

THE MAGAZINE OF THE



ISSUE 5/01 - August 2001

Fee rises / Notice of AGM / Moorings / www.dot "B"

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

We did have a good time at the Inland Waterways Festival, meeting many existing members and recruiting more here than any other event we attend. My husband and I left Birmingham going straight to Saul Junction, doing some serious boating for a change. Here I had the novel experience of recruiting a member whilst I was making an inquiry on the British Waterways stand. The Gloucester & Sharpness canal seems to have a policy of letting moorings on waterpoints. I wonder if they charge extra for this convenience? We came back via Stourport and were impressed by the towpath maintenance between there and Kinver. There were stretches approximately 70ft, cut to the edge interspersed with approximately 70ft with longer edges. This should keep everyone happy. It was a shame that the edge deteriorated as we continued to Wolverhampton.

At a conference I attended, I was most concerned to hear British Waterways Commercial Director say that their aim was to make as much money as they could from anyone they could. He even talked of trying to get money from people for their view of the canal. Perhaps B. W. should stand for "Boating for the Wealthy."

I also attended the British Waterways Annual Meeting. The amount of work British Waterways is doing is really impressive. The safety backlog will be



finished by December 2004, fifteen months earlier than previously thought. The snag with this is that the stoppages are going to be particularly severe this winter. We are paying for years of neglect. British Waterways are proud of their partnerships especially with the IWA. They are the

main sponsors of the National Waterways Festival for the next three years. The Fibreway project is a huge success in contributing to the upkeep of the waterways and it is hoped that the water transfer scheme will be the same. I am concerned about the pylons that are to be erected along the system. We have been told that they will be tastefully designed but those already erected for back-pumping stations consist of a T.V. aerial on top of a scaffold pole.

I am looking forward to meeting more of you at the National Waterways Festival, where we will have a presence on land and water. I also hope that you are all thinking of volunteering to get involved in your National Association. Please come to your AGM on the 10th November, but if you can't, please offer to help. If you have offered before and your offer hasn't been taken up, offer again. Things change and where there wasn't a vacancy in the past, there may well be now.

Sue Burchett

LICENCE AND MOORING FEE INCREASES

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY LICENCE FEES TO INCREASE

The Environment Agency is proposing to increase Navigation Charges for 2002/03 in line with inflation and the RFERACs have been asked to approve an increase of 2.5% which is the same as last year.

Unlike BW which has pursued a policy of inflation + a considerable bit on top in recent years, EA has closely followed inflation increases for the past 6 years.

Despite the Agency receiving additional Grant-in-Aid from Government for navigation asset replacement, it had always planned that charges would be increased above inflation for 2002 onwards in order to meet its commitments.

However, in the report to the RFERACs, the Agency has highlighted the restrictions on use of its navigations during last year as a result of flooding throughout the autumn, winter and spring; and the Foot and Mouth outbreak earlier this year. They believe that any large increases in charges in the wake of these restrictions on boating could result in further decline in participation as seen in the early 1990's.

Hence, in an attempt to encourage growth in both recreational and commercial traffic on its rivers, the EA recognises that there is a limit to what boaters are prepared to pay. Income from boaters is only one component of total income and the Agency will seek additional funding for navigation from external sources and collaborative ventures.

In addition to the above, Thames Region also intends to impose an increase of 7.5% on its charges for base mooring at Agency sites with effect from April 2002, and will increase these charges by 5% above inflation in each of the next three years.

... AND BW MOORING CHARGES AND LICENCES

BW has indicated that it intends to consult over future fees and charges for moorings and licences and two meetings are scheduled for September 2001 to consider their proposals.

Their intentions regarding moorings are that the moorings matrix which was developed after prolonged consultation in 1995 will be abandoned in favour of a new system of "Bollard Ratings". . BW

argues that the current system of scoring a mooring site by reference to the facilities on offer is too subjective and this leads to disagreements between parties.

The new system will categorise the site by reference to the facilities typically expected to be present in each of the five bollard categories. Thus a Bollard Rating of 1 would provide just a sound edge and mooring rings, whereas a Bollard Rating of 5 would provide up to 12 specific facilities including all services, privacy, security, CCTV, etc.

Mooring prices will be subjected to a benchmarking process which would set the BW mooring charge by comparison with private sector moorings. BW state that they intend that this benchmarking exercise will be available for inspection at any site AT THE DISCRETION OF THE WATERWAY MANAGER! It is intended that there should be a consistent price differential between different bollard ratings and customers will be provided with a three year forward plan of charges so that they have certainty of future prices. And there will be no adjustment for inflation in future.

BW states the benefits of the changes to be a) a simple and clear pricing policy; b) certainty of pricing for 3 years.

What do you think about these proposals?

On the topic of licence charges BW intends to increase those for the year 2002 (the final year of the National Agreement) in line with inflation as in previous years. As to subsequent years, BW is seeking to agree a new longer-term rolling policy on licence fees. We just hope that they will heed the ETR Committee Report which stated unambiguously that "IT IS NOT FEASIBLE TO SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE THE CONTRIBUTION FROM BOATERS".

Stephen Peters

Education Otherwise

For parents having trouble finding schooling for their children because they live on a boat they can contact **Education Otherwise** which gives support for parents who want to educate their own children. Visit www.education-otherwise.org or ring 0870 7300074

Alternatively if in the West Midlands area there is an Education Service for Travelling Children 01902 714646. This is an advice/support service for getting children into a state school.

NABO 2001 AGM and 10th Birthday Celebration

This will be held at 10.30 am on Saturday 10th November 2001 at the Black Country Museum, Tipton Road, Dudley, West Midlands (3 miles from Junction 2 of the M5)

We have chosen the most central venue we could think of for this milestone AGM. We hope that a record number of members will make the special effort to be present both for the meeting and for the reception and lunch which will follow - more details in the next issue of NABO News.

All members of Council will be there together, we hope, with former Chairmen and others who have played a significant role in achieving NABO's current high profile in so many aspects of inland boating in the UK.

Several present members of Council will be retiring this year. We are looking for enthusiastic replacements. Being on Council is no sinecure, we are all volunteers and everyone is expected to pull their weight. It can be fun despite being serious in purpose and sometimes demanding in the face of unending directives and initiatives from on high. It is frequently rewarding when another piece of boating freedom is gained or defended. It certainly helps if you have a sense of humour. If you get a lot out of your boating,

here is your chance to put something back.

We meet seven times a year on Saturday mornings upstairs at The Waggon & Horses (excellent beer and food), Oldbury (1 mile from Junction 2 on the M5).

Basic travelling and other expenses are paid in full.

We specially need people to-

- take the minutes
- help with legal information
- run marketing
- co-ordinate NABO representation in all regions but especially Anglia, Midlands, West, and South Yorkshire

(note - you don't have to be on council to provide NABO presence at local User Group meetings, any help you can give your Regional Secretary will no doubt be most welcome)

Please talk to any present Council Member if you want to know more - or if you dare, just fill in the Nomination Form (Page 21) and send it to

NABO Secretary
6 St Thomas Terrace,
Wells,
Somerset
BA5 2XG

Please include a potted history (not more than 75 words) of your boating history, skills and interests, and any useful contacts you may have.

If you don't know anyone to propose and second you, we will help!!

Make sure you give us:-:

Name; Address, Telephone; Email; Boat Name; Signature and Date

Proposer Name, Address & Signature

Seconder Name, Address & Signature

Cut off and fill in the form on page 21

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Worried Woman of the Waterways*

Hello it's me, Dot again, worried as ever.

I was told that I worry too much so I'm making a list and worrying about things in an organised way, don't want to be accused of worrying senselessly. I was also told that a worry shared is a worry halved. That's why I'm sharing my worries with you.

This is a 'B' worry -

British Waterway's 'Backlog of maintenance'.

We hear of government grants for the 'Backlog of maintenance' but wherever you travel you come across some neglect and poor standards of repair.

When you go through a cutting and notice that the towpath has been replaced by marshland that is difficult or impossible to walk across, do you wonder how the horses coped without getting bogged down? Well of course there was a drainage ditch at the back of the towpath with drains running under the path into the canal. The ditches were cleared regularly and drainage kept clear. The same system was used in tunnels.

In the BCN area someone had the idea of filling the back ditches with rocks and covering them with a mesh. This, they said, made them 'maintenance free', well it made it impossible to maintain them. Over the years the ditches have filled with soil and plants have grown. The towpath is a bog and there are no plans to reinstate the original system.

When did you last see a lengthsman? They are a disappearing breed in most areas. More travel by car than walk the length. Few use boats and work the locks so they don't get checked in use. We need to tell BW where faults are or I worry that they will never know.

If they make a length inspection what could they see from the towpath? The height of edge of towpath vegetation is a disgrace. Not only is it a hazard preventing viewing ahead and what you may be stepping onto, it is also causing damage to the waterway wall.

Trees are growing in the brickwork and breaking existing walls. Do not be fooled, this vegetation is not there for the wildlife, there is plenty for them to inhabit on the opposite side and they were prolific before vegetation on the towpath existed. It is just that it is easier and cheaper to go along on the

flat path with a motor mower than it is to trim the edges. Most of the work is done by contractors who care not for the state of the canal or waterway wall.

How many of you have experienced floppy safety rails with loose or missing bolts but all beautifully painted? Contractors are paid to paint not notice the state of what they are painting.

You can get pretty leaflets describing towpath walks, but I worry that those that produced it never walked there. There exists a leaflet describing a Heart of England ring. This is a 'ring' round the 13 (Farmer's bridge), the 11 (Aston), Garrison and Ashted locks. Now would you recommend that to a visitor to our canals? Who spends time and money in an office thinking up these things when there is such a 'backlog of maintenance' needed on these very locks.

When were the side pounds on these locks last dredged? No not the main channel that has been done, (because it's easy), the side pounds. The rubbish and silt has been there for so long I worry that there could be victims of Jack The Ripper buried there. (OK but London and Birmingham are linked by canal).

What is all this 'backlog of maintenance' money being spent on?

I worry that it is too often spent on taking on more people in the smart newly furnished offices, producing paperwork and publicity, putting up expensive signs and doing 'silly things' along the canals, such as -

- Removing all the gate paddles then putting up a sign 'Please use both paddles when operating this lock' (the bottom gates leak so much you will never get a level otherwise and just look how low the pound above is.) It's far cheaper to put up a sign than repair the gates.

I try not to worry and look at improvements that I see, but the priorities seem to be all wrong.

Now I have an even bigger worry. The government changes after the election say Waterways are no longer under 'Transport' but are 'Environment Food and Rural Affairs'. Where is responsibility for maintaining navigation in all this?

Oh I do worry! Hope you are enjoying time on the cut, leave the worrying to me

W.W.W.DOT

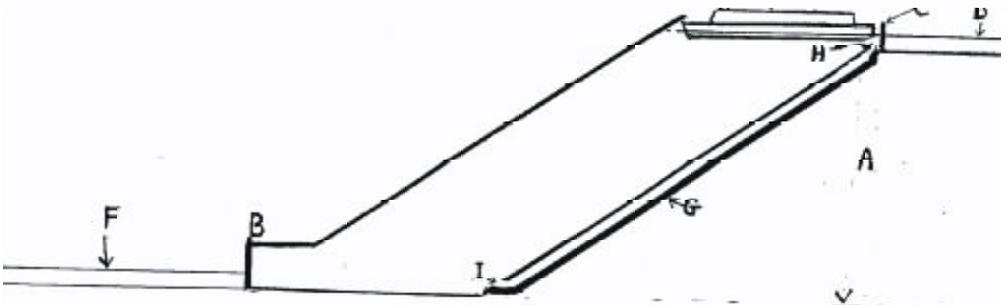
The Diagonal Lock –

a novel concept for the 21st Century.....

During my afternoon stint at the Birmingham Show, a gentleman approached me and asked if I was aware of the concept of the "diagonal lock". At that point I had a recollection of the concept being associated with the proposed Milton Keynes to Bedford Link but nothing more sprang to mind. The gentleman in question introduced himself as Terry Fogarty and then painted a 3-minute word picture of his concept.

As I listened to his explanation, a mind-picture of the envisaged structure formed in my head (a product of too many years in the company of design engineers!) and I became more and more fascinated as the story developed. In simple terms, Terry has come up with a radical concept – he has looked at the age-old problem of transporting a boat up and down hill and has come up with an idea that does the job in a simple and water-efficient manner. Terry's idea is based upon the concept of (large) tube oriented to the slope of the terrain (see illustration below). The entry point to the upper end of the "tube" is closed by a traditional gate with water transfer from the upper-pound being achieved via normal paddle gear; the lower end of the tube is sealed with a guillotine gate.

- A. HEIGHT 100'
- B. GUILLOTINE LOCK
- C. STANDARD LOCK
- D. WATER LEVEL AT TOP
- E. BOAT 70 FEET LONG
- F. WATER LEVEL AT BOTTOM
- G. SLUICE OPERATED BY STANDARD PADDLE ON LOCK GATE
- H. SLUICE INLET
- I. SLUICE OUTLET



Water supplies for the lock are provided by back-pumping and/or side-ponds. While the construction will be on a massive scale, the methods employed are simplistic and well-proven. When compared to a traditional lock-flight, Terry's initial calculations indicate marked reduction in transit times and associated water consumption. Due to the simplistic nature of the construction, operating risks are lower – imagine the Falkirk wheel grinding to a halt mid-travel (memories of stuck rides at Theme Parks spring to mind ?)

In an attempt to provide some diversity to the more formal proceedings of our AGM, Terry has agreed to bring a working model of his "diagonal lock" to the meeting and he will be available to answer questions following our deliberations. By this time, his discussions with BW should have progressed and he should be in a good position to update us on the status of his concept.

Graham Freeman



Do you want the good news or bad news? Ok, the good news - that not a few new members have joined NABO commenting that they have seen our stickers on a lot of boats so we must be doing a good job and they would like to be part of it.

The bad news? That some members from time to time sadly give up boating and sell up or, more happily, sell on for an even better floating joy. The trouble is that in the sadness/excitement of parting with their old and trusty craft they forget to remove the NABO sticker (ok, we know they are hard to get off your windows). Alternatively, perhaps they think that any publicity is good publicity and that it does us a favour to have said sticker(s) go on floating round the system. Maybe, sometimes! The trouble arises when aforesaid ex-NABO boat becomes a wreck, or somehow doesn't have a licence, or pinches a lock, or gets left for days/weeks on a water-point (eg at the bottom of the Stoke Flight last June) or any combination of those then NABO GETS THE BLAME AND A VERY BAD NAME.

So please, when parting with your boat for any reason, remove NABO stickers and help us keep a good name (at least among boaters). Don't forget, I have plentiful supply of up-to-date stickers (Round 5" and 3" and Long 8" x 2") free to members for new and old boats. Just ring, e-mail or write and they will be with you by return. And yes, we will have a supply at The National - come and see us on the NABO Stand M4b.

Thanks

Roger Davis (Membership Secretary)

BASIC BOAT LIABILITY THIRD PARTY INSURANCE

First the bad news

The no-frills Third Party boat insurance scheme promoted by the Basic Boat Liability Company was underwritten by Independent Insurance. And we all know what happened to Independent Insurance recently!

BBLC has written to all of its customers advising them that their insurance policies are void and that their premiums have been lost. Policy holders may wish to add their names to the lengthy list of creditors of Independent Insurance.

Remember the old adage - if something seems too good to be true, it probably is!

The good news is that the Third Party insurance scheme will continue and is now underwritten by Royal & Sun Alliance. But it does mean that boat owners will have to pay a new premium. Fortunately, the terms and conditions are identical to the previous scheme, with the same low premiums.

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Over-view From the North West

BW Liverpool Plans

In the NABO NEWS issue 1/01 we ruffled a few feathers with our comments about BW proposals to take control of the Albert Dock water space from English Partnerships, this of course is part of a much larger plan to revitalise the Liverpool docklands.

A new waterway link is planned which will, if approved, extend the Leeds & Liverpool Canal into the Albert Dock. Derek Cochrane, BW North West Regional Director, has stated that the proposals would enhance the water features of the Albert Dock and increase its use by boats. I agreed that this, in turn, could make better use of the western end of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal increasing navigation. NABO is often accused of being controversial, but only where BW's proposals are in conflict with the interests of boaters. BW in the North West do appear to have a good relationship with user groups and an understanding of the requirements of boaters in particular, so NABO gives its support and hopes the scheme gets approval.

River Dee EA Consultation

Across the Mersey, EA have issued a consultation document "The Future of the River Dee Conservancy". We are replying officially, but one of the proposals is to remove existing exemption from dues enjoyed by many estuary users (granted under the 1889 Act). If you have a mooring between Wilcox Point (downstream of Chester Weir) and the seaward boundary, you may be affected.

Gordon Reece.

**Join NABO Council – DO
something about it! Fill in the
Nomination Form on Page 21**

WILL WE EVER FIND SOMEWHERE TO TIE UP?

Boating is supposed to be the fastest way to slow down and soothe away stress, but, come the end of a hard cruising day, you need to find somewhere to moor. The longer you cruise, the more the visitor moorings fill up, so the longer you will have to cruise to find a space, making the chance of finding a space even less, and so on.

The navigation authorities should ask themselves, "If you add up all the continuous cruisers and shared boats, most of the hire boats and a third of all other private boats (assuming they all leave their bases for at least a fortnight during six weeks of 'summer'), are there enough suitable places for them all to tie up each night?" Until they can truthfully say "yes" to this, the unstressed boater will be the one who knows in advance where moorings are available.

BW cannot even list their official Visitor Moorings accurately for the whole system, let alone other places where an overnight stop can be made. To this end we suggest a NABO Guide to Overnight Moorings. I would like feedback and suggestions in what form this should be, e.g. A5 punched for a ring binder, or as stapled booklets covering different waterways etc.

By now many of you will have brought your summer cruising logs home and we would be very happy to receive extracts of your findings. Here are two examples of how entries might look.

Waterway: River Soar, Leicester Navigation
Location: West of Miller's Bridge No. 34 (near Loughborough)
Time Limit: No signs
Tie to: Bollards
Depth: 2'9" - 3'3"
No. of boats: 2
Facilities: None
Site: Rural, but paved edge
Notes: Entertainment provided by Sea Cadets on Tuesday evenings!

Waterway: Kennet & Avon
Location: Crofton, Between Locks 59 & 60
Time Limit: 48 Hour 'Visitor Mooring'
Tie to: Nothing - use your own spikes
Depth: 2' 2" @ 3' from bank, level further depleted by lock use
No. of boats: 6
Facilities: Rubbish, water above Lock 59
Site: Rural, shortish grass at edge
Notes: Crofton Pumping Station nearby and walks by Wilton Water
Trains hoot!

Any support for this project will be gladly received

Stuart Sampson

Memorandum

To: NABO members
From: Stephen Peters
Date: 13/4/2001
Subject: Book & Chart Sales

I would like to remind fellow members of the fact that I am able to supply nautical books and charts published by Imray, Laurie, None & Wilson; and now I am also able to offer waterways maps and charts produced by GEOprojects; all at concessionary prices. I would be pleased to answer any enquiries and advise on the publications available.

Details as follows:

I am offering to supply books and charts published by **Imray**, by post, through my own trading company at up to 20% off RRP to members of NABO.

The publications on offer include inland waterways charts and maps, reference and guide books, coastal pilotage guides and Imray navigation charts. Books and foreign charts covering European waterways and overseas cruising areas are also available.

The inland cruising canal and river maps produced by GEOprojects are well known and of high standard. They also produce street maps and atlases as well as specialist maps covering the Arab world! In addition, their range now includes the well-known Stanfords Allweather coastal navigation charts.

If members would like more information please contact

Stephen Peters at PQS BoatHelp, Tel I Fax 01564 824927.

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This issue also comes from the floating editorial office, this time travelling slowly east along what may be mistaken for a water feature with 'marginal plants' to enhance the Bath to Reading cycleway.

Although I have only been to blame for three editions, so far it seems readers' reactions to these are just as varied as ever. Some praise our News for its informative content, reading it before the major waterway magazines, others feel its content is so depressing it could put folks off boating altogether. It is just the way with all news, good news really worthy of mention is a rarity.

Readers do seem united on the 'hard bank/soft bank' issue. Not only is this relevant to finding somewhere to stop overnight, (see Page 14) but the lack of places to get a boat close enough to the bank to disembark can actually be a safety hazard. The incident that I shall use to illustrate this I witnessed recently, but for the sake of the people involved I won't say exactly 'when?', 'where?' or 'who?', but I will say 'why?' and ask 'what if?'

Believe it or not, we were actually tied up on a stretch of bank of adequate profile for mooring which was sparsely occupied. Shortly after it started raining heavily, a trip boat came past and tied up hastily behind us, disgorging its passengers, their boxes of food and drink, and other heavy items such as fire extinguishers. The crew then lifted the decking and started bailing out the engine compartment with buckets.

The vessel was of the type with a seating area open at the bows but covered in further aft. Behind this was a higher helm deck over the engine which also jutted out over the transom, from which protruded an outdrive. It appeared that the rain had driven all the passengers, a full load, to the back to seek shelter and despite the certification tests it had been enough to submerge the steering rod aperture for the outdrive and flood the engine compartment. That is the 'why'. The question I ask is, "What if there had been no suitable bank for disembarking the passengers?"

So please forget biodiversity on the towpath side, England has plenty of rivers, streams and flooded gravel workings for waterside ecology that are not navigable by habitable boats. If it is about 'Waterways for All', do you hear weekend towpath walkers suggest to their kids, "Let's go and look at the Rosebay Willowherb or the *Urtica Dioica**"? No they don't, they say, "Let's go and look at the boats."

Stuart Sampson

* *Stinging nettles to you and me*

NOTICES

MARKET HARBOROUGH BASIN

It has been suggested that numbers of boats visiting the basin are not as high as they could be due to the visitor moorings being on the approach to the basin. British Waterways have had no feedback so would members please write to BW with their comments & copy to NABO

Has anyone thought of forming a society to campaign against cruelty to maggots?

NAEO member's wife plans to write a book on haunted canals and would be most grateful for any first hand accounts of any ghostly goings-on you may have experienced on your journeys! If you think you can help, please contact Jane Hunting at lauranightingale@yahoo.co.uk (telephone 0115 9143938) and leave your details. Your privacy will be respected at all times.

Here's one to add to your list of abbreviations.
A N R C Association Of Nene River Clubs

Comfortable Winter Quarters Urgently Required For Staid / Idle / Good Natured Jack Russell (paid-up Nabo Member I), Whilst Owners Visiting Family In New Zealand. Expenses Paid. Tel: 07710 291180 (all Calls Returned) nb Amos

WANTED
Original style TORGEM fire-door, or complete TOR-GEM stove with boiler
Les Travell 07860395837

Meetings

Council will meet on the following dates in 2001:

Sept 29th;

Nov 24th

AGM will be on

Nov.10th



RIVERS



Extracts from EA's NAVIGATION UPDATE - ANGLIAN REGION

The 2001 boating season seems to have started off where the 2000 season finished, very wet!

Combined with the effects of Foot and Mouth related restriction, these two events have significantly affected the early part of our seasons...

*...Due to the loss of boating time... we have received a number of requests for a rebate on licence fees for this year. **The hard economic reality of the situation is that we are unable to provide a refund and manage the navigation infrastructure.***

followed by details of the financial reasons for this.

• **THE FUTURE**

The Agency is committed to the continued improvement of the navigation's we control, for the Anglian Region this means :

Health and Safety - will remain our number one priority, ...

Improved Facilities – such as new moorings, pump-outs, Etc

Network improvements - this means investigating opportunities for...new navigation links like the Great Ouse Relief Channel ... a new fens link connecting the Witham, Welland, Nene and Ouse....

Licence Fees - We will continue to keep the licence fee increases to as low a rate as possible,We will continue to offer the 'Gold' and 'Eastern River' licences, ...

Internet .. to improve navigation and waterway information on the internet..

• **RIVER NENE IMPROVEMENTS**

Guillotine Gate Removal - We plan to replace the gates at Upper Wellingborough and Higham Ferrers Locks, with pointing doors. The Agency identified a further 8 locks where replacement is being investigated. They have high maintenance costs and... also suffer from higher levels of vandalism..

.. We will close the Navigation at Upper Wellingborough and Higham Ferrers locks from the 15th October through to Easter 2002.

Guillotine Gate automation_- We have in recent months increased the number of gates automated to 10 with a further 4 planned to be completed in the next few months.

Low Headroom Bridges - The Agency is looking into increasing the headroom of Chain Bridge at Titchmarsh and Kings Bridge at Higham Ferrers) subject to funding.

Continued on Page 30
for the Great Ouse

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF THE KENNET & AVON CANAL

We had heard various reports about the Kennet and Avon: “It’s hard work”, “We turned round at Newbury”, and “There isn’t anywhere to moor”. Having experienced the Wigan flight and the swing bridges on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, we thought it would be nothing that three Shredded Wheat couldn’t cure.

And so it proved. True, it provides a challenge for even the most experienced of boaters, mainly due to the cross currents of the River Kennet, and it is useless to be in a hurry - you need to allow a month to cruise from Reading to Bristol and back again.

On the plus side, you’ll find a wide waterway with a deep channel and a combination of river and canal sections giving the best of both worlds, a warm welcome from the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust, friendly anglers, turf-sided locks, scallop-sided locks, a traffic light controlled one-way system, lardy cakes, muscovy ducks, the little black book courtesy of British Waterways (containing a list of Visitor Moorings, facilities, and shopping), beam engines, magnificent scenery and panoramic views.

On the minus side, you’ll find the usual crop of Nicholson errors, ‘soft’ banks where landing stages should be (already anglers are tramping down the plants so that they can fish, so it is still possible to jump off), insufficient depth to moor anywhere but at the Visitor Mooring sites stipulated in the little black book (woefully inadequate, and even then, the state of the bank and depth of the water is unreliable), therefore boats are moored under bridges and on water points, Sally Boats that without exception use the waterway as a speedway, the same little black book (because its contents is misleading), extortionate charging by boatyards and marinas (60% extra on a gallon of Elsan Blue), a lack of adequate facilities, and the distinct feeling that boats and boaters are at the bottom of the pile when it comes to having their needs considered, let alone satisfied.



A 48 hour ‘mooring’
near Bath

So, for the K & A, I recommend certain specialist equipment.

- 1) EAR PLUGS, to enable you to have a decent nights sleep in spite of the railway line (and also the cockerels at Great Bedwyn)
- 2) SHEARS, to enable you to prune your mooring spot, so that you can disembark more safely and even see the bank
- 3a) Some sort of HOMING DEVICE, so that you can find the unsigned, unlabeled chemical toilet disposal points (not to be missed is the Turdis at Pewsey Wharf!). This leads on to:
- 3b) A strong constitution at the western end where there is a distinct lack of emptying opportunities (We were told about live-boards who empty theirs down an embankment into the River Avon)
- 4) TROUSERS, to protect unsuspecting legs from the nettles, and considerable jumping skill to give you any chance at all of landing on terra firma
- 5) A HANDY GANGPLANK - no point in stowing it away, you'll need it more often than not

It occurs to me that here is a golden opportunity for the entrepreneurs amongst you: start a rent-a-pontoon base in Reading. These would need to be small enough to be towed behind boats, then moved to the side for mooring.

And finally, would we go again? Yes, because Bath and Bristol are lovely to visit by water, but not in the next few years, and only perhaps when we cruise along the River Severn between Bristol and Sharpness. But I did see a water vole!

Carole Sampson



Crofton Pumping Station



Dundas Aqueduct

Nomination Form

Nomination Form

Advertisement

a bird's view from council



Not so many managed to get to the meeting this time, those that did probably would rather have been boating while the sun shone. One member has fled the country (well, been posted abroad as part of his job!). Council are missing him already as he was the one sorting out the technical communication hardware. (I don't even know what that means but there have been communication problems.)

Other communication problems are between council and members. How can council represent members if they don't know what they want or what they are concerned about?

Government and many leading organisations, including international ones, recognise NABO as THE organisation that represents boaters. This means that council members have to attend lots of meetings, and it helps if the load can be spread.

From this magazine you will learn that the AGM will be at the Black Country Living Museum. Now that is a jolly nice place to visit so why not

come along and make it a family day out? Council are a friendly crowd and great at getting to grips with boaters' needs. Now YOU are needed so don't be shy, offer to help.

The problem of canals in the south being 'full' (no vacant moorings) cannot be solved by simply building more marinas. Where can boats go to if there are no short term or overnight moorings available when they get anywhere? Council want to discuss, and help solve, all the related problems with BW and our members.

In the North West, BW are having problems over indication of bridge heights. Obvious to most of us is that it is the 'air space' under the bridge that skippers need to know, and this varies with water levels. EA have a brilliant scheme on the river Nene where an indicator board on every bridge measures from the apex to the water level. Perhaps a little consultation with them would be of more benefit than takeover battles.

Oh dear all those horror stories of transit through Standedge Tunnel and now a boat has sunk in it. It seems that miles of canal had to be drained. Where were the stop planks situated then?

This gave council concern over what the situation is with Boaters'

insurance when they go through the tunnel and are NOT in charge of their own craft. This will be thoroughly investigated and reports will follow.

There is an on-going battle to stop BW charging for towpath moorings, from day one, in LLangollen (or anywhere else they fancy if it starts).

Boaters are joining us so fast that the membership secretary's report was out of date by the time got to the meeting!

Welcome All.

Have you been kept informed about the BSS review? Many boaters not on BW waters are being missed out on the consultation but they still need the certificate. Council is going to make enquiries, let it be known if you are missed out.

Progress on the review is unacceptably slow. Council is advocating that those with current renewals due should be allowed a year's extension on their certificate.

It seems that BW think they can instruct their regional managers to do anything (even illegal things?) providing that they say that it is 'guide-lines' they are issuing.

Some, however, interpret them as conditions, or are they trying to enforce a guideline. Oh for the simple life!

It makes the problem of 'When is a fender part of a boat' seem relatively straightforward.

Despite promises from BW executives, you still can't see the canal from the towpath in many places. Some of the trees are certainly not this year's growth. So much for the promise of cut to the edge twice a year.

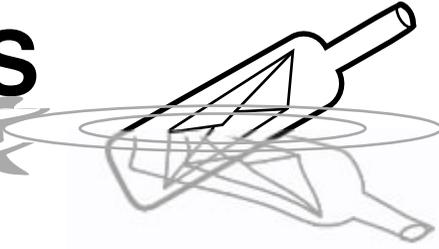
Favourite correspondence was between the Ombudsman and BW complaining that no reply had been received to a letter that was about complaints that letters were not being replied to.

Well I must fly, good job I can as I'm sure there was a boat somewhere along this stretch of towpath, but which side is the canal?

Lots of council will man the stall at the IWF Milton Keynes, shall I 'spot' you there?



LETTERS



Lucky?

Have we just been lucky, or is it perhaps not quite so black, boating about in muck as folks make out? As relatively new members of NABO, though long time hirers on the narrow network, we find the last two copies of NABO NEWS extremely depressing reading. It isn't that bad out there really, is it? Jenny Maxwell's article, *Crime on the Waterways* was particularly alarming.

Just for the record, we have taken the plunge, bought our floating home, and after Christmas ice-breaking trials which included negotiating thick fog INSIDE Kings Norton tunnel, brought from Alvechurch to Croxley Green, with diversions to Gas Street Basin, Stratford-upon-Avon, up the Mira dead-end to nowhere, and to Foxton, and even to the temporary end of navigation on the Wendover Arm (in reverse!).

During these happy wanderings we have experienced no trouble with vandals, stone throwers, thieves drunken louts, dirty old men in

raincoats, or hells angels afloat. (We did meet some of the latter, but they were a friendly crew and a great help locking down Hatton with us, and they make a nice 'wine', if that what it was!).

Even the fishermen are polite when we thank them for moving their rods to let us pass, having slowed down of course (doesn't everyone?).

We can only offer praise to Alvechurch Boat Centres, from whom we bought our second-hand boat, who have been friendly and most helpful, even replacing an alternator ammeter, and voltmeter under warranty, months after the sale, when an ignition problem kept recurring. (It didn't cure the problem, but thanks anyway!).

To be fair, we did meet someone who had an old crash-helmet dropped on his boat from a bridge on the Coventry (maybe he now wears it afloat!) and we do conspicuously carry a camera with a large telephoto lens, just in case.

We don't leave our boat unattended on a linear mooring for more than a

Note – Views expressed in readers' letters are not to be taken as those of NABO as a whole

few hours, and we do most of our cruising in the morning before the louts have fallen out of their cesspits.

But if anyone is being put off boat ownership by reports of hell on high waters, a little common sense goes a long way towards self-protection, as does a sense of humour.

Licence fees- now that's a different story!

Best regards, and happy ditch-crawling!

Tony & Jackie Haynes, Croxley
Green

Moorings and Forebodings

Firstly, I think your idea of a mooring register is first class. I am sure hundreds of members could contribute, particularly on their home stretch, which they will know very well. My home stretch for instance could be from Brewood to Cheswurdine on the Shroppie. It always intrigues me how many people try and moor up just south of Norbury Junction for instance and find a ledge stretching the whole length of the visitor moorings, when just through the bridge, moorings are deep and pleasant.

I am sure that if you got a nucleus of contributors you could put together an excellent guide for members.

Secondly, do you not think the Magazine is getting a little gloomy?

I don't know about costs and the BSS situation putting people off boating, I think if anyone read the last ten issues of our magazine, they would probably not even consider getting afloat. Don't get me wrong, the content of the magazine is excellent and there is much information to be gleaned from it, but we do seem to be publishing everything which is wrong with boating and little to promote its virtues.

I am full of admiration for Jenny Maxwell who boats alone, but no one in their right mind (particularly a lady) would walk around some of the areas canals pass through on their own, so boats will be just another target for the yob culture and is nothing specific to boating.

As for the rest of the content of the article (and a recent one but I cannot remember who by) it seems to me that every incident that has ever been reported or anecdotal story told has been published and reads as if this is normal, which it is plainly not.

There are high risk areas which canals pass through and care should be taken, in exactly the same way as you would if you drive through them, but we should not portray our beloved pastime as hazardous.

How about an article to balance things up? The vast majority of members will have had years of trouble free boating, 14 years in our case and we weekend the boat all over the system. Another good use for your mooring log!

John Robinson

(Good news items always welcome. Ed.)

Teach them Fishing

Yesterday, passing a school, I commented that as vocational training the kids ought to be taught fishing (to keep them occupied when no job is available).

No sooner said than done, here at Rodbaston we find Rodbaston Agricultural College is teaching its students to fish! Already they have learned the best place (beside a noisy road or, better still, the M6).

To the good they have learned to withdraw their poles rather than let their maggots drip on us boaters. To the bad they have achieved the morbid look and the no response to our greeting. Further down the cut is the junior class who obviously need coaching as they actually grinned at us. Luckily the teacher (with clipboard) was with the senior group.

Mr D Gragg, Oswestry.

BW acts against Polluters

Recently we had pollution on our section of the Old Main Line between Wolverhampton and Smethwick at Tividale, so being responsible boaters we sent a letter to Mr David Green, our local Waterway Manager. He replied as follows:-

"Thank you for your recent letter concerning pollutions to the Old Main Line at Gilberts Bridge. I am pleased to be able to confirm that the Environment Agency now has sufficient evidence to take a prosecution against one of the polluters and we are continuing to work on the others. Thank you again for reporting this matter to us"

Den & Bridget Fellows (nb. Astra-Content)

(Mr Fellows has also sent harrowing details of an assault he suffered in the BCN area and the Police response. These I have sent to Stephen Peters who is co-ordinating NABO's efforts to ensure the authorities are aware of crime around the waterways. In deference to the wishes of our other correspondents I shall spare you the details. Ed.)

"Don't forget the AGM - put 10th November in your (and your crew's!) diary now"

Mooring at Market Drayton

I was most perturbed by your comments in NABO News issue 4/01 "Notices". The local residents at Market Drayton were just as perplexed as the passing boaters when the signs went up preventing daytime mooring (except on Tuesdays and Wednesdays) on the towpath side between Betton Road Bridge and Lords Bridge. Perhaps BW can tell you who made the decision and why it was made!

Please get your facts right before going into print as your comments could cause unnecessary friction between your readers, who may be boating in the area, and local residents who, in the main, choose to live here because of the proximity of the waterway and the boats.

Barbara Myatt
(Local Resident and Boater)

I must apologise to Barbara for expressing the same perplexity as she obviously felt about this matter.

It is not unknown for new residents near waterways to be initially unaware of the activities that accompany the scenic aspects of their new domiciles, e.g. a certain boatyard on the Grand Union. Ed



Your crew need more than just a windlass if they set off to walk along the towpath!

Don't forget you also need banners to go on swingbridge barriers saying to motorists

"Bridge Broken, BW aware"



BW notices appear in some unlikely places !!

EA Anglian News Extracts Cont.

• **RIVER OUSE**

Capital and Revenue Programme -

A late release of navigation Grant in Aid from Government ...will see further Health & Safety improvements including Strong Stream Advice signage at our locks and improved directional signage at river junctions. .

....The replacement of Brampton Lock (downstream) Landing Stage is due to proceed shortly...

...an appraisal of the available options for repairing/replacing the v-doors at Houghton Lock.

Little Paxton Paper Mill - *...the purchase of sufficient land to accommodate our future plans to enlarge St Neots Lock..*

Strong Stream Advice - *Strong Stream Advice has been introduced on the River Great Ouse. .. replaces our existing navigation closure system .. signage is being erected at lock landing stages to warn those navigating on the river of the state of navigation. **JOHN ADAMS***

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