

THE MAGAZINE OF THE



President: Bill O'Brien J.P. M.P.

ISSUE 3/02 - June 2002

Write to your MP / Mooring Matrix - R.I.P. / WWW. 'F'

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2002 CALENDAR

Council meetings	Copy dates
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June 15th	June 15th
July 27th	July 27th
Sept 21st	Sept 28th
Nov 9th	A.G.M.
Nov 23rd	t.b.a.

WRITE TO YOUR MP

- about mooring fees increases

The Background

The Moorings Matrix, has been operating successfully for some years. We could understand it and work out for ourselves precisely what we were paying for. This year, the system has been scrapped, without proper consultation, to be replaced by charges related to “market forces”. This means that if you moor where everyone else wants to moor, you’ll be subjected to hefty increases, more so if you happen to have a state-of-the-art private marina next door. (Don’t put your name down on waiting lists for several sites: this would put up the fees at all of them!)

The Effect

British Waterways has taken the ‘right’ to charge whatever it decides without answering to anybody. At a recent User Group meeting, it was stated categorically that the government insists that, as a commercial company, BW has to make a profit and charge the going rate for its facilities/services.

The Problems for boaters

This could be the thin end of the wedge: we could be facing similar increases next year as BW’s increased charges to private operators hike up the competition’s rates. Without doubt, boating will become even more the province of the affluent, and many will be priced out of the market. We do not have the option of taking our custom elsewhere: the majority of boats have to float on water. Other organisations have regulatory bodies (such as OFWAT, OFTEL) to whom representations can be made. But no such body exists relating to BW (OFFCUT?).

What can we do?

If we do nothing, we will be deemed to have accepted this situation, and that we are prepared to pay up in future. Council is briefing the Office of Fair Trading, who can take the case to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, but it is the Government that needs to be made aware of the effects of its policy towards BW. So, **PLEASE WRITE TO YOUR MP**. You cannot afford to be apathetic regarding this matter.

How to find your MP

Go to your local library or enter your post code into the search engine on the website **www.parliament.uk** under “*Find your MP*”. The site also has a “*Contact your MP*” facility, including an e-mail form if your MP has e-mail. Address letters to your MP:-
c/o The House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA.

What to say

- 1) I own a boat moored on the **** canal. I have been subjected to a **% increase in mooring fees, for which no improvement in services has been provided.
- 2) I have been given no explanation as to how this increase has been arrived at.
- 3) I wish to object, but there is no regulatory body to object to.
- 4) I hope you will make the necessary representations to the appropriate minister.

Use the information above as you see fit to pad out your letter.

FAREWELL TO AN OLD FRIEND



DENIS SMITH MOURNS THE DEMISE OF THE MOORING MATRIX.

I quote an extract from a recent IWA Bulletin which is on restricted issue:

"Dave Fletcher (BW's Chief Executive) felt that the old Mooring Matrix was becoming used for a purpose for which it was not intended and that it had become a weapon that could be used by a few people against BW, which would waste inordinate amount of staff time in justifying charges. BW felt that that 'there was a grave danger in the whole system becoming paralysed with neither the moorer nor BW being able to exercise sensible and practical judgements in reacting to day to day events'. Dave Fletcher also felt that some boaters trying to reduce their mooring charges were improperly involving the Waterways Ombudsman".

As one of the few boaters who has apparently wasted BW staff time and improperly involved the Ombudsman in a **successful** complaint to reduce charges, I feel the urge to respond:

'Sour grapes' and a 'bad loser' immediately spring to mind but let's be more objective:

1. BW were clearly unable to live with the system which itself created and felt aggrieved when decisions went against them and they could not get their own way.
2. An inordinate amount of time **was** wasted by BW management (at all levels) - but only because they did not understand how the Matrix worked. Had they understood it then they would not have wasted the time trying to justify charges clearly wrong.
3. The Matrix **did** allow BW to react to changes as they occurred provided Waterway Managers had the will to do so - my complaint was based on this very point i.e. that BW did not reduce my mooring charge when a facility was withdrawn; BW's judgement proved neither sensible nor practical.
4. I would have thought the Waterways Ombudsman, Mr Edell, to be very capable in deciding himself whether boaters were improperly involving him in their complaints - his terms of reference are very clear as to which complaints he is authorised to investigate.

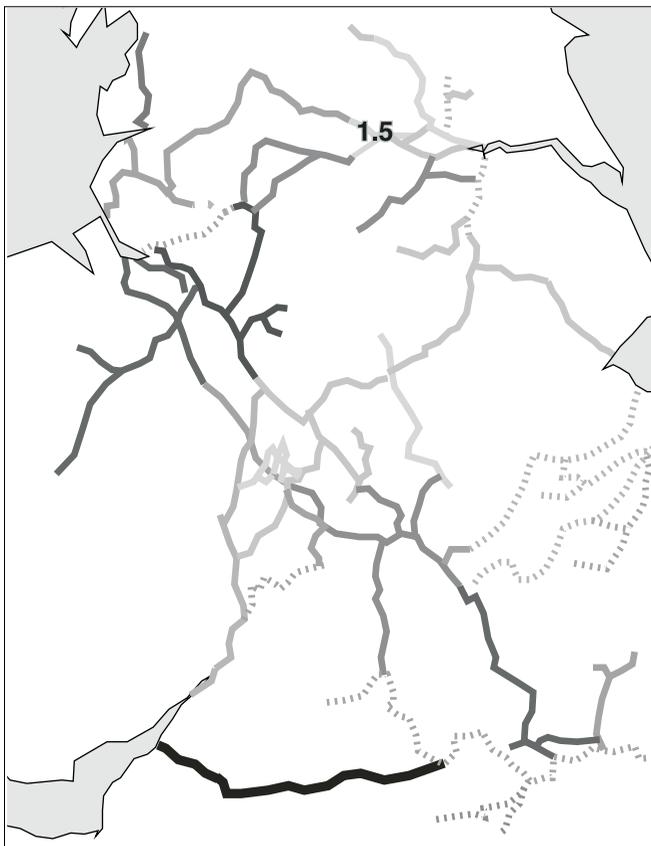
As I was involved with the 'consultation' prior to the abandonment of the Matrix, the following **facts** may be interesting:

- a. A short consultation paper was issued by BW to User Groups in July 2001 with a request for responses by mid September. Whilst it referred to a **revision** of the Matrix it was clear that it really meant its abandonment.
- b. A meeting with BW and User Groups was held in late September 2001 at which all but one User Group opted for the Matrix to be retained with very minor amendments. At this meeting, BW agreed to consider the written responses and comments expressed at the meeting before deciding how to proceed.
- c. The new system was introduced in March 2002 without further consultation whatsoever.

Come on BW, let's have at least a modicum of honesty and admit that you were not going to take any notice whatsoever of User Group objections to your proposals for change and that the Matrix was abandoned because it hindered your determination to hike up mooring charges - as proved by subsequent events.

Denis R Smith

MOORING FEE RISES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY



This map is based on average figures for each BW waterway

DISPLAYING LICENCES

There seems to be some debate about having to return both your BW licence discs when applying for a Gold Licence. Some boat owners may feel their boats are illegal or at the very least underdressed without their discs, but the whole system of Gold license administration is still being streamlined and we would hope this aspect will soon be resolved.

SPARE A THOUGHT FOR THE PIGGY IN THE MIDDLE

M.V.Sulaskar is safe, or so the authorities would have me believe at 11.43 on the 19th of April, as it was on this day that a BSS Examiner signed and sealed a certificate to that effect. By rights it should have been a foregone conclusion. The examiner, whose identity I will only narrow down to being 'he', had inspected my installation four years ago at various stages of completion and had passed the vessel then.

There was only one modification I had to make to satisfy current standards so I had to count myself lucky. However, like most of his customers, I couldn't disguise the fact that I was more apprehensive about whether the boat would pass the test than I was about the dangers I might have been exposing myself to before he inspected it. This is the sort of scenario, he said, that spoils for him what he thought would be a satisfying job.

When the scheme started and he joined the ranks of examiners, they were told their role was to ease people's minds about the safety of their boats, and assist and advise in any way they could so the end result was a pass certificate that meant something. As an example, while I was fitting out, he even made a special journey home on my behalf to consult his literature when he saw I had installed a flue damper according to the instructions for my solid fuel stove, and he rushed back and told me it was not allowed, before the fire cement had set.

Now the atmosphere is one of anxiety and hostility, he finds he is not made welcome on some folk's boats and feels he is ranked with traffic wardens in the popularity stakes. I asked him, jokingly, if I would have to remove panelling so he could see I had not deliberately inserted fifteen unnecessary joints in the LPG pipe. He replied that there are still people who lose sleep over such matters.

When he came, his main concern was to test the gas. He attached his digital pressure gauge to the test point, we lit various combinations of burners and it all seemed OK. I had been slightly concerned that the new master valve now required downstream of my auto-changeover regulator might have caused pressure drop. He then asked me to turn off the gas, which I did on both bottles rather than use the new valve, as one would by instinct. Meanwhile he had a small burner lit to bring the pressure down for the leak test and it stayed burning! The moral of this tale is not to trust your bottle valves and perhaps we should all have an alternative master cock to ensure the supply can be properly cut off.

He needed very little time to check everything else, he had seen it all and passed it all before and it wouldn't do to fail it now unless something had deteriorated badly. However, time-wise, we were only a quarter of the way through the test. He then had to record details of all my appliances and write down all his calculations of my ventilation requirements even though nothing has changed.

Before this extra bureaucracy came in, he could do the sums and just mark one box to pass or fail the ventilation, now it all had to be done again and written down. The BSS office had given him a crib sheet for various appliance requirements but he couldn't find any of mine so some educated guessing was needed. No wonder, the list didn't even mention the Squirrel under solid fuel stoves! He was glad I didn't have a Paloma water heater - he told me of occasions he had to endorse a perfectly valid pass certificate with a notice condemning one of these appliances. Was that boat safe or wasn't it - does a BSS certificate mean anything?

Then he had to tick some three hundred boxes on four sheets of paper. If he hadn't seen the boat before and had to spend a minute on each item, explaining failures where necessary, this could add up to at least FIVE HOURS!

"...Yes, yes, yes, not installed, yes..." he intoned until he came to "fuel tank secure?" A little chuckle here, we would not have been sitting in the dry if he failed that, the fuel tank was in fact the back of the boat! When he had done all that, he had to sort the copies. It could have been simple, all blue ones to me, yellow ones for him and white ones for the BSS office, but was it? - what do you think?

As he assembled the copies for the office he spared a thought for the girls who had to remove all the staples and feed the sheets into scanners to read the data into computer. Some examiners he knew felt the opposite - the more staples the better!

Test done, forget about it for another four years and hope that by then....

Anyway, both much relieved, he told me a few stories, like the one about the guy who thought he was blind enough to pass fire extinguishers whose kite marks had been skin-grafted on using epoxy. "You can't trust boaters with their own safety", he said but he didn't have much praise for the present scheme. He offered to write up for us some of the horrors he has encountered, but with all that other paperwork, he is probably sick to the back teeth of pens!

So, spare a thought for the pigs in the middle, the BSS examiners. SS

READING MARINE DIESEL WEEKEND COURSE DATES 2002/03

Narrow Beam: 19/10/02, 23/11/02 18/1/03, 15/2/02

Cruiser & Yacht: 9/11/02 & 1/2/03

Other courses will be arranged to meet extra demand.

Cost: £85 or £75 if your club is in our discount scheme - at present AWCC, GOBO, IWA, NABO

Lunches: Coffee & tea are provided as part of the course. We can book light, buffet lunches, at a local waterside pub, for an additional £4.95 per day. Payable with your enrolment fee.

Contact Tony Brooks on:- 0118 967 5246 ("Term time") marine@reading-college.ac.uk

FIGHTING BACK

Picture the scene...

A hire boat is slowly making its way along a secluded stretch of the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal through the Yardley Wood / Warstock area of suburban Birmingham. Does the helmsman realise that this is “ambush alley” and a group of jobs is waiting to attack the unsuspecting holidaymakers?

Then, no fewer than sixteen louts pounce and start to stone the boat. What happens next?

Four policemen who had secreted themselves on board this specially chartered boat jump off and immediately arrest six of the miscreants. The others hotfoot it but are apprehended by other officers and dog-handlers brought in especially for the sting. Some twelve convictions have resulted and the message is clear. Every hire boat should come equipped with a copper as part of the inventory!

(A true story, suitable embroidered for your enjoyment, as reported at a recent User Group meeting held at Lapworth.)

Moral - If enough folk report trouble to the police and the navigation authority, they will act.

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THE BOATER'S HANDBOOK

Have you received your copy of the new booklet on basic boat-handling and safety from BW and the EA yet?

The publication is endorsed by AINA (the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities) and is based on material that first appeared on its website earlier this year in the guise of the "Boater's Toolkit". BW and EA received help from the British Marine Federation and a dozen or so boaters who were charged with giving the proof copies a test run. Were you one of them?

The booklet contains a lot of information, which will be of use to novice and experienced boat owners alike. Hirers will also receive an instructional copy to read as they merrily make their way along the waterways.

The contents appear well presented and tackle all the major facets of handling a boat, using locks, bridges and tunnels and how to avoid personal accidents. Apparently, "accidents and injuries are rare, but every year a few people do get hurt – usually through inexperience or not paying attention". The most common causes of injuries are slips, trips and falls and the booklet gives guidance on how to avoid these dangers. True story clips are used to illustrate how accidents can happen – some with disastrous results and some with happy endings. It would, of course, be wise to carry a First Aid kit on board your boat, but the booklet overlooks this simple piece of advice.

Boat fires and explosions are apparently "extremely rare – probably because most people take the same sensible precautions as they do at home". So why do we need a Boat Safety Scheme, when domestic situations are not covered by stringent inspections and expensive modifications to gas appliances, etc?

The advice in case of fire rightly tells users to evacuate the boat if possible. There then follows advice on how to use a fire blanket and how to discharge a fire extinguisher into an engine space. Perhaps there should be more emphasis on getting everyone including yourself off your boat. Most extinguishers will be ineffective in anything other than a very small fire, when a bucket of water would probably do just as well! A fire on board is best tackled by the Fire Brigade in our opinion.

Vandalism and aggression are recognised as a problem and advice on how to avoid problems are given. Rather than placing the onus on the victim, should we not be told that the waterways authorities take such instances very seriously and are doing everything within their powers to make their waterways safer?

The booklet advises boaters to take heed of signs especially warning signs at weirs, and examples of common signs are included. These are the signs adopted by the Environment Agency, but BW appears to be lagging seriously behind its partners where signage is concerned. Is it not about time that boaters were provided with meaningful, modern signs in the interests of boating safety?

The signs that are illustrated are from the European regulations (known as CEVNI). The booklet advises anyone planning a cruise on tidal waterways to obtain a copy of the guidebook "Euro Regs for Inland Waterways" but says they apply to tidal waterways, whereas they actually apply to all inland waterways on the Continent.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN PIANC

What is PIANC we hear you asking yourselves?

Well, NABO is a member of the International Navigation Association (which was established in 1885 and used to be called something else, very unpronounceable and abbreviated to PIANC). The unpronounceable part has been lost in the depths of time but the acronym persists.

Major navigation bodies, port operators and government agencies throughout the world belong to this august body which is based in Brussels. BW is a member, too.

The Association provides members with a forum for exchanging information and views on all matters relating to navigation (the movement of vessels, not the science of finding your way around the globe). It publishes research papers on specialist topics and a regular Bulletin containing shorter articles on the latest techniques and designs employed around the world. PIANC has a number of Technical Commissions concerned with inland waterways and ports, environmental aspects and sport and recreational navigation, amongst other subjects. The findings of Working Groups are published as guidelines and recommendations that carry great weight. Recent topics covered include the management of traffic on inland waterways and the use of modern information systems; the design of fender systems and dockside

protection; and environmental guidelines for the disposal of dredged material.

Recent articles appearing in the Bulletin have included a fascinating study of the world's first swing and floating bridge constructed in Japan to link two islands. Instead of pivoting on a bearing at one end, this bridge simply floats and is supported by rubber fenders and dolphins. When a large vessel needs to pass through the waterway (in times when the alternative major channel is blocked) the bridge is simply released from its moorings, towed into the open position by tugs and then moored in the open position. Fiendishly cunning Japanese designers!

Another interesting article reports on plans to eliminate the one remaining bottleneck on the German Danube. A decision is still pending after more than 30 years on the choice of solutions to deal with deepening and widening of the waterway and the construction of dams and locks whilst respecting the high ecological value of the area.

All very high-powered stuff but involvement in PIANC does give NABO a voice and the ability to influence thinking that might have repercussions for boaters on inland waterways in the UK. Furthermore, it demonstrates our serious approach to the needs of inland waterway users.

POSTE RESTANTE UNDER THREAT?

We have heard a rumour (nothing more at this stage) that the Poste Restante service provided by Consignia (soon to revert back to its original name of Royal Mail) may be scrapped. This service provides a means whereby people travelling around the country can arrange to collect their mail from participating Post Office outlets. The service is currently FREE for up to three months and enables mail to be sent to you while travelling in the UK.

Anyone writing to you should put on the envelope your name (and if you are at sea, your ship or yacht's name), the words *'Poste Restante'* followed by *'post office'* and the full address where it is to be held. All mail, excluding special delivery and recorded items is held for collection for 14 days. Those taking extended cruises around the country frequently make use of this service and any withdrawal or enforced move to more expensive alternatives must be resisted. We have asked a member of Postwatch (the consumer body) to investigate and report back to us.

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WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

Did you miss me in the last issue? I was so concerned about my 'F*' in worries' I spent a while away from my beloved waterways in F F Foreign parts.

A long time ago I used to worry about the men (they always seemed to be men) I saw wandering the tow paths carrying large amounts of luggage. I came to the conclusion that they were refugees of some kind. They always seemed so unhappy. Perhaps their loved ones had kicked them out?

Some had, amongst their luggage, large boxes marked 'Shakespeare'.

Ah a clue!

Perhaps they were scholars from noisy households looking for a quiet spot to study. They did sit by the water's edge for long periods, some even camping overnight. I'd try to cheer them up, perhaps with a display of formation or synchronised boating.

They don't respond to my friendly greetings. Sometimes they mumble something but, when I reverse up to explain that unfortunately I couldn't hear what they said because of the noise from my engine, they just say 'It's too late now.' or some such.

How very sad.

I noticed that they held long sticks or poles extended across the waterway, these they raised in greeting as I passed. How kind, and sort of regal, I thought.

After a while I spotted fine string or wire of some sort dangling from these same poles. Now what does all this mean?

Despite my poor eyesight and lack of astuteness I keep looking.

They now seem to form tribes or gangs lining the banks.

Another clue. Opposite where some of them sit I see a number. Different for each one.

Ah ha! - it all falls into place.

Each one has to aim to get the degree of turn between the rigid pole and the flexible line to match the number they have been allocated.

They have to get the correct (not the right that's 90°) angle. Ah now I see, that's why it's called Angling!!

Then to my horror I spot evil barbed hooks dangling off the end.

Were they after ME with these?

If not what were they doing it for?

Of course the fish! Some fish were obviously getting hold of the end of the flexible line and upsetting the chance of achieving the right, sorry correct, angle. To stop this, they try to rid the water of fish by catching them and keeping them in a net until the competition is over.

This aspect of the game has taken on such importance that they seem sometimes to award the man who clears away the most fish. They judge this by weighing what is in the nets.

This is what I have managed to deduce from my observations. I hope this helps clarify things for any others of you that share my worries.

Please do what you can to cheer up these lonely folk.

Call out friendly greetings: Give a display of fancy boating: Offer a cup off coffee: Share the smell of frying breakfast but DON'T ask 'Are you all right!'

They will think you are being sarcastic, and that will never do.

It is so hurtful to be called 'moaning, griping, paranoid and depressive' by Roy Ulay in February's NABO News, but sarcastic I never am!

Enjoy your boating, leave the worrying to me.

All the best, yours

WWW Dot

*The Daystar theatre used to have a character that used 'Fishing' as a swear word and I'm not the type to use bad language!

A SKIPPER'S GUIDE TO THE AIRE & CALDER NAVIGATION

BW have written to tell us that copies of this leaflet (which formed the basis of last issue's pull-out) are being given to marinas and chandlers and put into the emergency telephone boxes at locks on the navigation so that boaters can access them with their BW keys.

The letter to Carole, (N.E. Reg Sec.) from Stephen Talboys ends by saying, "*We are very grateful for your proactive initiative to help make our waterway more welcoming to, and safer for, our boating customers.*"

A similar one for the Trent from Nottingham to Keadby is with BW in Newark in draft form. We will keep you informed of progress.

Advertisement

The time approaches when the editorial office takes to the water, but this year we shall not be venturing south of Nottingham for reasons that I will keep under my other hat.

Even though we will be servicing BW's beloved 'activity nodes' along our home waterways when visitors are most likely to benefit, we will not be in sync with the stoppage season in this part of the world because - during the very period that cruising is at its best, when the days are long and most of the kids are at school - they have chosen to cut our region in half for a period, hopefully lasting only six weeks, while they empty the whole of the New Junction Canal into the Rivers Don and Went, paint the inside of the aqueduct troughs, and then beg, borrow or steal water from the adjacent navigations to fill it up again. I guess the waterfall as they drain it off through the bottom of the Don Aqueduct will be quite a spectacle, let's hope they don't wash away the foundations in the process. We hope we can work round this without having to brave the Humber.

One advantage of our wider waterways is being able to get along without having to wear out the throttle cable when slowing down for moored boats, a subject that seems to cause the most aggro amongst everyday cruising folk. We all know the types who are for ever on the move or in the pub so they never experience another boat passing them, but there are inexperienced or thoughtless steerers who actually obey the request "*Slow down **when** passing moored boats*". The trouble is that they do so literally. They should have eased off well **before** passing, and the notices should read "*Moored Boats - pass very slowly*". On the other hand one might argue that if someone can take the trouble to put up the sign, then they can take the trouble to moor their boat so it is not going to be damaged by vessels passing at a sensible cruising speed for the channel, particularly on lengthy moorings. The ones we must respect most are the likes of a hire-boat stopped for lunch, with pins half into the ground, no fenders and Mum slaving over a pan of hot fat, or a boat being painted, unless the paint on the brush matches our own!

On a totally different subject, I have done a quick count of articles in the last eight issues of magazine to see who has written them. Numerically they fall into five roughly equal categories:-

- About Council - Chairman, Fly/Bird, notices re AGMs, vacancies, duties etc.
 - Articles written by Stephen Peters, bless him!
 - Items originated or written up from other information by me
 - Articles from other members of Council
- * Those from outside Council - mainly WWWdot, Denis Smith and Sadie Dean

If you think that under 10% from general members is insufficient then you know what to do!

May the road be good (i.e. the locks be with you).

Stuart Sampson

Editor- NABO News, c/o 15 Harcourt Way, Hunsbury, Northampton. NN4 8JR

NOTICES

POST FOR NABO NEWS

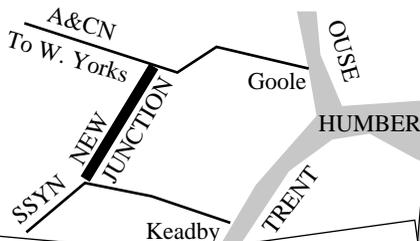
Please address postal contributions for the NEXT TWO ISSUES to:-

The Editor
c/o 15 Harcourt Way,
Hunsbury, Northampton.
NN4 8JR

E-mail still-
news.editor@nabo.org.uk

NEW JUNCTION CLOSURE RE-TIMED

The dates have been put back to
10th June to 21st July, see
editorial for comments.



After 20 years making theatre costumes for large Opera singers with the English National Opera Company. I am taking a leap of faith and turning my Hobby of making all types of covers into a business.

In order to stay out of the poor house I need work across the year. To this end I could offer a discount to fellow NABO members. I will be known as, "Bob'll Cratchit" (at a Dickens of a good price - groan!). I work from the Tring area on the G U, and am willing to travel to measure and give a price.

The number is 01525 220122. This would be a great leg up for me. I will advertise with you of course once I start earning .

Many thanks in anticipation. Bryan Coventry

EVENTS

Forms are available from Ann Berry
35 WOODLAND ROAD, SELSEY, WEST
SUSSEX, PO20 0AL. annmberry@hotmail.com

NABO have stands at:-

- **Crick** - June 1st to 3rd
- **Reading Waterfest** June 22nd
- **N.I.A Birmingham** 17th - 22nd July
- **Newbury** 28th July
- **Huddersfield**, National Waterways Festival - August Bank Holiday

Please visit - or even help!!

**DON'T
FORGET!
LET YOUR
M.P. KNOW
YOUR
FEELINGS
ABOUT THE
MOORING
FEE
INCREASES**

Password for website guidance
leaflets & mooring tables
= **Branch** (capital B)



RIVERS



NAME AND NUMBER

The British Waterways Act 1971 Section 9 specifies the requirements for displaying the name, mark and craft number on a powered pleasure boat registered for use on a river waterway. Exemptions are permitted for boats owned by the Scouting Association but not for boats belonging to the fire, police or river authorities, or for rescue boats, all of which have to be registered. And tenders to private pleasure boats suitably marked do not require to pay a separate charge.

Failure to display the specified markings can result in a fine but there is one exemption from the requirement for marking; a boat registered under the Merchant Shipping Acts (i.e. a British registered ship) does not have to display the BW number plate. Not a lot of people know that.

This latter exemption is commonly found in other navigation legislation, for instance the City of Chester byelaws for the River Dee.

There was no necessity to display the registration certificate on a boat on a river waterway until the BW Act 1975 Section 3 came into force. Rather curiously, there was no similar requirement to display a licence on a canal boat until the introduction of a byelaw in 1975.

SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE TO BE DEMOLISHED?

Plans to re-develop the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon have been revealed recently. And the proposals have caused not a little consternation and controversy.

Multi-million pound funding from the Arts Council and Lottery funding has been earmarked for the scheme but there are many hoops and hurdles to be negotiated before it can proceed. The present building which dates from the 1930s (following a catastrophic fire in the earlier building) is a Listed Building and many influential critics of the new theatre are pleading for the existing structure to be retained.

The Royal Shakespeare Company and the powers-that-be would prefer an entirely new theatre with improved auditorium and back-stage facilities.

The existing theatre building is in a very prominent riverside location adjacent to Bancroft Basin and there are some people who hold the view that the present building does little to enhance the vista across the river Avon or the basin. The vast expanse of brickwork creates a very stark and forbidding elevation to the river and it is to be hoped that any replacement building will seek to incorporate the riverside into the new scheme. Boating visitors and tourists should be welcomed at the theatre and suitable mooring facilities ought to be included in the project.

The views of our members would be welcomed.

SEARCH AND RESCUE ON THE RIVER THAMES

The Port of London Authority has issued a Notice to Mariners detailing the new procedures for Search and Rescue on the tidal Thames.

A Coastguard Rescue Sub-centre has been established at Woolwich with a 24-hour radio watch. The Coastguard is responsible for co-ordinating all search and rescue incidents between Canvey and Teddington and has the assistance of four RNLI lifeboat stations – at Gravesend, Tower Pier, Chiswick and Teddington.

The police, fire brigade, and other resources will continue to be available to deal with emergency situations and if circumstances dictate a new form of life-saving device called a Towed Inflatable Rescue Raft will be deployed. Each TIRR has a capacity of 60 persons and is rather like a large liferaft, able to be towed along to pick up casualties from the water.

All these measures stem from the horrific Marchioness pleasure boat disaster some years ago but, rather strangely, the VHF distress procedures still require voice communication on Channel 16 in the form of a 'Mayday' call as the primary means of summoning assistance. The latest Digital Selective Calling (DSC) equipment is not installed at London Coastguard and so modern R/T equipment requiring only the pushing of one button in an emergency cannot be used to its full potential. NABO questioned this apparent oversight taking into account the amount of traffic on this busy, commercial river with vessels from all parts of the world using it, and we were told that it is not known when the VHF DSC radio equipment will be fitted at Woolwich.

Makes you wonder why some boaters go to the trouble and expense of fitting the latest radios only to find that they are too technically advanced for use on the Capital's river.

IS YOUR BOAT A SHE?

Lloyd's of London has recently decided to abolish the tradition of referring to all ships as "she". From now on they will call a ship "it".

The Royal Navy has responded by stating that they do not intend to change the age-old convention that ships are female.

Is your boat a "she" or an "it"? Does it really matter? Or is the decision to abandon the gender tag yet another retrograde step and a case of PC gone mad?

"May God bless it and all who sail in it" may not have quite the same ring!

AN ANDERTON EXPERIENCE

As soon as I heard that they had started taking bookings for the Anderton Boat lift I telephoned to book a trip down and up for the Lynx.

"I will get in quick," I thought *"it is sure to be closed again within a couple of weeks."*

I gave details of the boat and those planning to travel with it, and, yes, it was from the T&M to the Weaver on Thursday 4th April and from the Weaver to the T&M on Saturday 13th April. Half past eleven for the trip down, I was told, but later I received a telephone call to say that the trip down would be at 10.30 as the trip up was 11.30.

There was some question over the length, 70ft 6ins, but I agreed that we may need to remove a fender to fit in.

£45 I was charged for down and up. I paid by credit card.

Within a few days I read that the charge should be £30 for the two way trip.

When I rang up to question why I had been charged £45 rather than £30, the lady agreed that the charge was £30 but explained that I was charged more *'..because my boat was 17ft 6ins WIDE.'*!

This caused me to chuckle as I pointed out that a boat that wide couldn't possibly get along the Trent and Mersey canal, and wouldn't get into the caisson if it could arrive there.

I was promised refund of £15 (which I haven't yet received).

So we were on our way to the Easter gathering of historic boats at Ellesmere Port, and still I had received no written confirmation of our booking or details of the rules/bylaws I was told we had to obey, and no tickets.

I had phoned a number of times to chase this up and by now wanted them to hold them at the lift as no post would reach me in time.

On Thursday 28th March I phoned again. Ruth, who I had been dealing with, was away so Gemma promised to ring me back within two hours. She didn't, so why be so irritating by saying she would.

On the Friday we were moored, with many other historic boats, in Chester Basin.

A lady from BW was trying to interest us all in attending a gathering called 'Northwich on Water' so people were asking about the lift.

I approached her and explained my problem and said I knew it wasn't her department but could she suggest how I should proceed. She said I should telephone this Gemma again to find if anything was wrong.

I could see by the way she said it that something was.

On phoning I was told that-

-All bookings for the lift were cancelled.

-They were starting work on it on Tuesday 2nd April.

-They would refund my money, (I haven't received it yet).

-They could not tell me when I would be able to book again.

“Is that ok?”, I was asked.

“There doesn't seem to be anything I can do about it if it isn't”, I replied.

Which probably simplified what both of us meant.

So now you know.

As I write this (14th April) The Anderton Lift is NOT CLOSED.

No boats can go up or down.

Men are working on it.

They are not taking any bookings.

But it is not closed.

Go on, you phone up and find out what is going on.

It has cost me too much all ready, and **I'm** daft enough to continue to donate £5 a month for a white elephant!

Sadie Dean

DIGLIS BASIN TO BE DEVELOPED – AT LAST!

British Waterways have finally identified a developer with whom they will work on the redevelopment of the derelict Diglis Basin area at the end of the Worcester & Birmingham Canal in Worcester.

A User Group has been formed and has held its initial meeting. NABO was represented by a member who had kindly volunteered to attend and report back to our Midlands Regional Secretary. More news when we have it.

Advertisement

FLY ON THE WALL



at Council

I've kept my eyes on things for you boaters again at the latest council meeting and can report that your interests were top of the pile.

The hike in mooring charges has been discussed with The Office for Fair Trading. They seemed very interested and want more details. They will also involve the Monopolies Commission if necessary. Watch this space! Meanwhile you can help and add weight by complaining to your MP.

There was some conjecture on whether those organisations responsible for new and restored waterways who want British Waterways to run their patch, realise what they are letting their moorers in for. Some pay no mooring, and even no licence at the moment and could be in for a shock!

BW say their aim is to get moored boats off-line and into marinas, but have you noticed this once the marina is built? Has that policy sunk when there's money to be made BOTH sides of the bank?!

While on the subject of mooring, the signage in Aldermaston Basin limits visitor mooring to one hour.

Apparently this is scant time to moor and have a pump out. The good news is that a review of visitor mooring has been promised.

Of course BSS raised its ugly head again. An interesting point was made that the Recreational Craft Directive, as a European regulation, should surely supersede the BSS, but, as this regulation varies from the BSS, how will they be harmonized?

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) are unhappy that new sea marked boats which are granted a BSS certificate would, under the present standards, certainly fail 4 years later. RYA has decided to take action against BW and NABO are supporting them.

The Council's had news that boaters being checked on and off the Middle Levels have to complete longish forms. Would this lead to traffic jams in the summer? And shock horror it looks as if licences could be introduced on the Fens. So if navigation is being paid for, surely there will need to be a new attitude towards the Drains, treating them not just as water systems, but navigational routes. Could this now mean enough headroom for boats?

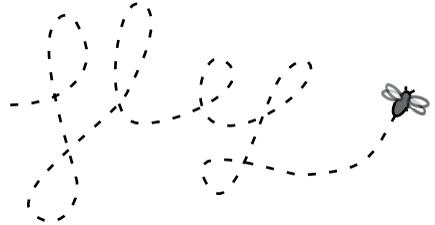
Is there anyone out there to represent NABO members in East Anglia? **YOUR COUNCIL NEEDS YOU!** (pointing finger, hopeful expression)

Rumour has it that Poste Restante facilities may disappear in the reorganization of the Royal Mail. Your Council will investigate on behalf of those members with no letter box of their own.

NABO too are having a wee reorganization! Advertising of the items sold through the newsletter will be rationalised. Look out for the new all-embracing advertisement!

NABO will, of course have a presence at various boating events this year with a stand at Crick, Penton Hook, Manchester, Tamworth, Middlewich, Birmingham (NIA) and of course the National in Huddersfield. Lend a hand for a short time if you can, but if not just go and say 'Hallo'.

On that note I'll buzz off until the next time.



Advertisement

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RED DIESEL TO BE SCRAPPED!

It has been announced that red diesel fuel which is subject to a lower rate of duty than the ordinary white road diesel fuel is to be abolished.

But **don't panic!**

Diesel fuel for boats and agricultural use will still be available at the present lower price BUT IT WILL BE YELLOW in colour. The reason for the change is because unscrupulous (criminal) persons can readily remove the red coloured dye from cheap fuel and re-sell it at the higher price, thus depriving the Exchequer of badly needed funds. As a matter of interest, red diesel carries a duty of 3p whereas DERV for vehicles is taxed at 46p per litre.

It has been found that yellow dye, as used in many European countries, is more difficult to remove and therefore will be introduced within the next few months.

Advertisement

BROADLY SPEAKING

This is the new canal age, we are told, and the visionaries are publicising grand schemes, some of which are even growing in real concrete and steel. Rotating boat lifts in Scotland, broad beam networks linking the English Channel to the Lake District without your stern tubes shipping a drop of briny, where will it end? (Starvation through lack of boats? - Ed)

Take a look at www.aina.org.uk and get a PDF or two full of pipe-dreams. AINA lays out a compelling case for broad beam boating, once the Wey and Arun is restored, the Watford flight widened, the Foxton incline plane rolling again, the Rochdale and Ribble links open and even the Calder & Hebble locks lengthened.

Broad beam boats are cheaper to build and equip, and might encourage a boom in boat building and a new breed of boater. Certainly the prospect of long-term or live-aboard cruising in a wider vessel would have its merits.

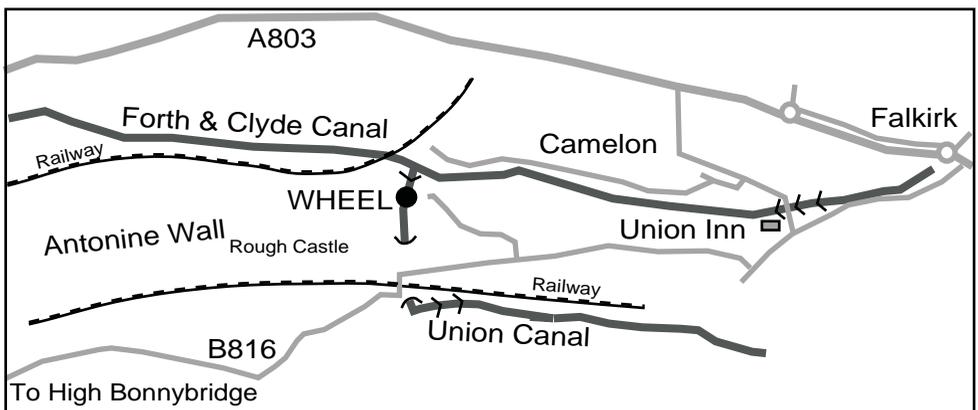
There are big hurdles to overcome but there is certainly no lack of enthusiasm. If they can build a revolutionary boat lift in Falkirk, why not another at Watford, where it would certainly be used? Or would it cause too many crashes on the M1?

What they have to realise, however, is that the boater is not going to pay and pay. We balked at £30 odd to pass through the 'Rochdale 9', now they are suggesting twice that for the Ribble Link.

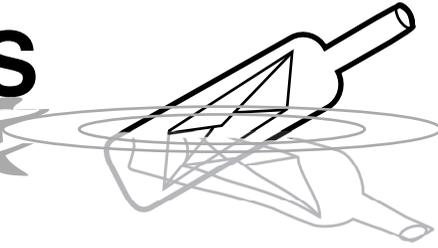
For Sassenachs who want a taste of the dream by visiting the Falkirk Wheel, head north towards Stirling via the M73 and A80. At the third roundabout on the A80 (Castlecary) go right, parallel with the Forth & Clyde Canal. At the next 'T' junction don't cross the canal but turn right to High Bonnybridge (Don't get your hopes up, there is little bonny about it). The the B 816 from here to Falkirk crosses the Union Canal over the tunnel leading to the wheel and you can see the new locks and walk to the mouth. On the north side of the road there are more walks giving distant views of it from above.

A left turn off this road leads to what is, at the time of writing, the site entrance. If you can't or don't want to go in to see it, you can carry on to the next turn, park up by the F&CC at the 'Union Inn' and take Billy's Barge to see it from the water. Alternatively go on across the canal by the pub, keep left and drive through the dreary Camelon housing estates until you can go no further and walk up on to the towpath opposite the lift.

How much will a go on this ride cost?



LETTERS



Canal Narrowing

In February's NN Ron Bingham requested information about Canal Narrowing.

I have recently come through Kidderminster and all along there is new piling and 'canal narrowing' going on. I spoke to a local resident outside Sainsburys, where there seemed to me to be a severe case, and was told that about 9ft has been added to the width of the towpath.

Is Ron Bingham going to take up this canal narrowing problem with BW or will NABO pursue it?

There are lots of places on the Birmingham and Worcester canal, on the stretch between Tardebigge and Wast Hill Tunnel, where the old wall has fallen in, or been broken up (I've seen them doing this with a pneumatic drill). Wooden posts have been put into the canal past the submerged stonework, then all is backfilled with bits of plants and mud. This also narrows the canal and creates a rather weak edge.

How long will it last?

Will the subsequent repairs narrow the canal still further?

Do BW finance this innovation from the 'backlog of maintenance' budget?

Sadie Dean

NABO Thinking & Cycleways

First, as to the editor's request for thoughts on advertising in NABO News, I have no problem with this. Some magazines may be bought specifically for the "ads", but I am very happy with the format achieved by the current editor, and we must be careful that we do not let fear of offending advertisers stifle justified criticism (as if it would?).

In the February 2002 issue, I particularly liked "Fly on the Wall (at council)", and on the facing page "A Guide To NABO Policy". Assuming accuracy, these are extremely useful summaries of what I assume "NABO Thinking" to be on critical issues and tell me what I think I need to know to decide whether my annual subscription is going to support a good cause (it confirms to me that it does.).

With regard to Christine Denton's proposal to have someone "waiting in the wings", for continuity of Chair, my own professional institute has a president, a senior vice president, and a junior vice president who are expected to move up in progression so as to maintain continuity. However, annually elected, and so it is possible in times of crisis for concerned members to vote out the

"heir apparent" in preference for someone in whom they have greater confidence (as indeed has happened in my own lifetime on my institute's council.)

Finally if I may turn somewhat tongue in cheek, to the "Plantain and Cycleway" letter, I agree it is concerning that the conservationist apparently never wants to see boats on the conserved waterway (Basingstoke and Pocklington refer). Consequently may I suggest that when faced with covetous eyes from the SSSI lobby, we should call their bluff, put down our picks and shovels, put our money back in our purses and wallets, and back slowly away, saying "I am very sorry I did not realise you wanted a stinking ditch full of dirty water just here, so I will leave it to you".

As to cycle ways, I think the issue is less one of canals being narrowed to provide track ways, than of towing paths being obliterated to do so. I recall a couple of continuous cruisers I met shortly after acquiring our first boat, who were vehemently opposed to any attempt to modernise the towing path, (which was in a truly dreadful condition), and proclaimed themselves less in danger of falling in the cut than of being run over on a bike race track. Increasingly I share that point of view.

Eric Ramage (n.b. Catflap, Braunston)

Carrying on the Cut

Adrian Stott says, in the February NN, that commercial traffic can mix with pleasure craft on our canals because it is done successfully on the continent.

I would like to point out the following relevant facts-

-There has been no time when commercial traffic stopped on the continent, so they have always been used to it and the rules about priority.

-Continental canals are generally much wider and have been maintained to a suitable standard. This also makes it easy to let a commercial boat overtake.

-There are far more pleasure craft on English canals and not much room as it is.

-Keeping to a timetable would be impossible.

-The standard of most English canals makes it very difficult, in fact impossible, in places to move fully loaded boats successfully.

Some waterways in England ie in the North East have commercial carrying and I hope that this increases.

I think that BW & EA etc have got all priorities wrong, there is not any incentive for them to keep the canals open all year, or for most of it. They have our money anyway and don't have to rely on tolls.

I also think BW should do something to facilitate the return of 'carrying on the cut', and make maintenance of the waterways and navigation their top priorities.

Sadie Dean.

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