

THE BOATER
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of
BOAT OWNERS

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Whilst every care is taken to ensure that the contents are factually correct, we accept no liability for any direct or consequential loss arising from any action taken by anyone as a result of reading contained in this publication. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association.

STOP PRESS

GU(South) Meeting

On 8th September we will be attending a User Group meeting with Caroline Clark, Manager, Grand Union Canal (South). Of particular concern to us is the charging for overnight mooring along the length of the Tring Summit.

End of Garden Moorings

The Case of British Waterways Board v Allen, Shaw and Crennell was heard in early July at Birmingham County Court. Because the arguments are purely legal and no evidence was introduced, the transcripts are not available. (There must be some logic in this somewhere).

Two observers at the trial thought that the defendants' case had not gone very well and commented that they appeared to concede some points that they could possibly have fought more vigorously for. One observer felt that both sides had particularly weak arguments. A comment made more than once was that the barristers, who did all the talking, were seemingly not really familiar with all the subject matter in hand, and a much more exciting time would have been had by all if the people they were representing had presented their own cases. The overall impression seemed to be that the defendants' position is far from certain.

Judgment is not expected before the 15th August, so we will just have to wait and see.

Printer's note.

The printer has noticed one or two spelling discrepancies in the text of this edition - including the editorial, and wonders if anyone can lend him a dictionary!

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

Thank you

We have received an excellent response from members in respect of our requests for information on problems you have suffered around the system and on various proposed byelaws. This information is vital to us. Please keep it coming. We try to reply to all letters which need a reply as soon as possible but pressure on committee members' time sometimes means that this is not as quick as we would ideally like.

New Recruits

You will hardly need telling that a lobbying organisation like ours only has credibility if it can show that it represents a significant proportion of the relevant population, in our case boat owners. We would like to double our membership over the next 12 months but need your help. Please spread the word. Display our stickers in your boat or car: £1.50 per pair - see page 20) or our window posters (free of charge) in suitable places. Please talk about NABO and the boating issues to other owners and keep a few membership application forms handy on the boat. Some of our members recruit very successfully in these ways. If you need additional stocks of membership application forms please let us know.

We are grateful to members for their recruitment efforts, to Michael Stimpson for continuing to put NABO forms with insurance renewal notices and to those rally organisers who are including NABO forms in rally packs this summer.

EDITORIAL

The recession seems to be striking NABO as much as others. Suppliers of sweatshirts appear to go into liquidation as soon as the word NABO is mentioned. We are thinking of circulating orders to all suppliers in the country so that when they have all gone out of business we can set up a monopoly of our own...but in the meantime please do not order any more - you may have a long wait! We do apologise for the problems those of you that have ordered them have encountered. Please see the comment by Syd and Margaret Beacroft on page 20.

Another apology is in order in that we previously stated that the cut off date between the two tiers in the harmonised boat standards is 1st Jan 1970 rather than 1st Jan 1971. Newer boats (ie built since 1.1.71), will not have to comply before 1st July 1994, and the older ones before 1st July 1995. This further delay is partly as a result of an EC Directive which makes it necessary for the harmonised standards to be approved. An outline of the Directive is included on page 17.

Anyone who has recently renewed a cruising licence will notice the large volume of superfluous information asked for on the form. If you wish to protest about this impertinant intrusion on your privacy, write to BW - and as a protest just don't fill out the offensive parts of the form. David Allison, Commercial Admin Manager, has already publicly stated that additional information requested such as your boat's value is voluntary. If you are refused a licence on the grounds that you have not filled the form in completely, please contact us immediately.

Another disturbing problem has been brought to our attention, namely the harassment of boaters at short stay moorings. We hope these are isolated incidents but if you have been intimidated or harrassed, please let us know.

Jon Darlington (Acting Editor).

NABO COMMITTEE REPORT

News from the Committee Meeting held on 18th July 1992 at Hockley Port on the BCN.

- Update of Committee Members Contact List. Errors had crept in to the last Newsletter. The corrected list of members is printed on page 24.
- Review of IWAAC.- A discussion involved the question- Is it a watchdog or a lapdog?
- Replies were awaited from BW re issue of licences and Towpath moorings.
- Sweatshirt Saga. The end is in sight. If you await one you should have been contacted. See page 20 for comment by Margaret and Syd Beacroft and the editorial on page 1.
- Exhibition Stand for NABO - This is being generously donated by a member.
- Membership number approximately 760 - Membership Cards will not be issued due to cost and time involved.
- Draft Customers' Charter - see page 6 for more details. Please respond to Chairman.
- BW have asked NABO to withdraw their petition against the Waterways Bill. The position is to be reviewed by the Officers, but withdrawal is most unlikely.

Date of AGM. 28th November 1992. Further details in next Newsletter.

Next COMMITTEE Meeting: 12th September 1992 at 10.00am
at HOCKLEY PORT.

FINANCIAL REPORT

A healthy finish to our first year of operations has been achieved with a bank balance at 31st July of £ 2,343.00. This is a considerable improvement on our budgeted position of £115.00 which assumed membership of 60 less than actual.

The main areas where savings have occurred are printing and travel. We use a sympathetic printer who charges us for little more than materials. The progress of the BW Bill has been slower than anticipated, saving on visits to Parliament for the moment. We continue to benefit from members not claiming travel and office costs in many instances.

Our funds have also been boosted by donations totalling £378.00 received since publication of the last "boater". Many thanks for your generosity.

If anyone would like more detailed financial information. Please don't hesitate to contact me.

Penny Barber, Treasurer.

AGM

Plans are already underway for our second AGM which will take place on Saturday, November 28th at a venue to be announced later. This advance notice is to advise members that under the terms of the NABO Constitution it is necessary for proposals for the committee to be received by the Secretary no later than **Saturday, 17th October**. Nominations must be proposed and seconded and the nominee must confirm his or her willingness to serve on the Committee. The Committee may consist of between four and 16 members. A nomination form is enclosed with this issue of the Boater. Nominees are encouraged to enclose a resume about themselves (not exceeding 300 words) which will be circulated with the nominations list. All the existing committee members will retire but will be eligible for re-election. If you would like to join the Committee but do not have a Proposer or Secunder, please send your form anyway as we will ask whether any committee member is prepared to propose/second you. The nomination form printed on page 23 need not be used as long as you supply the details and statement requested. You can nominate more than one person.

Any resolutions for decision at the AGM must also be received by the Secretary no later than 17th October. The notice of the meeting, details of committee nominations and any Resolutions will be circulated to all members no later than 7th November.

Please do not be backward in coming forward. We need a dedicated and hard working committee if NABO is to be effective.

THE RIDGEACRE BRANCH.

A tale of mystery, intrigue, violence and 'hanky-panky' on the BCN. "Whither the Ridgeacre Branch" or at best chop it in half.

What is the RIDGEACRE? It is a branch canal (approx 1½ miles long) in the Black Country.

How do you get to the RIDGEACRE? From Pudding Green Junction on the BCN New Main Line navigate towards Ryders Green Locks. A fingerpost directs you on to the RIDGEACRE just before the top of the locks.

What is special about the RIDGEACRE? Some of this canal is the oldest part of the BCN, cut in 1769 to carry coal from Wednesbury to Birmingham.

The far end of this branch is landscaped and clean, having been the subject of workparties by BCN Society in the late 1970s and dredging by the West Midland County Council in 1981.

The maps and guides do not do it credit, it is full of interest, broad and contains within its length a railway transshipment basin in which 14 full length boats could moor and manouver in comfort. It has two roving towpath bridges which, with a lick of paint, could be restored to their former glory. In fact, when visited on 30th July, I found it a quiet, peaceful and interesting haven in the heart of Sandwell, which might easily be mistaken for the depths of the countryside.

So what does the future hold for the RIDGEACRE?

The best of the Ridgeacre is to be lost to through navigation (unless you have an amphibious submarine which can pass through a pipe). It is the victim of a development called the Black Country Spine Road which will effectively cut the canal in half.

The Black Country Development Corporation (you will remember their plastic carrier bags from Windmill End) want to cross the canal at low level. They say it is too expensive to provide navigable headroom.

British Waterways say that their 'agreement' with BCDC on a canal strategy for the Walsall Canal is in jeopardy if they insist on navigable headroom. Anyway they intend to continue to maintain the cut off portion, which will mean further money spent on non-navigations or it becoming an unauthorised tip.

The work of surveying and sampling is progressing and the RIDGEACRE seems doomed.

Where is the IWA in this saga?- This is the body that campaigns for the restoration, retention and development of inland waterways- Well they are not opposing the road crossing.

Are NABO members concerned at this, almost certain, loss to the navigable canal system?

WHAT CAN WE DO? DOES IT MATTER? WHO CARES?

User Group Meeting with BW Midlands Regional Manager 30.7.92

This was the first meeting of its type in this region. Future meetings were thought desirable by all present and will take place twice a year. BW led the meeting and welcomed any topic being raised right down to use of metric signs. BW seemed very anxious to make us aware of and sympathetic to the complexities and pressures of waterway management. The impact of the Environmental Protection Act is worthy of our compassion - more on this later!

Tunnels

BW are concerned that a severe accident could occur despite a good historic safety record and that they'd have to face the coroner's court and allegations of negligence. The point was made that as users we accept and to some extent desire a level of risk in our leisure pursuits.

A group of national experts in fires and risk assessment were assembled and plans for modest safety measures are being implemented. Please note your licence fees only paid the travel and accommodation costs of these experts. They generously gave their time free of charge. User group representation was not thought appropriate. All tunnels are being assessed and safety measures introduced as appropriate for the degree of risk. The mathematics of the assessment was explained in detail. It is a shame the same approach has not been taken with boat standards. The safety measures being considered include the following:-

- 1/ Directions to nearest Phone box at each end of the tunnel.
- 2/ Lighting.
- 3/ Local emergency services made aware of existence of tunnel and its exact location. Inter agency disaster plans prepared.
- 4/ Surrounding area monitored for possible hazards. e.g. Industrial fumes being sucked in.
- 5/ BW to educate boaters of potential hazards using leaflets and signs. Eg don't do any cooking.
- 6/ In consultation with the Department of Transport, trip boats have been banned from tunnels in the Midland region.

The supposedly luminous arrows that don't actually glow were an interim measure. BW were told that the material would perform in the light levels of a tunnel. We asked if their suppliers were to pay compensation - apparently not, since BW provided the specification.

Dredging

BW feel very hard done by- dredging is their biggest source of complaint despite the fact they think they do a lot of it and it is very expensive- around £30.00 per cubic metre for dredging and disposal. The whole region has been surveyed and silt samples taken every 2km to identify the level of contamination. 40% of all silt gives a disposal problem.

The grot from Dudley tunnel was so poisonous it had to go to a specialist tip in Bedfordshire. The information gathered will be used to devise the most efficient and cost effective dredging programmes.

Good news for Brummie Boaters- 1.5km (km?) around Gas St and Cambrian Wharf is to be dredged removing all contaminants. The Department of the Environment is funding this project (costing £450,000) as an expression of its sympathy for the problems BW have with the Environmental Protection Act.

Lowesmoor Pound on the Worcs/Bham is also to be dredged - cost to BW £300,000; and that's for clean dredgings.

We raised the matter of towpath improvements on the BCN where the debris was dumped in the canal instead of being taken away. BW were clearly embarrassed and virtually admitted it was a cock-up. Apparently a dredger was supposed to be in the area shortly after the work was completed, so it would have been cheaper for them to remove this new material along with the existing silt rather than pay for someone to remove it as it was being created. The dredging didn't take place for some reason. This leaves the bottom nearer the top and the cleanish earth that was on the towpath is now mixed in with the toxic waste lining much of the BCN.

Ridgeacre

The canal is to be partly filled in courtesy of a new road. BW say conceding a £1.m bridge here was necessary to secure the overall funding of £7.m from the Black Country Development Corporation for the Walsall canal. We have a map of the proposed road if any member would like a copy, or ask BW Fazeley Office. **A fuller article on the Ridgacre appears on page 4.**

Draft Customer Charter

BW are very interested to receive users' views on this and would especially welcome ideas for measuring their performance against it. It is thought that any system of penalties could be open to abuse and the net effect would be to take cash away from the canal system. Get a copy of the charter from BW and let them, and us, have your views ASAP. The deadline is Mid-September. The NABO response will be finalised at the 12th September Committee meeting. One obvious improvement to the charter would be a guaranteed profile not just a channel depth as currently mentioned. Another obvious improvement would have been to release the document before everyone went cruising.

Disabled People

BW assured us that they automatically considered the requirements of disabled people and worked with their representatives to improve BW's understanding. British Telecom have sponsored a scheme to improve access.

Environmental Protection Act.

BW have had to comply with this since November 1991. Paperwork describing rubbish has to be raised each time it's collected. It's OK if it's categorised as "Household", but apparently if you chuck in a used paint tin it becomes something else and costs a lot more to dispose of. Dredging tips past and present have to be licensed and their contents described. 144 tips need licensing, a process involving local authorities and taking 6-9 months. Three BW staff in Leeds are working on this full time. BW were keen to point out that despite the problems the Act causes them, they fully support any legislation designed to improve the environment.

There was an article in The Guardian on the 1st August concerning exemptions from licensing for property developers. We shall suggest that if the Government can make these sort of concessions, more time and money should be made available for BW to comply.

BW is already storing toxic waste in the canal bed and a licence is also required for this, so why is it a problem when it's dredged?

The principle of the EPA is that "The polluter pays". Why should BW and boaters today have to foot the bill for the additional costs of disposal of industrial wastes that have poured into the canal system over two centuries? BW are trying to identify remaining polluters but many firms no longer exist so there is no one to pass the buck onto. BW have been given £1.2 m (half the sum requested) specifically to meet the demands of the Act.

Regional Structure

The midlands and SW regions are merging. The Gloucester Office closes in March 93. Peel Wharf, Fazeley, Staffordshire will cover the whole region.

This will provide an overhead saving of £0.5m.

From April 1993 the boundaries for the Midlands areas are being redrawn and managers shuffled around. The new boundaries are:-

- 1/ Trent and Mersey north of Stafford, Staffs and Worcs, Shropshire Union.
- 2/ Trent and Mersey south of Stafford, Coventry, Ashby, and Fazeley.
- 3/ BCN and Black Country canals.
- 4/ Worcester Birmingham, Stratford, Grand Union (North).

Kennet and Avon.

The existing K&A manager, Terry Kemp is to be seconded to the K&A trust for 3 years to aid the fund raising for a back pumping station. An article about the K&A appears on page 9.

BW North West Region Report

Tom Hartney, our NW regional representative attended a regional consultative forum which was held on the 10th April 1992. Derek Cochrane, Regional Manager, who chaired the meeting, hoped that a similar meeting would be held annually in the future, with local consultative meetings held twice a year.

BW NW aims to increase income for reinvestment in the waterways and to run efficiently so that grant aid is spent on the track. They have, like other regions, got extra funding to implement the Environment Protection Act. Particular success has apparently been achieved in the cleaning of sanitary stations, which is very reassuring.

The results of BW's recent questionnaire of private boat owners found that 75% of respondents were satisfied that they got value for money in the NW.

Various topics of interest were touched upon, some of which are mentioned below.

Stoppages: APCO would be informed immediately (by phone or fax) if stoppages are for less than 3 days - in view of their specific business needs. Otherwise notices will be displayed at strategic points. An assurance was given that BW would try to ensure alternative options to stopped routes.

Complaints: BW NW are keen to get things right and state that they will respond to all complaints. They have also stated that they are willing to review any decision made by any member of their staff.

Preston Brook Tunnel: The new tunnel signs which are now absolutely essential for safety, but for the past 200 years weren't, are so long that at Preston Brook people didn't understand them and entered the tunnel at the wrong times causing confusion and danger. The situation has been corrected, but this is another example of the Nanny State Nonsense we are expected to put up with.

Dredging: This has been started on the Caldon and will start on the Macclesfield soon. There are 9 new dredging tips licenced in the NW.

Resoration: BW NW are supporting the restoration of the following canals:

Montgomery

Huddersfield

Manchester Bolton and Bury.

Leeds & Liverpool in Liverpool

The upper Lancaster.

The Dept. of Environment have agreed that BW can apply for Derelict Land Grants to support these schemes and applications are now being processed.

The Future: Re waterway standards, BW NW have planned for a 20% improvement overall in Environment and Navigation over the next 4/5 years.

It was not entirely clear how standards will be defined - or what is really meant at all. Perhaps members could tell us if standards of Environment or Navigation have improved by 4% in the next 12 months. Include your methods and calculations with your results!

KENNET & AVON CANAL REPORT

In the last Newsletter we indicated that navigation was virtually impossible throughout the Kennet and Avon Canal. We meant to say that *through* navigation was virtually impossible. Both the western and eastern ends remain open and we would encourage boaters to visit this delightful waterway. The Caen Hill flight is closed at the time of writing. We have recently had a meeting

between Dave Wetton and Phil Bland of NABO and Terry Kemp, BW manager Kennet and Avon Canal. Some of the issues discussed are outlined below.

Moorings

While we agreed with Terry Kemp that boaters (generally a small minority) who flout the regulations should be dealt with appropriately, care should be taken not to harass people who genuinely needed to overstay a towpath mooring restriction for a good reason. (eg breakdown, stoppage or water shortage, etc). Mr Kemp agreed with this, and assured us that all boaters had to do was telephone his office to discuss any problems with him.

Licence Fee Reduction?

Although Mr Kemp was sympathetic to our point that with a limited cruising range on the Western end of the navigation caused by the "closure" of the Caen Hill flight, a reduction in licence fee would be fair, he would not agree to any reduction. NABO are progressing this at a higher level.

Apparent double standards.

Hotel boats are being let up and down Caen Hill when private boats are not. Mr Kemp assured us that this decision was not taken lightly, and denied he was under any pressure to make the decisions he did. But if there is no water for private boats, how is it found for hotel boats?

Cruiseway or remainder waterway?

To alter the K&A to cruiseway status would apparently mean that the 9 Local Authorities along its route would not donate their current £400,000 per annum, which would have to be found by BW, or for some other body to make up the shortfall. Mr Kemp thought the only way was to pressure MPs to lobby for more financing.

Maintenance

Mr Kemp explained all that he was doing which includes the use of real grease on locks(!), monthly checks on all lock gates, and dredging at various points on the Western end - and on the summit. Visitor moorings are being developed at Pewsey. Concrete linings are being installed on the worst affected areas of the canal and an investment in computerising all the current back pumps in the area is still under development.

A project is to be run by the K&A Trust to raise £2m to get the back pumps installed, but this might take as long as 10 years to complete.

Generally Mr Kemp was very sympathetic to boat owners and the particular problems we have on the K&A. He thought that the opening had been given too high a profile by the press, who had given the impression that the canal was now open to everyone, all the time, throughout its length. Although navigation is possible over most of the canal from Reading to Great Bedwyn, and Lower Foxhangers to Bath, the stretch between Great Bedwyn and Lower Foxhangers is beset with problems, mainly lack of water, and Caen Hill is shut until further notice.

So until further notice **THERE IS NO THROUGH NAVIGATION**

THE ROYAL RIVER

We have now responded to a consultative document issued by NRA on the best way to deal with congestion on the River, particularly at five bottleneck locks. The Committee took into account the views of members received following a request in the last newsletter. We also wrote directly to a number of members who we could identify from our database as being Thames users.

The basis of our response was as follows:

Of the options contained in the document we believe that Option A has the most to commend it (maintain status quo but bring sub-standard infrastructure up to an adopted standard). The danger of a large scale enlargement programme is that traffic may increase thus moving congestion to the next most sensitive lock and so *ad infinitum*. Members have pointed out that they are already paying a 25% lock enlargement surcharge over 3 years. This finance could be used to bring sub-standard locks up to scratch quickly and not, as is suggested, "gradually".

We made a number of additional suggestions:

1. Increase lock keepers hours at peak times and busy locks.
2. Allow registered boat owners to use the electrical lock gear outside of attendance hours. This is already done by BW on such major waterways as the River Trent and the commercial waterways of the north west.
3. Ensure lock keepers are adequately trained in fast, efficient and safe "lock packing".
4. Improve lay by facilities. This is an urgent requirement on safety grounds.
5. Install a system at locks which could notify skippers of congestion ahead. Perhaps a regular bulletin could be broadcast on marine VHF and possibly CB.

We believe that there is no merit in seeking to encourage a "standard" size boat. If there is to be a penalty for size then it should be applied to the boats with greatest beam and not length. Penalising narrowboats, for example, because of their length has nothing to recommend it given that their slab sides and narrow beam enable them to be packed particularly tightly in locks. We would support the concept of the Thames Tonnage system in principle although the formula itself would warrant study to ensure that it achieves a fair result.

VHF on the Thames

VHF marine band radio is required to be fitted to vessels over 20 metres in length using any part of the tidal river. This includes full length narrowboats. We have lobbied the Port of London authority to remove or modify this requirement in respect of the five mile stretch of river between Teddington Lock and Brentford. This is a vital link route between the non-tidal Thames and the canal system, the effect of the tide is relatively small and there is little or no commercial traffic. Under these circumstances we believe it reasonable to exempt craft either totally on this stretch or, if that is not acceptable, then where the length does not exceed 25 metres or the beam does not exceed 2.5 metres.

We have now heard that the PLA have moved somewhat and granted a concession which will require only a single boat to be fitted with VHF when a number of boats are travelling together. This helps a bit but was certainly not our preferred solution. It means that a boat affected by the rule but not fitted with radio will need to cadge a "lift" with a boat that is fitted. Since most boats with radio are likely to be high speed cruisers, you may have to persuade the skipper to slow down for you or else give the Bolinder some welly!!

REPORT OF THE ENQUIRY INTO RIVER SAFETY

The enquiry, published this July, looks at the responsibilities of the Department of Transport since 1980 for the safety of vessels on rivers and inland waters, in view of the Marchioness/Bowbelle disaster. It is important to note that the report refers to operational and passenger safety, not construction safety.

NABO submitted evidence to the enquiry, and noted that because of this disaster BWB were panicked into prematurely introducing boat standards without any research in to what was actually required to improve the safety of vessels, and that such research is still required to be done.

The report, whilst not referring specifically to private vessels on inland waterways, does raise some interesting points which should perhaps be noted by us and BWB.

General Findings and Recommendations

General Findings

The Marchioness/Bowbelle disaster brought home to everyone just how vulnerable you can be travelling on the Thames, particularly at night. The onus for safety of travellers rests with the operators. On the Thames the DOT and the Port of London Authority have to regulate the operators.

The conclusion drawn was that on the whole the DOT were technically competent, but that they had not checked that measures agreed between themselves and operators to increase safety on rivers in the early 1980s had being carried out.

Recommendations

Any future marine safety organisation should have responsibility for developing operational safety standards as well as enforcing them.

The DOT should be prepared to carry out more spot checks, and do more relevant research and heighten safety proficiency among those who use our rivers for pleasure and profit.

In conjunction with others, responsibility for the provision of emergency services should be defined. (On inland waterways and rivers there is no rescue service operating nor is there a statutory duty on any authority to provide one. Where accidents occur it is usually the task of the 'Normal' emergency services to deal with the consequences)

An Independent review of the rescue arrangements and equipment on the Thames, should be undertaken. The review should then be used as a basis for action by Riparian and Canal Authorities.

The DOT should also undertake a pilot study using quantified risk assessment and the safety case approach, suitably adapted to improve safety and rescue standards on major rivers and inland waters and to develop these and other safety techniques.

The appraisal of new regulations should include not only the cost of compliance but also the estimated costs of accidents likely to be avoided by them.

It was also suggested that breath tests for skippers and crews, and compulsory tests in boatmanship for those in charge of vessels above specified limits be considered after consultation.

The report included a list of the incidents on the Thames involving commercial vessels from 1965 - 1991. There were 20 incidents: - 19 collisions (2 with bridges) and 1 grounding.

The Bowbelle was involved in 11 of these, and its sister-ship the Bow Trader in 3.

Of the 12 incidents in the 1980s, 7 involved passenger vessels at night, and yet in the 1960s and 70s no passenger vessels were involved. This would appear to be because it is only in the 80s that late night boat trips became fashionable. Yet it is clear that this is where the safety measures are required. It also seems clear that there were specific problems with the Bowbelle/Bowtrader and the accident, as well as the panic response to it which is so typical now, could have been avoided by a careful collection, monitoring and response to previous accident data.

Deeper than we thought!

A poster issued by BW quotes the draft at the reconstructed Wrenbury Bridge as being 8'10". Could this be a new standard for the waterways we thought? On more sober reflection, however, it seems more likely to be a reference to air draft although the poster does not say so. Oh well, back to the lobbying! The same poster advises boaters to "approach the bridge very slow." We will give them an English grammar primer for Christmas.

MEETINGS WITH M.P.

South Derbyshire MP, Mrs Edwina Currie, frequently goes jogging along the stretch of the Trent and Mersey canal which runs through her constituency near Derby, and is fully aware of the enjoyment which can be derived from canals. With the massive new Toyota car factory due to open later in the year, she is looking to improve leisure facilities, which, at present, are somewhat sparse in South Derbyshire, and she sees the canal as the focal point of these facilities. A meeting was held at the end of June to discuss the practicalities of the idea, and those attending were Edwina Currie M.P, Stuart Sim, BW's Midland Manager, Stephen Goode, the local Manager, Mike Mitchell, Chairman of the Trent and Mersey Canal Society, representatives of the local District Councils, John Baylis of IWA, and Pete Sterry, NABO Publicity Officer.

One of the items discussed was the proposed Burton Canal Corridor (Or 'Goodeworld', as it is known locally), and then the whole length between Burton and Shardlow came under scrutiny. This length of canal is basically rural, and it was unanimously agreed that this condition should not be altered. Towpaths would be improved, cyclepaths would be introduced where appropriate, and the public would be encouraged to visit places of historical interest, such as Shardlow. The cost of all this development would be met by contributions from local industry (such as the brewing trade), and grants from local councils. Whilst I am delighted that this section of the canal will not suffer the neglect which afflicts other canals on the system, I did voice my expectation that the character of the canal would not be altered, and received reassurance on this point. I also made the point very strongly that, whereas I welcomed other people spending money on the canal, this money would be wasted unless a lot of it went on ensuring that boaters would also be encouraged to use it. In other words, dredge it out, and improve the moorings. A canal without boats very soon ceases to be a canal, and visitors will not come along to look at the sort of shameful neglect which can be seen on the Leicester Arm. This was probably not the most popular fact to throw at her meeting -- after all, you can spend £1m on dredging, and when it is done, you cannot actually see any difference (I was told by Stuart Sim that he had spent £1m on dredging in his area, and I'm buggered if I can see where it was done!).

This meeting discussed the possible future of the canal. I had previously written to Mrs Currie about present-day problems, and at the end of the meeting I was asked to organise a further meeting so that these could be thrashed out.

The second meeting took place at Swarkeston Boat Club, aboard a boat generously provided by Midland Canal Centre and those attending were :- Mrs Currie MP, Stephen Goode, Regan Milnes - News editor of Waterways World, Syd and Margaret Beacroft - Area Reps from NABO, Eric Wood and John Bayliss - IWA, Mike Mitchell and David Hill - T & M C.S, Eddie Baldwin - Midland Canal Centre, John Page - Chairman of the Swarkeston Boat Club, and Pete Sterry - Chairman of the Greyhound Boat Club. A lively discussion covered such points as BW response time to obstructions in the canal, more casual mooring places, more facilities, i.e Sanitary Stations, Rubbish dumps, and Water points. I raised the topic of giving the 2000-mile system the same status as the National Parks, with more Government money, not less, but was told that, with a massive Budget deficit, more old people receiving pensions and expectations of 3 million unemployed, there was nothing in the kitty for this idea. This led on to licence fees, and Mrs Currie felt that with the improvement that had taken place on the canals over the last number of years, boaters should be expected to pay more for their pleasure. It was strongly pointed out to Mrs Currie that this could result in a fall in the number of boaters, especially when they were being forced with (largely) unnecessary expenses to meet to bring their boats up eventually, to compliance standard. Mrs Currie was very concerned, however, with the inevitable imposition by Europe of Customs duty on diesel supplied to boats, as this would have serious implications, particularly for the hire trade. She promised to take this matter up with the Treasury, and report back to us.

The meeting was felt to be useful, and Mrs Currie certainly learnt about the problems facing boaters and other canal-users, not just on her patch, as originally intended, but throughout the system. It is obvious that her views do not always coincide with those of NABO, but she is interested in the well-being of the canals, and of course, being who she is, when she speaks, people listen. She even told us that there is a group of MPs who are charged with looking after waterways matters, and she promised to deliver a kick up the backside to them when parliament reconvenes.

Membership renewals

Starting with this issue of the Boater we will be inserting renewal notices for those members whose renewal falls due in the coming month. If there is a renewal notice in *your* issue of the Boater please help us by completing the form and returning it with your remittance immediately.

NABO SAYS "NO" TO PRICE INCREASES

We have recently been asked by BW to give our views on fees and charges for 1993. This is what we said in our reply to BW:

"NABO takes the view that there should be no increase in fees and charges this year. We appreciate that this would mean a reduction in the Board's income in real terms but nonetheless believe that this position is justified in the current market conditions.

We are getting strong feedback from members that in the present state of the economy the constantly rising cost of boat ownership in real terms over the last several years has now reached a stage at which further increases could well cause boaters to leave the system in significant numbers. The increasing cost of mooring and expenses resulting from seeking to comply with an ever changing set of standards are just two of the areas leading to boaters questioning the justification of the financial consequences of ownership.

We would once more question the applicability of VAT to licences. You may be aware that the Basingstoke authority is refunding licence VAT since it appears that the licence is a "right over land" and as such is not taxable. We are currently carrying out our own research in this area but your views would be appreciated. We further believe that the way in which you dealt with the increase in the VAT rate led to boaters being overcharged by approximately one half of one percent.

We suggest that in considering your charges you should give consideration to providing reduced fees where cruising range is significantly restricted - we have the K & A particularly in mind since we do not believe the current reductions go far enough.

We take a similar view that there should be no increase in mooring fees or in the charges to other people and organisations who provide moorings. In the latter case we would like confirmation that charges are and will continue to be applied on an even handed basis. We are also concerned that moorings should not be "upgraded" and thus subjected to higher charges by providing additional facilities unless there is proper consultation with the moorers at the site, the moorers actually want the additional facilities proposed and the additional charges are a fair reflection of the added value of the additional facilities.

We believe that the underfunding of the waterways arises from a lack of appreciation by Government of the nature of the waterways asset and of the millions of people who, every year, make use of it without directly contributing to its upkeep. We believe the system should be regarded as a national park and would be happy to support the Board in any application to Government for additional funding. We are currently seeking a meeting with Lord Strathclyde to discuss the Government's approach to the waterways and their funding."

EC BOAT STANDARDS

There are no EC "standards" as such - yet, but the foundation for them is laid down in a proposed directive which will affect EC Members' standards.

It is interesting to note that The Commission tried to draw up a directive just on the hulls of recreational craft in the 70s, but abandoned the attempt owing to divergent views of construction principles!

Rationale for Directive.

The laws, regulations and administrative provisions in force in the member states of the EC differ in scope and content and are liable to create barriers to trade and unequal conditions of competition within the "internal market" of the EC. But the EC requires that "the internal market shall comprise an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured."

A Council Resolution on the 7th May 1985 calls for the removal of technical barriers to be achieved by "the definition of of essential requirements on safety and other aspects which are important for the general well being".

These essential requirements provide the basis for the preparation of harmonised standards at a European level. The European harmonised standards will give a concrete form at a technical level to the essential requirements.

Compliance with the technical requirements must be monitored in order to ensure adequate user and 3rd party safety. In order to avoid numerous checks which merely impede the free movement of boats, there should be mutual recognition of the inspections conducted by member states. Therefore it is necessary to lay down harmonised community procedure and to harmonise the criteria to be taken into account in selecting the bodies responsible for examination, monitoring and verification.

The planned implementation date for the Directive is 1st July 1995.

The essential requirements are given in annex 1 to the Directive. There are five sections:

1. Definitions
2. General requirements such as boat identification and builder's plate.
3. Integrity and Structural requirements such as strength of hull, buoyancy, stability etc.
4. Performance ie that the vessel can be properly handled under power.
5. Installation requirements. These cover the main areas included in the BW/NRA/BROADS standards and are reproduced below in their entirety.

Installation Requirements

5.1 Propulsion Systems

1. - All inboard mounted engines shall be placed within an enclosure separated from living quarters. The craft shall be so constructed as to minimise hazard in the living quarters from fumes, heat, noise and vibrations.
 - Engine parts and accessories that require frequent inspection and/or servicing shall be readily accessible.
 - The insulating materials inside engine spaces prevent the fire from spreading
2. The engine compartment shall be suitably ventilated, depending on the equipment inside and considering both the temperature requirements and the air consumption of the engine(s), as specified by the engine manufacturer.
3. Unless the engine is protected by a cover or its own enclosure, exposed, moving or hot parts of the engine shall be effectively shielded.
4. All boats with outboard engines shall have a device to prevent starting the engine in gear, except
 - a) When the engine produces less than 500N of static thrust or a power of -- kw
 - b) When the engine has a throttle limiting device to limit thrust to 500N or a power of -- kw at the time of starting the engine.

5.2 Fuel systems

- The filling, storage, venting and fuel supply arrangements and installations shall be designed and installed so as to minimize the risk of fire and explosion.
- Fuel tanks shall be separated or protected from any source of significant heat. The material the tanks are made of and their method of construction shall be according to their capacity and the type of fuel.
- Unless fully isolated from the engine compartment and any source of ignition, all tank spaces shall be ventilated.

- Liquid fuel with a flash point below 55°C shall be kept in tanks which do not form part of the hull and are:-

a) separate from the engine compartment unless all electrical components contained within it are ignition-protected.

b) separate from living quarters.

- Liquid fuel with a flash point equal to or above 55°C may be kept in tanks that are integral with the hull

5.3 Electrical systems

1.- Electrical systems shall be designed and installed so as to ensure proper operation of the craft under normal conditions of use and shall be such as to minimize risk of fire and electric shock.

- Attention shall be paid to the provision of overload and short circuit protection of all circuits, (except engine starting circuits) supplied from batteries.

- Adequate ventilation shall be provided to minimise the accumulation of gas which might be emitted from batteries.

5.4 Steering system.

1. Steering systems shall be designed, constructed and installed in order to allow the transmission of steering loads under normal operating conditions.

2. Single-engined inboard boats with remote controlled rudder steering systems and sailboats without auxiliary engines shall be provided with emergency means of steering the craft at reduced speed.

5.5 Gas System

- Gas systems for domestic use shall be of the vapour withdrawal type and shall be designed and installed so as to avoid leaks and the risk of explosion. Materials and components shall be suitable for the specific gas used and designed to withstand the stresses and exposures found in marine environment.

- Each appliance shall be equipped with a flame failure device effective on all burners. Each gas-consuming appliance must be supplied by a separate branch of the distribution system, and each branch must be controlled by a separate closing device.

- Gas bottles shall be stored in an enclosure separated from the living quarters, and ventilated to the outside so that the gas drains overboard unless the bottle contains less than 3kg of liquid gas and is directly attached to the appliance with no weight bearing on the gas connection. The system shall be tested after installation.

5.6 Fire protection

1. The type of equipment installed and the layout of the craft shall take account of the risk and spread of fire. Attention shall be paid to the surroundings of open flame devices.

2.- Craft shall be supplied with fire-fighting equipment suitable for their size and boat usage group. Number, size and distribution of extinguishers shall take account of the type and number of the propulsion units, the size of engine spaces, and any equipment which may present a fire risk.

- Where fitted, portable fire extinguishers shall be readily accessible and one shall be so positioned that it can easily be reached from the main steering position of the boat.

5.7 Navigation lights

Provisions shall be made for the fitting of navigation lights when required.

The Directive itself is concerned with trade in new vessels only, but as the BW/NRA/BROADS standards are applicable to new as well as old boats, they come within the scope of the Directive. It is clear that any Boat Standards produced by navigation authorities must be neither too lenient nor too stringent for the EC. We are now in a position where we have to see if the BW/NRA/BROADS standards will be acceptable.

BOAT STICKERS

There has been a good response to the stickers, and those of us who have seen them will probably agree, as a piece of publicity they work very well.

As there has been some criticism that they are too big for small boats and cars, the possibility of having smaller round stickers was discussed at the last Committee meeting. It was decided to look into the cost of producing small stickers, but that it was probable that the cost would be prohibitive when compared with the likely income they will generate - and we still have a good supply of the bigger ones.

If you have not yet bought a Boat Sticker but would like to (or three), then please send a Cheque made payable to "National Association of Boat Owners", To Jon or Melanie Darlington,

. Sticker size: 13" x 3.5".

Prices (incl postage) 1 @ £1.00, 2 or more 75p each.

SWEATSHIRTS

The pursuit of sweatshirts goes on. Members who have placed an order will be receiving a letter and a refund explaining the situation. Meanwhile we are investigating other possibilities re sweatshirts and methods to publicise NABO; and we will keep members informed through the newsletter, Boater or personal contact.

Syd & Margaret Beacroft

MIDDLE LEVEL COMMISSIONERS (NAVIGATION) BYELAWS 1992

NABO was invited to comment on the proposed Middle Level Navigation byelaws currently in a draft form.

We provided detailed comments on the draft byelaws. Some of our objections are outlined below.

On a first viewing these byelaws look like another set of onerous, authoritarian and largely unnecessary rules and regulations; with penalties which seem to be out of all proportion to the 'crimes' they relate to. A second viewing will, in all probability, only reinforce this opinion. Is it, for example, really necessary to make a criminal offense of mooring a boat for longer than 24 hours against a towpath? There are a number of new criminal offenses which any conscientious bishop would be capable of committing with a clear conscience.

We were very disappointed to see yet another set of Boat Standards in these byelaws, but we understand that the BW/NRA/BROADS standards will be in the final version.

It is proposed that these byelaws should not apply to the Commissioners or anyone authorised by them, or to a local authority or the NRA. Laws should apply to all.

There is a requirement that a register be maintained giving names and addresses of boat owners and that this shall be open to any person. This might constitute a threat to the security and privacy of the owners.

Some form of consultation and arbitration process should be included in the Navigation Charge setting mechanism.

There is a requirement that where two vessels are approaching a narrow channel, the smaller vessel should give way to the larger. This has obvious dangers. For example where two vessels of a similar size are approaching each other, it may not be apparent which of the two is smaller and should give way. It would be perhaps more logical to require the first vessel to reach the narrow channel to pass through first.

No person shall launch or remove a vessel other than at a site approved by the Commission. There should surely be a general exemption from this clause for unpowered dinghies and canoes otherwise even to lift a licensed canoe out of the navigation will be a criminal offense.

Rule 19 makes towing a vessel a criminal offense. This ruling precludes the use of narrow motors and butties. Timely use of a vessel to tow a broken down, stranded or grounded vessel might prevent a more permanent obstruction. Dinghies and canoes are exempted, and can be towed, presumably because its an offence to lift them out!

Rule 22 makes the washing down of a boat a criminal offence.

Rule 34 makes it an offence to pollute the navigation unless you are the biggest polluter of all, ie a farmer using nitrate fertilisers and pesticides. The poisoning of water by farmers is probably one of the biggest environmental problems we face in this country, and surely such farmers should not be exempted from pollution laws.

We object to the wording of the requirement that the master of any vessel using a Navigation Waterway shall obey and conform to any directions which may be given by an officer of the Commissioners relating to the navigation, mooring or unmooring of such vessel. The master of the vessel must be responsible for his/her vessel and need not comply with a direction which in his/her opinion prejudices the safety of the vessel.

At a time when lawlessness is becoming endemic within the population as a whole, is it really sensible to alienate those who are naturally law abiding and considerate, by devising unnecessary and punitive byelaws?

We have therefore asked that very careful consideration be given to the question of whether each particular byelaw is really absolutely necessary.

HELP NABO WITH REGIONAL AND LOCAL ISSUES

With 14 members on the committee it is impossible for us to properly cover all the local and regional issues that arise as we would like to, therefore in order to improve our knowledge of local situations on the cut we want to enlist the help of members who are willing to attend the occasional consultation meetings etc with BW managers on behalf of NABO. You would be expected to report to the area representatives and keep them aware and up to date with local problems. You should also be prepared to be contacted in any situation which needs local knowledge of your area.

If you are interested in helping can you please contact Dave Green or your area rep for more details. See page 24 for names and addresses.

Who represents NABO?

Committee members names, Addresses and Responsibilities.

Penny Barber c/o
(Treasurer.)

Margaret/Syd Beacroft
(Midland and NE Reps)

Phil Bland,

Vic Brown,
(Editor of Boater)

Melanie Darlington
(Boater production)
Jon Darlington
(Vice Chairman)

Jane Green,
(Secretary)
Dave Green
(Chairman)

Thomas Hartney
(NW rep)

Neil Hutchinson
(Newsletter editor)

Christine Potter,
(Public Relations,)

Pete Sterry,
(Publicity,)

Harry Winter,
(Technical Officer)

Dave Wetton,
(SW rep.)

Area representatives :-

South East South of Thames
North of Thames and East Anglia
Midlands and North East
North West
South West

Dave/Jane Green
Harry Winter
Syd/Margaret Beacroft
Tom Hartney
Dave Wetton