

**THE MAGAZINE OF THE**



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

**ISSUE 4/04 - June 2004**

**Policy Review3 / Alcohol Survey / WWR Progress**

# IN THIS ISSUE

<b>3</b>	<b>Chairman's Column</b>	<b>Stuart Sampson</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>BW Matters</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Alcohol Limit Survey</b>	<b>Webmaster</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>NABO Policy Review</b>	<b>Council</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Bulletin Blacklist</b>	
<b>10</b>	<b>Waterway Reports Progress</b>	<b>Webmaster</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Worried Woman of the Waterways</b>	<b>WWW Dot</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Notices</b>	
<b>16</b>	<b>Rivers</b>	
<b>18</b>	<b>Strange Craft on the Basingstoke</b>	<b>Canalman</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>Doggie Problems</b>	<b>Stephen Peters</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>Can't get your mooring back?</b>	
<b>21</b>	<b>A Lockie's Lot</b>	<b>from PIANC</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>Fly on the Wall</b>	<b>Fly</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>Letters</b>	<b>Yourselves</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>NABO supplies</b>	
<b>27</b>	<b>Council contacts</b>	

## 2004 CALENDAR

<b>Council meeting</b>	<b>Copy date</b>
July 17th	July 24th
Sept 18th	Sept 25th
<i>Nov 13th A.G.M.</i>	
Nov 27th	Dec 4th



# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



We are trying a different boating pattern this year. Previously we hadn't started out till May and had to return by the beginning of September, but now we have more freedom to pick and choose, so we are planning to avoid some of the August mayhem and cruise later into the autumn. We may be forced to take a break – folks keep buying Carole's books and we can only make more when ashore! So I am starting this issue at home but will have to finish it on the boat.

Quite a lot has happened since I wrote the last Chairman's column, in fact much of it had happened before you even had the chance to read what I wrote then. It is a sad fact that the printed word takes a long time to deliver and if you feel the need to keep up to date, I strongly advise you to embrace new technology, equip yourselves to receive e-mail and sign up for the bulletins.

While on the subject of e-mail, you might like to take advantage of our latest service to members, namely, automatic forwarding of Reports Board postings. More details later in this issue.

So, what was all the panic about? Like London buses, meetings tend all come together. I had three shortly after May's News went to print: BW's Boating Issues Meeting, EA's National Navigation Users' Forum and the all-party pan-everything Parliamentary Waterways Group.

The prospect of breath testing on waterways was raised with both BW and EA. Although there was a feeling at both meetings that the measures were unworkable, and that EA hadn't any records of any alcohol related accident on the Thames, I thought I should poll members on the subject.

The on-line survey form on [www.nabo.org.uk/alcohol.html](http://www.nabo.org.uk/alcohol.html) is still open for input. If you are not online, get up to the local library and use their computer to fill one in. The results so far are varied – far more voted in favour of alcohol limits for inland mariners than I was expecting, and quite a few felt locking crews should also be tested too.

The red diesel issue also came up, we were really asking BW and EA to add their voice in support of their customers, because it is in their interests in the end.

The Parliamentary Waterways Group meeting was addressed by Stephen Twigg, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Schools. (For those who don't know, the PWG is supposed to be an 'interest group' for MPs, but they are outnumbered by associate members like your truly and it becomes a lively forum on all waterway affairs.) Anyway, the Commons was in session while he was speaking to us all and it came to a Division half way through, which meant he and all the other MPs present had to scarp and vote.

This gave Robin Evans the chance to stand up and explain the latest situation regarding BW staff cuts, which gave me the chance to pose the question of safety (as mentioned in my last column). He categorically stated that safety would not be compromised. We should keep a watchful eye on this, and whether BW uses the funding crisis as an excuse for less forgivable lapses.

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As I said, I would be finishing this while afloat, and so here we are, having arrived at 1030 in the morning to grab the only space on Tixall Wide. The new Whispergen is purring away restoring power to the batteries and the view is restoring power to the soul. We have also had a nice morale boost from members we have met on the cut.

However, going back to BW and its attempts to reduce its fixed costs, one thing that cannot be classified as a fixed cost is imagination. Has its rarity something to do with the office environment then? Maybe – it was reckoned to be thirty degrees in the shade when we were descending the Atherstone flight and, to a man, the towpath walkers were clad in collar and tie, presumably having left their suit jackets enjoying the air-conditioned comfort of their desks, but it hadn't occurred to them to relieve the stranglehold of their neckwear.

So, perhaps by the same token, it hasn't occurred to those in BW offices how difficult it is to remove that chalky stuff when the kids have walked it in from the towpath onto the boat's carpets, or how scruffy the towpath looks from the water when seen (or perhaps not seen) through a barrier of weeds and nettles. Nor has it occurred

to them that moorings are scarce on Tixall Wide because it is one of few places where one can get ashore and fix ones ropes without getting stung. Still, help for that could be 'just round the corner' – on one tight bend at Polesworth there were dock plants growing between the towpath and the water to such a height I wouldn't have been able to see a boat emerging from a bridge hole barely thirty yards away. Plenty to sooth a few nettle stings, but their size and position **are a safety issue.**

I went into Peels Wharf office to leave a complaint about this, only to see a BW employee manicuring the little trees opposite to ensure the view from their windows was immaculate. So they couldn't say they had no-one to deal with it.

NABO has been banging its head against this brick wall since the association was founded. British Waterways has an obligation enshrined in its Statements of Intent with respect to the 1995 BW Act to carry out **meaningful consultation.** What does this mean? The feedback I get is that the only time the user's views are taken into account is when a decision is 'cost neutral'. "We've got grey paint, it costs the same as black, so we'll let you choose if you want the lock gates painted grey" – then they blow the trumpets to say they consulted!

To be fair, BW HQ is trying to get a grip on local user consultation, but that relies on local offices toeing the line. From what I hear, respect for HQ is scarce at local level after the cuts and re-organisation, so what hope is there of them taking any notice of us? Still, we'll keep plugging away and maybe win now and again.

# BRITISH WATERWAYS MATTERS

## DEFRA Review

Every five years DEFRA holds a review of each of the public bodies in its remit, and British Waterways is now due for scrutiny. Comments are wanted on how well BW is keeping to the intents outlined in *Waterways for Tomorrow*, how well it is performing commercially and how it is serving its customers.

NABO Council will be responding to this, but by the time you read these words there won't be much time left for your input, so you will have to trust us to speak on your behalf (That's what you elected us to do!)

## User Group Meetings

Eugene Baston, Customer Relations Manager, is preparing guidelines outlining minimum standards for User Group Meetings and would like the fact publicised. We will be seeing these very soon.

He also wanted all to know that a list of all meetings, with contacts, venues and often maps, is on BW's website at:-

[www.britishwaterways.co.uk/accountability](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/accountability)

This is good news as it means you can prime your NABO regional secretary with issues you want raised in advance of a meeting. Hopefully the meeting notes will be available on the site afterwards, but we recommend you discuss them with him or her before forming any conclusions, as preparing a record of a meeting for public scrutiny is not necessarily the easiest task for secretarial staff at waterway offices.

## Licensing hiccups

Eugene has had quite a few reports of problems with craft licensing and welcomes feedback on the subject. If you are still waiting for a licence, don't just put an '*In the Post*' sticker on your boat. Chase it up with him on 01923 201350

## Incident Report Forms

BW are working on a new reporting form for mishaps on the waterways. Please let us know what information you think should be reported, especially if you have had an incident to report and couldn't find slots for all the things you felt they needed to know.

Alternatively discuss it with the Safety Officer, Peter Wade.

# Alcohol Survey, results to date

This is gleaned from returns from the website form combined with replies from boaters questioned along the towpath.

## Scope of the legislation

About **10%** thought only the **master** of the vessel should be subject to breath testing, and that if he/she chose to delegate control of the vessel then he/she should still be sober and legally responsible.

About **85%** thought it was right to apply limits just to **those in control** of the vessel.

**15%** thought that in a canal situation the **lock crew** should also be under the limit in the interests of safety. (This also begs the question as to whether a vessel in a lock should be deemed 'under way')

## Exemption

**7%** felt **all should be exempt**, i.e. there should be no alcohol limit restrictions for 'non professional mariners'

**40%** were in favour of **limits for all mariners** (of those asked directly, the figure was more like 60%)

The remainder thought there should be exemptions.

### Of the latter:-

About **half** considered exemption should take **boat length** into account, most of those accepting 70 ft (22m) as the figure. A handful quoted area and tonnage, but those figures also reflected the narrowboat limits.

Roughly **70%** thought design **speed** important, mostly recommending lower speeds than the 17 knots quoted in the D of T consultation paper. 10 knots being the most popular.

There were **70%** who considered the **category of waters** important, but the choice of where to set the limit was fairly evenly divided.

## Conclusions

Many people thought there was a case for apprehending enebriated steerers before they caused an accident, but others were fearful they may fall foul of the law after a couple of pints at lunchtime. Almost everybody had severe reservations about enforcement, particularly on the BW canals, where manpower is very scarce for enforcing anything, especially as, for safety, staff sent out to apprehend drunken boaters would need to be in pairs.

# NABO POLICY REVIEW 3

In response for more 'openness and accountability' from NABO towards its members, Council has been fleshing out more 'sound bites' in its policy document and is offering the draft results for member's comments.

The clauses are being taken in turn and in this magazine we deal with policies relating to BW and other users.

## 1. The role of British Waterways

Summary policy -

*NABO believes that British Waterways should place its obligations as a navigation authority at the top of its duty priorities, and only conduct other commercial activities as a means to further this aim.*

Detail -

The dictionary definition of 'waterway' is 'a river, canal, or other route for travel by water'. To 'travel by water' requires some form of boat and so a body titled 'British Waterways' would indicate that its prime purpose would be to facilitate boat travel in Britain.

NABO therefore believes that property development, pub management, water distribution, communication data distribution, marinas, event organisation, nature conservation and development of the waterway corridors as linear public parks should not in any way prejudice the maintenance and development of the waterways as routes for travel by water.

## 2. Cycling

Summary policy

*We are against any organised cycling events on the towpath. Boaters to have priority over cyclists on the towpath and we object, on safety grounds, to the 'upgrade' of towpaths in order to create cycleways.*

Supporting Detail

Approved cycling on towpaths has come into being against the interests of all other users. BW has agreed to this because:

- 1) it has been unable to police and prevent illicit cycling
- 2) grants were available, and the cost of upgrading the towpath has been largely met by third parties
- 3) government direction that the canals should be available to all.

n.b. Other navigation authorities, such as the National Trust, refuse to allow cycling.

n.b. This has led to motor cycles being illicitly used on towpaths, which are still not policed.

Whereas on roads, cyclists exercise caution, on towpaths they represent the fastest moving users. They have no insurance or cycling permit, and do not adhere to BW's guidelines. NABO knows that serious accidents have occurred, as well as incidents of bike/rod rage.

British Waterways should take responsibility for its decision to allow cyclists on towpaths, and enforce its by-laws. It is never acceptable, on safety grounds, for organised cycling events to be held on towpaths, and towpaths should never be referred to, or made into, 'cycleways'. Boaters should have priority over all other users, and cyclists should dismount at locks, swing bridges, visitor mooring sites, and in all places where a crew member needs access to the bank. NABO supports the responsible use of cycles whilst lock-wheeling.

### **3. Angling**

#### Summary policy

***NABO is opposed to angling-only lengths of bank. Boaters should have sole use of lock landing stages and facilities points, and priority at designated Visitor Mooring sites. Elsewhere, priority should be on a first-come-first-served basis.***

#### Supporting Detail

Canals were built for boats, which can suffer from mechanical problems, propellor fouling, crew sickness etc. from time to time. It must be possible, therefore, for a crew member to gain access to the bank AT ALL TIMES. With this in mind, angling-only lengths could create a problem for a boater.

Fishing matches should NEVER be permitted in the pounds on a lock flight, nor should pegs be created on lock landing stages or visitor moorings. Boaters should have priority at recognised mooring sites at all times.

Fishing should not be allowed anywhere on landing stages, opposite moored boats nor within 15 metres on the same side.

Bait should not be cast at boats and the use of barbed hooks should be banned. Discarded tackle on the ground and in trees is a hazard which should be avoided.

## **AS AN ASIDE - ANGLER & CYCLIST IDENTIFICATION**

It is all too easy for anyone to report a boater, the boat must display a number. Why not insist on registration numbers for anglers and cyclists too?

On the front of an angler's cap?

Numbers on bicycles would have to be elongated so they could be read at speed!

## **MEMBERS' RESPONSES TO DRAFT PREVIOUS POLICIES**

We are grateful to members who have responded to this review, especially those who have pointed out where NABO has in the past had higher standards than given here and that we should not relax our demands. e.g. that trees should be trimmed **nine** feet clear of the water, and that 14 days should be the norm for visitor mooring durations and shorter times should only be imposed as a last resort to prevent overcrowding if more moorings cannot be provided.

### **The Bulletin Black List**

**The following addresses are giving delivery failures.  
If one of them was yours, please let us know your  
new one**

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**Thanks - The Webmaster**



# PROGRESS

## E-mail Notification for members

We have now harnessed the 'announcement list' facility on our web system to bring the latest postings on the board to your computer by e-mail. There are seven lists covering different parts of the system and members can sign up for as many lists as they like. They are:-

Scotland

Northwest (including Wales and Border Counties)

Northeast (including the Trent area)

Midlands

Anglian

South & West (plus much of the Thames)

Southeast (including London)

It is all set out in the members-only section of the NABO website, with forms to 'subscribe' or 'unsubscribe' to the lists:-

[www.nabo.org.uk/members/forwarding.html](http://www.nabo.org.uk/members/forwarding.html)

As soon as someone posts a message it is sent straight to all those who have subscribed to that area's list, as well as appearing on the board. This means you don't have to go to the website to check for postings. However beware, some postings might not make much sense if they are in reply to a subject already on the boards and so out of context.

We do hope people will not abuse this facility. If fatuous messages become annoying you can just as easily sign out of the lists and look at the boards where the good tastes of our moderator team should keep them free of unwelcome postings.

Note - You are not put straight on the list when you use the 'subscribe' form, the system sends an email to the address you put on the form with instructions how to confirm. Only when you do this is your address added. This ensures nobody subscribes your address without your approval.

## **E-mail Notification for the waterway offices**

I am still chasing EA and most BW Units for addresses to forward postings to their area. We will get there in the end.

## **Text your postings**

We have three numbers now:

**07961 001814 (T-mobile)**

**07930 419 981(T-mobile)**

**07989 441674 (Orange)**

I have had comments that abbreviations might make messages difficult to read. True, but I was rather hoping that whoever posts the message will put it into plain English!

## **‘Moderation’ and updating**

We have four Moderators now, excluding myself, broadly splitting the boards geographically. Not only will they remove the dross and notices which have past a quoted end date, but they can chase up things that should have been resolved too.

*Advertisement*

## WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

Well **U** know, better than anyone, how much I worry about things. Is it a **useless** pursuit or does it do any good?

BW have some wonderful gulping machines that skim up all the rubbish from the surface of the water, usually in **urban** city centres. They are obviously concerned that the canal should look attractive for the non paying guests.

They are **undoubtedly** not worried about us boaters.

All of us worry about what is **under** the surface of the water. Are there any of the great variety of **underwater** obstructions?

Those, such as shopping trolleys or wheely bins, that stop you dead or tilt you at a worrying angle.

Those, such as polythene bags or bits of blue rope, that cling to your prop and gather other rubbish to them as you go slower and slower trying to slip whatever it is off your prop by quick bursts in reverse gear. Trying to put off the moment when you know there is no other choice and a trip down the weed hatch is **unavoidable**.

Then there is every boaters' nightmare a mattress spring which, once you get it entangled with the prop, takes bolt croppers, hacksaw, wire snippers, brute force and for ever to clear, and only then if you can actually get at it!

All of these delights may be lurking **unknown** beneath you as you boat happily along.

Often there is the **usual** problem of not enough water **under** the surface. The bottom is too near the top so we scrape along it, wondering how on earth loaded working boats managed to get about in such shallow waters.

Whatever they tell us it is **undeniable** that the canals are not being dredged back to the original profile.

Am I **upset** enough to bring my worries to the attention of the relevant waterway authority. Nothing will be done about things **unless** those that are in a position to take action, are aware of the problems.

Do **User Groups** help? Do they do any good? Or are they just a public relation exercise and a good excuse for a chat while guzzling free food?

Do the powers that be take any action over what problems are discussed or do they lose it all while it is being 'prioritised' in the computer?

Who attends **User Group** meetings? Waterway **users** of course, anglers, walkers, cyclists, botanists, entomologists, (and goodness knows how many other '-ists' and finally, those **under dogs**, the boaters, who pay the most so that all the others can also enjoy the facilities.

It isn't wise to **underestimate** the influence of these non boating groups.

See how they get the canal narrowed (they call it towpath improvements) for cyclist and walkers.

See the 'No Mooring' lengths that are supposedly there to protect the wildlife from mooring pins being banged in. See the wild boaters who can't moor there but can watch the anglers bang in their rod supports!

See how many restoration projects have been held up or halted because some **unbelievably** fanatical '-ists' says it will damage the surrounding habitats.

See the lengths of canals where **uninformed** cranks don't want boats to go because they say 'boats **upset** the environment'.

Now you will see why I get **upset** and worry about **user groups**, don't they know **CANALS WERE BUILT FOR BOATS!**

Should we **unite** and form a boaters' **union** to protect our interests? No, support NABO and keep your council informed of your worries. Better still offer to attend some **User Group** meetings and help to get boaters' views heard.

Don't you worry, be positive, when **urgent** action is needed, let the right people know. It is **useless** just to worry. I do enough of it for all of us.

Happy Boating in this **unbelievably** lovely weather.

Your friend Dot

# Stop Press Letter - Data Protection Acts

I read with interest the article on Data Protection from Nigel Johnston, Director, Legal Department British Waterways, especially the section in which he wished to make it clear that “BW is bound by and complies with both the letter and the spirit of the Data Protection Act”.

After having attempted repeatedly over at least 18 months to get BW to confirm correction of some incorrect sensitive data stored by BW, as well as to get their Gloucester office to comply with my subject access request, I must say I was surprised by such an effusive claim.

I have just received an assessment from the Information Commissioners Office which states “*From the information provided it appears unlikely that BW has complied with your subject access request. As such it seems that there has been a breach of the 6th Data Protection Principle which states personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under this Act*”

Neither letter nor spirit was complied with, and Nigel Johnson should perhaps have been aware that for past several months this was being dealt with by his legal department. Unfortunately when BW finally do comply with this request it will come too late for BW appeal to High Court for which I required this information.

I am also indebted to “a Boater” who wrote in the February edition of NABO News and drew my attention to Project Clearwater, and BW using a system of “Customer Resource Management” to better profile their customers. It will be interesting to see this information, which I have now requested.

I made the mistake of asking the Information Commissioner far too late for an assessment over several other issues. They have a cut-off period of 12 months, so make sure that your assessment is asked for well in advance of this or any date for which the information is needed, if any data processor is not complying with your request. They will also provide you with information about the Acts from basic to advanced level, but it is quite complex and time consuming. Their details are Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Tel 01625 545 700.

BW say they provide one free request per year. Any more than this costs £10. Information will be held on you at craft licensing at Watford, perhaps your regional office as well, presumably, as this Customer Resource Management. I was delayed for months by replies to put the assessment in proper form (not needed – a request for a data subject access request under data protection acts is sufficient), and further delayed by asking for a fee but not detailing how much, then delayed by being passed between three different solicitors, and other lawyers, as well as a direct refusal to deal with the request.

I trust that Nigel Johnston fine words will in future be matched by fine action.

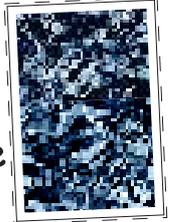
*Peter James*

## NOTICES

### POST FOR NABO NEWS

For issue 5/04 please send contributions well in advance to 48 Old Lane, Bramhope, Leeds LS16 9AZ

E-mail much better if possible - [news.editor@nabo.org.uk](mailto:news.editor@nabo.org.uk)



### Going for a Burton?

If you can give us a hand manning the stand at the National Waterways Festival over August Bank Holiday at Burton-on-Trent you would be warmly welcomed

### Eberspacher for sale

D5 water heating unit, 5 years old but not heavily used, working when replaced. Needs new wiring to pump and control switch

£200 as seen. Contact Editor

### 'Keep up the good work'

We often get this little encouragement at the end of letters from members leaving having sold their boats. If you feel this way when you have to sell your boat, why not ask us to send an info pack for the new owner?

### PASSWORDS

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

The members-only website section has a password, which has been sent out to on-line members via the members' bulletin list.

The User ID for the members section is the word 'member'.

If you have not been given the new word please e-mail: [webmaster@nabo.org.uk](mailto: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.

Text your waterway reports to: **07961 001814**  
**07989 441674**  
**07930 419 981**



# RIVERS



## A PASSAGE FORECASTER for NABO's Website?

You probably know by now that one of my sidelines is playing with computers. There is certainly a great satisfaction in getting 'machines designed without a purpose' to do something useful for mankind. However the decline in my little grey cells and the huge expansion in computer capability means that the days I could instruct them in their native language is long gone.

What does give me a kick nowadays is writing scripts to make web pages more active, and I thought of something that might help boaters. It is a predictor to give a rough idea when to expect favourable tides for the various passages many of us have to make to get where we want to go.

Tide times are fairly predictable, high water times are on average 12 hours and 25 minutes apart, so no problem forecasting that for future dates with some simple formulae. When high water happens at various places around the British Isles is also reasonably well documented. What isn't so easy to discover is how the local lockie works out when is the best time to set out, say, from Keadby to Torksey, and this is the sort of information I need to make this project work.

I have listed eighteen tidal locks that an intrepid or otherwise inland boater might find themselves using, and from several of those there is a choice of destinations, often having different departure times.

### **Yorkshire Ouse**

Naburn                      Selby                      Goole                      (Keadby via Trent End)

### **Trent**

Keadby                      W Stockwith              Torksey                      Cromwell

### **Great Ouse**

Salters Lode                      Denver

### **Thames**

Limehouse                      Brentford                      Teddington

### **Severn**

Bristol                      Sharpness

### **Mersey**

Ellesmere Port                      Liverpool

### **Ribble**

Tarleton                      Ribble Link                      Preston Dock

If you are about to embark on a tidal transit, please ask the lock-keeper how he calculates when to pen you out, and let me know. There are bound to be variations according to the speed of your vessel, its draught, if there is a sill or mud bank to clear, whether the tide is spring or neap etc etc, and we will try to incorporate whatever factors we can.

It is bound to be a fairly approximate guide and aimed at future planning rather than giving you a precise time to arrive at the lock. It may only tell you whether to expect the right tides in the morning or afternoon, or not at all, on a particular date. However I would like to feel it would be better than that, but we would still advise boaters to contact the lock-keeper for confirmation anyway. I could have benefited a few years back when we arrived at Keadby and found the tide times totally wrong for a passage to Cromwell. We had to spend a few days loitering on the Chesterfield en route, which would have totally fouled us up if time was tight.

So, if you are using the tidal rivers, please garner what information you can from the lock-keepers. Ideally we need to relate the penning out times to high water at a nearby coastal port or resort for which tide times are published. e.g. for the Trent and Yorkshire Ouse, timings usually relate to high water at Hull.

If there are to be any economies made in the manning hours or experience at tidal locks, a service like this might help the boater and reduce the number of enquiries the lock-keepers have to cope with.

*Your Webmaster*

## **Port of London News** (from a report kindly written by Ron Bingham)

Some half of PLA bylaws will be updated and become General Directions.

A business (cargo) river map is on the Internet, and a leisure river map will be available soon.

Construction of the Thames Gateway Bridge from Becton to Thamesmead is planned for 2009 -2013. It was suggested that it would support the Olympics bid if it were finished a year earlier in time for the games, but the democratic consultation programme prevented that.

A professional assessment of the upriver rowing rules (to keep to a specified side of the river) is being carried out.

Environmental Health officers can ban noisy boats from operating for the following 24 hours.

### **Incidents.**

A bollard on a trip boat had pulled away, the tension in the mooring rope caused it to fly ashore, striking and seriously injuring a woman.

Two RYA instructors in RIBs collided, due, it was said, to apparent ignorance of the rules of navigation on the river!

PLA said that many boats under 20m carried VHF but did not keep a listening watch, as they should.

# Strange Craft on the Basingstoke Canal

You are a test pilot, taking off from Farnborough Airfield in an experimental aircraft. As you retract your undercarriage, you are aware of a narrow ribbon of water flashing below you just beyond the perimeter fence. It is the Basingstoke Canal. You point the plane's nose skywards and you briefly speculate that should you suffer engine failure during take-off, that canal is where you will end up!

In fact, the canal has embraced a flying machine before. Almost opposite the end of the runway, there is a wider reach of the canal known as Eelmore Flash. Nowadays it is choked with weed, a SSSI, and a haven for fishermen. Back in 1913 an aircraft floated there.

It was the Cody VI, the very latest product of Samuel Franklin Cody. With a wing span of more than 18 metres, a four bladed prop driven by a 100hp Green engine, and a single rear rudder, it was Cody's biggest aircraft yet, nicknamed *'The Flying Cathedral'*. In June that year, a large centre float, and two wing floats had been fitted. The plane was lifted into the canal, and buoyancy tests were carried out.

It was Cody's intention to enter his latest invention in the Daily Mail's Race Around Britain. In fact the aircraft never flew with the floats attached. It was later converted into an early flying ambulance, a forerunner of the helicopters in the film MASH, perhaps. It could carry three medical orderlies, a stretcher, operating table, and equipment into front line locations.

Cody himself was a flamboyant character. He came to this country from

his native Iowa in 1890 with his wife, Maud Maria Lee. On their wedding certificate his profession is described as; *'sharp shooter and cowboy and pistol shot.'* He found work in the music halls, billing himself as *'Captain Cody, son of the Great Buffalo Bill, and his sister'*.

They soon formed a Wild West Show during which he would astound his audiences with his horsemanship, trick-shooting and fancy rope acts. He would shoot at glass balls over his shoulder or between his legs, even using mirrors, whilst she held them close to her body, wearing a red leotard so that any blood would not show!

But Sam Cody was a fake. His real name was Franklin Samuel Cowdery. He was not related to Buffalo Bill

Cody at all. It was after a law suite in 1891 to prevent him calling himself Buffalo Bill's son, that he parted company with his American wife who was perhaps disappointed at the truth.

However his skills were real, and he soon continued his shows with another partner, the Englishwoman Elizabeth (Lela) King and her sons. He taught them to

shoot. They were so successful that he was able to afford to indulge in his hobby....flying kites. He manufactured man-carrying kites, and eventually interested the British Army in his invention.

In 1905 he was given the post of Kite Instructor to the Royal Engineers' Balloon School at Aldershot, close by the Basingstoke Canal. His interest in kites soon developed into gliders, and then powered aircraft.



On the 16 October 1908, he made the first official flight of a heavier than air machine in the British Isles. He would fly from Laffans Plain, next to the canal, close to the site of the present airfield. No doubt that ribbon of glistening water would lead him home.

However, the army were more interested in balloons than aeroplanes, and Cody had to continue his experiments with his own money. He broke many records and won many trophies.

He also walked away from many spectacular crashes! On one occasion his Cody IV monoplane collided with a cow. The owner was awarded £18 damages despite Cody's claim that it had committed suicide!

On August 11th, 1913, in the canalside military town of Aldershot, a throng of one hundred thousand souls witnessed Sam Cody's last extraordinary spectacle.....his funeral procession. Escorted by the pipers of the Black Watch, he completed his last parade on a gun carriage drawn by six black horses in a funeral cortege a mile long. He was buried in Aldershot military cemetery with full military honours.

Although affectionately dubbed Colonel Cody, by King Edward VII, he

never actually held that rank. His contract with the army merely stated: *'Mr. Cody's status is that of an Officer of His Majesty's Army, though he has no military command. He is to be treated as an Officer, as becoming the status in which he has been engaged, by all employees at the Factory.'*



Yet he was held in such esteem that even King George V sent his condolences.

What had happened?

No doubt to raise money for the race, Cody was giving flights in one of his earlier machines to eminent passengers. On the morning of 7th August 1913 he took up the famous cricketer WHB Evans. Whilst flying over Ball Hill, overlooking the Basingstoke Canal, the machine broke up, and both pilot and passenger fell to their deaths. Thus ended the life of perhaps the most flamboyant character to have ever used the Basingstoke Canal, in perhaps the most bizarre craft.

However, the canal's link with seaplanes does not end there. In a photograph taken in 1954 of Great Bottom Flash, close by Ash Vale

*Advertisement*

Boathouse where the previous owner of the canal, Alec Harmsworth had built and repaired his boats, you can see the hulks of narrow boats *Basingstoke*, *Greywell*, and *Mapledurwell*. But in the foreground are the remains of a huge flying boat hull. It is thought to have been a Walrus. Two local gentlemen can remember that just after WW2 there were two of them. The recall playing in the cockpits as children, though how they got there, or what happened to them no-one knows. (London's Lost Route to Basingstoke p183)



two disused boats, the narrow boat *Robin* and the wide boat *Stanley* in the middle of Mytchett Lake to prevent enemy seaplanes landing there and dropping off spies near Keogh Barracks.

We never heard of spies penetrating the barracks during the war, so presumably it worked!

The hulks of both boats can still be seen. They rest in nearby Anglers Flash where the army dumped them after the war. Of seaplanes and their floats, there is now no sign, but a plaque on a wall of a house in Ash Vale, a few yards from the canal, declares that this was the home of Col. Samuel Cody.

*Canalman*

Within living memory it is known that Harmsworth, who began as a barge master, built floats for second world war seaplanes. He carried out flotation trials by loading them with people and towing them along the canal between Great Bottom Flash and Mytchett Lake.

It is doubtful that planes ever actually took off or landed on the canal or its flashes, but it is known that during the second world war the army moored

With thanks to Jean Roberts for her website, *S F Cody*;

*'Colonel' Cody And His Flying Cathedral* by Gary Jenkins, published by Simon & Schuster;

and P A L Vine.

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## TOWPATH SOLUTION TO DOGGIE POLLUTION

The Spring 2004 journal of the Countryside Recreation Network reports that British Waterways will be installing 1000 dog waste bins with free dog waste dispensers at popular waterway access points across the canal network.

The project has been informed by recent research undertaken by Encams, the environmental campaigner and BW will be contacting local authorities throughout the country to identify problem areas and to arrange for the waste to be collected. They have already trialed the scheme with Stockport Metropolitan Borough and Macclesfield Borough councils by providing easy-to-use dog waste bins at trouble spots in Stockport and Macclesfield.

Further information may be obtained from John Bright at JRB Enterprises email [info@jrbenterprises.com](mailto:info@jrbenterprises.com)

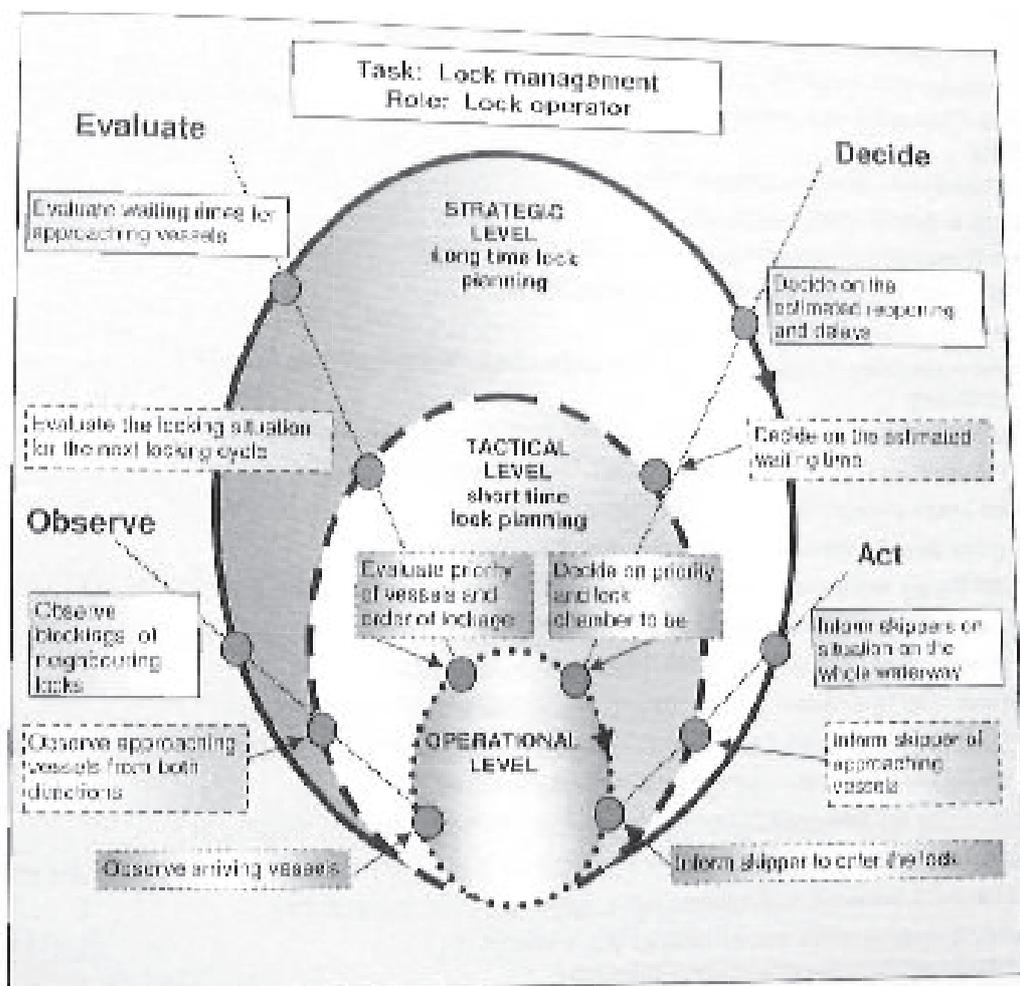
# DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM GETTING YOUR MOORING BACK?

We have heard complaints from owners with marina or boatyard moorings that after a period away cruising they return to find the mooring they are paying for is occupied by another boat. This can be particularly annoying if they have given notice of when they intend to return and even more so if there is nobody about to sort the problem when they do arrive.

If this is happening on a regular basis NABO could take it up with the relevant bodies, e.g the Yacht Harbour Association or APCO. Let us know.

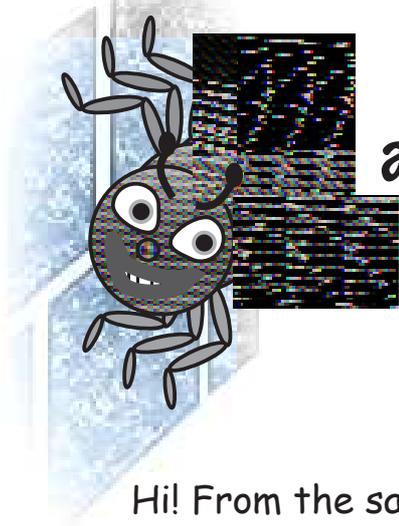
On a lighter note –

## DID YOU KNOW LOCKIES DID ALL THIS?



From a continental waterway strategy analysis sent to NABO as members of the organisation PIANC. Sorry about the distortion, had to be done as a photo.

# FLY ON THE WALL



## at Council

Hi! From the same fly on the same wall telling you what the same people said about some old chestnuts along with some new topics in the latest lively meeting of your Council.

The discussion on red diesel gave me a surprise to hear that red diesel is no longer white diesel with red dye added as it used to be. That was a higher specification than now. The new stuff can cause problems to some engines and to heaters such as Eberspacher whose owners would do better using white diesel. Will they need two tanks or use only DERV at a higher cost? Hire bases would have problems stocking and serving two types of diesel and to use only DERV would increase the price of their holidays, making them even less competitive than their main rivals: the cheap holiday abroad.

Boaters with large cruisers and engines may even feel forced to go

for a petrol-only option or cross the channel to fill up!

Your Chairman will bring up this issue at the next BW users group meeting.

Every five years the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) reviews all public bodies within their remit which includes BW. There was some discussion on the topics that NABO would like to bring to their attention. One item was concern was on the downgrading of the Rivers Severn and Trent for commercial craft. An effect of this could be less dredging. It was acknowledged that the Safety List backlog was being tackled as promised, but maybe to the detriment of other necessary works and the whole waterway infrastructure. Have you any examples that would back NABO's case? With photos if possible. Please send to the website direct or via text. One result could be that BW gets more grant-in-aid.

There was a lively discussion on towpath users, especially cyclists and anglers. Gripes to Council were about lack of enforcement of BW regulations, with cyclists and even

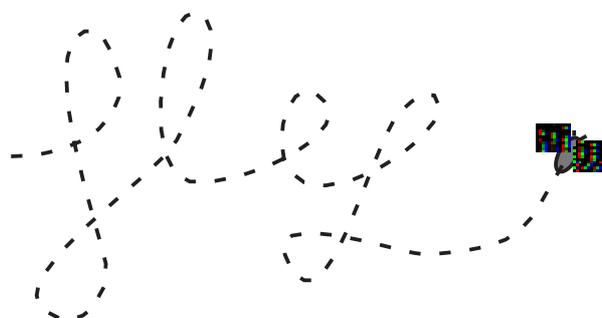
motorbikes being ridden in 'no cycling' areas, and anglers having matches in lock pounds and even using lock landing stages. Here the enforcement should be by the angling clubs which are supposed to police their events, but surely BW could make more money if they leased direct?

Your regional secretaries commented that BW seem to be giving lip-service only to their legal requirement to consult. Are the number of user group meetings are being reduced? BW decides the agenda and the timing at their convenience. Trade users are now split from local boaters. It was

apparent there were discrepancies between different areas of the country as to the type of meetings held, e.g. whether to have a regional meeting, the number of user group meetings held and if and when minutes are produced.

Council will look at details of meetings in each region for comparison and raise the issue at the 'Corridor Issues' meeting in July.

Byeeeeeeeeee



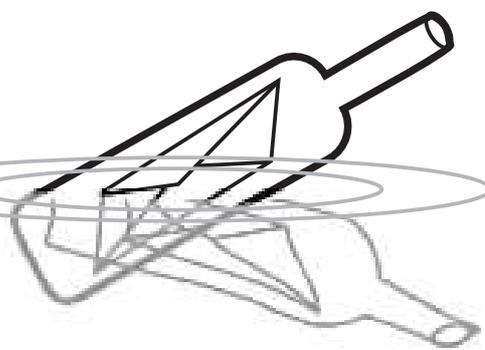
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## LEEDS AND LIVERPOOL CANAL TO BE EXTENDED

A recent edition of the Railway & Canal Historical Society newsletter has reported that British Waterways has now formally applied for planning permission to extend the L&L Canal by 3.5 miles from Stanley Dock, Vauxhall to the Pier Head and central and south docks in Liverpool.

This major project will include the excavation of Trafalgar Dock, creating 470 metres of new channel with a new lock and road bridge to be built at the northern end of the new link at Princes Dock, where it will flow to the plaza at the Pier Head and past the future Fourth Grace development into Canning Dock. There is also the prospect of a cruise liner terminal at the Pier Head, capable of accommodating large ships like the new RMS Queen Mary II.

# LETTERS



## Seeking harmony

The 2004 March News confirms NABO policy in favour of an integrated national system of charges for the public waterways, and supporting interim steps towards this goal.

Fine. Except for one cited example of a favourable step -- the proposed harmonisation of charges across EA's three regions. This harmonisation will actually impede the creation of a uniform national system, and be very expensive for many boaters, so I believe NABO should be opposing it strongly.

EA intends to repeal all of its current charging powers, and replace them with much broader ones. Then, it hopes immediately to apply the system of charges it now uses on the Thames to its other regions, and to pull many more boats into its charging net.

The Thames charges are based on "Length x Beam". The other regions' charges are based on length only. This means that applying the Thames system to the Medway and the Anglian waterways will result in a

significant increase in charges for the many broad-beam boats (i.e. river cruisers) now on the latter waters. Moreover, EA's new powers would allow it to insist that all craft on off-channel private waters (marinas, etc.) register and pay annual charges. These craft now pay only when they actually use the EA's navigations. Both these aspects are clearly against boaters' interests.

Worse, though, the Thames system is fundamentally incompatible with the length-based charging system BW has recently confirmed it will keep for the foreseeable future. So, if EA insists on continuing to use the Thames system, an integrated national system will be impossible. This again is not what boaters want, and is also against the direction from government to to EA and BW achieve an integrated system.

The problem is that EA is putting the barge before the horse. The first step should be for EA, BW, and other authorities to agree what the national charging system will look like, and get users' approval for the scheme. Only then should EA's

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



powers be changed, and its new powers should be no more than are needed to implement the agreed system. With those powers in place, EA should apply the new system across all its regions, including the Thames, thus achieving a real step towards the national harmonisation we all want.

EA's change of powers requires an Order under the Transport & Works Act. If there is substantial public objection, passage of the Order will require a public inquiry. EA has confirmed that it cannot afford to fund such an inquiry, so significant objection will cause it to drop the Order.

But EA really wants harmonisation. This gives boaters considerable clout. They can use the possibility of objection to persuade EA to work with BW to produce the proposed charging system before the Order is brought forward.

NABO Council is strangely reluctant to acknowledge how seriously negative the EA's plans are for boaters. Especially if you want a national system, or if you have a broad-beam boat, I hope you will join me in persuading the Council it is letting us down badly on this one.

Adrian Stott

Barge Onx

## Alcohol Limits for Boaters

I have read somewhere that the IWA has called for the vast majority of boaters to be exempted from the blood alcohol limits and testing regime contained within the Railways & Transport Safety Act 2003. They apparently think it is inappropriate to include vessels under 22 metres in length, and incapable of speeds exceeding 17 knots on most inland waterways.

I fail to understand why anyone should wish to condone drunkenness on the inland waterways. If my boat were to be involved in an accident (God forbid that it be fatal) I would expect the full force of the law to be applied if the master of the other vessel was drunk or drugged so as to be incapable of exercising proper control.

I think this law is one that no one can argue with. If anyone is irresponsible enough to boat whilst under the influence they should not be boating. I hope NABO will adopt a zero-tolerance policy as far as alcohol and boating is concerned.

Stephen Peters (the very same!)

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