

♥ ♥ ♥ Camboaters' Newsletter, February 2009 ♥ ♥ ♥

Dear All,

Phew! What a month, sure feels like winter with sub-zero temperatures, snow, ice, etc. It's been a while since the river has risen like it has recently, well done to all you boaters who took the necessary safety precautions, using scaffolding poles to avoid being banked, checking ropes on a daily basis and looking out for other boaters homes. I guess with mooring rings it would make adjusting submerged ropes so much easier! And it would stop boats moored on soggy ground coming loose, careening down the river and putting other river users lives at risk!!! Hopefully this will help highlight the problem and the City Council might understand the need for mooring rings.

Those Bloomin' Boats

On a brighter note, I would like to ask for your letters of support for a sustainable/environmental project called 'Boats in Bloom'. Don't worry, you won't have to do much or maybe you might well get in to it and end up beautifying the Cam. The idea is to give all boaters 4 hanging baskets, a few pots, compost, handfuls of seeds, tools for maintenance and a pinnae ☺ Then off you go to propagate and low and behold in the coming months your boat is in bloom! In addition the tree guards on the commons which are in a state will be repaired and the ground around the base of the trees will be tidied, wood chipped and while we are at it we may as well drop a few bulbs in for next spring. (Obviously any planting will be in-keeping with the natural habitat) Please email me on luther_photmail.com with your thoughts.

Cam Conservancy News

The river crew have completed a new length of piling downstream of Fen Road, Horningsea. The area will be backfilled and reseeded with grass mix. Two fishing platforms are to be installed as part of this project, courtesy of the Environment Agency Fisheries Team.

At their meeting on 15 January, the Conservators approved the release of funds to upgrade the gearing mechanism of Baits Bite Lock, bringing the asset specification into line with modern H&S standards (the guillotine gate was installed in 1989). Tenders are being sought for these works and we expect a start date around May or June with the possibility of a week's closure. A suspension of navigation will be announced well in advance in the local newspapers, by our notice boards and via e-mail to the Camboaters' committee.

There has been some filming on the Cam recently. A BBC crew filmed Sheila Hancock near Waterbeach for a programme on 'Poetry', due out June 2009, and John Craven, of Newsround fame, was filmed on the Backs for 'Countryfile' about the Charles Darwin anniversaries (more information on the BBC's website at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/darwin/>).

Don't forget that February sees the return of the University Lent Bumps! Last year, the masters of two vessels were prosecuted by the Conservators for failing to heed the marshals' instructions during the races, placing the competitors at risk. In the first incident, the motor vessel collided with a rowing eight, fortunately without injury. The Lent Bumps will be held from Tuesday 24 February to Saturday 28 February. If you're planning on moving around that week, be mindful of the competition times (approx. 1pm to dusk) and communicate with the race organisers before cruising along the rowing course (Baits Bite to Chesterton). If in doubt, phone the Conservancy office for advice (01223 863785). We shall be listening in to the race marshalling with a VHF radio.

The EA is consulting on the River Basin Management Plan for the EU Water Framework Directive. All registered vessel owners will be receiving a leaflet about the Directive with their registration renewal forms. This ambitious Directive will have far-reaching implications for the management of water bodies in EU member states. The Directive encompasses water quality and for the first time in water legislation, hydromorphology, i.e. the shape, form and function of river channels. One possible outcome may be the imposition of new regulations to reduce bank erosion from boat wash (i.e. a 'create no wash' policy) and even stricter controls on dredging operations. The ultimate goal is that every water body achieves 'good status' by the final deadline for implementation in 2027. The River Cam has been placed in the 'Cam and Ely Ouse (inc. South Lincs)' catchment. The Anglian River Basin Management Plan can be viewed on the EA's web pages at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd. Warning: this may take some time to download! The main document is 70 pages long. Annex B details the 'nitty gritty' for each catchment, running to 1700 pages. Annex C shows the list of actions for each catchment as captured by the EA to date. Further feedback is sought for inclusion in the overall Plan. There is an online submission form for comments, and the consultation deadline is 22 June 2009.

The next AGM of the Cam Valley Forum will be held on Friday 27 March at St Paul's Church Lower Hall, Hills Road, Cambridge at 7.00 pm. Following the formal meeting, Dr Chris Preston has agreed to talk about the changes in aquatic plants in the Cam and the riverside commons. All are welcome. Any motions you wish to be put on the agenda should be received no later than the 5 March and these should be sent to the Forum's Secretary (John Terry, 33 Park Lane, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 8AZ, e-mail johnterry23@hotmail.co.uk). The Cam Valley Forum is a local stakeholder group which was set up in response to concerns about the future of the River Cam and its tributaries in the face of pressure on the Cambridge area from planned future development. The Cam Conservators are an affiliate member. For more information see the Forum's website at http://www.colc.co.uk/cambridge/cam_valley_forum/

Events on the River 2009

If an event is over-running on its official time 'window', please bear with the organisers and allow them to finish their activity before setting off from your moorings.

Fri 20 Feb 13:00 to dusk	Lents Getting On Race <i>Baits Bite to Chesterton Footbridge</i>	CUCBC
Sun 22 Feb 08:30 to 14:30	Winter League 2nd Leg <i>Baits Bite to Chesterton Footbridge</i>	X-Press BC/City RC
Tue 24 Feb 13:00 to dusk	University Lent Bumps <i>Baits Bite to Chesterton Footbridge</i>	CUCBC
Wed 25 Feb 13:00 to dusk	University Lent Bumps <i>Baits Bite to Chesterton Footbridge</i>	CUCBC
Thu 26 Feb 13:00 to dusk	University Lent Bumps <i>Baits Bite to Chesterton Footbridge</i>	CUCBC
Fri 27 Feb 13:00 to dusk	University Lent Bumps <i>Baits Bite to Chesterton Footbridge</i>	CUCBC
Sat 28 Feb 12:00 to dusk	University Lent Bumps <i>Baits Bite to Chesterton Footbridge</i>	CUCBC
Sun 1 Mar 10:00 to 15:00	Winter League Match <i>Baits Bite to Clayhithe (Cam B)</i>	CFPAS
Sun 8 Mar 08:30 to 14:30	Winter League 3rd Leg <i>Baits Bite to Chesterton Footbridge</i>	X-Press BC/City RC
Thu 12 Mar TBC	St Catherine's Cardinals <i>Baits Bite to Chesterton Footbridge</i>	St Catherine's
Sun 15 Mar 12:00 onwards	Junior Sculling Head <i>Plough Reach to Penny Ferry</i>	Champ. Thames RC
Sun 15 Mar All day	Turing Trail Relay <i>Waterbeach to City (towpath)</i>	Ely Runners

If you should like to host an event on the river, or if you have any comments or complaints in relation to any of these events, please contact the River Manager (river.manager@camconservators.org.uk, telephone 01223 863785 office hours).

“forecast crap” A Cautionary Tale

“Hi overnight forecast crap. Can the boatyard move the boat for you? Expensive but safer?”

This inauspicious text message marks the starting point of the tale of my first solo voyage by narrowboat to Earith.

In spite of the foul weather, I really had to get my boat to Earith in order to have some essential maintenance work done: replacement windows had been ordered, a date agreed, I had taken the Friday off work and found a friend to come with me on agreed date – then work got in the way and I found myself without crew for the Friday. I’ve lived on a narrowboat for long enough, so decided that time has come that I have to go it alone. How hard can it be... what could possibly go wrong (well, apart from the obvious death and destruction, of course)?

To reassure myself that I knew what I was doing, I (quite casually) mentioned my adventure to an experienced boater. So, here we go:

- Once in the lock, tie boat up loosely to give the rope room for the descent; just loop the rope once around the protruding bit of the gate, then go to operate the lock gates.
- As long as yours is the only boat in the lock, it doesn’t matter if it bounces around when the water level changes.
- Once the gate is fully open, don’t get into a tug of war with your boat; loop the rope around something as you climb down, holding on to the other end of the rope, and only release the rope when you’re back on your deck.

All good advice – I hadn’t thought about the boat escaping as you climb down, so for that piece of advice alone I was grateful. And now I felt prepared. I’m gonna do it!

Thursday comes, and with it the text message – rain and strong winds were predicted for the Friday. By this time, I fear, stubbornness had set in and made itself at home. The forecast for Cambridge is usually 24 hours out, and anyway, all I had to do on Friday was to get off the Cam to avoid the Head to Head races on Saturday. The further I’d make it, the better, but if the weather was too bad, I’d simply have to stay at Clayhithe for the night and get up just that bit earlier the next morning.

Friday, and I’m off! Check list, first:

- Cat – already in foster care
- Diesel, oil, grease and water – all topped up
- Tiller arm – installed
- Fog horn – positioned within reach
- Radio – all new batteries, wrapped in plastic, put under the gunnels
- Sufficient clothing – long johns, waterproofs, sensible shoes
- Engine and prop – started and responding

So... that’s it! Nothing for it – just push off and – well – go!

The plan for pushing off is this: the wind is strong, so if I push the bow out, the wind should do the work. Just make sure that I don’t get stuck with a stubborn rope or pin at the stern, and... ah, yes, do take the flood poles out before pushing off! It wouldn’t be the first time I started going down the river waving good bye to my flood poles, only this time it wouldn’t be a matter of a few days before coming back to them.

I am happy to report that wind took my bow without any pushing out, and that stern pins came out very nicely, thus not causing bow to swing happily into my neighbour’s boat. See, how hard can it be? Get yourself in a straight line, and you’re off. I can do straight lines; in fact, I’m quite good at straight lines.

It is quite windy and rather wet. On the other hand, there are no rowers out, and I will have cleared the course before tomorrow’s Head to Head race. All good. It’s bloody cold, but I’m doing it, and on my own. By the time I pass the Plough I’m ready for a pint, but on I press, doing it on my own. My toes hurt with the cold (note to self: put extra pair of socks on!), but my confidence is on the up. I might have started singing (out loud) at one point, for which I apologise in case you were at home nursing a cold when I passed your boat.

I crabbed along quite happily in my straight line, and as I approached Baits Bite Lock, I went through the plan in my head. The wind would push me out, so my approach would have to be quite firm. It should be clear of rowers (the only IV that had overtaken me earlier has already come back), so I should have plenty of space. My eternal dilemma, though is this: You need speed against the wind to go the way you intend to, but you must stop the boat before you get off to tie it up. Without fail, I take the speed off too early and the wind pushes me out, leaving me flailing in open waters. Any instructions welcome! However, having the river more or less to myself, I can try and try again at Baits Bite – and stay there for the evening, if things go really wrong and I lose the will to live.

What I didn’t count on was another boat with the same idea – happily moored up before the lock and taking up valuable training ground. But – hah! – the lock is in my favour – another thing I hadn’t counted on. So, that’s easy enough: I crab towards it, lining the bow up with the opening, and steer the stern in at the last moment. Beautiful! (And, naturally, nobody around to see it...) That the boat is now on the wrong side of the lock is just a minor problem. Surely I can push the stern off, attach a rope to the ladder, get out, pull the rest of the boat over, voila! Only... I get half way across before I get pushed back. Right! Push harder! And again! And again! Swear under your breath, and push again!

Several pushes later, I stand (on the right side!) on firm ground and operate the lock in my newly found expert fashion. I climb back on board and leave the lock in an expert fashion. Then the wind catches me and I do a bit of zig-zagging, but nothing to worry about. I’ll get my straight line back – soon. Or not. Either the wind has picked up, or I was more sheltered above the lock than I realised. When I’m still zig-zagging 10 minutes later, I start to worry: there is no way I can moor at Clayhithe in this wind, whether there be other boats or no. There is also very little chance that I make it through Bottisham Lock. Yet there is nothing I can do now – should have stayed above the lock, that’s all, but sadly it’s too late for that now. I’ll just have to go on and see what happens.

In the middle of this reverie who should appear on the bank but my crew on a white stallion. Slightly disgruntled as I had not noticed my phone going to tell me that he had checked the weather forecast and, in the light of it, had taken the afternoon off at short notice in order to help me, but nevertheless, there was crew, somebody to pull me in at Clayhithe. Hip, hip...

So, Clayhithe then. The wind is still strong, but I am reassured by crew on land. I get my bow in, just touching the bank. Perfect. I would prefer my crew to catch my rope, but he has taken hold of the bow. So, we’ll work with that, steering so that the stern would come in, hopefully without pulling my crew into the water. Alas, nothing happens. On reflection I realised that this may have been mainly due to me getting my angles wrong in my head yet again – the stern will NOT come in if you steer it out! So it comes as no surprise that it all went wrong – the wind caught and blew me out and across and towards the Maiden of Clayhithe. At this point, predictably, a small group of people had gathered on the bank and stopped to watch me flounder. With some drastic steering and a lot of power I manage to avoid collision with the Maiden – just! – but I also miss the landing stage and hurtle towards the bridges, as in both the construct and the pub. Just as I envisage my career on board the Flying Dutchman, my crew catches the rope and I manage to come to a standstill outside the pub.

I hold on to the boat whilst the stallion is tied to the roof, and when the wind catches the boat, I need my crew to give me a hand or the boat would have taken off without either of us – another indication that I would not have been able to moor on my own. Again, I would be grateful for instructions to fill this gap in my manual.

On further reflection, once we’re back on the river and my maiden solo voyage has, technically, ended with the arrival of my crew, it appears that the incidental crowd that had witnessed my failure to moor at Clayhithe might not have been there simply for an enjoyable afternoon stroll. Not only were they, apparently, all dressed in black, but also, I was informed, trying to concentrate, sombrely, on the urn one of them carried. I hereby send my sincere apologies for possibly rather inappropriate language at the time out into the ether.

Help the University of Cambridge mark the occasion of its 800th Anniversary

Twilight at the Museums

Bring a torch and explore your favourite museum by night or take the opportunity to discover a new favourite! This year, seven University Museums and the Botanic Garden are all turning off the lights and hosting family-friendly craft activities, twilight trails, and more!

Date: **Wednesday, 18 February**

Location: Museums around Cambridge listed below

Time: 16:30 to 19:00

Location: Fitzwilliam Museum, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Museum of Classical Archaeology, Museum of Zoology, Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences, Scott Polar Research Institute Museum, Whipple Museum of the History of Science, and the Botanic Garden.

Time: 16:30-19:00 (Fitzwilliam opens at 17:30)

Tickets: ADMISSION FREE

Darwin College Lectures

Come mark Cambridge's other Anniversary. 2009 marks the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth, and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*.

The Darwin College Lectures take place on Fridays during Lent term (January to March). The lectures are given at 5.30 p.m. in The Lady Mitchell Hall, Sidgwick Avenue, with an adjacent overflow theatre with live TV coverage. Each lecture is typically attended by 600 people so you must arrive early to ensure a place.

February lectures as follows:

06 Feb 17:30 Professor Rebecca Stott, University of East Anglia [Darwin in the Literary World](#)

13 Feb 17:30 Professor Paul Seabright, University of Toulouse [Darwin and Human Society](#)

20 Feb 17:30 Professor Craig Moritz, University of California [Evolution and Conservation of Biodiversity](#)

27 Feb 17:30 Professor Steve Jones, University College London [Is Human Evolution Over?](#)

Further information from: <http://www.darwin.cam.ac.uk/lectures/>

Cambridge Cantat 800

If Darwin isn't your thing but music is, **booking opens in February for Cambridge Cantat 800**, a choral festival happening in April. Including late night cabaret (should be really good!), family singing workshops, come and sing with John Rutter as well as choral and organ recitals and concerts.

Cambridge Corn Exchange Box Office

Open: Monday - Saturday 10.00am - 6.00pm

In person: Cambridge Corn Exchange Box Office, Wheeler Street, Cambridge, BC2 3QB

By phone: 01223 357851 (fax: 01223 329074)

Tickets on the door: Any remaining unsold tickets will be available for purchase at the concert venue 30 minutes before the concert starts.

Please note that tickets are not required for services.

Any questions to Elisabeth Burmeister (NB Sirius)

efb28@admin.cam.ac.uk

Keep up to date with the latest happenings in the University of Cambridge's 800th Anniversary Year

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/800>

Luther Phillips

For and on behalf of Camboaters



Feb 2009

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www.camboaters.co.uk

