



January 2023

After two years with travel to and from the Continent being virtually impossible because of Covid, 2022 was truly revolutionary. BOC then had around 30 boats based in Continental waters, a level which had changed little over several years. With this small number spread across eight different countries, I saw little prospect of arranging any formal meetings or rallies, such as happen regularly in the UK Regions. Then during Lockdown in the UK, we all started to meet over Zoom, giving me an unexpected opportunity to get to know some European members. More important, it also allowed Keith Rowe to develop plans for an expedition across the North Sea and a meeting with Netherlands based Members.

Early 2022, Keith and Carole held a seminar for UK based members, covering preparation for the North Sea crossing as well as the challenges posed by new Brexit regulations and the residual, but thankfully diminishing, Covid restrictions.

By this time, inspired by the enthusiasm Keith generated, I had decided to take on the challenge of getting there in La Strega, to lead the EU based contingent. No sea crossing required, only 1,150 kilometres down the Moselle and the Rhine. Last June's event in Naarden was an outstanding success, with six boats crossing from the UK, meeting up with nine EU based boats. Another four members came without their craft. The event also attracted a number of new members who joined, having heard about it from friends. The outcome has been a significant (35%) increase in European membership and a strong interest in a repeat event at Naarden from Friday 9th to Monday 12th June this year to encourage more people to cross from England, Keith and Carole are holding two more presentations, open to members of any region who might be interested in joining the fun in Holland The first is on Saturday 28th January, hosted by Alan Foden South East Coordinator, 7.30pm at the Orida Hotel Maidstone, ME14 5AA. The second is at 7pm on Saturday 25th February, at the George Hotel Norwich, NR2 2DA.

For further information and to book a place at one of these meetings, please contact Keith Rowe- keithrowe557@gmail.com - or call on 07970 284557.

I hear estimates that there may be over 200 Brooms based around the Ijsselmeer and would ask locally based people to spread the word, see if we can attract more new members to this year's June gathering. Looking beyond Netherlands, shortage of water in major European rivers and canals was a serious issue for most routes from as early as July, during 2022. With this in mind, it is most likely that Marjorie and I will postpone plans to return with La Strega to France this year, taking the opportunity to re-acquaint ourselves with the joys of the Ijsselmeer ports and Friesland.

Don Walker 15th January 2023.