

PRESS RELEASE



Issue date: 30 April 2026

****Photo Call Notice: CONVOY OF HISTORIC NARROWBOATS, 6-7 MAY 2026****

Event: Convoy of Historic Narrowboats on the Tidal Thames, organised jointly by Cathy Haysom of the Historic Narrow Boat Club, the Fund Britain's Waterway campaign (FBW), and the Association of Waterways Cruising Clubs.

Date: Wednesday 6 May and Thursday 7 May 2026

Location: King George V Dock, Woolwich and the tidal River Thames between the Thames Barrier and Westminster

Photo opportunities:

1. A convoy of 24 narrowboats including fourteen historic working boats will pass through the Thames Barrier between 07.30 and 09.00 on Wednesday 6 May (South Bank) and at 13.30 on Thursday 7 May (North Bank)
2. Fourteen historic working boats will assemble at King George V Dock, Woolwich, where they were built 90 years ago starting at approximately 13.00 on Wednesday 6 May.
3. On the morning of Thursday 7 May, the historic boats will be manoeuvring in the dock ready for their departure.
4. The convoy will travel upstream, passing Tower Bridge and the Palace of Westminster on Thursday 7 May.

Why: Join us for visually compelling photo opportunities of a flotilla of historic working narrowboats returning to their origin and cruising on the tidal River Thames.

The wider group of narrowboats will include leisure boats dispersing from the Inland Waterways Association's annual Canalway Cavalcade festival, held at Little Venice over the Bank Holiday

weekend. But in addition, this year marks a special anniversary, which is why this cruise will be so special.

Of the convoy, fourteen boats will be historic working Grand Union Narrowboats, which were all built at the Harland & Wolff yard at King George V Dock at Woolwich in 1936 and will be celebrating their 90th birthday.

In a momentous celebration of their anniversary, these boats will be returning to the dock where they were built. The majority have not been back since they left the docks in 1936. It is a testament to their build quality and the dedication of their owners that so many of these boats are still in use today, and many of them are still working full time delivering cargo on the canals.

The boats will be displaying banners in support of the Fund Britain's Waterways campaign. Our canals and navigable rivers are not just for boaters, or even for the millions of other people who use them to walk, cycle, jog, commute, canoe, paddle, fish or just relax. They are vital for local economies and the environment and an irreplaceable part of our national heritage. We owe it to future generations to look after our waterways and keep them safe and well maintained.

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About Harland & Wolff at King George V Dock, Woolwich

“In the 1930s Harland & Wolff had a contract at North Woolwich with the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company, a subsidiary of the company that owned the Grand Union and Regent's canals, to build narrowboats to work on the canals. Grand Union canal narrowboats worked in pairs, with a motorised engine boat pulling the engine-less 'butty' boat. Forty-four pairs of narrowboats were built between 1935 and 1936, each boat named by the canal company after stars, planets and constellations, such as Saturn, Venus, Mercury and so on. They were of composite construction, with steel hull sides and flat wooden bottoms. The motor boats were fitted with diesel engines manufactured by the Russell Newbery company.”

(from <https://www.thehistoryoflondon.co.uk/harland-wolff-on-the-thames/2/>)

About the [Historic Narrow Boat Club](#):

The Club was formed at the 1966 Inland Waterways Association (IWA) National Rally of Boats at Marple, and is one of the oldest inland waterway boat clubs. We are a national boat club, dedicated to preserving the working heritage of our canal system, from the boats themselves to details of the waterways on which they travel.

Traditional cargo-carrying narrow boats are the largest craft designed for the narrow canal network and are often the first to pinpoint navigation problems relating to draft or beam. As an active pressure group for navigational and heritage interests, we draw attention to these issues so that maintenance can be carried out before the situation worsens to the detriment of all - boaters, anglers or other users.

About [Fund Britain's Waterways \(FBW\)](#):

FBW brings together a wide range of organisations with the sole purpose of campaigning collectively for an increase in government funding of Britain's inland waterways to avert their decline, and to promote awareness of the huge economic, environmental, and social well-being value they provide. Established in June 2023, it already has more than 160 members representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways.

Contact:

For further information about Fund Britain's Waterways, contact FBW Project Manager Stephen Busby (stephen.j.busby@gmail.com, 07486 984677)

For further information about the historic narrowboats, including precise timings on activities at King George V Dock on 7 May, contact Cathy Haysom (cathyhaysom@outlook.com, 07702 187781) and see <https://hnbc.org.uk/events/thames-tideway-trip-woolwich>

Historic working narrowboats off Greenwich on a previous campaign cruise

(credit: Simon Judge)

