

# Wet and dry January and preventing a drowning!



That's a full canal

Boats don't travel around in the  
dark that much, not on the canal

system anyway. That's why I was a bit surprised to hear the now familiar sound of a diesel engine and to see somebody manoeuvring their boat around the marina early on New Year's Eve. It was about 4.30pm, already dark and raining, so the idea that somebody might be going out for a pleasure cruise seemed unlikely. It turned out our new neighbours were arriving, later than expected, having been severely delayed by a lack of water in some of the locks they'd had to negotiate. We had only just landed ourselves and as I brought the last of our boxes on board I

thought I could hear raised voices. I told Gill I would just pop out to see if they needed any help mooring up but as I stepped outside I was greeted by the screams of a terrified woman up to her shoulders in the water and clinging desperately to the end of our jetty. I'll never forget that sound, it was the sound of pure fear. Not so much the fear of drowning, but the fear of being crushed by fifteen tons of steel narrow boat piloted by her husband who had no idea she had fallen in.

By now Gill was on the scene too

but we realised there was no possibility of lifting her out. The jetty is narrow and slippery, as she had found out to her peril, and even a small person weighed down by soaking winter clothing is impossibly heavy to lift in such circumstances. Thank goodness her husband had realised the danger by now and was backing away. That's when Gill realised that the poor woman was attached to the boat by a rope around her waist and somehow we managed to untangle it just in time. We eventually calmed her down enough to convince her that she was able to stand on the

bottom of the marina and then walked her to the bank where there were plenty of helping hands appearing on the scene. Somebody produced a ladder and she was finally able to escape the freezing water to the safety of our boat.

We expected to start New Year's Eve off surrounded by more of our possessions, and wondering, once more, where on earth we were going to store everything. The addition of a very frightened, wet and extremely cold semi-naked stranger had never been part of the plan. I

am very happy to report that there was no lasting damage, as far as we can tell, and our new friend Beth and her very relieved husband made it to the party to see in the New Year a few hours later.

The party was an unsophisticated affair held in the marina offices that are currently under refurbishment, meaning, it's just an empty building. Consequently it was a bring a bottle, chair, crockery, food and glass party and was all the better for it. It was another opportunity to get to know a few more of our fellow marina

dwellers but also a great illustration of what a resourceful and down-to-earth lot they are. The food was magnificent, the drink copious and the laughter unbridled. And so started Dry January.

What was a daunting test of willpower and abstinence has now, in its third year, become more of an annual institution for me. Rather than fret and worry about whether or not I would be able to resist the temptation of the considerable amount of alcohol we have on the boat I was more amused

by the irony of the situation. I was constantly reminded of the Dry January tradition on social media as I sat on the boat drinking my tea and listening to the torrential rain beating down on the roof. Then to top it all we woke up this morning to the news that the lower of the two marina car parks was under two feet of water.





Tanker putting the water back where it belongs

It seemed that the heavy rain and Spring tides had raised the level of the canal above tipping point and the car park contained the overspill. Dry January indeed.

One thing is for sure; I don't think our new life will be boring.



Looking to the source of that Spring  
tide