

**INLAND NAVIGATION ISSUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS**

**NABO**



**NEWS**

- **BW Welcomes Survey Results**
- **New Website**
- **News from East and Northwest**



**Issue 1 – February 2010**

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## Contributions

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are always welcome. Anything from one line to 1000 words considered. Plain text in email is best, or Word. It all has to be re-formatted before use, but if lists, tables or emphasis are beneficial to your articles, we will do our best to reflect the styles.

Images or photos in JPEG format please. All to [nabonews@nabo.org.uk](mailto:nabonews@nabo.org.uk).

Letters or articles on paper also welcome, typed if possible. See inside back cover for address. Please ensure we can read your name!

### NABO E-mail Bulletins

Join or leave list through [www.nabo.org.uk/bulletin](http://www.nabo.org.uk/bulletin)

## 2010 CALENDAR

<b>Council meeting*</b>	<b>NN Copy date</b>
<b>6th Mar</b>	<b>13th Mar</b>
<b>17th Apr</b>	<b>26th Apr</b>
<b>5th June</b>	<b>12th June</b>
<b>10th July</b>	<b>17th July</b>
<b>4th Sep</b>	<b>9th Oct</b>
<b>20th Nov</b>	<b>AGM</b>
<b>27th Nov</b>	<b>4th Dec</b>

*\*Members are entitled to go to these meetings. Please arrange with Chairman or Gen. Sec.*

## THANKS FOR LISTENING, BW!

At the beginning of December, David Fletcher and I met with Vince Moran, BW Operations Director and Caroline Killeavey, Head of BW Customer Relations, at British Waterways' Hatton Office - well, actually Caroline was “present” thanks to a very good video link. We attended, at their invitation, to discuss the NABO 2009 Waterways' Condition Surveys, after Vince read about them in NABO News.

The survey reports were received in a very constructive manner. In fact, we were asked if we would be prepared to repeat the exercise annually, thus adding to BW's accumulation of volunteer hours!

We had concluded that boaters disagreed with chief executive, Robin Evans' statement that *'the network is now in better shape than at any time in decades'*. During the frank and open discussions, Vince was quite willing to express his concern that BW is unable to maintain their canals and rivers at “steady state” due to the shortage of funding. Let us hope that concern will reach the ears of those in the corridors of power and affect their policy making.

In a public statement, published soon after our meeting, Caroline said:

*“The NABO Condition Survey provides good information and our Waterway Managers will use the data as they plan for next year's works. The key benefit of customer feedback like this is that it helps us prioritise the works we do in line with customer needs.*

*We will report back to NABO on the items identified as "urgent" and "medium term" outlining the actions we have taken or plan to take but unfortunately we simply do not have enough money to do everything. We have to constantly make decisions on priorities to try and deliver the best value that we can for the waterways and I would like to thank NABO members\* for taking the time to complete the survey which will help us with this task.*

*We will use the information provided alongside our own boater survey information that we will have results from early in the New Year."*

Once again, thank you to those of you who took the time to make your feelings felt. We believe the considerable time spent analysing your submissions was most worthwhile. In at least two meetings with Waterway Unit Managers, attended by NABO Council members on behalf of boaters, the survey report was high on the agenda. It is being used to help decide priorities for the next round of spending on the waterways. We hope that this “new” listening face of British Waterways will be reflected across the whole organisation.

At the meeting we agreed to email those who had flagged up “near misses” in locks, asking them to complete a BW incident form, detailing their experience. These are available from BW offices, or you can complete a form on-line at <http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/listening-to-you/visitor-information/visitor-incident-reporting>, or print out a form and send it in.

We do encourage you to use this facility if you have any sort of problem as you cruise; don't wait for a survey to jog your memory. BW want to be advised of

incidents from the boaters' point of view and has promised to act on your reports with appropriate action.

P.S. \*We did point out at the time that it was not just NABO members who had responded to the survey. We were also glad to publish the results in association with RBOA and TBA.

*John Slee*

## HON TREASURER REMINDS YOU ABOUT NEW MEMBER RECRUITMENT OFFER

Happy New Year to all members! Have you made a New Year's resolution yet? Why not make 2010 the year to recruit new boating members into NABO?

The offer we introduced two years ago is still available and means that you receive £5 off your current subscription for every new member you introduce, up to a maximum of three. Effectively, your basic membership fee of £15 can be recovered for very little effort on your part. Just make sure you put your name in the space provided on the application forms.

Recruitment is not just the responsibility of Council. It is far better to advertise NABO on your own boat as you cruise around and meet other boaters. You can attract them with your window stickers or by displaying one of our new advertising boards which can be mounted on your roof (suitably weighed down on windy days), or we can provide laminated posters saying "Join Here". Just let us know if you require any advertising materials and membership forms and we will despatch some to you post haste.

Let 2010 be the year of the new member. There are approximately 30,000 boat owners out there somewhere who have not yet joined NABO. Your Hon Treasurer has his cheque book ready and waiting to repay your efforts!

*Stephen Peters*



# I BRING NEWS FROM THE EAST!

**says Sadie Dean, Anglian Representative**

Firstly news of closures in the area –

The River Nene has closures planned for various locks up until 1st April. I won't give all the detail as, because of the weather and conditions on the river, there have been changes. Much of the work cannot be done this winter – however there will be closures up until Easter. At present Water Newton lock will be the last one closed.

The Middle Level Ashline Lock is closed and along King's Dyke until 1st March. There is no access to the centre of March (the town) until then either because there are works being carried out, by the local council, on two foot bridges. These are situated to the north and the south of the town.

For the latest on these, and other, closures see [www.middlelevel.gov.org](http://www.middlelevel.gov.org).

As I write there is a 'Strong Stream' situation on the River Nene.

This means **DON'T NAVIGATE ON THE RIVER!**

There has already been 'an incident' this year because a boater ignored the strong stream advice.

*'On Sunday 17 January 2010 a novice boater, who was attempting to navigate in Strong Stream conditions became trapped long-ways on against a bridge on the River Nene, sparking a major rescue operation. It took Environment Agency staff and several fire crews, including a specialist water rescue team, more than three hours to turn the 65ft narrowboat to enable it to pass safely under the bridge. At one stage, the force of the water against the craft and its position against the bridge forced an attempt to winch it free to be abandoned because the boat was in danger of tipping over.'*

It is vital that people know the state of the river before taking to it in their boats – it could make the difference between life and death.

If you do not frequently travel on the river, phone the Environment Agency before making a passage; 0845032112 for the River Nene or 0845033211 for the River Great Ouse.

They have river inspectors for each section of the river. As soon as the names and phone numbers for this season become available I will pass them on.

The plans for a marina for Northampton are going ahead. From what I understand, once there are boats moored in the marina, there will be an EA employee on site and up to date information about the river will be available.

We shall see!

Mooring is always harder on rivers as the banks are in 'riparian ownership' i.e. not for public use. There are plans to improve the availability of moorings within the area - I'm not holding my breath – but watch this space!

The local IWA branch is campaigning for moorings to be installed at various sites on the Middle Level Navigations. As the banks are very steep this would be really a great asset to the area and is much to be encouraged.

For most of the year this is a peaceful and beautiful area; I hope that, should you visit, you have a safe and enjoyable time.

# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN



Dear friends

The canals have thawed and we have movement again thank goodness. Val and I were frozen in on the Coventry and were very grateful to find a good mooring and be near a village with shops and facilities. I suspect that others were not so lucky. I confess that we did go home and not sit it out for the whole period. The boat stoves might have been helped by the fact that BW have been cutting the offside trees on this stretch. It all looked very tidy, and the logs were gone.

But the world of politics has not been frozen. We have some movement after the last round of the campaign to secure the BW property portfolio. In December, BW published a report on their vision of a possible future in the third sector. I have found this report a good representation of the benefits and risks as presented during 2009 at the various briefings that I have attended for you. Your Council have also considered it, and concluded that NABO should now give their support to the concept. We know that the Government and the Opposition are both considering the future of the waterways and also other national bodies. Policy decisions are being made in the run up to the general election and we should no longer sit on the fence. It is unlikely that the structure that we see now will remain if cost savings can be identified. If we are to influence the decisions in Whitehall, then we must speak up.

For 2020, of course there are many details to work out so there is not full knowledge available or even yet decided. We will have to work hard in the coming months and years to contribute to the model. I am told that if decisions were taken quickly, then this could be in place in about 3 years; there

is no need to wait for 2020, it can happen earlier if there is a will for it. For me there are two key factors in achieving this aim.

Firstly, I believe that the 3rd sector gives the best opportunity for boaters to engage with the navigation authority to influence the management of our water and take some responsibility for it. A combination of boaters and other waterway users, acting in conjunction with the navigation body, provides a formidable force for the future of the waterways that we all love. It will no longer be a split of often critical users and an under funded Nationalised Industry, but a powerful Trust saying "This is what is needed for the future, let us do it." Above all, by working together we would be in a better position to establish priorities and determine a realistic and sustainable future for the waterways.

Secondly, there would be a chance to make a long term funding deal with Government away from politics and budget cuts. I know from my own working experience that bodies such as Navigation Authorities, managing well established assets, need stability to confidently plan work over long periods, even if the funding is limited. Fluctuating budgets are hopeless, and may well lead to short term and perhaps overly cautious decisions. 2020 could also lead to opportunities for contributions of time and money from other sources without the fear that it will be negated by reduced funding at the next budget. I do not think that it is right that volunteers will undertake the core work of Navigation Authorities. The responsibility and expertise of the staff should be highly valued and retained, as this is what will

guarantee the future of the system. But there are tasks that can be undertaken by volunteers in the wider waterways family and thereby building on the core work carried out by the full time staff.

The alternatives of 'doing nothing', or becoming closer to Government like the EA, are not attractive and could result in the property portfolio being removed. The benefits of working together with navigation authorities, and achieving a funding deal with Government have the potential to be better. BW has said that 2020 is a journey, and there are parts that we should start right now. I agree. A good example of this can be seen in BW's reaction to the NABO Waterways survey, which could so easily have been interpreted as negative criticism. In fact their reaction has been very positive, and indeed some of the BW regions are now using the information to help with their future planning. I

see this as encouraging and an example of what could be. NABO has continued in this vein with our input to the recent online and residential moorings consultation, which we hope will be construed as a positive contribution to the complex issues that face all waterways users.

On the legal challenge, you may have seen in the canal press that BW has reacted quite negatively about NABO's stance. We have recently met with BW about the correspondence, and although this meeting was robust, it was at the same time constructive. We are awaiting information from BW, and further interchange has been proposed. There will be no further news for the time being.

I wish you well for your boating in 2010.

*David*

## SIGN OF THINGS TO COME?

Is your BW waterway unit cutting its hours like North East?

Dear Customer

**RE: LEEDS OFFICE CUSTOMER SERVICE OPENING TIMES**

Please be aware that as from the 1<sup>st</sup> February, our customer service opening times at the Fearn's Wharf Leeds Office are Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10.00am-12.00pm and 2.00pm-4.00pm. The team will be available to sell sundry items and deal with licencing and moorings payments to customers during these times.

Customers unable to visit us during these opening hours and needing any sundry items such as electric cards, can send a cheque to the Admin Team at our Fearn's Wharf address below, so that these then can be posted to you.

We apologise for the inconvenience this may cause.

Yours Sincerely



**Louise Gardner**  
**Administration Team North East Waterway Unit**

# A NEW WEBSITE

<http://nabo.org.uk> – John Slee reports

Yes, the address is the same, but the look is rather different - or at least it will be sometime during the next few weeks:

The screenshot shows the NABO website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Issues, Reference, Join Us, Members, and Contact Us. A large circular logo for the National Association of Boat Owners (NABO) is prominently displayed, featuring the acronym 'NABO' and the website address 'www.nabo.org.uk'. To the right of the logo is a search bar and a list of recent news items, including 'BW Organisation Restructure', 'BW Launch 2009', 'BW Editors Forum', 'NABO News 2009', and 'NABO News 2008'. Below the navigation and logo, there is a 'Choose from:' section with links to Consultations, Surveys, and Calendar. A 'Popular' section lists various articles such as 'Members Restricted Area', 'Keep in the know with NABO', 'Reference', 'BW Waterways Condition Survey', and 'BW Back Issues & Contents'. The main content area features several news articles, including 'End of Year Update' with a 'Dear friends' greeting, 'Legal Challenge' discussing a meeting with British Waterways, 'BW Response to WCS' by Caroline Killaway, 'QA Waterways Condition Survey' by British Waterways, and 'BW Moorings Consultation'. Each article includes a 'Read more...' link.

I'm in the process of testing it and preparing to replace the old site. Those of you who know anything about computers will know that publishing deadlines is very unwise. So, all I will say is, make a habit of visiting the website; you'll know when it's been changed. I will still be adding any breaking news to the existing site – have you seen the piece about the BSS urgent safety warnings about cookers, carbon monoxide alarm recalls etc? You should - maybe it affects you!

When you find the new site, instead of the old, is on-line, do have a look around. If you find a problem, before you “Contact the Webmaster”, have a look at the FAQs. If they don't answer your question, contact me using the email form and I'll try to help. If I think it would be helpful to others, I'll add an FAQ to help the next person not to get stuck in the same way.

**This issue's tip:** the Search facility near the top right of the new front (Home) page will search the whole site and only the NABO site.



Type the word(s) you are looking for into the Search box; then press Enter. Try it! ....and if there's something you'd like to see on the website, but can't find it, let me know.

That's all for now – more tips in the next issue.

P.S. The website uses the Joomla! content management system to enable various people to keep the news up-to-date. I would be very grateful if any another member who has used Joomla would contact me, so that we have a backup administrator in case of emergency.

## **MSC BAN FOR SHARED OWNERSHIP BOATS**

### ***Not forgotten, says Howard Anguish***

For those members who are shared boat owners such as myself, you may be unaware of the ruling by Peel Holdings that shared boats are banned from transiting the Manchester Ship Canal, along with hire boats. Recent applications by individual shared boat owners to be allowed on to the canal have been refused by Peel Holdings, and the ban is published in the Manchester Ship Canal Transit Rules which can be found on the following web site:-

**[http://www.shipcanal.co.uk/assets/pdf/pleasure\\_craft\\_rules\\_msc.pdf](http://www.shipcanal.co.uk/assets/pdf/pleasure_craft_rules_msc.pdf)**

Over the last few years the reason behind the ban has been questioned on a number of occasions without reaching a satisfactory answer although one possible reason may have been that in there has been some confusion between shared ownership and time share. This was possibly acceptable a while ago when there was uncertainty in some schemes about whether the boats were truly owned outright by the shared owners or whether there was a commercial interest involved and this uncertainty was reflected in the British Waterway licensing rules.

As most people will know, this uncertainty was removed some years ago and BW revamped their rules to reflect the true position. This clarification doesn't seem to have reached Peel Holdings yet and so I have raised the matter again with the Harbour Master to see if it can be resolved. At the time of writing this I have had no response to my letter but I will persist and give an update in the next NABO News.

*Howard Anguish,  
Share Owners Representative*

# URGENT SAFETY NOTICES

## *From the Boat Safety Scheme*

### **Cookers**

An urgent appeal has gone out to boaters who remain at risk from potentially fatal carbon monoxide poisoning, to act on a safety alert from the manufacturers of Belling, Flavel, Leisure, New World cookers. Despite earlier warnings about the dangers and extensive efforts by the manufacturers and Trading Standards to contact affected customers, there are still around 12,000 appliances to be tracked down and boat owners could easily have one of these cookers.

Free modifications by the supplier's engineers to the cookers are available to prevent the risk of CO if the grill is used accidentally with the door shut. Several boat owners have already had the modifications done and have said it is a quick and simple operation.

The Boat Safety Scheme is urging boat owners, including those that rent and hire their craft and letting agents, to check the brand and model of their cooker today as there is a serious risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, made worse now with the cold weather - people are keeping their windows, hatches and doors closed to keep the cold out, and some may be using their grills improperly to heat their cabins.

The Boat Safety Scheme is advising any boat owners with the following appliances to contact the freephone number on 0800 342 3049 to have the appliance modified as soon as they can.

Belling G755 MkII White	Leisure AL6NDW
Belling G755 MkII Anthracite	Leisure CM10NRK
Belling GT755 White	Leisure CM10NRC
Belling Countrychef 100G Silver	Leisure CM101NRCP
Belling Countrychef 100G Anthracite	Leisure CM101NRKP
New World Vision 50TWLM Silver LPG	Flavel DCGAP5LS
New World Vision 50TWLM White LPG	Flavel AP5LDWP
New World Vision 50WLM Silver LPG	Flavel AP5LDW
New World Vision 50WLM White LPG	Flavel AP5LDSP
	Flavel Milano ML5NDS

### **Carbon Monoxide alarms recall**

The Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) is alerting anyone with a battery powered carbon monoxide alarm supplied by Lloytron (model B822) or PowerPlus (model BWK034C / Ref 6167) that some units are being recalled as recent tests have shown that some batches, may not detect, and hence alarm, in the presence of certain concentrations of carbon monoxide.

The advice is to remove the unit and return it to the place where you bought it for a refund or further advice.

The alarms are approximately 11 cm in diameter. The Lloytron item is in blue packaging and the PowerPlus item is sold with blue and yellow packaging.

The Boat Safety Scheme believes that carbon monoxide alarms made to the international standard EN 50291 and installed according to manufacturers guidelines can give boat owners reassurance, but they should be used alongside a policy of maintaining and using gas, coal, wood and oil burning appliances according to instructions.

There is further information on carbon monoxide in the BSS leaflet, *Avoiding the Silent Threat* which is available from the BSS Office (01923 201278) and on the BSS website [www.boatsafetyscheme.com/site/Downloads\\_174.asp](http://www.boatsafetyscheme.com/site/Downloads_174.asp)

### **Push the button is the best thing to do in 2010.**

Start the new decade with a positive action to fit a smoke alarm and test it routinely to avoid drowning, not in the cut, but in the toxic smoke of a boat fire says the Boat Safety Scheme.

According to the latest Fire Kills campaign, if you're asleep when fire breaks out you could suffer a sensation similar to drowning, and in just two to three breaths of toxic smoke from a fire on your boat, you could be unconscious.

In recent years four people have died in boat fires at night or when they have been asleep and a working smoke alarm could have helped them to escape.

Graham Watts, Boat Safety Scheme manager said *"That's why boaters should make a promise to press the test button when returning to the boat after a gap away and then weekly when aboard. It should just be a matter of habit."*

The alarm of choice is an optical alarm with a long-life battery, a hush button to cover cooking times and one that meets either BS 5446:2000 Part 1, or BS EN 14604:2005, preferably also carrying a Kite or horseshoe certification mark and there's more detail available on the BSS fire safety website [www.boatsafetyscheme.com/fire](http://www.boatsafetyscheme.com/fire).

### **The BSS certificate has had a small facelift.**

The next time your examiner issues a BSS Certificate you will notice that the hologram has now gone and in its place is the printed circle and BSS propeller. Your examiner will continue to emboss the certificate issue at this place on the certificate.

The move preempts greater emphasis on online licensing and registration by the navigation authorities whereby the combination of the certificate number and examiner PIN provides the assurance to the licensing or registration department about the issue of a certificate to the boat in question.

Boat owners should not be concerned by the lack of the hologram, but if they do have any doubts as to the validity of the certificate their boat has been given they can call the BSS office on 01923 210278 or email:

**[bss.enquiries@boatsafetyscheme.com](mailto:bss.enquiries@boatsafetyscheme.com)**

## NOT B.S.S. BUT C.S.S.

### *Stuart's update on Customer Service Standards*

There was a meeting of the CSS Advisory Panel due on the 16th of January, but doubts were definitely rising as to whether it would take place given the forecast blizzard for the southern half of the UK. That morning I got a frantic call from Caroline Killeavy as I was the only CSSAP member whose number was in her mobile. A rare honour indeed ..... don't misinterpret that!

I had arranged not to travel to Hatton anyway but use the video conferencing system from Leeds, to save myself a good four hours in transit and so BW could spend my train fare on waterway maintenance. Instead the old Bus Pass took me to Fearn's Wharf where I was installed in a room off the open-plan office that processes boat licences - another rare honour. There I was to commune with a small screen that was split in three, showing the meeting room in Hatton, an office in Newark, and myself - quite disconcerting as it was not a mirror image and there was about a second delay between any move I made and seeing it back. This made any attempt at preening nigh on impossible, but would I?

With Caroline officiating from Newark, this miracle of technology brought eight of us together, including those stalwarts who did manage to reach Hatton. The meeting was a bit difficult to follow due to the link delays and not being sure whether you were being heard, so I will treat you to some impressions.

Just to make this clear, I was only there as a relatively experienced boater and my affiliation with NABO is incidental, but there are certain things they encourage us to share and they are not averse to hearing collective views, especially if it can improve the safety on BW waterways.

In this respect they did want me to pass on my thanks to everybody who contributed to the Waterway Condition Survey, especially those who made comments about locks and near misses. There was a lot of discussion about 'possible obstruction to the vertical movement of boats in a lock', what was meant by 'fendering gates', and how to set meaningful safety standards. Any evidence about boats getting stuck is very important to BW even if the boat freed itself.



*A picture from BW lock safety presentation*

Another item on the agenda was a revision of the Boaters' Handbook that Sally Ash is 'heading up'. The NABO leaflets on the Aire & Calder and Trent were examples of where specific waterways should be subjects of add-on supplements, and other navigations like the Yorkshire Calder waterways could be subjects for the future. There may be a cautious welcome for some volunteer expertise here but don't hold your breath.

One thing BW offers the Panel is a performance analysis. This half-year the figures for the safety related items were encouraging, but achievement in the 'people' and 'performance' categories were not so good. This was put down mainly to the reorganisation.

At last there was a commitment to issue a revised version of the standards as a result of the discussions we have been having at the Panel, and there may even be a standard set for main channel dredging, so our efforts may not have been in vain.

*Stuart Sampson*

## NABO HAS ALWAYS OPPOSED LAW BREAKING

From 'A guide to NABO Policy', NABO News issue 1 2002

*"Continuous cruising is not a problem and any problems regarding mooring are covered in the existing BW byelaws and apply to all boats.*

*We are against 'bridge hopping' and boaters moving continuously between two close moorings.*

*We want proper consultation and the interpretation of the rules to be consistent in all regions."*

From 'The Chairman's Column', NABO News issue 2 2004

*"...BW does not consider its licence gives you the right to use any one spot as a long-term mooring unless you have a permit. NABO does not condone overstaying either, but it does support the basic right of boaters not to have to pay for permanent moorings that they would never be in a position to make use of...."*

From 'NABO POLICY REVIEW', NABO News issue 2 2004

### **6. Licence Evasion.**

*We do not support licence evasion and will do all we can to help BW in eliminating it.*

### **7. Mooring Abuse**

*Continuous mooring is a problem by boats however licensed. We agree in principle with BW's moorings guidelines and will support them whenever appropriate in any prosecution. Enforcement must be seen to be even handed and not discriminatory.*

*We are against "Bridge Hopping" and consider that shuttling between two points is not Bona Fide Navigating.*

From 'The Chairman's Column', NABO News issue 3 2004

*"NABO has given a lot of time, plus members' money on travelling and legal advice, to steer BW towards a workable and legally sound way to counter mooring abuse"*

**So NABO's out to sabotage BW's attempts to control illegal mooring?**

## EDITOR'S PAGES

The transition from 'King Pin' to 'Old Hat' seems to have almost caught me unawares. Returning from a day wrestling with the giant white python that was sold to me as odour resistant hose, we found a message on our answer-phone from our esteemed chairman that he wanted to talk about NABO News. There had been a Council meeting the day before and it just hadn't entered my head!

The fact that NABO is increasingly better off without me is perhaps a little niggling, but the fact that I can do without NABO involvement is perhaps more worrying. I am losing touch with the main issues at an alarming rate and I am supposed to be the one to keep you in touch!

I suppose I did help to push the legal challenge 'bob-sleigh' but I never got in. BW may not like the medicine prescribed by our team but if nothing else it has shaken up its legal team and alerted them to the issues of the boater. I have to say that when I heard BW's legal director claiming at a PWG meeting that BW has inherited the effects of some four hundred Acts of Parliament in taking responsibilities for its waterways, I can sort of understand why they didn't want the 1995 Act Section 17 to dominate their agenda.

I had even less to do with the Waterway Condition survey. It is good to see that has gone down so well with BW, in spite of it bringing more bad news. John Slee has done great work there, and I think he has the website well in his grasp too. All power to him.

Now we need someone to take over this magazine so I can let go altogether. It is like all voluntary roles,

there is a 'core obligation', because other people are relying on you and you made a commitment to them when you volunteered. Beyond that it is what you choose to make of it.

The bare minimum for editing any non-profit making magazine is to *collect, correct and collate*.

### **Collect**

In this day of e-mail you just sit back and let most of it roll in, just giving people a little nudge at times. You may have the odd letter come in, hand written or typed, and the occasional picture on paper. Nowadays these need electronic conversion, so you do need to be equipped to type and scan. We mustn't forget something non-boaters might take for granted – a postal address for receiving paper contributions.

### **Correct**

Intelligent use of a spell chequer is required here (see what I mean!), and the patience to read everything you have collected to see if it makes sense. If not, some dialogue with the author helps a lot. Someone to help with the proof-reading is invaluable.

### **Collate**

Stick it all together and whack it off to the printer.

What I have described will fulfil your obligation as a volunteer editor – Job done.

Or is it? There are two extra functions that fit in quite well poetically to expand the list: *Collect, Create, Correct, Select, Collate*.

### **Create**

It is only fair that you shouldn't expect others to do what you won't do, and

being educated in the science stream, I hated writing at school, but, like working with wood, all that changed with the advent of 'power tools' (word processing) and now I find working with the English language a satisfying and enjoyable craft.

You may have relevant subjects to write about from your own personal experience or viewpoint, or be requested to make a readable article out of information provided piecemeal.

There's one essential guideline that I learnt working at the BBC and being in contact with journalists. This applies to any verbal communication and, from an editor's point of view, can apply to your own writing as well as coaxing the best out of your contributors.

Think of your readers(viewers): never underestimate their intelligence but don't over-estimate their knowledge.

'Copy' written to fill space in advertising freebies can be an insult to the intelligence, e.g. *"To begin flower arranging you need flowers and something to put them in. Flowers can be bought from your florist or picked from your garden"*. Wow! I am so much better informed after reading that!

Regarding assuming knowledge – many journalists tend to forget that politics and 'current affairs' have just as much jargon and acronyms as science and technology but they do tend to assume everyone is versed in the former but needs 'nanny' language for the latter. For example I was editing a news story about a blast at the then chemical works in Castleford,

(next to the cut at Bulhome). Someone was cleaning out a reactor vessel used for DNT when it caught fire and blew out all the office block windows. The journalist used the emotive term 'toxic chemical' to describe it, which may have been true, but the 'D' stands for 'Di-' making it a close relative to 'Tri-', which, reassembled with -NT (NitroToluene), makes a well known substance used as a yardstick for the power of nuclear bombs – TNT. Perhaps 'explosive' rather than 'toxic'?

### Select

Wielding the axe is something I do with reluctance, because someone has gone to the trouble to write you something and so you feel an obligation to use it. You have to be very sure if you think you know better than your readers what is of value to them. Obviously there is a need to reject stuff that is offensive or incomprehensible, but that is rare thankfully when it comes to NABO News.

What I have found after however many years of editing this magazine is that I have rarely been short of material come the copy date. I may have been panicking a few days beforehand but usually it comes good. Some fillers have been required because I hate: 'Article continued on page ###' just because they want another article starting at the top of the next page and do it by chopping rather than filling.

Nor have I been drastically oversubscribed. Occasionally I have reluctantly deferred an article but again I don't like to disappoint the author.

I do hope NABO finds someone to do this vital job. It is rewarding.

**Never underestimate the intelligence of your readers but don't overestimate their knowledge.**

*RCR Advertisement*

# PSEUDONYM

## *January's Council Meeting*

We had almost a full complement of Council Members at this meeting, one is managing to escape mostly by working abroad, well I suppose someone has to and we may get a report on how foreign waterways are run.

As there had been a meeting with the BW bods and their legal man this had to be reported on and discussed. Did someone say we were refusing to meet them? Nonsense. Perhaps it is the difference between people paid to sit at a desk waiting for work and busy volunteers trying to fit a life in.

A few members have sent their thoughts on the 'moorings consultation' and their comments are to be incorporated in Council's response. Another BW consultation is the 'license cost changes'. A debate took place on should BW penalise the prompt payers by effectively charging them more or should these prompt payers be subsidised by the slower payers. Things can get tricky when you get opposing views.

Everyone will have to wait on this one as there are so many unknowns. I do hope something is sorted before 2020 otherwise we are all going to get very bored with this, especially if it is on the agenda at each meeting.

John Slee is proving to be a real star. First he produced the Condition of the Waterways Survey that BW is so pleased with they want one done annually. Now he is producing a new web site. Thanks to his being iced in, this is progressing nicely. Individual council members are to be responsible for various sections and Council can put articles etc on it themselves, in theory. The technical abilities of Council are as varied as their views on waterway subjects. All are now using email – hooray. I am afraid that you may have to wait a little while before it is up and running as it has to be tested. It is coming though. I have seen it.

Council decided on a different approach to publicity at Shows and hopefully they will be taking part in seminars rather than standing behind a stall for a weekend. The loss of both the Tring and Saul festivals leave a gap for some.

The hunt for an editor is proving interesting with council members wanting different things from the magazine, or is it a newsletter? That is just one question to be decided. Coming up at the end of the meeting coherent thought and comments seemed difficult. The only thing council seemed to agree on was that we do need a newsletter/magazine so let's hope the ideal editor comes forward soon.

Just to make a change EA got a mention as NABO has been invited to a meeting about the Thames.

Goodbye till next time

$\Psi$  (Pseudonym)

## COLD COMFORT

### ***Why your boat may have survived the big freeze***

When you look out on thick snow and feel the biting wind penetrating every unintentional aperture in your centrally heated domicile, it is easy to imagine the worst happening to your pride and joy languishing on a mooring you can't get to because of the conditions. I won't say 'Fear not' as there could well be other reasons to worry, but it might be some comfort to know that, even when the surface of the water is frozen over, your boat's bottom is acting as a radiator at + 4° Celsius. This may not seem very warm, but if you consider the area, it can be quite a large source of heat to keep the frost at bay, and will remain 'on' until the canal freezes to the same depth as the draught of your boat.

This is all because water expands slightly when it cools below 4°, and quite significantly when it freezes, so as ice it floats up leaving the warmer water below.

However it is this very expansion that is also the cause for worry. In an extreme case it could sink your boat, such as a barge in France that took in engine cooling water through a ball valve sea-cock. When a ball valve was closed it trapped a slug of water, which froze and cracked the casing of the valve. However that was an extreme and freezing to that extent is very unlikely in the UK. Whether it would have been better to leave the valve open is arguable.

Generally speaking there is a little comfort in the other side to this equation – when ice is compressed it melts. This is why ice is slippery. At the point of friction the ice turns to water and the roughnesses on the solid surface in contact with the ice can go on their way unimpeded. When ice forms in a pipe and starts to put pressure on its surroundings, it will melt where the pressure builds up and to an extent accommodate to the shape if there is somewhere else to go. In the ball valve there wasn't. The same would be true of water pump chambers, and where elbows and narrowings cause a plug of ice to get stuck. It can be the water below the ice which builds up pressure and finds the weak spot in the pipework to escape, especially if the pipework is copper which doesn't yield until it breaks.

You might use an antifreeze to protect your engine or water system. Not only does antifreeze lower the temperature at which water freezes, but it also causes the water to go through a paste like stage while freezing. This allows quite a lot of the expansion to take place before the ice becomes rigid. This won't help if the water is trapped but if there is air above the water or the pipes are flexible it can help prevent fracture.

Snow can be a mixed blessing too. It can help insulate the decks and cabin tops, but if you rely on a solar panel to keep your batteries charged then it might be worth getting someone to clear it of snow.

To say all this now after such a cold festive season might be too late, but it can be bitter up to early Spring and some understanding of how cold can do damage might still be of value.

*Frustrated Frost*

## EX-CHAIRMAN MOVED TO WRITE

Dear Sally (Ash)

*Although I have no vested authority any more, I feel I should write to express my disappointment in the altercation that seems to have started in Towpath Talk regarding the legal status of BW.*

*I think it is entirely appropriate that someone needs to review the situation, particularly as you are embarking upon a public consultation about moorings which has to be based on BW's current statutory powers. NABO is the right body to do this as it is, or should be, at a distance from personalities. It represents the full church of those who are most affected and has access to professional advice.*

*When BW acquired its powers in 1962, boating on this country's canals was a pastime for the intrepid and resourceful, who faced far greater challenges than points of Law, so the powers went largely unchallenged. Now boating is enjoyed by far more people and, with the evolution of recreational canal boats and barges, boating is more of a lifestyle than a pastime for many enthusiasts. In the mid 90s this was recognised by the law makers by accepting a boating pattern that was not centred around a fixed geographical point. The 1995 Act section 17 is worded to limit the wide-ranging powers of the 1962 Act in respect of refusing 'consent' when a boater meets the three conditions of Constructional Safety, Third Party Insurance and 'mooring behaviour'.*

*Boating has now evolved over another fifteen years since BW's powers have been under parliamentary scrutiny, passing through a period of mooring scarcity which is now easing thanks to private enterprise, BW's New Marinas policy and a flattening demand for boats. During this time the provisions of the law, peoples' knowledge thereof and BW's interpretation thereof have been queried by many whose lifestyles and investment were perceived to be under threat. The situation has not been helped by the paradox that the reservation of a mooring is a disproportionately large part of a boater's expenses - it is cheaper to navigate than not.*

*As I say, it is entirely right for the waterways community, BW and its customers, to know exactly where it stands on legal matters, so enforcement teams have the respect of boaters and boundaries are laid down. Licence conditions should be separated from etiquette advice, made subject to consultation and people should be fully aware what transgressions may result in the loss of what could be their home. BW must be aware that it has a virtual monopoly of canal boating provision in this country and the idea of 'if you don't like it, go elsewhere' is not generally an option. With this in mind, BW has a responsibility to be absolutely fair and in accordance with the powers it has through Statute Law. It should welcome alternative views on how it interprets these powers and derive strength from that debate. Statements that it can 'do as it sees fit' under the 1962 Act smack of a heavy-handed authoritarian attitude that can only cause antagonism.*

*I wish all who are involved in the future discussions on this subject the very best of luck and hope good judgement prevails.*

*Best regards*

*Stuart Sampson*

# BW NEWS FROM THE NORTHWEST

## **We ask Debbie Lumb – BW Waterway Manager**

Our General Secretary, Richard Carpenter and several other officers are attending meetings on a local basis with BW together with other representatives of user groups to attempt to understand and assist the local Managers like Debbie. He reports that these meetings have been most refreshing in the openness of the problems each Region faces with the funds available. The logic is that understanding some of the problems BW face on the ground, many of which are never normally aired, should help improve relations between boat owners and BW on issues of maintenance and facilities.

For example the huge cost of maintaining and running the Links over to the Lancaster and down into Liverpool have been explained in some detail and how this impacts on the money needed elsewhere in the North West. Until now, User Group meetings have tended to be Boaters and others complaining about things not being done, repaired, maintained and BW took some stick. By explaining and asking for help and advice they have more chance of a better understanding from their customers and therefore a more balanced relationship and a useable Waterway whilst funding is so limited. Some of you may be sceptical of course – time will tell!

It does seem that for the time being BW have woken up on a local basis (or we suspect have been allowed to open up when perhaps they would have liked to have done so before?) to the fact that all users demand minimum standards but are all also enthusiasts and can and will actually help! Here's what Debbie has to say and we suspect she talks on behalf of the other Waterway Managers!

What are your Priorities?

*As you will all know, there have been and will continue to be changes within BW – this is only inevitable as we try to keep up and be relevant in the world around us. But what does that mean here on the ground? When I met recently with some of your fellow users of the local waterways in the North West we all agreed that I needed to communicate more with you about what resources I have, plus how you can help me do with it what is right for all of us.*

*So what's the starting point? Well, it starts with less money! Resources – just like everyone else and especially those within public sector – and with expected budget cuts next year are getting scarcer. There is only so much money within the whole of British Waterways and I receive a slice of that pie for our local canals. So – how can I use this slice smarter? Well, let's first look at what needs to be done.*

*43% of my budget is spent on personnel (14 in the office, 69 bank staff and 19 seasonals). So what do I need to spend the remaining 57% on? In the North West I have 6942 outstanding defects that need dealing with – these can be from leaking embankments to potholes. These defects – found mainly during inspections and from visitor notifications – forms one third of our job cards for the teams on the ground. The other two thirds are planned maintenance (of 1208 principle assets of which 363 are bridges, 124 locks and 303 culverts) plus the*

*final third on reactive works (broken paddles, leaks, litter, graffiti, etc). The monies also have to cover other obligations such as contractual works such as vegetation management; legal compliance such as asbestos and legionella in sanitary stations, water management plus £300k provision for all the claims I am currently dealing with. Plant, equipment, vehicles and offices also need to be managed (though I am planning to reduce these soon).*

*As you can imagine I actually cannot do all of the above with the money I have so I need to prioritise and get inventive on how I achieve more – and that is where you come in!! I want to hear more about what you believe is a priority and what you believe we should stop doing. Yes – I said stop doing. The harsh reality is that I can only do some things at the expense of others and I need to understand what is important to you and what you are willing to wait for. British Waterways is about to start its planning round for next year – can I ask that you let your local representatives know what is and is not important to you and I will endeavour to reflect this in my local plan? Plus I ask, what are you willing to do? Volunteering is essential to our local canals as I cannot look after them on my own. Those of you at the local user group will remember my call to arms – if you paint my bridges I'll fix them!! By volunteering you help release funds and time to do other works that are needed – just think, if someone else picked up the litter or fixed a fence or painted a lock, I could fix a leak, a paddle or any of the other 6942 defects I have.*

*If you want to know more about the new world of British Waterways then visit our web site [www.britishwaterways.co.uk/twentytwenty](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk/twentytwenty) . If you want to know more about the local canals in the North West then visit either [www.waterscape.com](http://www.waterscape.com) or contact us on [enquiries.northwest@britishwaterways.co.uk](mailto:enquiries.northwest@britishwaterways.co.uk) .*

*Remember that communication is key and a two way process – tell me your priorities and I will endeavour to do my best for you. Oh, and if you have any suggestions on how I turn a £10 note into a £50 note then call me!!*

*Debbie Lumb  
Waterway Manager – North West*

## **TV RUBBISH?**

**asks David Fletcher**

Over the years I have fished out all sorts of things from the canal. Fridges, gas bottles, sheep, safes, trolleys, beds etc. You know the sorts of things. But there was first for me in December to find a complete television. I know that the old large tube TV's are of little value now. Does the flat screen revolution mean that we have a new sport called dispose of the old TV in the canal? Unlike trolleys, they float of course, not so satisfying. I blame the TV soaps. They often have a story line of something or somebody thrown in the canal. Maybe we should have a word and tell them – not the done thing.

## From Our Own Central American Correspondent!

Dear readers, as a few of you may know, I am away in Central America at the moment, and amongst other things, I am taking a very keen interest in the waterways! My travels have predictably revolved around water wherever possible. I have spent a little time on the coast, as well as the rivers and the odd canal! This has allowed me to cross the boarder from Nicaragua into Costa Rica, and visit some of the more remote outposts of civilization.

One of the fascinating journeys I undertook was in Nicaragua. It followed an early potential route for the linking of the two oceans; the Atlantic and the Pacific. This link later became the Panama canal.

However, Nicaragua was a very serious option. There is only 12.5 miles separating the 2 oceans! This is due to the Lago de Nicaragua and the Rio San Juan. The Lake is



enormous, the largest in Central America, at 110 miles long and about 40 miles wide. It even has an island, Ometepe, made up of two volcanoes. It was from this island that I, with a few merry travellers, joined the night boat to San Carlos, a small port town at the entrance to the San Juan. The ferry boat had come from Granada, a stunning colonial city on the far shore, once the capital of Nicaragua. The vessel was a dumpy looking thing, but it did look like it was capable for the job. Amazingly life rafts were there, and in good order! Our first class tickets (about £7), gave us access to the upstairs deck and a room playing unseen Kung Fu films. Unfortunately the passengers from Granada had taken all the available deck chairs and space. It was with some gentle persuasion that we managed to get some room on the deck floor. It was 11 hours travelling down the lake. We looked like refugees; with an obsession for bananas! There were more bananas on board than I could care to count. At least we would not starve! We stopped twice in the night, and were sung to by a man with a guitar, and had all sorts of foods made available by people at the ports. They would have done better if it was not 4am!

By the time we arrived in San Carlos at 6am, we looked and felt like refugees! Blurry eyed we scanned the town for breakfast. The town had recently flooded, and was covered in a brown sludge... Hmmm! Quickly fed, we made our way to the dock to take our next boat ride to El Castillo, a small town about a third of the way to the Atlantic down the San Juan. The river stretches 125 miles in total.

The town is based around a fortress built by the Spanish in 1675 to stop pirates (many English and Welsh!) from getting to Granada. It was placed here as there is a long stretch of rapids, making passage by boat very difficult. In its busy history it was briefly held by the English, including a young Horatio Nelson!

The common form of transport today is a long, narrow boat, with similar dimensions to a narrowboat, but a bit thinner and made of fibreglass. Now imagine what happens when you put a 150hp outboard at the stern. Wow! It really flies. These boats are the only real option for transport, and so take everyone (up to 60 people) and all their goods (on the roof) up and down the river. Boats were the only form of transport in the town, used for fishing and travel. There were no cars. It was a very special place.

Sadly we did have to leave Nicaragua, one of the friendliest countries I have visited. We quickly passed through Costa Rica, and entered Panama. One of the highlights was our stay in the old part of city of Panama, and a day at the canal.

The Canal is a truly inspiring piece of engineering. It is close to it's 100 year anniversary, when the planned expansion is due to be finished, doubling the size of the locks. They currently stand at 305m x 33.5m! The photo shows some small boats passing through. They are probably about 50' long!



About 14,000 vessels pass through each year, averaging about £20,000 per passage. It is costed according to weight. The least paid was \$0.36 for Richard Halliburton, who swam it in 1928! The most paid was £120,000 for a French cruise ship Infinity. In case you are tempted, the boats pictured would cost about £400 to pass through. Not bad! The passage is 50 miles, has 3 sets of locks, and takes on average about 8 hours.

The Canal, though it changed Panama's fortunes, did take it's toll. Began by the French in 1881, it took over 22,000 lives of the workers in less than a decade. Many were from the Caribbean. The deaths were largely from yellow fever and malaria. With the high death toll and serious mismanagement, the company went bankrupt. In 1903 The Americans pressured the French to sell them the concession, and they completed the project. It remained in American hands

until 31st December 1999, when following much pressure, hostilities and 27 Panamanian deaths, it was handed over to Panama. The American withdrawal was long, having been initially agreed by Jimmy Carter!

So, enough history! We had a great day at Miraflores locks, watching a variety of vessels go through, from the huge cargo carrying ships, to the sailing boats and even a Russian Tall Ship. The museum was fantastic, and it was inspiring, especially with the backdrop of the new locks being built. It has a new design, for a new age, which has a series of chambers next to each other, and so conserves water. Hopefully there will be less deaths and slavery this time, and Panama can take pride in the biggest canal project seen in many years!

*Andy Colyer*



## Your Letters

Note - Opinions expressed here are independent of NABO policy and statements made have not been verified as true

### Dear boatowner,

I thank you for your invitation to carry out a BSS examination of your craft.

I would further request your indulgence in preparing your craft for the purposes of this examination.....

Yes folks,

Your BSS Examiner would indeed be very grateful in many cases if the craft we examine for you were looked at with our eyes and from our perspective beforehand.

If any of the following ring a bell, please remember next time renewal is due :-

The LPG cylinder locker in your narrowboat resembles the storage for tomorrows boat jumble – for a whole boat club!

To gain access to the engine in the rear cross-bench of your motor cruiser requires moving - a boathook, a brush, a pennant & mast, a fishing rod, a fuel tank dipstick, a pair of mooring pins, cushions, dog blanket, winter cover, seat squab.....well you get the picture I'm sure.

To lift your engine cover requires moving, either off the boat or into the cabin – a step, a footrest, a toolbox,

the helmsman's seat, a fishing tackle box, a floor-mat, a rubbish bin..... [I do not jest - last month it took the marine engineer who looks after a particular craft arriving before me to unbolt two seat pedestals and a one-piece carpet the size of the whole cockpit trapped by them, before I could find the engine, batteries, fuel tank etc]

To follow your LPG pipework from source to appliances means removal of the contents of the hanging robe, washroom cabinets, 2 galley cupboards, the cushions of the dinette, the contents of the bookshelf.....

With the whole LPG system in which to fit an LPG Test Point, your installer chooses to put it at arms length in the back of the deepest, narrowest cupboard.....

We Examiners are of course all animal lovers but again without jest, I have dealt with a couple of craft with rabbits loose aboard, one with a parrot which occupied the saloon with no cage just a perch and of course the cats and dogs favoured by many -on which point I am very wary of the term "He's OK, he's just a rescue dog...!" (I have a neatly repaired knee in a pair of chord working trousers which once supported one of those by the teeth for what felt like minutes)

On a more serious note I thank all those of you who take great pains to prepare, are present at the Examination and are wonderfully helpful to us all. It is however a fact that around 40% of examinations take place without the craft owner present for a number of good reasons. It is

then when we really appreciate your preparations.

*A BSS Examiner*

## **Pets and Waterways**

While I sympathise with the Sampsons over the loss of their dog, I do feel there is a need to express the feelings of the non-dog owning users of the waterways.

Our cat is a regular member of our crew and is frequently terrified by dogs barking on the towpath or even leaping aboard. The owners say "He's used to cats" or "He wouldn't hurt a fly". My answer to that is "How do you expect the cat to know that? Please keep your dog under control".

Another problem with the toilet habits of dogs is that they seem to like to pee on our mooring spikes and ropes and often deposit their more solid offerings when their owners are way ahead, taking little notice of what the dog is doing.

While walking on the towpath we have often been attacked by dogs, "just being friendly", which succeed in covering our clothes with muddy pawprints. We would much rather the dog were aloof and left us with clean clothes.

Not only is there a need for the powers that be to encourage responsible dog ownership, but dog owners themselves should realise that there is a proportion of the population who do not find these animals as attractive they do.

*Jill Noble*

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