

## THE MAGAZINE OF THE



President: Bill O'Brien J.P.

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# ISSUE 4/05 - June 2005

**BWAF & Ombudsman Cttee/ Edge Pledge**

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## 2005 CALENDAR

<b>Council meeting</b>	<b>Copy date</b>
July 16th	July 23rd
Sept 17th	Sept 24th
<b>Nov 19th A.G.M.</b>	
Nov 26th	Dec 3th

# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

It's great to be boating again. I have had a week or two to forget meetings and admire the views. Looking down on Church Minshull in the evening sun was tonic to the soul, even though we were on one of those mooring places wrested from those who like to chill out in the middle of nowhere and stamped with a 48 hour limit.

Not so the chance to forget meetings altogether, it is my duty to report. The BW O & A ones are covered later.

## Environment Agency meetings

Another feast for the eye is the view from the EA offices on the 26th floor of Millbank Towers, and I saw it twice. For the National Navigation Users Forum it was a bit misty, but that was made up for by the vastly improved conduct of the meeting. EA were showing national user groups some respect at last. The chairman was John Edmunds, the 'navigation champion' on the Environment Agency board of directors, and he fielded questions on his role which was very illuminating.

A week later I went to the EA Harmony Forum, the first get together of the group which will be consulted on the way EA uses its powers under its new Order, should that ever get through the Civil Service gauntlet.

From the boater's point of view the most serious issue is how EA can create a fair and equitable charging structure consistent across all its waters, and hopefully compatible with BW as well. The main argument is whether boat size matters and which dimensions should be measured. I am very keen to know your views on this.

## Membership

Does size matter for NABO? We seem to have come under fire on membership



figures, but it is obvious that if you only take full individual members the figures are smaller than if you include the membership of affiliate clubs, associates, family members etc.

Does it matter? Of course we would like people to join so they can benefit from what we have on offer, and we need the support, both 'by coin and deed' that they give. However in the eyes of the authorities NABO is the voice of the 50,000 boat owners on inland waters. Having more of them as members improves our credibility, but so does our ability to communicate with them, something that becomes more difficult as numbers increase and the hierarchy grows.

We can also rightly claim that every one of our members is there to support the cause of the boat owner, not for social or monetary reasons. Never mind the width, feel the quality!

In the meantime let's hope the summer is as good as promised and you enjoy as much of it as you can afloat.

*Stuart*

# EDGE PLEDGE?

We've had the Veg Pledge, but what we need now is an Edge Pledge. I have cruised more than 150 miles so far in the last month or two and whatever improvement BW's winter work has made is becoming invisible from the water, as no attempt seems to be being made to maintain it.

I am beginning to feel that BW is deliberately using vegetation to discourage casual mooring, as hinted at in a statement by its ecologist Jonathan Brickland: *"In rural areas the Guidelines suggest that a 100m cut to the water's edge every 600m will cater for informal mooring and can ensure that boaters don't try to moor up where it could be inappropriate or unsafe, perhaps because of the depth or for biodiversity reasons."*

I have seen very little notice taken even of this one-in-six concession to our requests. BW are aware there is a congestion issue and yet still expect boaters to moor bow against stern on limited visitor moorings, and then be hounded on by time limits. What chance is there of enjoying the peace and quiet of the waterways if they are denied the opportunity to stop elsewhere by rank upon rank of nettles, stings at the ready against invasion from the water.

A month or two back, BW Press Office was even so proud as to ask me for a 'sound bite' for a press release. I don't know if they have dared publish it and I'm not sure if I would want them to, bearing in mind what I am seeing now. For the record I wrote:-

*"NABO is delighted that BW has taken our concerns about waterside vegetation seriously. It is not just a*



W&B Canal, near Hadzor

*matter of appearance but also safety in being able to see what is coming round the bend. There is also the matter of finding firm ground when jumping ashore and everybody needs to know where the water's edge is. Of course amenity matters too. When we are afloat it is all we have as a garden and we are very pleased to see it tended."*

We would be pleased, but only where it happens. BW's External Relations Manager (note the new title), Eugene Baston, has been afloat on the Worcester & Birmingham and praises the mix of cut and uncut banks. I don't agree, the length past Hadzor has never seen an edge to edge cut and the towpath is invisible from the water, with mature trees growing by the piling, and there are very few cut banks elsewhere where one might want to moor in the country.

Not only is it difficult to moor, but I feel rural canals are getting scruffy and unkempt looking again. There is a subtle distinction between allowing wild plants to grow for 'biodiversity'



Stretton Aqueduct

and letting them grow because it is easier and cheaper not to cut them. This is especially obvious nearer human habitation where houses on the offside take so much care over their surroundings yet the towpath side is a mess. It really is a shame when features like the decorative ironwork of the Stretton Aqueduct on the Shropshire Union is getting swamped by weeds and steerers can't even see where the coping stones are.

## Nettles = Neglect?

I don't suppose BW management would welcome a view of nettles through their patio doors (or in a royal palace garden), so why do they expect us boaters to be delighted with a view of nettles from our boat windows.

I hope you will back me when I say that there is no place for hostile plants on the water's edge. Why should customers or towpath visitors, many of whom would like to enjoy the canals in the summer in shorts and sandals, have to get stung, scratched or stabbed for whatever 'ecological benefit' we get from allowing nasty weeds to grow unchecked.

I have sent these pictures to Robin Evans and await a formal response. Informally he said to me, '*You want the canals too tidy, you do*', and suggested we could always bash nettles down with our gangplanks. Maybe he wants to recreate the claustrophobic effect of Hampton Court Maze!

Stuart



Can you see the angler?  
Can he see you?

Is that a tree?  
On the nearside?  
Obscuring vision?  
It soon will be



# BW NOW OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE?

Following the streamlining of the Internal Complaints Procedure and the new guidelines for user group meetings, the two remaining parts of BW's Openness and Accountability proposals have been realised :-

- the British Waterways Advisory Forum (BWAFF), initially called the National Consultative Council.
- the committee to appoint and ensure the independence of the Ombudsman,



## **BWAFF**

On 11th May 2005, in the Moot Court of the Law Faculty, University College London, BWAFF held its first meeting where it elected its officers by secret ballot. As explained in earlier articles about BWAFF, we must reiterate that these officers are expected to be impartial and not promote the interests of the bodies who nominated them or those they belong to. (See page 8 for a list of BWAFF members)

Howard Pridding of the British Marine Federation (back row centre of the photo) is to be Chairman, and David Fletcher his deputy for a year. Yes – the ex Chief Executive of BW! – nominated by the Royal Yachting Association but also a vice president of the IWA.

Your chairman, representing NABO at the meeting, reported the balloting was conducted impeccably. It was a shame that David Fletcher was not present to answer questions before the election, so nobody could query the consequences of the CE and ex-CE of BW head to head at meetings! One might also question if enough time was given for voluntary bodies to prepare for nominations and for their candidates to promote themselves. It so happened that NABO had a Council meeting within the period so was able to respond with due consideration.

## **OMBUDSMAN COMMITTEE**

We are a bit disappointed to report that no private boater on BW waters was selected to serve on the 'arms length' Waterways Ombudsman Committee (WOC), even though licence holders are potentially the most likely users of the scheme.

There are places on the committee for two from BW, two 'non-aligned' members, and three user representatives. The latter were nominated by the user and stakeholder groups eligible for BWAFF membership and invited to submit election statements for distribution to groups delegates. Sealed envelopes containing the completed ballot papers were then collected at the beginning of the BWAFF meeting.

The 'winners' were two hire boat operators, one of whom did not present an election statement, and one 'legal eagle' from the Royal Yachting Association.

It would be wrong to say BWAf appointed the candidates, as that would imply some open discussion before the choice. The election was done and dusted before the delegates became a true forum and could decide on how they might choose their representatives. Nor had the working group which set up the BWAf constitution been consulted. Had it been, it might well have applied the same 'constituency' principles it used for BWAf to partition the electorate and the appointments may then have been more representative of the actual users of the Scheme. NABO fielded its allowed maximum of three candidates. This may have divided the votes, but Council couldn't refuse valid applicants purely in the interests of future tactics.

NABO has voiced its concerns to BW and Prof Jowell even though there is little chance of changing anything. With more vocal members using terms like '*stitch up*', something had to be done. We suggested that WOC co-opts someone seen to be more directly representative of BW's boating customers if for no other reason to recognise their importance.

The first task of WOC was to appoint a new Ombudsman. We will have to put our faith in the new committee to find someone of the same integrity as Stephen Edell.

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## NABO and the RYA

Up till now there has been a strange symbiosis between the RYA and other boating groups. NABO has had a seat on the RYA Inland Navigations Committee (INC) which has meant that a representative of NABO has theoretically been able to help shape RYA's policies on inland navigation issues, even though the spokesperson may have had no membership or obligation to it.

At least NABO has been able to keep tabs on what the RYA is being told on inland waterway issues, if not providing the information itself. However the INC is not particularly influential within the RYA as a whole, being a sub group of a legal and general committee. The only part the RYA seems to play on the canal network in the eyes of most boaters is overseeing helmsman, diesel maintenance and VHF Marine Band Radio courses.

Now it wants to focus its activities and is replacing the INC with an Inland Navigation Forum which will no longer include non-members. Time will tell if this will raise the profile of inland issues within the association enough to merit inclusion its magazine, but it cuts out NABO, the IWA and other external bodies.

However the outside world will still see the RYA as influential on the canals, particularly with the previous BW customer relations manager (Paul Wagstaffe) and Chief Executive (David Fletcher) on its new committee.

# British Waterways Advisory Forum

## List of Organisations per Constituency

### ***Members that primarily represent the interests of leisure and non-commercial boaters.***

Amateur Rowing Association  
Association of Waterways' Cruising Clubs  
Barge Association, The  
Boat Museum  
British Canoe Union  
Country Land & Business Association  
Electric Boat Association  
National Association of Boat Owners  
National Community Boats Association  
Residential Boat Owners' Association  
Royal Yachting Association  
Boating Association, The  
Steam Boat Association of Great Britain  
Wooden Boat Association

### **Members that primarily represent the interests of those engaged in trade or business**

Association of Pleasure Craft Operators  
APCO Hotel Boat Section  
British Hire Cruiser Federation  
British Marine Federation  
Canal Boat Builders' Association  
The Yacht Harbour Association

### **Members that primarily represent the interests of anglers**

Anglers' Conservation Association  
NAFAC  
National Federation of Anglers

### **Members that primarily represent the interests of walkers and those interested in access to waterway towpaths (other than when incidental to activities addressed in the other constituencies);**

Inland Waterways Association  
Ramblers' Association

## **Members that primarily represent the interests of cyclists, horse riders and horse boaters**

British Horse Society

Horse Boating Society

International Mountain Bike Association (UK)

Note that the Commercial Boat Operators Association and the Historic Narrowboat Owners Club are not listed. We have yet to determine which constituency they officially belong to.

Note also that the Inland Waterways Association has joined the 'the towpath walkers' constituency. This is a shrewd move on its behalf as in the 'Agenda Meeting' part of the BWA constitution it is stated that:-

*31 For every Agenda Meeting, the Chairman of the Forum shall issue an invitation to at least one member from each constituency who shall be entitled but not be required to attend the meeting by one representative*

*32. Subject to the requirement of the preceding paragraph, the Chairman shall have discretion in deciding which members to invite to send a representative to an Agenda Meeting, but shall take into account the desirability of*

*32.1. issuing invitations to members that have a particular interest in items of business considered at the preceding General Meeting, or to be considered at or next General Meeting;*

*32.2. rotating invitations amongst members within each constituency;*

*32.3. having available at the Agenda Meeting any particular expertise or knowledge pertinent to the matters expected to be discussed;*

*32.4. ensuring the number of persons present at the meeting enables a fully participative dialogue to take place between all persons present; and*

*32.5. any other considerations that will be conducive to the purpose of the Forum.*

Taking 31 and 32.2, the IWA could insist on being invited to every other agenda meeting unless the rambles had a hot issue on the table, whereas had they joined the boating constituency they could only exercise their right to attend one in fourteen. The chairman's job is not going to be an easy one.

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## **PARLIAMENTARY WATERWAYS GROUP**

At the PWG's 2005 AGM, Bill O'Brien was thanked for his period as Chairman and presented with a 'Buckby' water can painted by Phil Speight as a token of appreciation. Bill, who is NABO President, did not stand for Normanton at the last election and plans to enjoy involvement in the local community and not having to commute to London

Tom Laxton, MP for Derby North and owner of a narrowboat in Sawley Marina, is taking the Chair. A membership pack will be on its way!

# THE MAKING OF "A VOYAGE BETWEEN TWO SEAS"

Part 2 of A PERSONAL VIEW by Stuart Sampson

## CANAL TURN

If you remember, at the end of the last episode, the *Lady Galadriel* was crossing Liverpool Docks on her way at last towards Leeds with a crew aboard filming for BBC tv North. The day before she had nearly sunk in Stanley Bottom Lock.

The BWB men had not sorted out the lock properly, they were still probing the depths with long handled rakes, hoping to clear the obstruction from the lower gates. The tools were but six inches longer than the depth, but they won in the end and we panned up. There were short delays for rain, but, when the light was right, the camera rolled and the power of water rushing into the chambers was added to the images of sad decay that typified the docks. Our BWB friend was also immortalised, silhouetted above a lock gate, shouting something incomprehensibly Liverpuddlian over the roar.

The Waterways men worked the locks for us, bringing us up to the long pound, that curves north to east through miles of council estates. We had waited some hours above these locks on the way down, and I had got the boatman's stool out on to the bank, and sat blocking in some lettering. My crew had gone down the flight to help, but then I found I was not alone, a gang of lads had come up and were standing behind me watching me painting. It made me very uneasy, but eventually one of them said, "Nice barge, Mister" and they were gone.

We set off towards Aintree with the camera on board, and Keith seemed to get inspired. A moving viewpoint adds an extra dimension to filming, and the camera was looking at the bridges, the piles of junk, an angler... A particular favourite was the tracery of the pylons that straddled the canal here, a moving silhouette against the sky. The water is so clear that looking down you see weed wafting through the mesh of supermarket trolleys. Near Aintree the boot lid of a Morris 1100 breaks the surface. The rest was there so we had to steer a wide berth

Aintree was filmed, the light was getting low and we had little time, but it had to be done so we could clear the town for a quiet night's mooring. We saw nothing of the race-course from the boat. At nights I stayed on board with my crew, but the film crew went to a hotel. We arranged to meet near Latham.

We had covered some miles before they met us. They wanted to film a suitable swing bridge. We found one, the camera was set up and Pete leapt into action with verve, dismissing the handcuff lock in a flurry of manual dexterity, waving back the oncoming traffic and delivering his words to camera while heaving open the bridge. I chugged regally through, and then it all had to be done again. One thing the *Lady* takes exception to is going backwards, and without the expanse of the docks, turning is rarely possible. However she was backed through and it all was repeated from a different angle.

Swinq bridges are a curse of level rural navigations, and the Leeds and Liverpool in particular, where minor roads cross the cut. To delay you further, a handcuff lock and chain is used to deter vandals. I think the designer must have been a Chinese metal puzzle addict.

The rural aspect has its compensations, that part of Lancashire is very peaceful. Like a jewel on this baize cushion lies Burscough Junction. Built around the point where the Rufford Branch leaves the main line for the Ribble estuary, this hamlet is a pure waterways settlement. It is almost inaccessible by road, as we found on our car explorations. The branch descends an attractive flight of locks, there is a crescent of cottages, an inn and that amazing dry-dock.

It would be most unfair to deprive the readers of the dry dock story, just because it happened on the westward journey. It was a Friday that the wind blew, and a momentary loss of concentration lost me my line and we crunched into the sloping stone canal bank. We pushed off and got within sight of the junction when the engine showed signs of distress. We tied up and found all the coolant had escaped. All the hoses were intact, and so it had to be the tube round the outside of the stern swim that must be leaking. So we set off on foot to the Burscough BWB depot to see if we could use their dry dock.

Being a Friday, 'POETS' day to those looking forward to their weekend, (we weren't), I was relieved to find someone willing to help, and four men were dispatched to the dock. The dock is a great basin, some hundred



feet by thirty, with rows of 'T' shaped stocks upon which you could maroon boats by letting the water out. In fact the dock is kept empty, to prevent leakage flooding the cottage cellars. The canal water is held back by a set of stop planks with their ends resting in grooves in the sides of the dock mouth. Before work could start, a pile of ash had to be removed from where it had been delivered, on the bed of the dock, and piled on the bank. Only then could the dock be filled, so the plug was put in to the drain culvert, and with ropes round pins driven through each end of the plank, the top plank was lifted out. A cascade of water fell over the remaining planks and we sat back for an hour as the level crept up in the capacious basin.

Eventually the pressure was released, and one by one the remaining fifteen-foot planks floated up and were manhandled on to the bank. By then of course, there was no sign of the stocks, but, as the *Lady* was led in with two ropes each end, I realised that there were white marks on the bank stonework that lined up with the stocks. The *Lady* was positioned seemingly in the middle of this great lagoon, and the stop planks dropped back in. The most suitably dressed of

our hosts, in swimming trunks and wellies, trod on the pile of planks to force them down each time one was added. The great moment had arrived. Sue, from my crew, was to officiate in the plug pull. The drain culvert was covered by a board, linked by a chain to a plank arranged as a see-saw on the bank. As Sue sat on the other end there was a gulp and a gurgle, then we waited.



For the first ten minutes nothing seemed to happen. I walked down the locks and checked the water emerging from the drain channel, returning to find the level had dropped an inch or two. After a time there seemed to be turbulence round the stop planks, and we found out what the ash was for, namely throwing into the water upstream of the planks in the hope it would be sucked into and seal the gaps. The water inside soon clouded with ash, and we realised we had a major leak on our hands. One of the men disappeared with a rake and returned with a few propeller chewed polythene sacks. These were plunged in by the planks and the flow abated. Half an hour later, two feet or so lower, no more sacks or ash, and there was still too much leakage. The *Lady* was now almost out, leaning slightly on her shallow V bottom. As a

last resort the men got a spade, and putting new meaning to the curse "sod it", dug some turves and plugged the leak.

By the time we had got the nearest boatyard to come and gas-weld the fracture it was too late to refill the dock, so the men lent us a ladder and left us to sleep on board. We noticed that a great blue polythene bubble was bulging from an inch gap between the planks, and it was not long before it burst. The drain coped with the flow though and we went dry shod to the pub. The boat had a curious spring under foot when you moved, perched up there on stocks, but we slept well and were greeted next morning by the men, who gave us the morning papers to read, filled the dock and waved to us as we chugged on our way again.

Filming at Burscough Junction put demands on my steering, I had to turn the *Lady* at speed through the arch of the bridge so the dock and locks beyond would be revealed to the camera on the bow. Little would viewers know that we had spent a night high and dry on those stocks, the only clue being the wood blacks used to level the *Lady* so we wouldn't fall out of our bunks! Nor would viewers be aware of the time needed to take on water, empty toilets, get provisions and the other things that we did at Burscough village, having left the film crew to go and film the first shots of the programme on board the Mersey ferry.

"Wigan Pier at eleven hundred hours", read the schedule for the next day, and we had our work cut out to make it. The locks into Wigan were not the best maintained, and, since the film

could only afford to cover the highlights on the Lancashire side, this was one of the long hauls between locations. Where is Wigan Pier anyway?

## TO CONTINUITY!

We cruised into Wigan on time after an early start, and were faced by the camera as we approached. This caused my crew to take cover, leaving me, in the wrong clothes, steering. Part of the unreality of filming was that my crew should not be seen, the locks work themselves if Pete is on board, and that we should always be seen wearing the same clothes. Thus in the interests of the nose, I changed when off shot.

Pete was to stand on what they deemed to be the "pier", which was up a short branch not normally used, and so not dredged. Keith was on the bow as we came in on a smooth approach, while Pete said his piece from the bank. The first attempt failed as we stopped short, but I discovered that if I approached at full speed, the *Lady's* bows would ride to a beautiful smooth halt on the sediment of coal dross. Between takes I had them film the removal of a polythene bag from the propeller, as a typical activity of the canal boatman!

There are twenty three locks in Wigan, discounting the approach, and they filmed the first few, giving up and going back to their hotels when they had the shots they wanted. At this point the BWB helpers felt their act was over too, so we were left to finish the flight off on our own before dark.

There comes a time when sheer fatigue makes you clumsy, and this was nearly the end for Josie. She joined us to attend to our culinary

needs for the whole eastward journey, and was putting on a stalwart effort at winding paddles too. On the Wigan flight the ground paddles are worked by a vertical square shaft which you turn with a windlass. Josie had not engaged the windlass properly when she threw her weight against it When it slipped she fell in above the lock. Being very tired, and with the suction from the part opened paddle, she floundered and had to be rescued by a passer-by. From the boat in the empty chamber I knew little of what was happening, until we reached her level and she came aboard to dry out. Considering continuity, one wonders what would be thought of a boat manned apparently by Pete and I, with ladies smalls hanging up inside!

Nine miles of level pound faced us the next morning, which they chose not to film in spite of its historical significance. The stretch was originally dug by the Lancaster Canal Co. and was bound for Kendal. There is still a vestigial branch at the bottom of Johnson Hill Locks.

There are two reasons for repeating things when filming, one is to get a choice of angles, the other is when something goes wrong. The latter is usually overcast with clouds of despair, but for me, at Johnson Hillock Top Lock, the clouds had a silver, or rather frothy, lining. There is a pub, and we were to celebrate with Pete bringing me out a pint of beer. Continuity demanded that the glasses should always be full at the start of each take, so the more things went wrong . . .

Need I say more?

To be continued

*RCR Advert*

## NOTICES

### 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'.

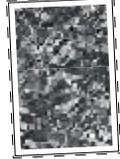
If you have not been given the new word please e-mail: [webmaster@nabo.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@nabo.org.uk) with your name and membership number to be given the password, and, if you want, to be put onto the bulletin list.

### POST FOR NABO NEWS

For issue 5/05 the editor will be afloat so please send contributions by email to [news.editor@nabo.org.uk](mailto:news.editor@nabo.org.uk)

Failing that, at least one week before the copy date to

48 Old Lane, Bramhope,  
Leeds LS16 9AZ



## EVENTS

### THE NATIONAL

**STAND HELP NEEDED**  
**August Bank Holiday**  
**Preston Brook**

Even if you can only manage an hour or two it must be worth a free ticket. Please contact Aileen on 0770 3567764

### PLEASE DON'T BIN YOUR ENVELOPE

The label gives your membership number and may be needed as evidence of membership when applying for discounts (e.g on page 16) or to access the members-only Website pages.

Text your waterway reports to:

**07930 419 981**

**07961 001814**

**07989 441674**

### REMINDER

**EA STRONG STREAM LINES**

Call **0845 988 1188**

then, when prompted, Dial 1  
then 'quickdial':-

**011131** for Thames

**032112** for Nene

**03321** for G. Ouse

Also **011132** for Thames works



# RIVERS



## PORT OF LONDON NOTICES TO MARINERS

The PLA has recently published the 2005 edition of its Permanent Notices to Mariners which users of the tidal Thames are urged to read and carry on board at all times.

These notices cover topics that are unaffected by the passage of time, unlike the other NtMs that NABO receives from the PLA (ask our Rivers Secretary for information about PLA, Port of Bristol and EA notices). Numbered P1 to P28 many of them are really more applicable to merchant ships but unless you gain an understanding of how others are required to operate you may unwittingly place your own vessel in danger.

The general information includes VHF channels in use by the Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) and Thames Barrier Navigation Centre. Notice P7 covers vessel speed and reminds masters that they must navigate their vessels at all times at a speed commensurate with local circumstances and conditions; and, in particular, anyone who navigates in a manner likely to injure or endanger persons or other vessels are liable to be fined (see last NABO News for report of a private boat owner caught for navigating "without due care and attention").

Notice P8 reminds boaters that vessels turning about in a fairway must sound four short blasts followed by either one or two short blasts dependent upon whether they are turning to starboard or port. Worth knowing - used on many rivers.

Notice P10 relates to the radio watch to be maintained on VHF Channel 14 by all reporting vessels and those exceeding 20m in length between Teddington and the open sea. All pleasure vessels are recommended to listen in on this frequency for safety reasons.

Notice P10 is perhaps the most relevant to owners of narrow boats on the tidal Thames. It applies only to narrow boats of between 20 and 25 metres overall length which are in transit between Brentford and Teddington Locks. Normally, vessels of this length are required to keep watch on VHF Channel 14 but the PLA grants a dispensation to those without VHF and requires them to establish telephone contact with London VTS at the Thames Barrier Navigation Centre on 020 8855 0315 immediately before and after their voyage.

For those intrepid members who enjoy sea-like conditions Notice P23 describes the procedures for passage through the Thames Barrier control zone. Budding James Bonds should read Notice P27 which describes the security exclusion zones adjacent to the Houses of Parliament extending 70 metres from the bank, and a similar zone along the Albert Embankment extending 15 metres into the river adjacent the top secret MI6 HQ. Oops, we've given the game away now!

## **MIDDLE LEVEL NAVIGATION TO COST?**

The Middle Level Commissioners are hot on the heels of the EA in applying for a Transport and Works Act Order to gain the powers to levy fees, apply safety standards and set appropriate navigation rules. They have tendered a draft Order and Byelaws which are similar to the EA ones, which is welcome in as much as they seek 'harmony' with the Nene and Great Ouse waters on either side, and intend to formalise reciprocal agreements with the EA for charging boats crossing the boundaries.

Apart from byelaws covering the removal of weed ropes, ice skating stoppages and other things specific to the fenland waterways, we cannot see anything boaters on other waters would be unaccustomed to in the proposals. There are no details of the fees and, like with the EA, the BSS is not mentioned by name in the text but the accompanying blurb from the MLC shows they intend to use it to set their construction standards.

The IWA has been involved in the drafting consultation but we feel it should at least be checked over by NABO

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## **MARINE VHF RADIO LATEST NEWS**

NABO has responded to the consultation document issued by Ofcom seeking the views of users on future licensing changes.

They have proposed that, in the future, it may be feasible for boat owners to print off their own licence discs in respect of VHF radio installed in their boats. There would be no licence fee to pay. An alternative suggestion is that licences should no longer be required for vessels remaining in UK waters. We supported both proposals with an emphasis on the latter procedure that would mirror the practice in the USA and New Zealand. If there is to be no licence fee, then it seems logical to take the next step which is to abolish the licence altogether. Vessels proceeding abroad would still require a licence. We hope this enlightened suggestion will come to fruition.

On the subject of marine VHF, NABO has taken up with Ofcom the apparent shortcomings of the database of Maritime Mobile Service Identity (or MMSI) numbers (allocated to boats with Digital Selective Calling VHF radios). It is possible for anyone to search the International Telecommunication Union website [www.itu.int/MARS](http://www.itu.int/MARS) to ascertain the MMSI of a vessel to enable a radio call to be made. It appears that the information has not been updated by ITU and Ofcom are aware of this and are working with ITU to resolve the problem. The Radio Licensing Centre at Bristol issues the MMSI numbers on request and passes the information to ITU and to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. We are assured that the MCA has the information on a daily basis so the safety of users at sea is not presently being compromised.

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# THAMES WATERWAY PLAN

The Environment Agency has issued its draft plan for the non-tidal River Thames which falls within its remit as navigation authority and has sought the views of users and members of the River Thames Alliance (which NABO supports but somehow overlooked paying the membership fee - problem now sorted out!). We have responded appropriately, as we did to the earlier consultation in October 2004 which helped the EA to formulate the current draft plan.

The plan is divided into a number of themes and, naturally, we have responded to the sections relating to boating and navigation. We are generally supportive of the policies within the plan but have pointed out that making it easier for people to take up low cost boating is not simply a matter of canoe portage points, campsites for rowers and white water for canoeists. What about a low cost registration for first time boaters?

Boating features strongly as one would expect and the statistics are worthy of note. There are 54 rowing clubs, 6 universities, 30 Oxford colleges and 29 schools registered with the Amateur Rowing Association's Thames Region (45% of their total membership of 20,000). There are also 21 canoe clubs representing over 3000 members on the river. A further 21 sailing clubs mainly based on reservoirs and gravel workings account for another 3,675 participants.

On the powered boating scene, things are not so bright. There are 32 motor boat and yacht clubs along the Thames between Teddington and Lechlade, some affiliated to the RYA and many belonging to the Association of Thames Yacht Clubs, representing 2,500 boaters. The total number of powered craft on the river reached its peak in the 1960's and through to the early 1980's. Since then, the number of holiday hire boats has fallen dramatically by 85% to just 123 last year. Likewise, the number of private power craft has fallen 30% since 1990 and now stands at just 9,000 craft. They represent 16% of all privately owned powered boats on the inland waterways of Britain.



As a matter of interest, the complete figures for the boating "share of the market" are British Waterways 39%, Broads 14%, Thames 16%, Windermere 11%, Loch Lomond 6%, Anglian rivers 6%, Medway 1%, Other navigations 7%.

There are 5,600 permanent berths along the Thames providing moorings for 62% of the private powered boats registered on the river. The remainder are thought to have end-of-garden moorings (maybe as many as 3,000 boats), whilst some are trailable boats and maybe some do not have a mooring! The number of available berths has declined in parallel with the decline in boat numbers in recent years.

Visitor moorings are the most requested area for improvement by boaters on the river. The draft waterway standard is for 24 hour / overnight moorings to be provided within 30 minutes cruising time, but this is not yet achieved at popular sites or along the higher reaches of the river. It is recognised that the increasing number of steel (and aluminium?) narrow boats has affected visitor moorings because of the length of the craft reducing the number of craft able to moor. The partial answer must be to encourage "breasting-up" of narrowboats when mooring. You cannot expect plastic cruisers to relish tying up alongside a steel boat or being sandwiched between them.

The upper reaches of the river have only one quarter the volume of boat traffic compared with the busiest downstream reaches. Last year the peak was reached in August with nearly 70,000 boat movements through locks and just under 160,000 total lockages. The busiest lock was Boveney and the quietest was Blakes Lock - understandably because this is off the main river at the entrance to the Kennet & Avon canal.

If you would like to contribute personally to the debate go to the EA website [www.visitthames.co.uk/twp](http://www.visitthames.co.uk/twp) and follow their instructions.



## **EA NOTICE - PUBLIC POWER AT LOCKS**

At the locks where this facility is available (see below) we will set the timer within the hydraulic system to be on public power from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. during British Summer Time. In winter this will change to 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

We are trialling a new system at Sonning Lock for public power i.e. at a slower speed. If successful, this will be fitted in new lock gate replacement schemes and depending on funds available, it will be retrofitted in existing hydraulic systems.

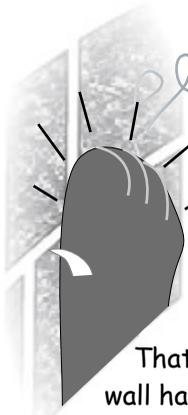
Instructions for the use of the lock with public power will be available on the pedestal.

Sites with public power available:

Molesey to Romney inclusive, Boulters, Hambleden and Sonning

EILEEN McKEEVER

Thames Waterway Manager & Harbourmaster



# CAT on the prowl at Council

That damned fly on the wall has been annoying me for months! So, I crept into the latest council meeting determined to side-swipe it. But it's buzzed off on a traditional boating holiday.... on a fly boat, I hear.

I'm the pub cat. Council don't like me, just because I try to untie shoe laces and knock coffee cups off counters. So, I crept under the table... the purrrrrfect place to eavesdrop.

That new bloke, the one who trapped me two meetings ago and threw me out the door, well he's been invited on to the BSS Technical Committee. There he'll be able to carry on the good work of Trevor Rogers. NABO will continue to have its paws directly into monitoring boat safety regulations.

Council tried out various bios. It was thought, with the NABO logo, they could be given away with application forms or sold at rallies, but the costs are perhaps too high. It was decided to leave the decision

for a streeeeetch. Meanwhile certain council members, getting their claws in, will give them an extended trial.

Instead of claiming for fuel, from now on council members are to receive half the Inland Revenue allowance per mile for using their own cars. That's just 20p per mile, but at least it helps towards wear and tear as they travel up and down the country between the cats eyes [ugh] on your behalf.

Council is purr-suing River Canal Rescue to work out a way to give their new clients associate NABO membership for the first year as a reciprocal offer to theirs, which reduce RCR fees to NABO members. More money available for Kitty Kat then!

No boat owners are represented on the Ombudsman Committee after the recent election. This seems unfortunate, especially as the majority of complaints to the ombudsman come from boat owners. NABO is monitoring the situation very closely and will pounce on anything fishy.

Talking of pouncing, 48 hour moorings are springing up on the Shropshire Union. This is good in some ways, except some are taking up what used to be very good 14 day moorings. Us cats like to linger longer. Is this a deliberate policy? The chairman and secretary are

cruising the Shroppie soon. They will report back on the situation.

At a recent EA Harmony Forum, there was talk about ways of harmonising licence fees between Thames and Anglian regions. This sparked a chat about ways to harmonise licence fees between BW and the EA. BW charge by length. The EA charge by length and width. Are there other ways? Suppose everyone was charged the same? Suppose it was done by berths aboard? What about if they were to charge by cabin space. How much room is there to swing a cat?

Questions have been raised about the true figures of NABO membership. Including family members and associate members, dogs, cats and parrots, it is well in excess of 3,000. A contributor to narrowboatworld.com got his sums wrong and came up with a figure of half this. Quite a-mew-sing, really.

A meeting will be held in early August with BW to review the half season report on Cut Crime. How bad is it? Where are the hot tin roofs? It will be decided how that information should be fed back to national and local government, and to police, to make the waterways a safer place to prowl.

Celia Kennedy needs to take a break from NABO business for personal reasons, which must, of course, come first. Thanks Celia for all your

hard work. Have a comforting rub round the legs.

Most of the council had fish and chips for dinner. It was good. I didn't get any! Tight lot!

Hope that fly's back next time. I have a boating holiday booked too..... on a catamaran, naturally.



PuSs - Why do they have to put all this on my favorite scratching posts?

# ££££ MONEY ££££

At our last AGM, Council was asked to look into trying to find a better deal for the Association's funds. There had been, and have again been, problems with our current bank, which had led a past treasurer to move all the funds into the same account: this does not pay interest. As the funds have grown, it would now be prudent to look to gain interest as every little helps. So, after much research into the different accounts available, new accounts have been opened with Barclays.

However, this means that those of you who pay by standing order will need to complete a new form, which has the details of the new account. Melanie, our membership secretary, will be sending these out as your renewal date approaches. We on Council appreciate the inconvenience this may cause you, and thank you in advance for your patience. We assure you that there is no increase in fees involved, just the change of payee account.

Members continue to ask if they can pay by direct debit. We have enquired about this, but NABO is not big enough: we would need a turn-over in excess of £1 million in order for it to be worthwhile for a bank to take on the cost of guaranteeing the correct usage of the DD system. Therefore, we only have Standing Orders available to us.

Should any member not already doing so wish to change to this method of payment of fees, please state this when you receive your renewal form.

*Carole Sampson - Gen Sec*

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## **Boater Quotes**

'Don't ever lend your boat to your son.'

'If yellow lines could float you would find them all the way down the canals.'



Enjoy it where you can! - towpath edge cut at Lower Bittell on the W&B

# LETTERS



## Where am I?

Your article on the use of OS map references, entitled "Where Am I?" begs the obvious question:

Is all this really necessary? Most boat owners use canal guides when cruising, and are not likely to be carrying a whole bunch of OS maps.

May I suggest some alternative methods, for those as lazy as myself

1. If trying to guide road users to a canal location, use the excellent Philip's Navigator Road Atlas. This, as far as I know, is the only road atlas that shows canals as clearly as it shows the roads. Even individual locks are clearly indicated.

(This also has OS grid squares - Ed)

2. If contacting the emergency services try giving them a bridge number.

(Preferably a bridge that has a public road on it!) Recently, having carelessly mislaid an appendix, I had to call an ambulance to my home and found that the emergency control room could not identify my address from the post code. Fortunately I live by a canal bridge because it transpired that they have location details of all the bridges, using the BW bridge numbers. I think you may find that this is true of most areas of the country.

3. If anyone still wants to use OS map references, and this is of course the most effective method in the long run, then why not obtain a list of these references for the bridges on your canal beforehand and carry it with you. (Perhaps Mr. Nicholson could be persuaded to publish it in the back of his canal guides. one day.) I was given list for Grand Union South, including the Northampton, Aylesbury and Wendover Arms, some time ago by those helpful people at British Waterways, it includes not only OS references but bridge names and local road names as well.

8W obviously have all this information on a database. If you were to speak nicely to them I am sure they would be happy to provide NABO with a listing for the complete canal network, from which you might then be able to provide members with local information.

John Cheeseborough

## Canaltime at Sawley

Following up the two mentions of Canaltime, Sawley, in May 2005 NABO Magazine - we (mooring at Sawley) must be just one of numerous boat crews who take Canal timers under our wing on the eastern T&M, and are fed up with it. Chris Deuchar makes the point twice in his book "A Boater's Guide to Boating"

that the eastern T&M wide locks are "abnormally vicious" - so what a baptism for first-timers apparently given little or no instruction!

However, it isn't as simple as "the goodwill of the private boater". We understand, from conversation with several Canaltime crews, that they are instructed that, when working up a wide lock, they should pass the centre rope round a bollard and give the free end to the steerer. Quite what use this is in a 'vicious lock', heaven knows.

On a recent trip, we caught up with a Canaltime ("O Lor", not another!) about to work up Stenson Lock. Very pleasant older couple; he eventually managed to get the centre rope up to the lockside - 'eventually' because the rope was so short that there was barely three feet of it past the bollard.

My wife (the diplomat) explained that the only option was to tie their rope on the bollard - which she showed them how to do, with a single hitch so that it could be loosed immediately if necessary, because Mrs Canaltime could not hold the rope and work the lock at the same time. Both the Canaltimers were seriously distressed that someone was 'taking over' and doing something with their boat that (they said) they had specifically been instructed not to do. The alternative, of their boat being under engine control only, not a good idea for the inexperienced. The big point must surely be "Who is liable if something goes wrong after someone other than Canaltime has 'done the instruction' " ?

Richard & Trish Smith, NB Ursula.

## Mail Redirect

My husband and I set up a mail re-direction service for boaters after experiencing quite a few dramas and traumas with receiving our mail.

There are two ways in which boaters can receive their mail anywhere in the country. If a long term traveller by doing a change of address using our P O Box number or if short term by using Royal Mail's re-direction service to our P O Box (charges available from a post office). After the mail arrives at our P O Box it is held by us until we give a forwarding address to either a Post Office, marina, pub or any other chosen address. Our service is tailored to suit each person's needs, from as little as one month to however long.

Our charges are £12 (minimum charge) per month for two names (any additional names please add £5 per name per month) and is payable by Standing Order or cheque.

If by chance we have more than one customer of the same name using the permanent change of address system, they will be issued with a reference number and ask that this number is quoted after their name on all their mail i.e. Mr John Smith (1234). This is a safeguard as we would hate mail to go to the wrong person.

We would ask, if possible, that we are given at least two or three days notice for each change of collection point (a phone call or text message to us is all that is needed) - start and finish dates for each address would be enormously helpful in case of unexpected delays.

A registration form and Standing Order form will be forwarded to each customer (the customer to send the Standing Order form direct to their bank). Upon receipt of the completed registration form and confirmation of their first payment, we will let them know they can use Mail Re-direct's address for their mail.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Geraldine Prescott

### **. . .and another**

"As the operator of a working hotelboat, mail forwarding is of crucial importance to our business. Perhaps your readers would be interested in looking at the small company called 'Mailbridge' who operate our mail forwarding. We have found them to be very reliable and cost effective. Further details of the 'mailbridge' service can be found at [www.mailbridge.co.uk](http://www.mailbridge.co.uk) or by telephoning 01948 710925."

Nick Scott.

Charter Hotel Narrowboat Willow

### **'Editorial'**

I am desperately trying to put this magazine to bed moored in Gloucester docks surrounded in boats with blue stickers all looking forward to our trip to Bristol.

Carole and willing helpers are beavering away shopping and preparing food for the 'Bash' and I am also trying to fit in various chores and preparations for the voyage.

I haven't got time to report fully on the two meetings I went to yesterday, NINF and PWG, save the references I have been able to work in.

If it's all a bit meagre this time, don't only blame me, I have had few contributions from anyone else so for the first time since I started I have been losing sleep about lack of material.

I'll say goodbye and hopefully go and meet a few intrepid members.

*Stuart*

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