

THE MAGAZINE OF THE



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

ISSUE 5/03 - August 2003

BW reacts to Regulator Plea/Ribble Link P-U

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2003 CALENDAR

Council meetings	Copy dates
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Sept 6th	Sept 13th (t.b.c).
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Oct 4th	Oct 4th
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Nov 15th A.G.M.

Nov 29th	t.b.a.
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CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Well, here we go again, what can I tell you this time?

Keep collecting names for the regulator petition. Alun Michael, the Waterways Minister, is aware that this is an issue, and the fact that it is being requested means customers are not satisfied. The thing that has really stunned me is the lack of refusals. So far we have had 99% of people asked agreeing to sign.

What would make us happy? Having a fair, simple and transparent system for mooring charges. Maybe a moorings matrix! Let's have price increases in line with inflation. How about security of tenure on moorings, why should business barges have 999 year leases and yet our moorings have only one year? Why treat us so shabbily? How about a truly simple Boat Safety Scheme?

Unfortunately if we got all this, the people in the offices wouldn't have any work to do. We are a job creation scheme. The Navigation Authorities think up outlandish ideas, spend hours discussing with other staff, send them out for consultation, let the volunteer sector spend hours discussing, then, when the deliberations are sent back, they analyse and produce a report saying what they wanted to in the first place. Look how many staff are kept in jobs! I hope the Navigation



Authorities are grateful to us.

Back to the BSS – they are now looking at solid fuel stoves. Why not educate people to get alarms? As I mentioned last time, Oxfordshire's Fire

Brigades answer is to **give** alarms to boaters. It is much cheaper to give away these alarms than the cost of innumerable meetings, discussions and consultations. However new and well installed a solid fuel stove is, it relies on having a clear chimney. This is down to maintenance and easily overlooked, hence the need for an alarm.

We welcome the consultation on the consultation document. We have now had chance to read the "*Improving Openness and Accountability*" which is what BW calls it. (and available from BW or their web site). This states the ideas for improving the Ombudsman's role, streamlining the complaints procedure (which is essential as this is where much of the frustration lies), and having a new framework on policy and strategy.

We are hopeful that this is the end of the "*consultation isn't negotiation*" policy which was so destructive and completely ruined relationships between several user groups and BW. We are looking forward to meaningful dialogue as

we have much experience to offer and we do know the customer.

As a last thought regarding the lack of moorings, could this be the fault of people paying for permanent moorings? Every time they move off their mooring they are taking up

the space of two moorings. One they pay for which no one else can use, plus a visitor mooring. 😊

With that thought I will continue cruising and hope to see you at Beale Park.

Sue Burchett

NABO WILL RESPOND TO CONSULTATION

DEFRA is currently carrying out a policy review of the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWAAC). This the statutory body established under the Transport Act 1968 to advise BW and Ministers on matters concerning cruising waterways and other matters within its subsequently widened remit.

The consultation document is available on the DEFRA website: www.defra.gov.uk and NABO will be formulating a response and giving its views on the future role of IWAAC before the deadline of 17/10/03.

AGENCY BRIEFING AFTER BOATING ACCIDENT

The Environment Agency is warning boaters about the dangers of not following lock safety guidelines after a man seriously injured both hands in an accident at Abingdon Lock on the River Thames.

As navigation authority for the non-tidal Thames, the Agency asks all boaters to act carefully and responsibly when working through locks. This includes using two ropes, one at the bow and one at the stern, to secure your boat whilst in the lock, adjusting them as the water rises or falls.

The accident happened early on Friday, June 27, outside of lock-keepers' hours. The boat only had a centre rope, which was not enough to hold the boat steady as the lock started to fill with water. The accident followed while the boater was trying to hold the boat with the single rope.

The Agency's caution comes weeks before the Inland Waterways National Festival and Boat Show over August Bank Holiday at Beale Park in Pangbourne, when more than 600 boats from all over the country will be arriving on the Thames.

NOTE - A vertical rope can do little to stop a boat moving horizontally. Ropes attached to side of boat furthest from lock wall give best control.

Someone's Law:- *A rope can only keep its two points of attachment from being further apart than its own length.*

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOUR CANAL WATER MAKES A BID FOR FREEDOM ACROSS THE FIELDS OF LANCASHIRE?

NABO NEWS interviews DEREK COCHRANE, Regional Manager - Northwest, about July's breach on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

Roughly how much water was lost?

About 100 million gallons.

Is it true that the presence of mind of boaters saved an even greater water loss, by inserting stop planks west of the breach and keeping most of the water in the stretch to Liverpool?

Boaters were local to the scene and were tremendously helpful and did reduce water loss over the 27 mile long pound. Our Engineer on site has already remarked internally on the excellent response of the volunteers. Dealing fully with the emergency though, required the installation of dams at both sides of the breach involving 120 tons of clay.

Is towpath telegraph correct in reporting that the police took them to task for interfering with the canal?

Police were concerned about public safety specifically at the breach site.

Can you give any timescale for the resumption of normal cruising?

The repair is major. We are already underway and plan for mid-September re-opening. This is our best estimate just now; there are many uncertainties and laboratory analysis of soil samples etc., are required. And of course the weather could have a disproportionate effect on such an accelerated programme. We'll be updating generally and regularly but will give NABO advance notification if you wish.

Is there no way that a breach of this magnitude can be predicted?

Unfortunately not. This length, like all of the network, is regularly inspected. We know the embankment in this vicinity needs strengthening works. These are scheduled in our arrears list

for three years time. There is no obvious cause of early failure on visual examination so further tests are required. There is a drain present which may have created a structural weakness.

Is BW insured against this sort of event?

No. We self insure the canal infrastructure as this is most cost effective as premiums on a structure built in 1770 would be massive.

How much do you estimate the repair and other consequentials will cost and will other works have to suffer as a result?

Estimates are currently being prepared. The repair job is significant. I would expect the cost to be about £250K. Other works will not suffer as we have a rolling programme to deal with arrears. Our targets for backlog and arrears will remain on course.

Perhaps you could tell me what BW is able to do for boaters stranded by the breach?

We regret the inconvenience caused to boaters and of course appreciate many are on route to/from the recently opened assets Ribble Link and Anderton Lift. Consequently we are craning everyone clear of the breach length so they can continue their journeys or return to base depending on individual wish.

Is there anything else that you feel boaters should appreciate?

The boaters responded quickly and I know that they understand the scale of the repairs required. Despite major disruption to their plans we certainly appreciate their patience while we fix the breach.

You obviously have your hands full, many thanks for giving us your time.

I make no apologies for the position, length or subject of this particular editorial.

I seem to have become more involved with NABO's approach to the Trial Moorings Code than just compiling items about it for this magazine, and so I would like to dispel a few myths, update you on progress, and add a few personal views, all in just the one article – especially as we have been accused of overworking the subject in recent issues. I do, however, apologise to those who may be looking forward to the page of opinionated trivia that usually (dis)graces the left centre page!

One worthy member has told us that the coverage of the matter has been slanted towards the needs of 'Continuous Cruisers', whom he feels are over-represented on Council. He is entitled to this opinion and others may share it. I have tried my best to ensure that the factual reporting has been balanced. As you should know, I am not a Continuous Cruiser nor a permanent live-aboard so I have no axe to grind on that score.

That doesn't mean I am totally in favour of the way BW has introduced the Code, and I still have severe doubts whether it will solve the problems it was drafted to solve. Boats without home moorings have to use public ones, and forcing them to move on only spreads the problem out, it doesn't cure it in the long term. However I am perfectly prepared to believe that there are selfish mooring habits on the system and, like NABO as a whole, will support any viable efforts to stop them.

My involvement started when I encountered, on the BW website, the first draft document '*Supplementary Consultation on Boats without Permanent Moorings*', which I irreverently christened '*SCOB*'. This was the embryonic Moorings Code, and I felt it my duty to bring it to the attention of members through the NABO website. My mistake was to ask the author's permission, which was not granted as there was a *SCOB2* on the drawing board, but to give her her due, she did take on board a few observations of mine at the time, mostly regarding ease of understanding.

SCOB2 is what we presented in the April issue, with the apology slips from BW, so you could say the official version introduced on 1/4/03 was *SCOB3*, but it was now to be called the *Trial Moorings Code*. Perhaps because some members of Council did not feel they could approach the issue objectively, it seemed to fall to me to draft the four requests to BW concerning the fairness and application of the trial. With just one word change, these were accepted by vote in Council, with no 'nays', and communicated to Robin Evans, Chief Executive. His reply is reproduced after this – judge for yourself.

Some members may wonder why NABO is investigating the 'legal safety' of the Code. This is not an attempt to undermine it, it is something NABO needs to do before endorsing it, especially as regards the '*Appeals Panel*' mentioned as the final step in the Code's '*Non-compliance and dispute procedure*'. BW proposed this body would include '*experts drawn*

from waterway user groups...’, and there would certainly be ammunition for NABO’s critics if we refused to be represented without good reason.

However NABO does need to be sure there is no risk of being sued for being party to the penalising of a boater using criteria that don’t stand up in a Court of Law. Hence the need to ensure that Human Rights legislation and the 1995 and other BW Acts will not be violated when the Code is applied.

On a more practical note, we were looking forward to testing the cruising requirements as we logged our travels along the Leeds and Liverpool west of Wigan, along with the Lancaster, as these comprise a fair stretch of canal with three dead ends and no through route. Having visited the termini at Liverpool, Tewitfield, and Glasson, at the time of writing we now have no ‘new lock-miles’ to do until we branch off our return course and ascend the Wigan Flight.

If we could keep going at our present rate, including the various delays to fit our time slots for the Ribble Link and various meetings, we would still be nowhere near breaching any of the rules, showing that the Code is no threat to those who use waterways for their original purpose, namely getting about. However, the canals of Lancashire seem to want the last laugh – we are now trapped on a three mile pound at Tarleton as all the water to feed the Rufford Arm has escaped through the breach near Parbold! We can’t go south, nor can we go back north through the Ribble estuary as the tides are on neap, so I will just have to sit tight and work on the magazine until BW has some good ideas. Do miles done on the back of a low-loader count?

Stuart Sampson

Editor– NABO News, 48 Old Lane. Bramhope, Leeds LS16 9AZ

P.S. BW have pulled out all the stops for us. They commissioned a sanitary station, offered transport to supermarkets and sent the Waterway Engineer to assess our needs. Customer care of the highest quality.

CONTENT OF REPLY FROM ROBIN EVANS:

Trial Moorings Code

Thank you for your letter of 14th May

We have explained why and how we are introducing the new moorings code. We have confirmed it will be applied in the first year using a ‘light touch’.

We have confirmed that we will not remove the licence of any boat during the trial period on the basis of the new code. However if the code continues to be applied after the trial period we will use evidence gathered during this year in any future action.

We will explain fully the results of the trial period and our reasons for continuing, adopting or abandoning the code at the end of the period.

Can I suggest you work with us to ensure correct application of the code (as you have already done on the K&A). We can then both assess its usefulness at the end of the trial in a rational and considered way.*

Yours sincerely...

[*NABO had pointed out that the Code was displayed on some K&A information boards without reference to its trial status.]

BW RESPONDS TO NABO CALL FOR A REGULATOR

The ongoing NABO campaign for a Waterways Regulator to control the excesses of BW and to regulate all navigation authorities has not been in vain. At its recent AGM, BW officials made several references to the request for a Regulator, in the presence of the Minister, so the concerns of users have obviously not been ignored.

The outcome of the recent spate of bad publicity for BW is that they are now consulting on a package of measures to improve openness and accountability.

And about time, you may well cry!

In the document entitled “*Improving Openness and Accountability*” BW proposes:

- a more streamlined and responsive internal complaints mechanism;
- a re-constituted Waterways Ombudsman scheme;
- the establishment of a new national consultative framework with representatives from all significant (user) groups
- adoption of the Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Written Consultations.

NABO has been stressing the latter requirement for many years seeing as how BW likes to flaunt its Charter Mark which is issued by the very same Cabinet Office whose best practices it has hitherto ignored.

We have until mid-October to formulate our response and we shall do so in a spirit of hope and satisfaction that BW finally seems to be acknowledging the concerns of its customers.

Reproduced here are the Introduction and summaries from the paper.

Editor's notes in italics

Introduction

British Waterways wishes to consult on a proposed package of measures by which it wishes to improve its openness and accountability to its stakeholders.

The four principal components to the package are:

- a more streamlined and responsive internal complaints procedure that takes full advantage of the flatter management structure being introduced by the recently announced reorganisation of BW;
- a re-constituted and updated Waterways Ombudsman Scheme that is transparently independent from British Waterways;

- the setting up of a new national consultative framework that is representative of all significant groups and bodies that have an interest in the waterways; including arrangements for elected committee(s) to have direct access to the Board and senior management of BW;
- and adoption by BW of improved procedures for direct consultation that include following the Cabinet Office Code Practice on Written Consultations for all national written consultations.



Proposed revisions to the BW Internal Complaints Procedure

- There should be only two levels of attempted resolution of a complaint before the complaint may be referred to the Ombudsman for adjudication (paragraph 11).

(Chief Exec no longer involved)

- Referral of a complaint from first level resolution to second level resolution should not follow the management line (paragraph 12).
- Attempted resolution of complaints should be subject to a time limit (paragraphs 13-16).

(20 working days quoted)

Proposals concerning the Waterways Ombudsman Scheme

- The powers of appointment, remuneration, oversight and dismissal of the Waterways Ombudsman should be placed in the hands of an arms-length Ombudsman Committee (paragraph 24 & 25).
- BW to continue to fund the Ombudsman Scheme, but via the Committee (paragraph 27).
- The core term of reference of the Waterways Ombudsman shall be “to investigate complaints of injustice arising out of maladministration” (paragraph 32).
- The exclusion of consequential losses is removed and compensation payments to be capped at £75,000 (paragraph 35).
- Businesses with a turnover (own or group) in excess of £500,000 should not have access to the Ombudsman scheme to resolve disputes with BW (paragraph 38).

Proposals for a new framework for consultation on policy and strategy

- Establish a new national consultative framework that is representative of all significant groups and bodies that have an interest in the waterways; under which elected steering committee(s) would act as the primary point of contact with BW (paragraphs 44-47).
- The steering committee(s) to have access to BW at the highest level to raise, discuss and mediate over issues of concern or interest at the level of policy and strategy (paragraphs 47, 54, 55).
- Organisations would be invited to become members of any one or more consultative body by ministers, acting so that they are as inclusive as possible (paragraphs 49 & 50).
- Management of the consultative bodies, and election of the steering committee(s), would be in the hands of the membership (paragraphs 48, 52, 53).
- The consultative framework could be set up on either a voluntary or a statutory basis – or could be set up on a voluntary basis and be converted to a statutory arrangement once legislative time became available (paragraphs 56-60).
Alternatively, IWAAC could (legislative procedures permitting) be changed to a ‘stakeholder managed’ consultative role (paragraphs 61-63).

STOP PRESS - SPILL RACKS

The BSS is soon expected to relax its rules on non-fire-resistant spill racks, providing the either they return fuel directly to the tank via approved piping, or they return fuel to the fuel feed pipework via a non-return valve.

RAG, TAG and BOBTAIL

Do you remember “Watch with Mother” on BBC television in the 50’s? One of the features was called Rag, Tag and Bobtail - a story involving rabbits.

But do you know where the original inspiration came from?

It seems that the characters were named after the children of canal boatman Jim Oldham in a book written by a lady named L T Meade in 1883. The book was titled “Water Gypsies or the Adventures of Tag, Rag and Bobtail”. This book should not be confused with the later “The Water Gypsies” by A P Herbert, published in 1930.

Advertisement

WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

Oh Dear Oh Dear! What a worry all this boating can be at this time of the year!

Overcrowding on the canals causing queues at locks. Overcrowding on moorings, sometimes because of people **overstaying**?

Is it right that you can overstay at a popular site if you are prepared to pay? According to the signs this is the accepted approach on the Shroppie. Why are there no moorings provided for boats to stay more than 48hrs? Where are the 5 and 14 day moorings? If you want to stay longer than 48hrs on a mooring site- PAY UP. BW meaning Boating for the Wealthy' again!

BW employ people as waterway **Operatives**. This must mean that they operate. I was once in a hospital and saw a sign 'Warning - thieves operate in this area' and was very glad that I was there just for a check up and not for surgery!

My other thoughts on operatives run to spies and undercover or secret agents that 'operate in the field'. Is this why our 'little green men' or 'jolly green giants' have become the 'boys in blue'?

I worry that you don't see so many of them out and about on the cut as you used to. I have noticed that when you do now, they are going round in pairs.

If you want to see operatives operating, go on the Anderton Lift. Here there are operatives aplenty. Six plus a bank of computers and screens to do the job formerly managed by one man and a switch. Isn't progress wonderful?! Is it going 'over the top' with safety measures or just overkill in the job creation market? How many does it take to work the Falkirk Wheel? I know that it is two on the Barton Swing Aqueduct, one to fix the stop gates and one to turn the bridge and the aqueduct. Still that hasn't been 'improved' yet.

A lot of the work previously done by BW operatives is now done by contractors, OK - but do BW **oversee** this work? Do they check up on the small and the big contracts? I worry on two counts, that they don't keep a thorough check on things and, if they oversee that all the towpath grass cutting, for example, has been done as specified it would take so long that they might as well do the job themselves!

I may be inclined to worry but just sometimes I take the **optimistic** view, that things are getting better on the waterways. However I do think **opportunities** are being missed.

We all have a duty so see things don't get **overlooked** as once something has gone it is irreplaceable.

Happy Summer Boating, don't worry, let me do it for you,

Your friend WWW DOT

SHOCK FOR ROCHDALE CANAL COMMUNITY

Set amongst the wuthering heights of the Yorkshire Pennines, Hebden Bridge is home to artists, craftsmen, clog makers, – and a small floating community living a simple life style, championing alternative technology and self-sufficiency, and, until recently, enjoying the freedom many of us would like to see return to the waterways.

Then British Waterways took over control of the Rochdale Canal.

Now everyone on the canal is seeing licence fees increasing several times over, the introduction of mooring fees, the BSS, and now the Moorings Code.

These people had made this deliberate and reasoned choice of lifestyle well before this threat was upon them, and are so keen to show social responsibility that they are promoting a floating classroom for boating children, complete with a solar/wind powered computer running the National Curriculum software.

Their spokesperson, Hannah Luff, is very concerned that the new regulations will destroy her community, and is setting up a meeting of “The Boaters’s Coalition”, between boaters, human rights organisations and traveller organisations, on the 9th of September in Oxford: interested parties should confirm their place at the meeting through her on 0775 9194789 or 07816 602050 or hannah@groundswell.org.uk.

In preparation, Hannah would like to collate views from as wide a cross section of boaters as possible, including those who do not feel the waterways should be home to her sort of community. As we could not include her questionnaire, we urge boaters to contact her or write to her, c/o Hebden Bridge Post Office, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX7 8AA.

IMAGES TO CONJURE WITH -



Solid as a rock?
It goes all the way through,
honest!

(My thanks to Steve & Norah, n.b. Penlan)



Hard Hat Zone? or maybe an invitation to trawl for balls. Who knows?

Need to tie up your car? BW Lancaster has the very place. Try Galgate Marina



Nomination form

Nomination form

LINKING TO THE LANCASTER

This pull-out is not a definitive guide to the Ribble Link, just a few comments for those who might be thinking of trying it, plus some aspects not so obvious from BW's Skippers Guide. (on www.millenniumribblelink.co.uk)

Note:- Passages have to be booked, maybe months in advance. Tide heights, and timings relative to daylight and staff working hours, restrict available dates, so you only have about a 1/3 chance of a passage being available at all on the day you want in the direction you want, even less 'out of season'.

What most people see as 'The Ribble Link' is in fact two navigations with their own separate challenges. Most boaters will be going up to the Lancaster Canal when they first have need of it, so we will assume a northbound passage.

The first leg involves stemming the tides on the Ribble estuary, one of the few times you will see water to the horizon from a canal boat. Then you will enter the confines of the 'Savick Brook Navigation', which is like a river navigation in miniature. Only the size of the locks give a clue to the fact that it is intended for 'adult' boats!

Is your vessel suitable?

The Millennium Ribble Link was built on the 80% principle, i.e. the cost/benefit of accommodating the other 20% of vessels was not considered viable. A 58 foot narrow beam boat drawing 26 inches should just round the turn upstream of the pipe bridge. Anything wider or deeper would need to be shorter. The headroom under this same pipe bridge is just too low to accommodate a large proportion of river cruisers. The lock dimensions are 14ft x 70 ft.

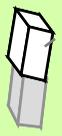
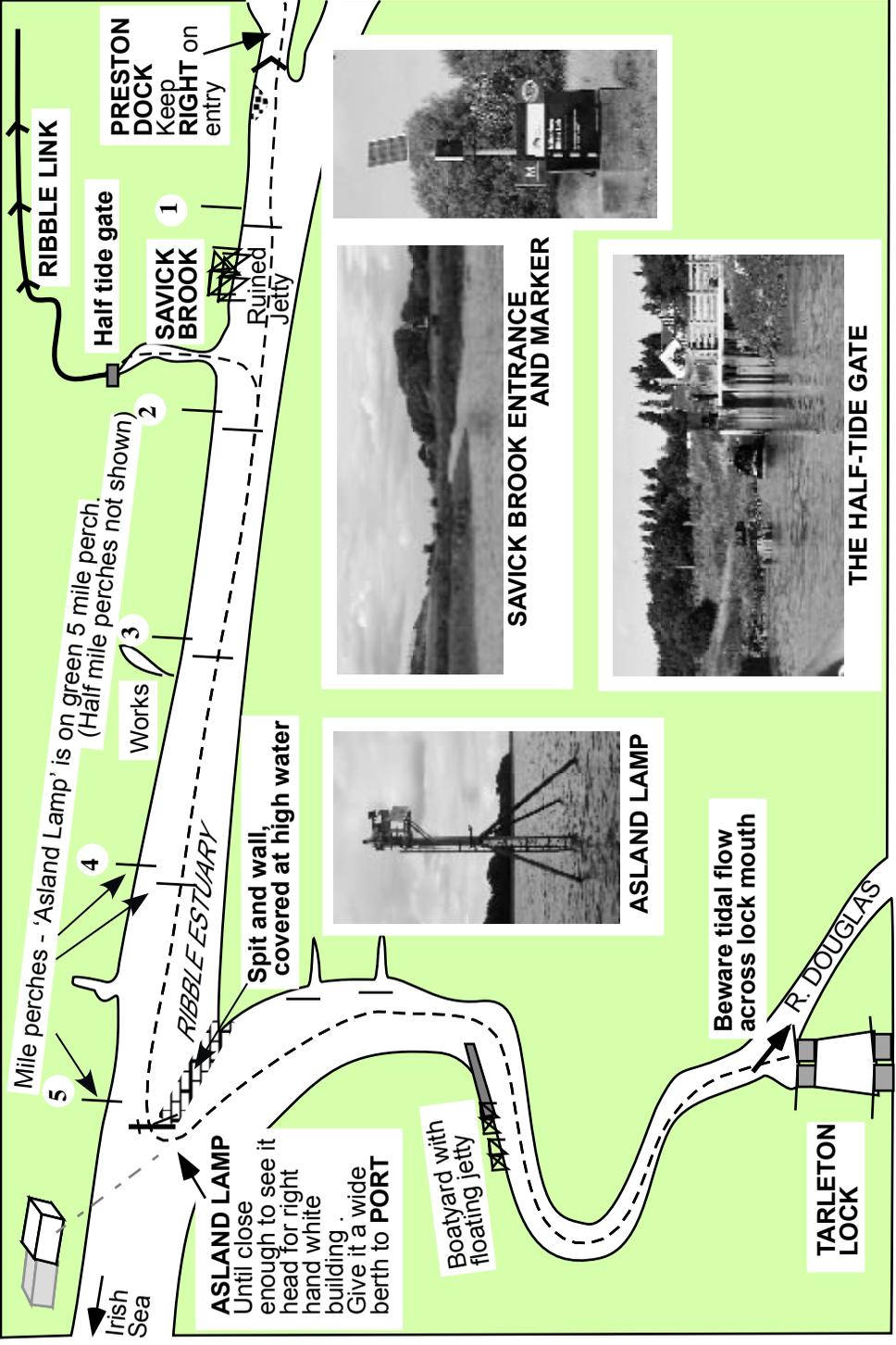
The tidal passage can be made by a narrowboat with a reasonably fit engine, e.g. a 58 footer with a Lister Canalstar running at 80% maximum r.p.m. can make the crossing at the least favourable state of the tide that is deemed practicable. Towage and pilotage can be arranged for those not confident.

Making the passage

Of prime importance is that '*time and tide wait for no man*'. There is barely enough time for three lockings of boats out of Tarleton having any chance of reaching Savick Brook 'sea gate' with sufficient depth of water if they travel at no more than narrowboat maximum speeds. Timing is critical and dawdling is certainly not recommended.

Arriving at Tarleton you will find good visitor/transit moorings north of the swingbridge. It is acceptable to breast up on these if space is limited. It is a good idea to check in with the lock-keeper in the cottage next to the sea-lock soon after you arrive. He will advise you when to approach the lock and show you photos of the landmarks that you need to use to find the correct channel across the estuary. He will also tell you the tidal passage takes around two hours, but may not emphasise that it must be done in two hours.

Prepare your boat to maintain full speed for this duration. Ensure your propeller is not fouled, cooling water strainers are clean, engine oil and coolant levels are OK and, if you have skin tank cooling, you have enough fresh water to waste some



through your calorifier if the engine runs too hot. Also expose your engine to fresh air to whatever degree is safe.

You need to have a mobile phone handy and charged to receive instructions, wear your lifejackets and rig your anchor with as long a warp as you have.

The lock-keeper will want to know details of your boat as this might affect your position in the convoy. To give the maximum time for you to complete the journey to the sea lock in Savick Brook you need to leave Tarleton Lock as soon as there is enough water over the cill. He can pen out shallower draughted boats earlier, but danger awaits anyone attempting to leave before their skeg can clear. You are emerging into quite a strong flood tide that is passing the mouth of the lock and if your stern sticks your bow could be swung round across the river. Take a look at the river from the lockside before you pen out.

Use full power to exit the lock, and maintain this. The river is bendy at first, avoid fighting the strong flows on the outside of bends. The channel widens out as you proceed down the Douglas estuary and tidal flows ease nearer high water, but don't be tempted to reduce power. The tide will turn and ebb against you as you go up the Ribble.

You are making to go round the Asland Lamp, i.e. leaving it to starboard. This ensures you clear the submerged training wall and the spit that separates the two estuaries. From a distance use the right hand hangar of the airfield across the estuary as an aiming point. As you get nearer you will find the beacon is the nearest of the pair known as 'The Five Mile Perches'. A sequence of these perches mark the sides and distances of the channel up to Preston and it is advised to stay just ten feet from the side of the channel to make best use of the slacker water, and only venture out across the stream shortly after the 2 mile perches to enter Savick Brook, which is just downstream of the disused jetties.

Savick Brook is deep enough at the mouth to be navigated at full speed, but it is silted on the inside of the bends, so don't cut the corners. The new 'rotating gate' is under the channel to the right of an unimposing island about half a mile up the brook, most likely best marked by the presence of someone in BW blue.

Once all the boats that can get in are upstream of this gate, it is raised and maintains the level in the pound up to the first lock proper. Any members of the convoy too late to clear the cill are telephoned and diverted to Preston Riversway Marina. Here too there is a deadline to clear the cill of the entrance lock, so maintain your speed, otherwise you will be left in the tidal dock against a wall and having to constantly adjust your moorings. Passage to Savick Brook will be arranged for the next day, and many boaters find the dock and surrounding shops compensate for the delay.

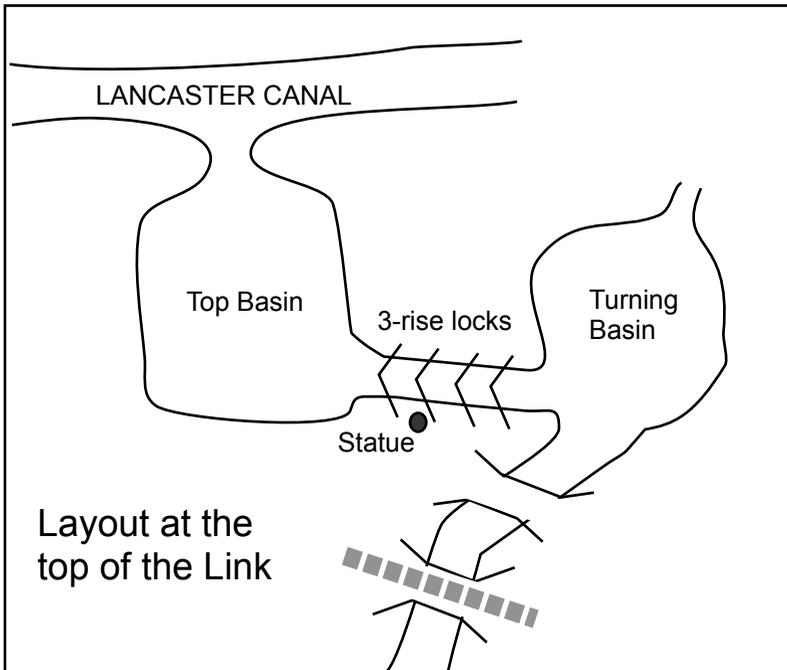
The Millennium Ribble Link

What they call the Ribble Link is a small, bendy, raw, river navigation with locks and weirs. In comparison the River Stort look big.

The semi-tidal part is the worst, with shoals on the inside of bends and other unpredictable places, although there is also an S bend between locks 4 and 5 which also requires slow approach and full helm. The locks are crude and clanky with steel piling chambers, and bordered by housing estates, kids and a golf

course. The constraints of an existing road and railway bridge have necessitated a hairpin bend between the brook and the 3-rise staircase that lifts boats to canal level. There is room to turn a 60 foot boat in the pound below but there is also enough space in the basin above to enter the canal forwards after ascending the staircase backwards. Your choice may lie in how much gate leakage there is to soak the steerer!

Once through the link, it is recommended to travel west for an hour at least before stopping, to clear bicycle range of the local youth. There is also a facilities block less than a mile east of the Link with room for two boats on 14 day moorings. You are not advised to stay overnight in the Link basin, nor moor up outside the sports complex to the west. Bearing in mind the needs and forethought of boats descending the Link the next day, the first option is best, although you may not find anywhere to your liking until after Bridge 23. Don't expect to find anywhere to get a narrowboat close alongside on your first night on the Lancaster Canal!



Useful numbers

Ribble Link Bookings (Carol) 01524 751888

Tarleton Lock (Harry Mayer) 01772 816592

Preston Dock (Riversway Control) 01772 726871

For those with GPS in fog!-

Asland Lamp - GR SD43181 26887 N53° 44' 06.9" W 02° 51' 46.2'

Savick Mouth - GR SD48124 28777 N53° 45' 09.9" W 02° 47' 17.6"

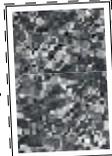
NOTICES

POST FOR NABO NEWS

The Editor is back on dry land for issue 6/03 so please send contributions to

48 Old Lane, Bramhope,
Leeds LS16 9AZ

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



FOR SALE

Ex Mem Sec Boat

SARA No5

40ft Josher style tug - steelwork by Simon Wain with curves and 'rivets' in all the right places. Russel Newbery DM2 with Crowther RN prop. in central Engine Room, grained and decorated. Full traditional Boatman's Cabin grained and decorated. Bathroom with basin, shower, porta potti, calorifier. Front Cabin with gas cooker and hob, electric fridge. 230v 1800 watt Heart Interface Inverter/65A Charger. Solid fuel stoves in back and front cabins, central heating plus Eberspacher Hydronic D4W auxiliary water heater. Absolutely complete with everything ready to cruise. We can deliver. Full details with pictures from Roger Davis:

01749 677195 or email:
hrd@onetel.net.uk

DANGER PIRACY

Advance warning to boaters when the L&L reaches Albert Dock. Arm yourself with a powerful water cannon to repel attacks from maniacs aboard DUKWs, Ex WW2 amphibious trip 'boats'. Alternatively join them, THE fun way to see Liverpool!

PASSWORDS

Any guidance papers tables still protected will open with password 'Branch' (Capital B)

The members-only website section has a **new password**, which has been sent out to on-line members via the members' bulletin list. This is because many copies of NABO News have been given out at events with the old password in them.

If you have not been given the new word please e-mail: webmaster@nabo.org.uk with your name and membership number to be given the password, and, if you want, to be put onto the bulletin list.

PLEASE - PLEASE - PLEASE
Tell us if your address has changed. We can't afford our PAID administration lady chasing up membership matters with folks who have moved and not told us. It needn't cost you even a stamp



RIVERS



NABO RESPONDS TO CONSULTATION

The Environment Agency (EA) has recently published its draft Order under the Transport & Works Act seeking to introduce a harmonised system of boat registration across its operating regions having navigation responsibilities.

We have scrutinised the proposals and have informed the EA that we could not accept the Order in its present form if they decided to proceed to formal promotion of the legislation. We are not against the principle of a harmonised national scheme for boat registration; indeed in common with many other organisations we have supported the ambition of EA and BW to introduce a uniform system of registration and eventually a nationwide licensing and charging structure. Presently there are many obstacles preventing such an improvement, not least the fact that the EA has a plethora of incompatible licensing and registration structures in each of its regions and this makes even the free movement of craft from one EA region to another very difficult to control.

There are a number of issues in the current EA proposals that NABO is unhappy with. Firstly, the power to require registration of craft would extend to all waters connected with the main navigable rivers including private marinas, tributaries, etc. NABO does not consider that this would be necessary or fair. It is not uncommon for craft to enter private off-line moorings for the winter period or to have work carried out. This may mean that these craft may not have a current Boat Safety Certificate and under the proposed EA Order they would not be able to register in any event without complying with the Boat Safety Scheme. Secondly, why should craft not actually planning to navigate for a period of time be compelled to pay for registration that they do not require? Or that they would not be allowed to have, and then be faced with criminal proceedings?

Another major concern that we have at present relates to the requirement for each registered boat to have a unique name. This is apparently the practice only on the river Thames where numerical suffixes are often given to boats with identical names to distinguish them. We would have thought that the allocation of a registration number should suffice - it certainly works for BW, and would obviate the need to change boat names; a practice that can be fraught with problems if the vessel is a registered British ship (as many motor cruisers are).

It is not clear how registration of a vessel for use on one EA waterway would enable it to be used on another EA waterway and how the fee would be calculated. We have therefore suggested that the basic registration should be free or only bear a nominal charge, and that using the vessel on an EA navigation should then attract a separate navigation fee. This system works well on the Broads and in Anglian Region.

It is proposed that registration will be subject to a vessel having a valid insurance policy and a BSC. This is in line with the practice of BW but rather strangely the EA does not have powers under its present legislation to insist that all boats are

insured. This Order would rectify the situation and we believe all responsible boat owners will welcome this.

Despite the Boat Safety Scheme being a joint initiative by BW and EA, the matter still proposes an entirely separate and difficult appeals procedure for any owner finding problems with compliance. Unlike BW, which has an appeals process by virtue of the 1995 BW Act, EA are still using the outmoded recourse to the Secretary of State by six like-minded owners before any boat standard could be relaxed. We call upon EA and BW to harmonise the appeals mechanism to create a level playing field (or should that be pound?) for all boat owners.

There are a number of other aspects of the draft Order with which NABO has misgivings, and our views are for the most part shared by other major bodies such as RYA and IWA. We look forward to making progress with persuading EA to amend some of its proposals before the final draft is prepared. It will also, be necessary for the statutory RFERACs to consider the proposals and give their views and this is being undertaken during the summer months.

The draft Order is available for inspection and comment on the EA website: www.environment-agency.gov.uk

AVON POWER STRUGGLE TAKES NEW TURN

Members may recall that the Upper Avon Navigation Trust experienced a little local difficulty in October 2001 with a re-convened AGM that resulted in the election, by a narrow margin, of three council members who were opposed to the possibility of BW taking over and operating the navigation between Evesham and Stratford-upon-Avon.

Acrimonious correspondence had been sent out to UANT members urging them to vote for certain candidates and it was apparent that there were two distinct factions at work within the organisation. A number of retiring council members seeking re-election had been entreating BW to give its support to opening up the Higher Avon link between the present navigation limit and the Grand Union Canal at Leamington via the projected Leam and Avon link. This project had the support of the nominally independent Waterways Trust and BW would carry out the works with a view to taking control of both the Upper and Lower Avon navigations.

It is known that LANT had not welcomed the prospect of being taken over by BW and that the membership of the Lower Avon Navigation Trust, that had long aspired to merging the two trusts, had been suspicious of the motives of UANT.

The latest development occurred in early April 2003, with an open letter being published by the so-called "Avon Committee", an *ad hoc* group of persons associated with the Warwickshire Avon, calling for support for the river to be taken over by a national navigation authority to ensure the long term future of the river as an integrated part of the national waterway network. They are calling for the two small and independent charities to relinquish control of the navigations.

A report attached to the letter sets out the group's views and vision for the river and is broadly critical of the style and management of the two Avon navigation

trusts. It points out that licence income is under threat with lower numbers of visiting craft than has been experienced for many decades, and the financial future is not certain.

The authors of the report (The Avon Committee) are for the most part ex-Council members of LANT and UANT who had failed in their earlier bids to merge the two trusts and to forge closer ties with BW. They include David Bezzant, David Burlingham, David Cottrell, Dr Dennis Hall, Geoffrey Holdroyde and John Macartney Filgate. Bezzant was a LANT Council member for 20 years; Burlingham had been involved with the Lower Avon since the 1950's when it was saved from dereliction by the late C D Barwell – a wealthy Birmingham businessman. Cottrell is a retired solicitor and landowner and was responsible for taking control of the former Beecham's boatyard at Tewkesbury in the late 1960's after the owners had been brutally murdered by a disgruntled relative. He oversaw the construction of Tewkesbury Marina and was an active IWA branch chairman for many years. Dr Hall, an ex-colonial civil servant, had served on both trust Councils and had been chairman of a joint committee in 1992 –93 when an ill-fated amalgamation of the two bodies had been mooted. Macartney Filgate was involved with marine businesses in Stratford-upon-Avon until fairly recently and served as Chairman of UANT for 8 years.

It has been said by outside observers that both trusts have lost their sense of direction over the years due to their out-dated management styles. Both Councils operated along the lines of gentlemen's clubs with vested interests controlling them, and despite the onset of old age, new blood was not encouraged and the operations stagnated to a large extent. In the early days, Council members were simply known by their surnames and initials – old-fashioned, faceless males with little involvement by ordinary members, most of whom were boat owners along the river. To this very day, the AGM's of both trusts are poorly attended by members who are given little information about the plans and objectives of the two bodies. The UANT was for many years heavily reliant on the work of David Hutchings MBE as general manager and the public face of the trust. He has now bowed out and recently the two trusts have pooled their administrative resources and now share the same premises.

Having overseen the slow demise of the trusts, it now seems that the protagonists are seeking to circumvent the democratic procedures and the majority wishes of

Advertisement

the members, by seeking widespread support from outside interests for changes to achieve the objective of the Upper Avon extension to Warwick and the GU Canal at Leamington. They envisage the support of the Environment Agency to achieve the goal but given its past record of non-support for the Avon Extension and the aspirations of the Severn Navigation Restoration Trust, it seems unlikely that the EA will be the national body to take over the Avon navigation and see the scheme through to fruition. There is substantial opposition to the plans for opening up the Avon between Stratford and Leamington, not least from the Pearson Group (Madame Tussauds) which runs Warwick Castle, together with Warwickshire County Council and Warwick District Council who have both demonstrated lack of enthusiasm for the project. This leaves BW as the most likely candidate to take control of the river and to complete the wide beam link to the canal network, perhaps using the Waterways Trust as an intermediary. Maybe they will secure the necessary backing that has been lacking to date. Who knows?

What is undeniable is that the two trusts successfully restored navigation along the river with the support of voluntary donations and to this very day they are self-reliant and do not depend on subsidy or grants from central government. It remains to be seen if the malcontents win the day and succeed in what they failed to achieve when in control of the two trusts.

Do you cruise on the Lower and Upper Avon? Have you visited the river? Do the two trusts lack the involvement of younger people with the necessary vision and expertise? What are your views about the latest twist in this protracted tale?

SKELDERGATE BRIDGE, YORK

Boaters familiar with the river Ouse in York may know that Skeldergate Bridge in York has one side span which opens with a single bascule. But has anyone ever seen it open? We would be interested to know of any photographs of the open span or other information relating to this bridge.

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FLY ON THE WALL



at Council

I'm buzzing with indignation at being swatted by that blood(y)hound and just because I wanted a holiday. But I'm back to keep my eyes on Council events for you.

The last meeting saw your NW secretary, Gordon, welcomed as Treasurer. Thanks went to David who has, for personal reasons, decided to stand down.

The meeting had many questions of what NABO can do for you boaters on some big issues. Your Council is looking in detail at the Moorings Code and the proposed new licence agreement. They are also meeting the Environment Agency (EA) to talk about the Transport and Works Act and look at the impact of the proposals.

Longer term a Council eye will be cast over the Dept. of Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) document on foot and mouth, decide how relevant it is to boaters and try to prepare in some way a policy should there be another crisis.

You probably know of, and may be supporting NABO's campaign for a Waterways Regulator. British Waterways (BW) have now acknowledged that there is a call for a Regulator and are thinking of changing the complaints procedure including the current Ombudsman scheme. They should be consulting you.....but keep your signatures for a Regulator coming in to the Chairman or the Editor.

There was some discussion on the fact that permanent moorings are often at places where overnight visitor moorings would be more appropriate, -- like at the ends of flights of locks and tunnels and other structures, where you often have to or choose to wait. Not everyone has the energy to buzz up a flight late afternoon after a day of boating and would prefer to tackle it in the morning provided there were overnight moorings.

It was also thought that all moorings should initially be free. The amount of free time would vary depending on use eg. 2 hours for shopping, overnight for the tide, longer to sightsee or weekend your boat

Boaters visiting the Thames may be interested to know of a new consultation group in partnership with the EA and called the Thames

Alliance. This group is concerned with the regeneration of the non-tidal Thames. It has your Council's support, but they did point out that more moorings are needed on this section of the Thames and they are not very happy that boats are seen as polluters!

Well, it seems that BW are not only taking over marinas and pubs but also boat rallies and gatherings and even charging entry or increasing existing charges. Boaters have complained that this alters the structure and atmosphere of the event. It is understandable that BW want to make money, but it does seem to resemble ever more a property company and event organiser rather than a navigational authority.

Having mentioned events reminds me that your Council would like some help to man the stand at the National this year. Could anyone give a little time? If only to give a council member time for a P-break! If you can help, please contact the events secretary, Aileen Butler or chairman Sue Burchett, preferably on their mobiles (boaters to a woman!). See the back of the mag for contact details.

After all that concentration I must buzz off for a snoozzzzzze

Byeeeeeee

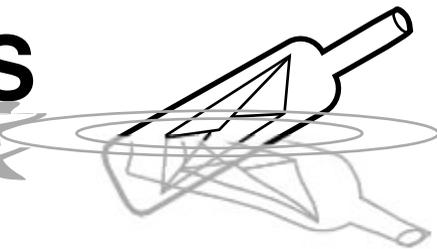


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DID YOU KNOW?

The British Waterways Wind Orchestra now has strings attached!

LETTERS



No real problem

I write in support of the views expressed by Peter Brookes in issue 4/03 of NABO News. I too can see no real problem with the Trial Moorings Code.

Those who wish to avoid paying mooring fees by claiming that they 'Continuously Cruise' should be prepared to do just that - cruise continuously.

A 14 day stop should be long enough for anybody to complete visits to friends, conduct boating related business and sightsee. After this time you should be ready to move on if you are really a continuous cruiser and enjoy the nomadic lifestyle.

Here on the K&A, we have a serious problem with those who moor up in popular locations and do not move on. Some boats have been in the same (or nearly the same) positions for years on end. Those that have licences are claiming to be continuous cruisers but are plainly not. Most of these owners are more akin to the gypsy types

we used to see causing mayhem at places like Stonehenge every summer. On the western end of the K&A, I have been spat at, offered physical violence and foul verbal abuse, amongst other things by these apologies for boaters.

Now I know that these individuals are not typical continuous cruisers but they are using this banner to clog up our waterways and hog the most desirable moorings - often for years on end. Most live in appalling squalor in decrepit old craft.

It is a pity that BW cannot move against this section of boating in isolation, but that probably contravenes a human rights law somewhere. So we all have to suffer in order to get an improvement in the situation. On the recently restored K&A, every new piece of mooring installed was colonised by these people as soon as it was commissioned and the normal boater was denied access by these dossers, tossers, dropouts and druggies.

Only the imposition of the penalty

charge regime for overstaying time limits reclaimed some of these new facilities for the genuine continuous cruiser and normal boater. Even now, particularly near Bath, they still hold large areas of moorings and prevent normal boaters from using these. Who in their right mind would wish to moor up amongst these water gypsies - your boat would be at great risk of damage or break in to fund their lifestyle at these gypsy ghettos.

I for one am willing to give the code a trial in the hope that it will improve the situation. If you are not willing to continuously cruise and move on after 14 days then do not register as such.

Name and address supplied.

Editor's Note

NABO's General Secretary has responded to Peter Brooke's letter pointing out that NABO's official policy does not support overstaying and bridge-hopping, but that the Moorings Code was introduced with inadequate consultation, leaving no opportunity to address the conflict between the new Code and the 1995 BW Act. NABO believes that BW's existing powers should be used as the Code's wording leaves it vulnerable to challenge on grounds of legality and discrimination, and that some of the problems it was to solve

are of BW's own making by issuing craft licences knowing that an applicant had no desire to 'Continuously Cruise' and yet could not be found a home mooring (e.g. on the K&A). She ended by reiterating that NABO's main aim was to challenge any unfair application of the Code, not to oppose the Code in principle.

Peter replied accepting these points but did not think they had been emphasised enough in the magazine.

I hope the content of my editorial in this issue will address this problem.

Ed

Death of a Boater Gathering

There has been a Folk and Boat festival at Middlewich for the last 13 years. When it started the Trent and Mersey Canal Society got the boats there and local people, led by the famous 'Middlewich Paddies', ran the folk side. There is a street parade with lots of dancing, a festival site with stalls, a bar and an entertainments marquee. For the weekend of the festival, if you boat and like live music in all its forms, Middlewich is the place to be!

I love it and have been going to the festival for years, (Sometimes single handing my boat all the way from the Cambridgeshire Fens to get there in time).

One year the folk side was officially cancelled, because of the 'Foot & Mouth' problem, but the boaters still turned up in their hundreds (by then movement restrictions had been lifted). The pubs booked groups, itinerate musicians roamed and the live music sessions were on.

Another great weekend.

Well what happened this year?

A great folk festival was arranged but where were the boats? 360ish one year and this year just a smattering above Kings lock and a few plus some historic boats on the 'Town pound'.

What could have happened to kill off such a hugely popular event on the boating calendar?

BW that's what!

They closed all the public moorings within easy access to the town and imposed a booking system.

They charged £12 per boat to moor there. When I asked what you would get for that I was told 'A plaque and health and safety'.

In past years there has been a plaque available to purchase for about £5, but £12 for some health, that would be a bargain I thought! but they wouldn't guarantee my health for that. As for the safety there was NO security patrol provided for the

boats, most people wanted to go off and enjoy festivities in the town, so what safety did that offer?

As far as I know only about 20 boats paid to book in. When they arrived they had to find their own mooring place as, despite booking in, there was no allocation of specific moorings.

Along with the plaque they were given a 'bag of bits' the most useful thing in it was a festival programme that would have cost £1 in the past. These programmes were GIVEN to BW thus depriving the festival of income they should have received.

There was a letter with the pack telling the boater that they could get concert tickets at concessionary rates. Too bad if they had already paid, but yet again this was a facility that reduced the income for the festival.

Another surprise was for those with historic boats, who were allowed to moor for free, they didn't get a plaque but were 'requested to provide access to their craft for interested visitors'. Nobody told them THAT before they booked in!

I haven't yet checked with the organisers what difference the

reduction in numbers of boaters attending has made to the festival. It certainly reduced the income of the traders in the town.

The reaction of boaters to BW over Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival wasn't an organised boycott, all the boaters I spoke to said that they thought everything had been fine until BW 'took over'. They think that BW's hierarchy saw it as a way to take control and make money.

I don't think they did make money, they had to pay some of their people to be there, they will have made a loss which will cost the customers (us) money.

Is this the way things are going to be?

I've heard that BW are intending a similar take over/annihilation at other gatherings.

Will they learn anything from what happened at Middlewich?

Do they care?

Sadie Dean

Mooring on the K&A (and other 'isoponic' waterways?)

It is certainly a problem.

As a (reasonable?) compromise, some waterway managers provide

alternate equal lengths of dredged hard edge, and soft edge.

Bearing in mind the cost of piling, the same compromise with unequal lengths, say 100m of dredged hard edge, then 500m of soft edge, would be better than nothing.

What do others think?

Ron Bingham

Mooring in the country

I would be happy, where there is enough channel width, just to see a few 'bulges' built out from the towpath, just far enough to get a boat alongside at whichever end you step off. Provided it keeps the boat out and floating free, and has a ring or two for tying up that end of the boat, you can throw a rope across the 'biodiversity' and secure the other end with a pin. There is no reason for the whole length of the boat to be alongside if all you want is an overnight tie-up in the country.

Put them under power lines, though, or out of range of angler's road access!

Stuart Sampson

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