

Norfolk broads

History

Although we know now that the Norfolk Broads were man made, until 70 years ago the old Broadsmen refused to believe this.

It is uncertain precisely when the "North Folk" commenced their work, but it is believed that extensive peat digging took place over a period of three to four centuries some time between 1000 and 1500 years ago. From the 9th Century onwards they were stacking and drying the dug peat to provide warmth against the bitter easterly winds.

The peat diggings were very extensive, probably because the population of the area was high compared to the rest of England at that time. These peat cuttings were eventually flooded, forming sheets of water that we now call Broads.

There were a couple of young Norwich men who set off on a 6 day exploration of the Broads, venturing into waters that had never before seen such a cruising party. Their equipment was, to say the least, primitive. A stone jar held their water supply, cooking was on a primus stove and their only shelter was a canvas cover. Nonetheless, they sailed down the Yare to Breydon Water, up the Bure from Great Yarmouth, through Broads that only a few locals had seen and on to Coltishall.

By the end of their six days, they had ended up at Wroxham, unaware that 47 miles of waterways separated them from Norwich where they were due to return the boat. Leaving the boat at Wroxham, they walked the 7 miles to Norwich to inform Mr Loynes.

As boat-letting flourished, John Loynes found that more and more of his parties were ending up at Wroxham. It was therefore only a matter of time before he opened a yard alongside the bridge at Wroxham as his headquarters, from where you can hire there cruisers today

Traditions

A traditional industry of the Broads is Thatching.

There are many examples of thatched roofs on the river side. Norfolk reed is more durable than straw, and grows naturally in the region. The stems of the reed are round and about 12.5 cm long. It takes an average of 2,000 bundles to thatch a house.

Another native plant used in thatching is sedge. It looks like long tough broad grass, and grows on slightly drier ground than reed. It is used for the ridging of roofs, because it can bend without breaking. This gives a decorative effect to the thatching. There are several successful thatching businesses still operating on the Broads today.

The Norfolk Wherry

The only remaining trading wherry left on the Broads is the Albion which was rescued in 1949 by the specially formed Norfolk Wherry Trust. She was built at Oulton Broad in 1898 to carry grain, malt and flour. During her time the Albion was sunk and raised three times.

All the wherries have a counterbalanced mast. There is 1.5 tons of lead at the bottom of the mast, and it is lowered on a see saw principle. They were so expert that they could approach a bridge under full sail and drop the mast, carry on through under their own way and then raise the mast quickly again. They did not stop at all. Some of the wherries could actually slip their keel when the rivers became very shallow and they would pick it up on the return journey.

Boats

Size

Couples

There is a superb range for couples.

For the newcomers to boating there are small, cosy boats; for honeymooners or for the more confident boater there are larger, more luxurious two berth boats; for sets of couples there are boats with two en-suite cabins, or boats with four double cabins.

Families

We try to provide boats that give each member of the family space and privacy.

When children are very young, single level boats with doors that can be locked give parents peace of mind. When friends of the children come along, more single beds can be the order of the day, and if two families with children decide to come on one boat, we recommend two double cabins and two twin cabins.

Large Parties & Groups

If a lot of berths are required on a boat we can provide a boat that will fit the bill.

We have boats which will accommodate up to eleven people (that's with two people on the extra settee berth), which offers extremely good value per person.

Number of Berths

When you see the words "**Sleeps 4 - 6**", this means that the number of standard berths is 4, with 2 extra berths. The boat is ideal for 4 people, but can sleep 2 extra persons with some inconvenience.

Extra berths are normally located on a convertible settee/berth.

Style