the club and barging it is entirely appropriate that we have awarded honorary membership to Guy and Ruth.

It feels like the end of an era. Guy has been a member of the DBA board for as long as I can remember. He has not been well for a couple of years and has done more than his fair share of lobbying. His stalwart support for the club, his fellow Directors and the wider barging community is much admired. His adopted country, France, has always appeared closest to his heart but he and Ruth travelled across much of what we now call the EU long before he became involved with the running of the DBA.

Their barge Gebroeders, now moored at the bottom of their garden in La Chapelle Montlinard, is the oldest Dutch built barge on the DBA register.

Guy has raised the flag and ensured that all VNF officers were aware of our presence and interest. He has doggedly pursued our interests and ensured that our views were heard. Three Paris rallies were facilitated by his efforts and our liaison with the Canal du Paris authorities continues to this day. Indeed the resurgence of La Villette – the inland Port of Paris – may be entirely the result of Guy’s negotiating efforts on our behalf.

Guy has always recommended support and encouragement for our commercial colleagues and he has always been in the forefront of negotiations to rejuvenate commercial activity – with some success in his canal!

With his extensive language skills Guy has been very useful in the Netherlands including liaison with LVBHB (the Dutch DBA) and NIWE – a Northern Europe waterways group. He was also our representative in the European Boating Association for many years and became their first Vice-Chairman with responsibility for Inland Waterways. He was influential during the implementation of many issues including the ICC and the European Certificate (TRIWV) and ensured that the EBA kept at least one eye on Inland matters!

None of this would have been possible without Ruth’s enduring support and encouragement and her contribution extended beyond that to providing many translations of essential documents and articles for the club.

Guy is now focussing his attention on improving the facilities for boaters and barges in his local port. I am sure he will be very successful in teasing funds out of the local authorities and ensuring welcoming moorings for barges.

We wish Ruth and Guy all the best and if any DBA member is passing La Chapelle Montlinard (near Nevers), STOP and say hello whether you are on a barge or on the road! With an address of 1 Route du Canal, La Chapelle Montlinard you have no excuse for missing them!

Andy Soper
Through the porthole

In praise of Grandfather ships

by Edward Burrell

At the DBA rally at Bisham Abbey I was asked to give a 15 minute talk on why I had bought an old vintage barge. Left with so much more I could have said I thought this article might flesh it out.

In Blue Flag 116, Alan Arnold’s article “Howling At The Moon” talks about the misconceptions attached to the purchase of a new vessel.

Angelus was lying at Winkwell on the Grand Union canal in England, having been imported in 1986 and had a swift conversion to a houseboat. At that time I had already converted an 1898 Tjalk “Hoop op Zegen” which was my home on the River Thames. In those days you could pick up an old hull very cheaply. The new barge market had yet to get underway in the UK.

With a new mooring at Sunbury and a five year old daughter we needed to find a bigger barge. Angelus at 19.8 x 4.2m fitted the bill perfectly. She was built in 1884 in Dordrecht as a sailing barge. My ‘new’ barge was 14 years older than my ‘old’ one. I took one look at the beautiful curves of the hull and fell in love. I knew that she would need a complete re-fit - down to the rivets, an empty hull and start again from scratch.

Every barge conversion or fit-out is a compromise. There is no such thing as the ‘perfect’ barge. Start with the absolute basics and add to it remembering the basic KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) principle.

The Hull

With vintage barges the older they are the better the cast iron content in the hull. She was built two years before London’s Tower Bridge so as long as that stands there is hope.

Yes there was a lot of work to do to bring her up to Surveyor standards for the UK. Sections of the hull had already been over-plated. She had been through two world wars, a lifetime in trade and had the knocks to show it. Like “Hoop” she had concrete ballast in her main hold area. I had no problem with this. It provides a solid base, stiffens the ship and keeps the water out. No soggy bilges to deal with and I continued the concrete forward into the bow. Painted with bitumen it is clean and dry. With the ship gutted I embarked on a considerable amount of steelwork above deck level to provide full length, standing headroom throughout and the base for a new wheelhouse. With windows positioned and bearers in place for internal woodwork the boat was foam sprayed down to the concrete floor. No condensation internally or into the bilge. At this time the DBA hadn’t been invented so I didn’t have this phenomenal network of information to draw on.

Working Barges

With such a long history of boatbuilding and seamanship, the Dutch know how to make boats that work. They were, with the exception of some barge yachts, built to earn their keep. In Angelus’ case she was built to sail and this meant the right equipment in the right place. She has deck space where needed and bits of the right size. The foredeck winch was designed to raise the mast and rigging powering the derrick as well as the anchor. A manual winch, it has a choice of two gears. I have used it to winch myself out of a lock, pull a tyre off the propeller and retrieve a second anchor when the main one was still on the cog. With additional pulleys it lifted a heavy Dutch steel dinghy sitting on the slipway. This has proved to be one of the best bits of kit on the ship.

Side decks

Designed to provide just the right amount of width to do the job but no more. I have taken both my barges down to the East Coast every year. With children onboard it is simple to fit stanchions, guard wires and even netting to prevent them falling in. This also provides security for deck crew when out in open water.

Power Ratios

Hull shapes of old barges derive from sailing boats. Their fine lines were designed to move through the water with minimum effort. This translates into a lower power to weight ratio requiring less engine power. Many old barges are fitted with engines in the 65 to 95 hp range giving economies in terms of fuel consumption and tank sizes. Barges have a maximum hull speed of 8 knots and cruise happily at 6. With a bit of current or tide behind you can be making 10 knots over the ground without a problem. Better to have the right size engine and work it than keep some monster on tick-over.

Seaworthy

Built as a sailing ship she has the high curved bow of a Klipperkraak. This is excellent for going to sea. Apart from the Channel crossing to Ghent in 2002 she regularly travels around the Thames Estuary and East Coast of England. Angelus has been through some pretty rough stuff. Whilst it is challenging for the crew, the ship comes through it all very well.

Steering

The full sailing rudder is excellent for slow manoeuvres giving steerage even when the power is removed. This gives a finesse and gracefulness to manoeuvres that modern barges cannot manage.
New builds are restricted by design that requires the maximum internal space in the shortest length. This affects the lines of the vessel and flow of water to the aft end giving poor handling characteristics.

Drift & Slip
Flat bottom barges are easily blown about with everything above the deck acting as a sail area. Modern vessels are forced to create high cabins in their attempts to pack everything in. Often this obstructs the helmsman’s view of the corners of the ship making docking alongside a guessing game. It also reduces side and deck space to almost narrowboat proportions.

Elegant Conversion
Heavy old barges built for sail sit deeper in the water. Following the lines of the original topsides, cabin and accommodation will give a conversion an elegant appearance. A low cabin offers less windage and a smooth profile.

Lee Boards
Traditional barges were fitted with lee boards. Unless you buy a rigged vessel the lee boards will have been removed. Many barges now fit bilge keels. These reduce side slip and drift which the round bilge flat bottoms are prone to.

The Mast
Working barges will have used the mast to support a boom to load cargo. As engines were being fitted the sailing rig was dispensed with. Angelus was redesigned to carry a small tabernacle on the coach roof. The new mast reached back to the wheelhouse and a boom was fitted. This rig has worked well for loading heavier items through the skylight hatch and handling the dinghy. Fittings were installed for rigging a steadying sail, which has proved valuable in open water. Combined with bilge keels the rolling in a beam sea feels much more comfortable.

The Engine Room
Engine rooms are more practical in old barges. When the old working boats started installing diesels the engine rooms were organised by skippers who need it to be practical and efficient. They were not packed with generators, battery banks, inverters and boilers and access to the machinery was comfortable.

In Angelus the engine is under the wheelhouse. Fitted with a small workbench, racks and tools and close to standing headroom. There is still plenty of space for additional equipment. Access is through a door in the galley with an emergency entrance from the back cabin on the opposite side. This allows fast access on either side of the engine if there is an emergency. This is the only space which has not been foam sprayed. In winter months it works well as a pantry.

Longevity
Angelus is for the discerning and serious boatman. This working ship has served her many owners continuously for 132 years. No two old barges are the same. Like their skippers they are full of character and interest. There may be different types but each is individual and unique.

Old barges will outlive us all

...and the cost is probably half that of a new build which means you have loads of money to keep an old girl going and enjoy the envious glances.

The History of Angelus
“Drie Gebroeders” was built on the banks of the river near Dordrecht in 1884 reg no: 3165. It is thought she was built to carry stone and survived WW1.

In 1930 she moved to Antwerp and renamed “Mariette”. Between 1935 and 1942 she had three different names and survived WW2. In 1950 she was named “Albert Andre” moving to Brussel in 1971 where she remained registered as a BP Motortankschip.

In 1986 she was towed across the channel to the UK. Following a very poor conversion to a houseboat she located to Winkwell on the Grand Union and named “Angelus”. In 1991 she moved down to the Thames and her mooring at Sunbury. Here she was completely re-fitted now earning her keep as a home for her current owners.

continued over...
ANGELUS is now looking for a new owner

After 25 amazing years they have reached the point where they must part company.

Over many years of DBA Rallies she has been seen by countless numbers of prospective barges. Members are welcome to visit in Sunbury UK. We shall be cruising the barge this summer and will be available from October 2016. Please see page 35 in this magazine for details.

Edward Burrell

If you own a barge and would like to feature in 'Through the porthole'
please get in touch. You don't have to write it all up unless you prefer to; we can talk about it on the phone and summarise it for you. Even, if like Angelus, your barge is for sale, we are happy to feature it in return for placing a paid advert; it may help an aspiring bargee to fall in love and find their first ship.

What we would like to know is:
- What started your interest in barges?
- How did you find, buy or build your barge?
- All about your barge, vital statistics.
- What are you doing now? Your lifestyle, travels, future plans.
- What would you do differently next time?
- Send us some pictures.

Contact the editorial team Chris or Anna, details on the back page.
I am very happy to have this opportunity to ‘chat’ with you. I feel many of you are friends if only by email. I am looking forward to seeing some of you at Briare, meeting new friends and catching up with old ones. We are steadily making our way there from Veurne. By now all bookings and payments should have been made as John & Catherine have had to finalise numbers with the various caterers etc.

Bookshop
As most of you know, the Bookshop has closed but there are still some charts and books available and all are in the Shop on the website. When an item is sold out it is deleted so what is on there is available although if there is a rush overnight it may lead to disappointment! The club burgee and the Barge Buyers’ Handbook will continue to be stocked and they are in the Shop too. www.barges.org/shop

Now for a little nag . . . . .
The main method of communication is by email and it is constantly disappointing when I send out subscription reminders or important messages that my inbox is then inundated with undeliverable messages and I cannot email you to find out the correct one to use. Please amend your email if it has changed; login, amend then click update – simples. I will even do it for you if you call or email, you can buy me a drink when we meet.

If any of you have any queries then do get in touch, however if it involves engines that will be referred to the skipper.

Cheerio, tot ziens, à bientôt

Caroline Soper

For Membership, Bookshop or General DBA Enquiries, call Caroline on +44 (0)3036 660 636 or email membership@barges.org bookshop@barges.org info@barges.org

Welcome to new members

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<td>Steve &amp; Maggie Alley</td>
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<td>Ross Smith</td>
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<td>Ronald Thomas &amp;</td>
<td>Clair &amp; Gary Bowes</td>
<td>Angela Robotham</td>
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<td>Colleen Armstrong</td>
<td>Andrew Bradbury</td>
<td>William Sanders</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>Jonathan Shanks</td>
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<td>France</td>
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We were deeply saddened to hear of Paul Goldsack’s death, his wife Val had told us that he was gravely ill but the end came so quickly. Val’s last words to us on the phone were ‘the only thing keeping him going is getting the next bl**dy Blue Flag out’. Well what a reflection of Paul that is, so typical of his determination to finish what has been a huge part of his and our lives for so many years.

For any editor, it will be a tough act to follow so I will do my very best to continue in his footsteps with informative, friendly but also thought-provoking content and I am very pleased to be working with Anna Chapman-Andrews as deputy editor.

This edition’s lead article highlights the search for a barge ending with a beautiful 1912 Dutch Motor Tjalk. I make no apology for being a small part of this story. Our assistance to Rob and Pam is just typical of the friendship and sharing of ideas that permeates the DBA and helps the next generation of barge owners along the way.

As part of the new editorial, it’s been decided to give the editor this, the ‘last word’ and for that I’m grateful. I aim to use this spot to reflect on the articles you’ve just read, offer a glimpse of what’s to come and as always, ask for your ideas and input as to what you would like to see in sharing experiences and information.

A few ideas in the pipeline are:

- Winter moorings review - the DBA waterways guide reveals 193 winter moorings available throughout 8 countries but with often scant information so we will be interviewing harbour masters over the coming months to highlight the pros and cons for both leaving and staying on barges throughout winter.
- If commissioning a new barge, we will help you to challenge your builder with important specifications for continental cruising.
- A regular ‘engineer watch’ technical column with installation reports on solar systems, cleaning engine exhausts, mobile communications, AIS with paid and free mapping tools, water treatment... watch this space.
- Reports from various meetings and rallies taking place this year in Belgium, Netherlands, France and UK.

Well, I do hope you enjoy this issue.

Chris Grant

The Strépy-Thieu boat lift (French: L’ascenseur funiculaire de Strépy-Thieu) lies on a branch of the Canal du Centre in the municipality of Le Roeulx, Hainaut, Belgium. With a height difference of 73.15 metres (240.0 ft) between the upstream and downstream reaches, it was the tallest boat lift in the world, and remained so until the Three Gorges dam boat lift in China was completed in January 2016.
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BOOKSHOP CLEAROUT

As mentioned in Membership matters, the DBA Bookshop has closed but there are still some charts and books available and all are in the Shop on the website. When an item is sold out it will be deleted so what is on there will normally be available. The club burgee and the Barge Buyers’ Handbook will continue to be stocked.

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Membership of the DBA is open to anyone from anywhere in the world who is a barge owner, a barge dreamer or just interested in barges. Our club is around 1700 strong with members from all over the world cruising and living on their barges in the UK and in Mainland Europe, sharing knowledge and information. Tap into a huge amount of accumulated knowledge and wisdom about barges and barging; become part of an international barging community; fast forward to find your barge and all the practical information you will need to fulfil your dream; know that your club is looking after your barging interests whether you just want to live quietly on board up a backwater or plan to cruise the length and breadth of Europe; gain access to a data-base where cruising members share detailed information about good moorings both long and short-term.

DBA - The Barge Association is a not-for-profit organisation formed in 1992. The association relies entirely on the voluntary contributions of its management team and members. Volunteers represent the membership at both government and non-government levels within Europe.

DBA - The Barge Association Members’ Group
A closed group for members of DBA - The Barge Association. We are an association for barge owners, actual or would-be and for anyone interested in barges for cruising and living.
To see more about us www.facebook.com/groups/abd.chat

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andy.soper@barges.org
+44 (0)7940 598 364

Mike Gibbons
Vice-Chairman
Blue Flag and eNewsletter Editorial
Public Relations and Strategy
mike.gibbons@barges.org
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Barry Singleton
UK Port of London Authority (PLA)
barry.singleton@barges.org
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pete.milne@barges.org
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John Best
Events
Sailing
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john.best@barges.org
+44 (0)7770 782 248

John Booker
UK Canal and River Trust
Blue Flag - Commercial
john.booker@barges.org
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