

Glossary of boating terms

Abreast	Two boats working side-by-side tied together.
Accent (Canal)	There was no hard and fast recognisable 'Canal' accent, since boaters tended to speak with the accents of their birthplace. For instance 'Northern Roaders' (qv) tended to speak with a mixture of Cheshire and Black Country, 'Worcester Cut' (qv) boaters with a mixture of Birmingham and Worcestershire, and 'Southern Roaders' (qv) with a combination of London and North Warwickshire. Oxford Canal Boaters, especially those born south of Banbury, had more 'West Country' accents.
Agen (or Agin)	Against, or near. 'Agen the gas' = 'by the gasworks'.
Ahead (to get)	To keep going or moving. 'Get 'em ahead' = 'Get the boats moving'
Anglesey Basin	A one-time major coal loading point on the Wyrley & Essington section of the BCN.
Answer (or Anser) Pins/Shackles	Hooks and shackles at the stern of a boat at gunwale level used for 'strapping' qv, or 'breasting up' qv.
Among the locks	A heavily-locked section of wide (qv) canal, such as between Cowroast and Cowley (GU) or Hungerford and Crofton (K&A). Pairs of boats using such sections normally work 'Singled Out' (qv)
'Ampton Boat	A boat, usually with a small or else non-existent cabin used on the Wolverhampton level of the BCN (qv) with a beam of over 8ft and a length greater than 72ft on account of never passing through locks. Virtually extinct since the ending of large-scale coal transport on the BCN (qv).
'Ampton 21	Boaters' name for the Wolverhampton lock flight. Sometimes just 'Ampton.
Arm	A branch from the main canal
Back Door	A door in the rear end of a boat's hold (or fore end of cabin)
Back End	The rearmost part of a boat's hold
Back End beam	The rearmost cross-beam in a boat's hold, sometimes called the 'cabin beam'
Back End line	A rope attached to a ring on the back-end rail of a working motor boat.
Back end rail	A metal rail on a motor boat running from side to side on the leading edge of the cabin, usually with a metal ring on it.
Back flush	The result of a 'flush' (qv) of water hitting the gates of a lock further downhill and rebounding.
Back o' the Map	Boaters' term for the part of the BCN (qv) system between Netherton Tunnel and Stourton Junction, Staffs & Worcs Canal.
Banbury Stick	A short pole or shaft used for propping open an Oxford Canal drawbridge.
Barge	Technically an inland waterway vessel with a beam (qv) greater than 13ft. It is an incorrect term for a canal boat. These are either 'wide' or 'narrow' boats, again depending on beam. River or estuary craft, or naval craft used for personnel transport are correctly called barges.
Bats	The blades of a propeller
BCN	The Birmingham Canals Navigation

Beam	The maximum width of a vessel
Bell Oil (to give it)	To work an engine very hard. A Black Country term for the administration of a good hiding, probably derived from the sea battle of Belle Isle, 1761. cf "e weren't 'alf givin' it some Belloil' = 'he was thrashing his engine'.
Blades	The propeller
Bladeful (a)	A fouled propeller
Blis'orth (the)	The pound (qv) from Buckby locks to Stoke Bruerne
Blue Top	(or 'Dustbin') The name given to the last commercial narrow boats built for the British Transport Commission during 1959-60, so called because of their blue plastic hatch covers.
Boat (narrow)	Any boat intended for working over the narrow canal system (qv) other than a tug or specifically-named craft such as a dredger or ice breaker
Boat's Bottom	The inside of a carrying boat's hold
Boat Control	A system used by the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company for keeping a check and control over boat movements. The fleet numbers painted on the Company's boats were an essential part of this system
Bobby Dazzler	A small portable light bulb fitting to a motor boat's chimney or to a stalk from the cabin top, used at night or in tunnels to help guide a butty boat's steerer
Bolinder	A classic early Swedish semi-diesel engine fitted to narrow boats, especially those of Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd. The original engines were single cylinder, but there were some with twin cylinders and a later, high-speed twin version known as a '1050 Bolinder'
Bost (to) vb	Birmingham or Black Country term for 'to hit' or 'to break'. (cf 'The ice's bost all round the pound')
Bostin	Black Country boaters' term for 'very good'. (cf 'We 'ad a bostin night out in Brummagem').
Bostin stove	(from 'slow combustion stove'). A small stove used for heating rather than cooking.
Bostocks	Constructions in a dock on which a boat under construction or repair sits, allowing access to the underside of the boat from beneath.
Bottom Road	(or 'Back Road') The route from Birmingham to the Warwickshire coalfields via The Warwick & Birmingham Junction, Birmingham & Fazeley and Coventry Canals.
Bow hauling	Drawing a boat along manually. So-called because when drawing loaded craft along manually a loop is made (with a bowline knot). The loop goes over the shoulders, behind the neck and under the armpit. This allows the drawer to 'lean in the collar' and to get the boat moving. Also this leaves the hands free.
Bracket Open	Driving a motor boat at full speed. The phrase originates with single cylinder Bolinder (qv) engines, where the admission of oil to the cylinder is governed by a bracket-type control.
Braunston Pound	The pond (qv) running from the top of Hillmorton locks, on the Oxford Canal to the bottom of Napton locks, along with parts of the Grand Union Canal (qv) on the same level.

Braunston Summit	The level from the top of Braunston locks to the top lock of the Buckby flight.
Bread and Larders	An old term for boaters working the Oxford Canal south of Napton.
Breasting up	Drawing two boats together side-by-side.
Breastock	A curved beam at the after end of the fore deck (qv) that prevents lockage water from spilling into the hold (or 'boat's bottom'). It is customary for the deckboard (qv) to sit on top of this.
Breeching Strings	Thin, short ropes used for tying down 'Side Cloths' (qv) when they are not in use.
Bridge hole	The narrow section of canal passing under a bridge. In urban areas a favourite dumping ground for rubbish and therefore always a potential navigation hazard.
Brummagem also 'Birrigum'.	Boaters' name for Birmingham.
Butty (noun)	Generally taken to mean an unpowered boat working with a motor boat, but it can also mean another boat working in company. See below.
Butty to (vb)	To work in company with another person or boat. Probably connected with a South Wales dialect word for 'mate' and the American 'buddy'.
Bugby	boaters' name for Long Buckby locks and Wharf.
Bulls Bridge (or 'the Bridge')	The one-time administrative centre and workshops of the Grand Union Canal Company at Southall, Middlesex. Now residential moorings and a branch of Tesco.
Bull Nose	(See 'Knuckle')
By-Trader	North Country term for an owner-operated boat or boatman who owned his own boat (see 'Number One')
Cabbage Turn	A sharp outside turn (qv) between Wormleighton and Marston Doles on the Oxford Canal Summit. So-called because the nearby fields were used for growing cabbages at one time.
Cabin Beam	See Back End Beam.
Cabin Shaft	(Also 'Short Shaft') A short, hooked, pole kept on the cabin top for retrieving objects from the water, Clearing rubbish from the 'Blades' (qv) and similar tasks.
Cabin Strings	Ornamental cotton pieces that hang on the 'chimley pipe' (qv) side of a boat's cabin.
Caisson	Pronounced 'cassoon'. 1. A tank that is capable of holding a boat as at the Anderton Lift or the Barton Swing Aqueduct 2. A submersible tank used for raising sunk vessels.
Cable Rate	'Northern Road' (qv) expression for full speed, equivalent to 'Bracket Open' (qv).
Candlestick locks	Name sometimes given to the locks between 'Wigrams' (qv) and Knowle, GU canal, because of the distinctive paddle gear installed by the GU Company when widening the locks during the 1930s.
Capes Two	Two locks adjacent to the 'Cape of Good Hope' P.H. near Warwick.
Centres (or Centre paddles)	GU term for gate paddles.
Charlie Wood 'uses	North Kilworth Wharf, Leicester Section GU. Named after Charles Woodhouse the one-time landlord of the nearby pub.

Checking Stump	Horse boats or unpowered Boats are stopped or assisted round turns by means of a 'checking stump', or 'strapping post'. These are sometimes an extension of the top gate mitre post of a narrow lock, in which case the checking of the way of a boat also closes the gate.
Check Strap	A heavy rope used to check the way of a boat of 'Runners' (Uphill or Downhill).
Cheshire Locks	Boaters' name for the 30 locks between Kings Lock, No 71, Middlewich and Red Bull Summit Lock, No 41, Kidsgrove. The modern name of 'Heartbreak Hill' was never used by working boaters.
Chimley Pipe Side	The left hand, or 'port' side of a narrow canal boat. So-called because the range chimney is placed on that side so as to be towards the centre of the canal and as far as possible away from overhanging branches or bridge or tunnel arches.
Chimley Tins	Old food tins with the bottoms removed placed in the top of cabin chimneys to improve the draught and to carry smoke above the steerer's head. Also with the bottom still in place used to prevent rain from running down a chimney with an unlit fire.
Chuck Back	Freeing a propeller of rubbish by 'holding back' (qv) and then going ahead repeatedly until the 'blades' are clear.
City River (or Locks)	Term used by Thames and Kennet boaters or bargemen for the locks downstream of Staines. This part of the Thames was traditionally controlled by the City of London and the City arms may be seen on many of the older lockhouses in this section.
Clough	Pronounced 'Cloof', a North Country word for a paddle.
Come by	To overtake another boat (cf 'I came by him agin Leamington Gas).
Company's man	Although the canals have been nationalised since 1948 this term is still used to indicate someone working for the waterway administration.
Corkers Two	Two locks (Nos 32-33) between Horton and Marsworth on the Grand Union Canal in 'the Fields' (qv). Sometimes called 'Ivinghoe Locks'.
Counter	The rounded stern of a motor boat lying above the 'blades' (qv). This protects them from contact with coping stones, lock gates, sills, etc.
Cowley Pound	The length of canal between Cowley Lock (No 89) and Norwood Top Lock (No 90) GUC. Noted for its depth and consequent speed that boats can travel along it.
Cratch	A shelf at the fore end of a boat immediately to the rear of the 'deck' (qv) originally used for storing fodder for horses, which leads to the derivation from the Northamptonshire dialect 'cratch' meaning 'a manger' (from French 'crèche'). Latterly used for storing ropes, tarpaulins etc. The wooden framework above the cratch is called a 'false cratch' (qv) and the triangular board at the fore end of the framework is a 'deckboard' (qv). NB modern usage incorrectly refers to this latter as 'the cratch'.
Cross Beam	Wide planks set across the hold of a boat, slotted to receive 'stands' (qv)

Cross Straps	Two short ropes with loops spliced in both ends used to haul an empty boat from the dollies (qv) of a motor boat. The length is determined by the distance from the towed boat's tee stud (qv) to the water. When hung in position the bottom of the spliced loops should be just brushing the water.
Crow (the)	The flight of locks leading from the Old BCN Main Line to the Titford level.
Cutter (or Titch)	A small removable pipe fitted with a loop of brass at its upper end and fitting above the upright exhaust pipe of a motor boat. Its function is to break the force of the exhaust when passing beneath bridges, tunnels etc. The brass hoop should be aligned fore and aft, not as some enthusiasts insist, athwartships.
Dannel	Thames Valley/R. Kennet word for the river or canal.
Daylight 'ole	An airshaft in a tunnel. Cf 'There weren't 'alf some water comin' down that second daylight 'ole at Blis'orth' = 'The second airshaft in Blisworth tunnel was very wet'.
Deck	The 'Fore Deck', commonly called 'the Deck' is the foremost part of a narrow boat that acts as a locker for various items of gear and which is entered by means of a 'Deck lid', a hinged hatch. The upper part of the deck is generally covered in to prevent the ingress of lockage water. The 'Stern Deck', commonly called 'the Starn' is the rearmost part of a boat. On a butty or horse boat the uppermost part forms a small triangular cupboard and the lower part, accessed from the cabin is used for storing foodstuffs that need to be kept cool. The two are separated by a small deck used by the steerer and forming the entrance to the cabin. This is sometimes known as 'The Hatches'.
Deck board	(See under 'Cratch')
Denister	Boaters' name for Dunhamstead Tunnel, Worcester & Birmingham Canal.
Deritend	The flight of locks close to Curzon Street, Birmingham, known today as 'Ashstead'. Notable for including a short tunnel.
Dipper	A round-bottomed pan with a short (usually wooden) handle used for scooping water. Not to be confused with the larger, flat-bottomed 'handbowl'.
Dolly	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A metal stump of a motor boat's counter (qv) used for towing or tying up. 2. A tub-like implement used by boatwomen for laundering clothes. 3. Boaters' name for Doris or Dorothy.
Dolly's Hut	A one-time wharf on the Oxford Canal between 'Jericho' (qv) and Wolvercot.
Downhill runner:	A runner is a heavy rope used to stop a butty when entering a lock. 'Uphill' (qv) and 'Downhill' runners are so called because they are used in the directions indicated. They vary in length with downhill runners being shorter.
Dropper	An ornamental piece of cotton rope that hangs from the 'looby' (qv).
Drudger	Boaters' name for a dredger.

Dukes Cut	1. The short canal leading from the Oxford Canal near Wolvercote to the Upper Thames via Wolvercote Mill Stream. Built and for many years owned by the Duke of Marlborough. 2. The Bridgewater Canal, named after the Duke of Bridgewater.
Dunnage (or dennage)	Bits of waste timber used to raise cargo above the 'shutts' (qv) in order to pass crane slings through.
Dust Bin	See 'Blue Top'.
Eaveitup	BCN Boaters' name for a canal where a horse boat's towline had to be constantly raised to clear tied-up boats.
Economisers	See 'Side ponds' or 'side locks'
Edgeford	Boaters' name for Hednesford Basin and Arm at the northernmost part of the BCN
Engine 'Ole	Boaters' name for the engine room of a narrow boat.
False Cratch	An 'A'-shaped framework forming the rearward part of the 'cratch' (qv) assembly. The rearmost upright wooden frames are often painted with diamond designs.
False floors	See 'Shutts'.
Fan hold	The grip that a motor boat's propeller has on the water, dependent upon the depth that it operates. Good 'fan hold' is essential for both speed and 'holding back' (qv). Sometimes pronounced 'fan'olt'.
Fenny Pound	The eleven miles between Cosgrove and Fenny Stratford locks (Nos 21-22) on the Grand Union Canal (qv). Except for a short length near Cosgrove this is entirely within the New City of Milton Keynes. Often pronounced 'Finny'.
Fields, the	The open country surrounding the section of the Grand Union Canal between Marsworth and Leighton Buzzard.
Fore end	The foremost or 'bows' of a canal boat.
Flush	A sudden rush of water, usually caused by opening a paddle (qv) rapidly, but also an influx of water in a river system after heavy rain.
Fly paddles	An old term used in the south for gate paddles (see 'centres', 'ranters' and slackers')
Gailey Cut	Boaters' name for the Staffs & Worcestershire Canal between Aldersley Junction and Great Heywood.
Gas (a)	A gasworks, or latterly the site of a former gasworks.
Gas boats	Decked-in canal boats, resembling miniature tankers, used for the transport of gas liquor or tar in bulk.
Gas Two	Locks 51 and 52 on the Grand Union Canal (qv) near Berkhamstead. Named after a former adjacent gasworks.
Ganzies	1. Rushall Locks on the BCN (qv) (see rhyme under 'Moshes Two'). 2. Blue jerseys or sweaters (a corruption of 'Guernseys')
Gear Wheel	A large wheel that operates the reversing gear of a motor boat with an original Ruston-Hornsby or National Diesel engine. From the point of view of a boatman, if not a maintenance engineer, it has the advantage of being capable of almost instantaneous change of direction at full revolutions in an emergency, or when stuck in a 'bridgehole' (qv).
Getting' ahead	Boatman's expression for moving boats forward in a brisk fashion and not hanging about. Cf 'We'm startin' at four to get 'em ahead'

Girder string	A thin rope used for lashing down top planks when 'planked up' (qv). It runs from the cross beam (qv) to the top plank.
Gongoozler	An alleged boaters' term for an idle onlooker. If it was ever in use it had certainly died by the 1950s.
Grand Junction	The canal from Braunston to Brentford, with its later extension to Paddington, opened throughout in 1805. It later absorbed adjacent canals and eventually was taken over by the Regents Canal Co in 1929 and formed part of the Grand Union Canal (qv)
Grand Union	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The original (1815) name of the canal connecting Norton Junction, Northamptonshire with Foxton, Leicestershire. Sometimes (together with the canal from Market Harborough to Leicester) called 'The Old Union' or 'Leicester Line'. The Old Union Canals became part of the Grand Junction Canal system (see below) in 1894. 2. A Canal Company formed in 1929 following the amalgamation of the Regents Canal Co with the Grand Junction, Warwick & Napton, Warwick & Birmingham and Warwick & Birmingham Junction Canals. The Canal Company later extended via the River Soar Navigation to the Erewash Canal in Nottinghamshire. 3. A boat once belonging to the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company, a subsidiary of No 2 above, formed in 1933 and nationalised in 1948.
Greasy Ockers	Name given to boaters working for Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd employed regularly on the London to Birmingham run.
Griff (The)	A colliery area near Bedworth served by the private 'Griff Arm' from the Coventry Canal. Closed by the Coal Board in 1960.
Ground Paddle	See 'Centre Paddle'.
Guard	A semi-circular strip of iron or steel protecting a boat's hull.
Gunnels	The top sides of a boat's hull, generally formed with a horizontal plank or metal strip.
Or 'Gunwales'.	
Handbowl	A large, metal, flat-bottomed pan used for various purposes in a boat's cabin. Generally painted with floral patterns.
Hanging-up plates	(or Ribbon Plates). Plates with pierced edges much prized by boaters as cabin decorations.
Hatches	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The well deck and its surround at the stern of a butty or horse boat (qv 'Deck' above). 2. Large vertically-rising sluices generally raised with a winch or a handspike. A term used on the River Kennet Section. On the adjoining River Thames they are known as 'bucks'.
Hitcher	A Thames name for a long shaft with a hook, used by lockkeepers for closing unmechanised gates from the opposite side of the lock.
Hold back	To reverse the engine, derived from horse boating when the only way of stopping quickly was to check the boat's way with any convenient projection on the towpath.
Hold (in or out)	An instruction to steer towards ('in') or away from ('out') the towpath.
Holding back pin	A small projecting iron pin by the top gates of a Grand Junction lock used to hold a loaded boat back when working abreast (qv) and thus avoiding both boats moving out of the lock together and 'Jamming' (qv)

Hook on (to) Horse boat	To take up a towline or short 'strap' (qv). Until the early part of the twentieth century this was the commonest type of boat to be seen on the narrow canal system. Approximate overall dimensions were 72ft long X 7ft beam, although there were many boats of less than these sizes (and a few, such as "Ampton Boats' (qv) that exceeded the dimensions.
Hospital Pound	The pound between Farmers Bridge locks ('the Old Thirteen' qv) and Ashstead locks ('Deritend' qv) (BCN) which also accesses Aston locks.
How far tonight?	Boaters' query to another as to where they intend tying that evening.
How many's ready?	Boaters' query as to the state of the 'Road' (qv 2) ahead, i.e. how many locks are set in his favour? Sadly today this is almost impossible to state since so many boats tie up at unexpected times and places rather than at regular stopping points.
Ice boster Ice breaker	Black Country and Birmingham area term for an 'Ice breaker' (qv) A boat used for breaking ice. These had quite different lines (except those converted from other boats, such as some ex-Grand Union ones ([qv]) from working boats. They were intended to ride up on top of the ice and then be rocked.
Ignell Port Ippey Cut	Boaters' name for Icknield Port, BCN. An obsolete boaters' term for the Wilts & Berks Canal, possibly derived from the abundance of overhanging bushes bearing hips in season.
Inside	The towpath side of the canal.
Inside turn	A bend in the canal where the channel follows the towpath.
Isis Lock	The official name of Louse Lock (qv).
Jackdaw Pound	The section of canal between the 'Three locks' (qv) and Leighton Lock on the Grand Union Canal (qv).
Jamming	Often pronounced 'Jomming'. Getting stuck in a lock or bridge because the boat is too wide. Sometimes done deliberately by a disgruntled boater when another has stolen a march on him cf 'I slipped in a'tween 'em and jommed 'em' = 'I went between the two boats and they couldn't move'.
Jericho	The district of Oxford just to the north of Worcester College adjoining the Oxford Canal and the site of 'Juxon Street' (qv) Wharf.
Josher	A boat that once belonged to Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd. So-called after Joshua Fellows, founder of the firm that eventually became FMC Ltd. Most surviving Joshers are iron/composite build. Many were wooden, although few such survive today.
Junction Cut	Boaters' name for the main line of the one-time Grand Junction Canal (1793-1929)(qv) from Braunston to Brentford.
Juxon Street	A commercial wharf in Oxford adjoining the Street of the same name. Used until the early 1960s for unloading coal for Morrell's Brewery.
Knuckle	(or 'Bull Nose'). A dockland term for the rounded stonework at the entrance to a lock. 'Bull Nose' is the term used by Thames lockkeepers for the same thing.
Legging	The act of propelling a boat through a tunnel with the feet.

Leggers	Men whose job it was to 'leg' boats through tunnels. At Braunston and Blisworth tunnels the demand for work as a legger was so much and the institution of a sort of protection racket was sufficiently anti-social for the Company to introduce a system of registration for leggers and such leggers were issued with special armbands. This system lasted from 1829 until the institution of tunnel tugs in 1871. Leggers earned approximately two to three times as much as a farm labourer. A loaded boat would take some 90 minutes at the most to pass through Blisworth tunnel, with a minimum time of 30 minutes for an empty or light-loaded boat and a legger might make as many as four trips a day, although two seemed to be the norm. The rate was 6d (2.5p) for an empty and 9d (3p) loaded. A naval or army pensioner at that time had to live on 2.5p per day and a private soldier of naval rating earned 1shilling (5p). Not surprisingly men fought to become leggers and established a protection racket. The work was boring rather than arduous. Once a loaded boat is moving it can be kept going fairly easily. The work is hardest on the ankles.
Lift (the)	Boaters' name for the Anderton Lift, Cheshire.
Light (a)	Boaters' term for a power station, e.g. 'Uxbridge Light'.
Lighter	A barge (qv) used for loading or discharging cargo overside of ships, now largely obsolete in the UK.
Lily Pascal's	Boaters' name for 'The Anchor' at High Onn, Shropshire Union Canal.
Lime'us	Boaters' name for Regents Canal Dock, now Limehouse Basin.
Lining Piece	A horizontal wooden plank that runs fore and aft on either side of a wooden boat's 'Bottom' (qv). This strengthens the hull and supports the 'Gunnels' (qv).
Lock wheeler	Someone going ahead to get locks ready, strictly speaking on a bicycle, hence the name, but nevertheless applied to persons on foot.
London River	The tidal Thames, below Teddington Lock.
Long Lining	Operating a flight of narrow locks with a pair of boats whereby the butty is drawn by a very long cotton line passing from the motor (qv) to the butty (qv) over the intervening lock gates and pound (qv)
Long Shaft	A long hooked pole, usually kept in the 'Boat's Bottom' (qv) or when loaded hung from the 'Strings' (qv), ready for use. Used to push a boat clear of mud, 'Shafting' (qv) and similar purposes. Similar to a 'Hitcher' (qv) and often erroneously called a 'boathook'.
Looby	A swivelling piece of iron at the top of a boat's mast (qv), sprung so as to return to a vertical position in the event of a boat overrunning its horse and the line slipping off. Still used on working boats for a variety of reasons.
Loose by	To allow an overtaker to 'come by' (qv)(cf 'I loosed him by agin Gas Two').
Louse Lock	The lock joining the Oxford Canal to a backwater of the Thames at Oxford. Said to be so-called from the one-time presence of down-and-outs.

Lousy 'Leven	Aston Locks BCN, so-called for a similar reason to 'Louse Lock', Oxford. See also under 'Moshes Two'.
Maffers	Boaters' name for Marsworth, GU Canal.
Malkins Bank	Boaters' name for the area close to Wheelock in the 'Cheshire Locks' (qv) between locks 61 and 63.
Mast	A hollow, square wooden post about 14 feet or so from the fore deck (qv) or Breastock. It is used for 'bowhauling' (qv) and occasionally for towing a butty. It was always used in horseboat days for towing.
Mast Beam	The cross beam just ahead of and into which the mast fits.
Mast rope	A rope attached to the looby (qv) used to pull lock gates open (see 'thumb line') and sometimes to breast up (qv).
Meet (to) (vb)	To pass a boat travelling on the opposite direction (cf 'I met him agin Sid Strong's' = 'I passed him at Hillmorton Wharf').
Middle Beam	The cross beam behind the mast beam (qv), slotted to take a 'stand' (qv).
Middle Stand	The 'stand' (qv) that slots into the middle beam.
Mill Boating	Carrying coal to John Dickinson's paper mills in the Gade Valley. Until the mid-1930s a province of 'number ones' (qv).
Mitre	The point at which a pair of lock gates meet, but also applied to the outer post of a single narrow lock gate. Double gates that do not close properly are said not to be 'Mitring'.
Moira Cut	The Ashby Canal (often, aptly, pronounced 'miry').
Mortar Board (the)	Boaters' name for the canal near a pub of that name in the 'Cheshire locks' (qv).
Morton Pound	The length of the northern Oxford Canal from Hawkesbury Junction ('Suttons' [qv]) to Hillmorton.
Moshes Two	Daw End Locks, BCN. These locks form part of a boatman's rhyme as follows: <i>'Moshes Two, the Ganzies Seven, The New Thirteen and the lousy 'leven. A boat a-comin' up and a boat a-comin' down And two on the bottom in the Hospital Pound'</i>
Motor	A mechanically propelled canal boat capable of carrying cargo.
Mud heelers	Name given to boatmen regularly working the Oxford Canal.
Nags Head	Three locks, (Nos 34-36) on the GU Canal near Cheddington, Bucks. Latterly called 'Seabrook Locks' after a former lockkeeper.
Narrow boat	A generic term for boats that can pass through the narrow canal (qv) system. Working craft were divided into powered craft: motors (qv) and tugs (qv) on the one hand and horse boats and butties (qv) on the other. The most noticeable difference lay at the stern where powered craft were fitted with counters (qv) and horse boats and butties with large wooden rudders. There was another sort of motor boat, used until the 1960s on the Bridgewater and Leeds & Liverpool Canals in the Wigan/Manchester/Runcorn area. These were large wooden boats with butty-type sterns.
Narrow Canals:	The system, mainly of Midland canals, with locks of approximately 7 ft (2.2m) width by 72 ft length (22.0m). This dimension came about following the Coleshill Agreement of 20 th June 1782 whereby the Coventry, Birmingham & Fazeley, Trent & Mersey and Oxford Canal Companies agreed among other matters on a

standard gauge for locks, based on that used by Brindley's original Grand Trunk scheme. After its formation in 1929 the Grand Union Co obtained funding for reconstructing the canal between Wigrams Turn (qv) and Camp Hill, Birmingham) to wider dimensions. Lock widening was completed by 1937, but all Government Assistance and all civil engineering projects, other than war-related ones, were halted on the outbreak of war in 1939. After the war, just as with the railways, political uncertainty over nationalisation prevented any large-scale re-investment. There were narrow canals that were not connected to the main system, notably the Andover Canal and the Salisbury & Southampton, but these soon fell victim to railway competition. Although obsolete for most industrial trading purposes, most of the system has survived to form today's cruising network, with some notable examples of restorations such as the Huddersfield Narrow and Chesterfield Canals.

Neriton	Boaters' name for Netherton in the Black Country.
New Cut	Boaters' name for the Middlewich Branch of the Shropshire Union (only opened in 1833!!)
New 'uns	Locks 64-68 near Apsley on the Grand Union Canal. So-called because they replaced an earlier line of six locks in 1819 (!!)
New Thirteen	Perry Barr locks, BCN
Noble	Boaters' name for Newbold-on-Avon, Oxford Canal.
Northampton River	(also 'Wellingborough River') Boaters' name for the River Nene (pronounced locally as 'Nen'. Below Oundle locals call it 'Neen').
North Stafford	Boaters' name for the Trent & Mersey Canal south of Harecastle, presumably from its one-time owners The North Staffordshire Railway.
Northern Roaders	Boat crews working the canals north of Birmingham and the Black Country. Once mainly applied to Fellows, Morton & Clayton crews , after nationalisation generally taken to mean any boaters working the narrow canals of the one-time NW Division of British Transport Waterways. cf 'Southern Roaders'.
Northwicher	A boat built by Yarwoods of Northwich, Cheshire. In particular referring to boats built for the Grand Union Carrying Company during the 1930s.
Number One	An owner-boatman, analogous today to a sub-contract lorry driver.
Old Thirteen	Farmers Bridge locks in Central Birmingham.
Outside	The side of the canal opposite the towpath
Outside Turn	A turn where the channel follows the side opposite the towpath.
Oxford River	Boaters' term for the Upper Thames upstream of Kennet Mouth.
Paddington Arm	The name given to the section of GUC from Bulls Bridge, Southall, to Paddington Basin, including the junction with the Regents Canal at Little Venice.
Paddington Armer	A boat or a lady of doubtful provenance or worth.
Paddle	A sluice admitting water in or out of a lock, or to or from the canal.
Parks (the)	The section of the Grand Union Canal through Cassiobury Park, Watford, where the Grand Junction Company landscaped the canal to please the adjoining landowners.
Parks Two	(also 'Albert's Two') Two locks, Nos 75-79, close together in Cassiobury Park.

Peters Two	(also 'Two below Maffers'). Two locks, Nos 37-38, near Marsworth, GUC.
Pigeon Box	A small detachable skylight, generally above the engine room of a motor boat.
Planked up	A boat that has its 'running planks' (qv) set up on the top of the stands (qv).
Pound	The part of any canal that is 'impounded' between two locks. A boat travels 'up' or 'down' a pound, or 'round' a long pound, a summit or a bottom pound, such as the 'Fenny Pound' (qv). Cf 'We was three hours and a half a-comin' round Napton summit' = 'It took us three and a half hours to cross the Oxford Summit'.
Port to Port:	The normal means of passing on a canal, although rarely known by that name. 'Port' only became a recognised term for the left hand side in the 19 th Century. Boaters refer to this side as 'chimley pipe side'.
Rack	The toothed iron bar that connects a 'paddle' (qv) with the winding gear. Paddles are known as 'racks' in Ireland.
Rams Head	
Ranter Cloughs	North country term for gate or centre paddles.
Rye peck	A Thames Valley word for a type of anchor with a single hook at right angles to the shaft, used for tying a vessel to the bank in at absence of bollards or rings. Called a 'Rond Anchor' in Eastern England.
Ribbon Plates	See 'Hanging-up plates'.
Ricky	1. Boaters' name for Rickmansworth. 2. A boat built by Walker Bros of Rickmansworth.
Ring 'Ole Deep	A well-laden boat. So low in the water in fact that the ring holes on the 'Gunnels' (qv) are awash.
Road	1. The canal route to a place cf 'The Oxford Road' 2. The state of the canal ahead of one, a 'good' road signifying that all locks are in one's favour, a 'bad' road meaning that they are against.
Rodneys	Boaters' term for disreputable habitués of the towpath, especially near towns. Also applied to boaters whose boats are dirty and unkempt.
Rooms	A boat's 'Bottom' (qv) is divided into four 'Rooms'. These are divisions marked by 'Cross Beams' (qv) and are known from fore to aft as the Fore End or Cratch, Back o' Mast, Middle Length and Back End. A boater will refer to these when loading, e.g. instructing a tipper lorry driver 'I'll have four ton in the fore end and ten ton back o' the mast'.
Runner	1. An official who transmitted boat control orders to crews on the Grand Union Canal. 2. Another word for a 'Check Strap' (and cf 'Downhill' & 'Uphill runners')
Running Blocks	Half-moon shaped wooden blocks, with a central hole through which a towline passes. These are fixed along the 'Top Planks' (qv) of a 'butty' (qv) and guide the towline back to a 'Tee Stud' (qv) on the cabin roof. This enables very fast working in and out of locks, but was regarded as dangerous with young children aboard.

Saltley	1. An extremely dirty flight of locks on the Birmingham & Warwick Junction Canal in Birmingham, forming part of the 'Bottom Road' (qv).
Sailormen	2. A boat built at the one-time boatyard in Saltley locks. Boaters' term for Thames sailing barge crews.
Shaft	Boaters' term for a pole that can be picked up by one person.
Shafting	Moving a boat by poling it.
Sheepwash	A short side-channel of the Thames connecting the mainstream with the Oxford Canal below Louse (qv) or Isis Lock. Boats heading down the Thames have to go against the current for a short way until reaching the main stream. Until the 1980s there was also a railway swing bridge dating from 1851 across this section.
Short boat	1. Name given to the wide beam boats operating over the NW Division of the British Transport Waterways of 60ft length, capable of working uphill of the Wigan Lock flight, Leeds & Liverpool Canal. 2. A specialised narrow boat of lesser length than normal e.g. craft built to navigate both the Huddersfield Narrow and Broad Canals where the lock chambers on the latter are less than 60 ft long.
Shutts	False floors in a 'Boat's bottom' (qv) or Hold, used to keep cargo away from the actual bottom of a boat and to allow bilge and rainwater to accumulate below without affecting the cargo.
Side Bridge	A bridge over an 'Arm' (qv) carrying the main line towpath.
Side Cloths	Tarpaulins fixed to the gunnels (qv) of a cargo boat that can be drawn up so as to partially enclose the hold. Complete coverage is completed by 'Top Cloths' (qv)
Side Ponds	Also 'Side Locks' or 'Economisers'. Largely obsolete today but originally a means of saving water by diverting half (or even two thirds) of a lock of water into a reservoir for re-use by uphill boats. The Grand Junction Canal Company was a great user of these and the first experimental ones devised by their engineer James Barnes may still be seen at locks 56/56 ('Top & Bottom Side Locks') near Berkhamstead. Modern electric back pumping now largely obviates the need for these.
Sid Strong's	Hillmorton Wharf, Oxford Canal.
Single Out (to)	To work a pair of boats in tandem rather than 'Abreast' (qv)
Slack	1. To take things easy, to make a temporary stop of 'we slacked for breakfuss agen Sid Strong's'. 2. Small coal used in industrial plants.
Slacker	London, especially East End, area term for paddles (qv)
Slide	A moveable hatch over a cabin or engine room entrance, often painted with geometric or other motifs such as hearts.
Snatch (a)	To tow a boat other than the one a boater normally regards as his, e.g. 'I came by 'im broke down and gi'ed 'im a snatch to Braunston'
Snatcher	A short, heavy-gauge rope used for towing 'Among the Locks' (qv)
Snubber	A long heavy-gauge rope used for towing on long pounds.
Sparrers Drinkin' Off the Gunnels	See 'Ring 'Ole Deep'. A term for a well-laden boat.

Southern Roaders	Boat crews working the canals south of Birmingham and the Black Country, once applied to boaters working for Fellows, Morton & Clayton and Grand Union Canal Carrying Co, later generally taken to mean the one-time SE Division of British Transport Waterways.
Sparrow fart	Very early in the morning.
Staircase	A group of locks where the top gate of one is the bottom gate of the next, such as at Foxton (GUC Leicester Section or Grindley Brook (Shropshire Union, Welsh Canal)
Stand	A vertical wooden upright that supports 'Top planks' (qv). Often painted with geometric designs, although the larger carrying companies' stands were generally a plain colour.
Stank	A temporary dam, the word being related to 'Staunch' (qv). A section of canal that has been temporarily drained is known as 'Stanked Off'.
Star Class	A type of boat built for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Co during the early 1930s. The hulls were built in iron, steel or wood to a basic outline and shape by Harland & Woolff at North Woolwich, Walker Bros at Rickmansworth or Yarwoods of Northwich. To distinguish them from later, larger products of these yards they are known as 'small' boats and named after stars, planets and constellations.
Starting Money	A subsistence payment made to a boatman at the commencement of a trip and deducted from his final settlement.
Staunch	A term used in Fenland and rivers flowing to the Wash. A rising gate similar to a guillotine gate, used to hold up water over a shallow spot to permit navigation. Similar in principle to the flash locks on the Warwickshire Avon and Thames Lock on the River Wey (except that these used/use a swinging gate). Unlike Thames flash weirs these were normally kept open and only 'set' for the passage of craft. Thames weirs were normally closed in and only opened for craft passage.
Stern	Pronounced 'starn'. The rearmost part of a boat, not to be confused with 'back end' (qv).
Stink 'Ole	The Colne Valley Sewage Works near Rickmansworth, sited on an arm (qv) of the GUC. Used today for off-line moorings.
Stop Place	A narrowing of the canal, usually to the narrowest gauge of the canal in question. Used initially for the insertion of Stop Planks' (qv) near a vulnerable section of canal, but also used by boaters to refer to other forms of narrows, such as a demolished 'Bridge Hole'.
Stop Planks	Stout planks kept adjacent to a 'Stop Place' (qv) which may be inserted into grooves and used to 'Stank Off' (qv) a section of canal.
Stour Cut	Boaters' name for the Staffs & Worcestershire Canal south of Aldersley Junction (cf 'The Gailey cut')
Straight Shoot	Finding a lock ready for one with the gates open.
Strap	A rope used for stopping the way of a boat, see also 'Uphill' and 'Downhill' Runners..
Strapping Stump	A stout wooden post on a lockside or canal bank used for stopping the way of a boat. On some narrow canals the top gate 'Mitre post'

	is extended for this purpose. Using it also closes the gate behind a downhill boat.
Strings	Name given to thinner ropes used for lines used for tying up e.g. 'starn string' or for securing tarpaulins, cf 'Breeching Strings' and 'Top Strings'.
Stud	Name used by boaters for a metal projection to which lines or ropes can be attached. 'Tee Studs' are so-called from their shape.
Suttons	The boaters' name for Hawkesbury Junction, Oxford and Coventry Canals.
Sweeps Two	Locks 54-55 at Berkhamstead GJC.
Talbots	Lock 23 GJC just south of Milton Keynes.
Tall Pipe	A long detachable pipe carrying a motor boat's exhaust above the steerer's head, usually fitted with a 'Cutter'(qv).
Tank (the)	Boaters' name for the Barton swing aqueduct across the Manchester Ship Canal.
Target Turn	A sharpish 'Inside Turn' (qv) on the 'Fenny Pound' (qv) near New Bradwell, GUC. Called after a 1914-18 rifle range nearby.
Thirty and Twelve	Boaters' name for the flights of locks between Astwood Bottom Lock, No 17, and Tardebigge Top lock, No 58, Worcester & Birmingham Canal.
Three locks	Local name for Locks 24-26 between Leighton Buzzard and Fenny (qv). Like many canalside places they have different names according to the user. Boaters tended to call them 'Stoke Hammond Three' while the canal authorities call them 'Soulbury Three'.
Thick (a)	More than two locks close together, cf 'The Thick of Hatton', these being the closely-spaced flight above the Middle Lock.
Thumb lines	Lines used on the Grand Union system when locking downhill. A light line is taken from the looby (qv) to the handrail of the bottom gate and secured with a slip hitch. On being pulled backwards the hitch jams but as soon as the gate is open and the pressure released the hitch comes free.
Tiller	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A curved wooden piece used on horse boats or butties (qv) for steering. When not in use it is either placed on the cabin top or else inserted upside down in the 'Rams Head' (qv). In the latter position it implies that the boats have finished working for the day, or else are deliberately having a 'Slack'(qv), and that one is welcome to 'Come By' (qv) them. 2. A piece of metal tube used on a motor boat for steering. Well-found boats will have a plain or painted one for use in wet weather and a polished brass one for use at other times.
Tiller pin	A metal peg, usually brass, that secures the tiller of a motor boat. Hanging 'strings' or 'lines' from it is considered both bad form and dangerous.
Tip (the)	Boater's name for the Stanley Arms, Anderton.
Titch	See 'Cutter'.
Top Cloths	Stout tarpaulins, usually in three sections, used to cover a boat's hold when carrying perishable cargo. The front (or 'Mast') cloth has a square hole made in it to accommodate the 'Looby'(qv).

Top Plank (s)	Stout, moveable planks running the length of a boat's hold or 'Bottom'(qv). They are, from the 'Fore end' (qv) 'Cratch Plank', 'Mast Plank' (these last often being combined in one these days), 'Back o' Mast Plank', 'Middle Plank', and 'Starn' (or 'Back End') Plank'. The two 'Mast' Planks have rectangular recesses for the 'looby' (qv), while the Back o' Mast' and 'Middle' planks have overlaps chamfered off to support the adjoining plank. The 'Starn' plank can double as a gang (or 'Shore') plank in required.
Town Class	Craft built for the Grand Union Canal Carrying Co in the latter 1930s with higher capacity than the 'Star' Class (qv). They were built by the same builders, although there were no large wooden motor boats in this class. They were named after towns and villages, somewhat randomly chosen.
Townies	Boaters' term for non-boating people, especially nosy ones who peer into cabins. Qv 'Gongoozlers'.
Trainees	Persons learning boating who are not born and bred to it. Often a source of amusement to the native boater, or a comparative term of uselessness of 'there we was, jommed up like a pair o'trainees!'
Tug	A powered boat, often shorter than a normal working boat, with no cargo carrying space and used for towing strings of other craft or unpowered maintenance vessels.
Uphill Runner	A stout rope used on the GU canal to check the way of a butty when going uphill. Longer than a 'Downhill Runner' (qv) since the check stumps on the 'Candlestick' locks (qv) are set below the 'Bull noses' (qv) of some locks and the locks are longer than Grand Junction ones anyway.
Uprights	Notched pieces of wood that fit between the 'Gunnels' (qv) and 'Top Planks' (qv) to prevent the latter from bowing or springing under the weight of a person walking along them.
Wardle Cut	The very short length of canal that joins the Middlewich branch of the Shropshire Union Canal to the Trent & Mersey Canal below Wardle Lock, Middlewich.
West Country	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A type of large Thames barge, originally capable of carrying over 100 tons and of working to Newbury on the R. Kennet, but latterly a smaller type carrying up to 70 tons. 2. A London area term for any boats, barges or crews who worked above Staines (the ancient boundary of the City of London jurisdiction) and in later years upstream of Teddington lock. 3. An upper Thames or Oxfordshire term for the Thames upstream of Oxford. Thames lockkeepers and bargemen refer to this part of the river as 'up West'.
White strings	Decorative cotton lines surrounding the 'Deckboard' (qv) and 'False Cratch', terminated in coils, known as 'Rockets'.
Wide Boat	A canal boat of more than 7ft beam. Obsolete now as a type of carrying boat on the GU system other than in the London area where 'Wiganners' (qv) have been imported, but increasingly common as pleasure or residential craft. The last survivor of once-numerous unpowered wide boats on the GU is thought to be the

	wooden boat 'Firebrand' and the last motorised one was 'Progress'.
Wiganner	'Southern Roaders' (qv) term for a Leeds & Liverpool wide boat, especially one of between 62ft and 72ft length used between Runcorn and Liverpool via the Bridgewater and Leeds & Liverpool Canals.
Wigrams	The junction of the Warwick & Napton Section of the GUC with the Oxford Canal near Napton. The nearby flight of three wide locks is known as 'Wigrams Three'.
Wind (to)	Pronounced to rhyme with 'sinned', it means to turn a boat. The word is connected with winding a clock rather than a meteorological event.
Windlass	The metal crank used to operate paddles (qv). Often miscalled a 'Lock Handle' or 'Paddle Key' by pleasure boaters.
Wobble (to make)	To travel very fast along the canal. Cf 'We didn't 'alf make the water wobble to get through afore the stoppage' = 'We had to travel very fast to beat a lock closure'.
Woolwich	A GU boat built by Harland & Woolff of North Woolwich.
Worcester Cut	Boaters' name for the Worcester & Birmingham Canal