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Back and
better
than ever**



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**Now
there are
four of
them**



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More flock to canals and boats

It may be a dull February but for those who have canals at the heart of their business there is a definite air of optimism and excitement, as interest in the waterways seems to be growing steadily.

Simon Jenkins, the managing director of Norbury Wharf Ltd on the Shropshire Union canal sees a steady upward trend and it is being reflected in the growing investment in the business.

"Last year, for their first time in many years, we saw a move away from last-minute, short-break holidays and back to the days of families planning their holidays on the canals months in advance.

"The same thing is happening this year and our January sales offer of a 15 per cent discount on holiday bookings saw a lot of prime school holiday weeks booked in the first few weeks of the year.

"We have some prime dates left, but they are going fast. We are also seeing substantial growth of interest in almost every aspect of our boatyard and moorings here in the Shropshire Union.

"As a result we are investing more and more in the business, from refurbishing our cafe to increasing the size of our fleet of day-boats and doing major work on some of our hire fleet to ensure the boats continue to meet our high standards.

"At the same time boats are selling almost as soon as they arrive at Norbury and boat own-



More and more people than ever want to be messing about on boats

ers are investing in their boats in a way we haven't seen in recent years. For example, our under cover paint shop is booked until June next year with boat owners wanting high quality repaints and our dry dock is already filling up fast as boaters make sure their boats are protected with a good quality blacking."

Simon believes that the almost endless stream of celebrity canal boating programmes is playing a major role in the upsurge of interest. "That's excellent," he says, "and it is encouraging that the interest is in everything about the canals, with the public becoming more enthusiastic than ever about a cruise on our trip boat or hiring a boat for the day, as well tak-

ing holidays and even buying a boat for themselves.

"Enthusiasm for the canals starts on the bank and the ever expanding numbers visiting our tea room on the wharf at Norbury Junction is part of the same phenomena. It is all good for the future of the canals and I just hope that we can keep them properly navigable and the functioning waterways they should be. Without proper upkeep this will be a short-lived boom.

"Sometimes you wonder whether those responsible for the navigation realise how important it is that boaters can travel with relative ease on canals that are truly fit for purpose."

Bargains

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It's back - and even better

Norbury's tea room, which looks out on the Shropshire Union Canal basin where the Newport and Shrewsbury Canal once joined the main line, has been a favourite spot for boaters, cyclists, walkers and other travellers for many years - but they have been deprived of anything more than a cuppa for the whole of January.

The reason is a major refurbishment of the cosy tea room - but those who might fear it will lose its eccentric and charming feel are being reassured that the traditional narrowboat theme will remain.

The collection of lace plates and other narrowboat paraphernalia is already back up of one wall and in mid January the friendly staff started serving tea, coffee and cakes whilst the remainder of the work was completed.

By the time you read this the tea room will be back to its full opening hours of 8.30am to



The traditional lace plates are already back on the tea-room wall and, below right, Norbury stalwart Joyce White is welding a paintbrush instead of a pan.

5.30pm 7 days a week. Along side a fresher and smarter look there will be a new menu launched ready for the Spring and an enigmatic Norbury director, David Ray, promised: "We have some exciting surprises in store for our customers." Like most things at Norbury the refurbishment has been a joint effort amongst the staff with stalwarts like Joyce White welding a paintbrush instead of a frying pan, and everybody determined to reopen on time.



Cruising is now year-round

Traditional wisdom suggests canal trip boats are a fair weather thing, but since Norbury Wharf brought in the Shropshire Star trip boat a few years ago it has demonstrated a year-round appetite for expeditions along the Shropshire Union.

Inside the warm and cosy 42-seater trip boat, with food and drink on hand, the canal has something to offer in all seasons, with exceptional views across the surrounding landscape in winter when there are few leaves on the trees. In fact, even when the views are in short-supply, after dark, there is still something special about cruising through the cuttings and along the embankments - especially with some good fish

and chips in front of you.

The Shropshire Star's fish and chip cruises only finished just before Christmas and public demand means they began again before 2018 was a few weeks old, with regular Saturday cruises from the wharf.

Director David Ray explained: "People come again and again and they tell their friends and we find we can fill a fish and chip cruise, even in February, so it's best to book ahead.

"I think it is because the canal gives something different every time, winter, spring, summer or autumn.

"And we are seeing increasing numbers of private charters, with a classic car club the most recent to combine a drive with a cruise - and that was in January."



Getting on board the Shropshire Star at Norbury Wharf

Now there's even more chance of a day on the water

First there were three, then there were two and now there's four. What are we talking about?

It's not a riddle really. For several years Norbury has had a small fleet of three day boats – small steel narrowboats with basic cooking and sanitary facilities that up to 10 people can hire for a day and drive themselves.

They are very popular and out most days in the summer but also in the colder months of the year, mostly taking advantage of the 17 mile, lock-free stretch of the Shropshire Union Canal on which Norbury Wharf sits; and the half a dozen pubs on its banks.

Finally, last autumn, one of the boats was retired and put up for sale, but the demand for boating days out was growing. Now Norbury has bought two more day boats, putting it's



Three of Norbury's four day boats being prepared for the coming season

fleet up to four and three of them are currently on the bank at the wharf being prepared for the new season.

It means that up to 40 people can now become boaters for a day and get a first taste of what it is like to be out in your own narrowboat on one of the most attractive canals in the country. David Ray, who has seen the demand for day boats grow

steadily, said: "For many people it is their first taste of steering a boat of their own and having the freedom to explore the canal in their own way.

"We couldn't keep up with the demand so we have had to increase the number of boats. We hope this will mean we won't have as many dissatisfied people in 2018."

Winter push as holiday bookings flow in

One of the big jobs of any boatyard with a hire fleet is winter maintenance and the work takes on greater urgency when everyone knows that the holiday season is getting longer and boats are already being booked for week after week this spring and summer.

At Norbury the holidays never really stop, with some hire boats out over Christmas and New Year and even in the dark days of January and February, and bookings already filling up for Easter and summer school holidays.

Winter maintenance and even refurbishment is key to a fleet that gives reliable first class service to holidaymakers.

David Ray said: "The work we do now is key to a smooth operation once Easter is here and we have many more boats out on the system.

"Every boat has a full engine service and every other system, from the electrics to the water pumps and the heating is checked, serviced and cleaned.

"Every boat will have the bottom blacked and the paintwork touched-up with a bigger repaint every few years. The same is true inside with any damaged paintwork and varnish.

"People don't realise it sometimes but hire boats are probably the most carefully looked-after boats on the cut.

"After all, it costs us money if we have to go out to breakdowns and we want satisfied customers

who know they are taking a holiday on a properly cared-for vessel."

Like most hire firms, Norbury takes a pride in it's hire boats and want's them looking good."

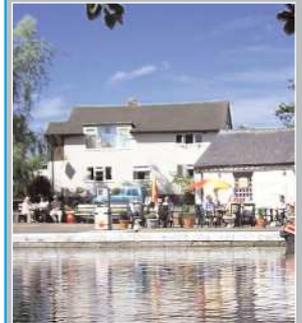


Axbridge in the paint dock and almost ready to face the world again.

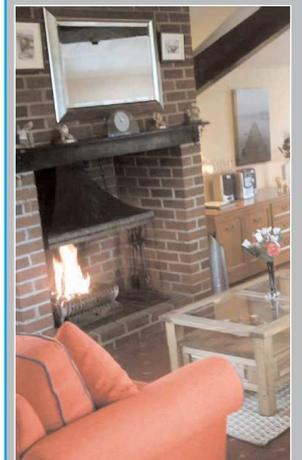
Holidays

WHY NOT JOIN US ON SHORE?

Norbury Wharf's cosy cottage sits alongside our busy wharf and is a home from home.



Special rates on day boats if booked in advance.



All bookings are handled through Hoseasons.

Boats for sale

Lyla B - a stunning example of a 2003 trad stern boat built by Jonathon Wilson and fitted out by Roche Valley. Powered by a Beta Marine 38hp engine with a PRM 120 gearbox and a Python drive coupling. At the rear the engine room, leads to the double bedroom. Then comes the shower room. The well-equipped galley includes a 12v Shoreline fridge / freezer, and 240v washing machine. The cosy saloon has sofa bed, and solid fuel stove. A Mikuni diesel heater feeds the radiators and provides hot water. Professionally repainted in 2015. **UNDER OFFER**



Ref 10407

Boat on Trailer

Viewing by appointment only - boat is located 5 miles from Norbury Junction out of water. Please contact us for further information.

£4,999.99



Ref 10405

Python - a 58ft all steel cruiser stern six-berth narrowboat built in 1988. Reliable 42hp Isuzu engine with a PRM 150 gear box and Aquadrive coupling. At the rear is the dinette area, followed by the galley. Following on from this are two bunk beds then the walk-through shower room and finally two single beds. Heating is from an Ellis gas boiler feeding radiators. Python has been used as a hire boat throughout her life, and her systems have been regularly serviced. Her hull sides have been over-plated and the boat has been docked and blacked annually. There is a current Boat Safety Certificate on the boat which expires in 2019. **£29,950**



Ref 10412

Shebrokus

- a 48ft cruiser stern narrow boat built by Water Travel at Wolverhampton for Heritage Narrowboats in 1976. The boat is powered by a reliable Lister SR2 with a LH150 gearbox. From entering at the rear is the galley with all the usual appliances. Next comes two bunks with wash hand basin opposite and brand new Morco instant hot water heater. On one side is the toilet compartment and the other side the shower compartment. The large open plan saloon has a solid fuel stove. The front well deck has a cratch cover and hydraulic lift designed for wheelchair access. This boat feels very spacious in side and a wheelchair can be wheeled from one end to other.

£22,950

Willow Jade

a 58 foot traditional stern built by the Navigation Narrow Boat Company in 2008. She is powered by a Vetus marine diesel engine located within the engine room at the rear of the boat. The boat is centrally heated throughout by a Webasto diesel fired heater complimented by a Morso Squirrel stove in saloon. At the rear of the boat is the engine room, followed by bedroom with pull out cross bed and plenty of storage.



Walk through shower room with full height shower, macerator pump out toilet and vanity basin. Pullman style dinette and a large galley followed by a comfortable saloon with hardwood doors leading out on to the well deck. Many extras to include: Bow thruster, cratch and cover, solar panel, inverter/charger etc. Docked, blacked and new anodes fitted December 2017. Roof and decks recently repainted.

£57,950



Betty is a 70 foot, all-steel motorised butty. This boat is one of a few - if not the only one - surviving of its kind on the canal system. Betty was built in the late 1800's as a horse drawn boat, built of wood in Runcorn and known as a Runcorn Six Planker. This boat, along with her sister boat, was built for a local company and both were named after his two daughters. Sometime in the early 1900's this one was converted to a motor and then used to tow the other one. Interestingly they didn't change the shape of the stern so it still had the butty stern and large rudder. They carried on trading for many years before Betty passed in to private hands. This is where things get really interesting. In 1984 the boat was lifted out of the water at Hawne Basin in the Blackcountry where two boat builders set to and started to build a new steel hull around the original wooden structure as to keep the exact shape of the hull. Once this was completed they reused all the original iron parts like rubbing guards, stern post etc and fitted them to the new hull. The original wooden hull was then removed from inside the new hull. A new steel cabin was fitted and then it was fully fitted out. So what was an old wooden working boat was then given a new lease of life in the form of steel but keeping the sleek and slender lines of a Horse drawn Runcorn wooden 6 planker.

£34,950

Corvedale

A 50ft semi traditional stern narrowboat built by John White Boat Builders in 1999. She is powered by a Beta Marine. Layout from the rear comprises of double bedroom with full height hanging wardrobe; shower room with shower and cassette toilet; galley with Vanette hob, grill and oven, 12v fridge and sink/drain; and finally a spacious saloon with sofa bed. Corvedale has diesel fired central heating that heats radiators throughout along with the Calorifier to provide hot water. Lined out in oak tongue and groove with wood flooring throughout. Cratch over forward well deck.

£32,500



Ref 10410

