



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

NEWSLETTER

September 1994

Editor's comment

This issue contains an article discussing the possibility of selling advertising space in this newsletter. By doing this we could raise some extra revenue which could be used to improve the newsletter's appearance, or to add a new service such as an "Exchange & Mart" page for members, or even to contribute to a Fighting Fund. We would like to know what you think about these possibilities.

Every front-page Editorial should contain an embarrassing misprint! Sorry about this - I've double checked this time!

Whilst every care is taken to ensure that the contents of the Newsletter 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 anything contained in this publication. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association.

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**National Association of
Boat Owners**

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's comment

We are rapidly approaching the AGM which will be held on the 26th November. As in previous years we appeal for members to come forward to serve on the Council. There are 15 places in total, and we have never had a full compliment of members, apart from the very first Council (then Committee) meeting, when one member resigned!

Maybe the reason we don't have to short-list candidates from a large number of applications is simply because the posts are voluntary and unpaid, except for expenses. If you believe the Thatcherite maxim (commonly quoted by directors justifying a large pay rise for themselves) that if you only pay peanuts all you get is monkeys, what do you get if you pay nothing at all except expenses? The answer, I suppose, is idiot monkeys with expense accounts! On that basis perhaps it is not surprising we don't get many volunteers coming forward! However, an alternative description of such monkeys might be people who care for principle more than pocket. If you care for the principle of protecting

boat owners' interests and can spare time to help, then please stand for election to the Council.

We have a particular need for a North West representative. Neil Hutchinson has very ably taken on the role this year but as he lives in the Midlands, he is not ideally placed for the job. If you live in the North West and would be willing to join the Council, and represent NABO at user meetings with BW, then please come forward. You don't need any qualifications or experience other than that you care about the waterways and the freedom to use them. There must surely be a member somewhere in the North West willing to help.

Apart from the NW rep's job, there are many important projects and areas of work which we could and should be doing if we had more volunteers. We really do need your help to make NABO more effective.

We are very sorry to be losing Harry Winter from the Council at the end of this year. Harry joined the very first official Council back in 1991, but ill health and changing work patterns have made it impossible for him to

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's comment (continued)

continue on the Council. We would like to thank Harry for all the work he has done for us over the years.

We are also sorry that Chris Barnacle, who joined the Council last year, has also been suffering

from severe ill health, as well as a series of family difficulties. This has meant Chris has been forced currently to relinquish his responsibilities with NABO. We thank him for the work he has done on NABO's behalf.

NEWS

View from the Council meeting held on 10th Sept 1994

The summer sun seems to have gone but your intrepid reporter Moley reports no let up in NABO activities.

Attendance at the Waltham Abbey Festival resulted in a profit for NABO funds as well as 50 new members. It was felt that NABO ought to have a boat as well as the usual stand which tended to attract non boaters. Anyone who is likely to go to Nottingham, Braunston or Chester (the National) with a boat next year who would be prepared to use it for NABO purposes, please contact Pete Sterry.

Is there a policy of installing bollards or rings at Visitor

mooring sites in your area? We are worried that this might be becoming a trend as the provision of facilities is something BW can charge for. Let NABO know if this is happening as we need to ensure the undertakings given to us by BW are fulfilled.

After Moley's last report that BW were to be thanked, they appear to be back in their old ways. They are refusing to alter their "consultation" procedure even though they say that the changes we want will make no difference. They also say that other organisations have accepted. This is something we are checking and if incorrect will be taking up.

NEWS

View from the Council meeting (continued)

The first application of the moorings matrix reported in the August Newsletter has been received from Stephen Goode. It is not clear whether it is subject to "consultation" or not, but it appears to be reasonable and reduces most current charges. Colin Paillin has the details (or he will do when Moley returns it!).

BW's licence fees are to go up by 2.3% next year - the figure for inflation in July.

Anyone in the North West or East Anglia willing to attend user group meetings in those areas please contact Neil Hutchinson. Also anyone willing to stand for Council at the AGM, please fill in and send your nomination form to Roger Hancock by 15th October.

Talking of AGM's this year's will be on November 26th. at Friends Meeting House, Northfield, Birmingham. Starts at 2.00pm. Parking is easy (on site and across the road), and it's easy to get to as it is close to M4 Junction 4 and M42 Junction 2.

More next time. Moley will sneak into the AGM as well, see you there.

The Unfriendly Thames

We periodically receive reports of inhospitable actions by local councils and land owners along the River Thames, and a number of problems have again occurred this year.

A few years ago we expressed our concern that mooring facilities at Marlow had been removed and no alternative provisions made to welcome boat users. Recently, members have reported high charges being levied for short term mooring at Cookham, allegedly by persons acting on behalf of the parish council. To their credit, Cookham P.C. have responded to complaints made, and it appears that the dues are not collected by the council and they are investigating any possible misrepresentation.

At Reading, boaters are welcomed by 'No Mooring' signs on council-owned land in the centre of town.

It seems that exploitation and hostility are official policy along the Thames, and we would be pleased to receive reports to the contrary from any members who have cruised the river during 1994.

NEWS

Standards on the Warwickshire River Avon

The NRA has recently published its draft Catchment Management Plan for the Warwickshire Avon. The document discusses the problems and conflicts between the various users of the river, and contains proposals for exercising yet greater control over boats.

Particularly worrying is their suggestion that discharges of sink waste water should be stopped and that all such effluents should be contained on board.

The NABO River Users' Co-ordinator has responded to the NRA document (as we do to all plans likely to affect boat owners) and pointed out the physical problems of providing storage for all waste water on boats.

The NRA also look to the introduction of Harmonized Boat Standards as providing the solution to oil pollution from boats. This appears rather incongruous, as the NRA itself uses large smelly and oily 2-stroke outboard engines on its pollution craft!!

We have taken up the question of possible introduction

of Boat Standards by both LANT and UANT, the two trusts who control navigation. It appears that UANT will enforce them as soon as they are introduced. LANT have still to formulate a response. Boat owners who may have thought that the River Avon would provide a refuge for their non-compliant boats may have to think again!

Update on the use of Marine VHF on the Severn

Further to the report in the last issue of the Newsletter we have received definitive clarification from BW at Gloucester concerning the use of VHF by boat owners wishing to communicate with lock keepers.

They confirm the NABO view that Channel 74 is a recognized port operations simplex channel meant for such purposes.

BW themselves are the culprits in permitting their land based staff to use marine VHF instead of mobile phones and they are having to review their own communications!

NEWS

Progress on Derby canal restoration - report by Judy Paillin

At a meeting held on September 5th, members of the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Society walked a length of the Derby canal from Swakestone to Chellaston. This part of the canal is to be tackled by WRG during a dig over the weekend of November 4th and 5th.

WRG will clear the length of bushes and trees ready for fuller restoration next spring. Hopefully, between 100 and 300 volunteers will arrive to complete the task.

During the weekend, it is also hoped that bricks will be retrieved from the undergrowth to be used when the bridge at Swarkestone is re-built.

This is the first length of the Derby canal to have restoration work started, and we hope that the actual work will stimulate people and business into realising that the restored Derby and Sandiacre canal will be a reality and not just a plan on paper.

Do I need a TV Licence for my boat?

Members may have read a national newspaper article suggesting that TV licence-detector vans might soon be appearing on the tow-path in search of illegal television users.

To put your minds at rest we have consulted the TV licensing authorities at Bristol who have clarified the situation as follows:

The use of televisions on board boats does NOT require a separate licence provided that a licence exists for your home address and the boat is being

used by the licence holder or his/her immediate family AND THERE IS NO SIMULTANEOUS USE.

This latter point is the critical factor, and boats are treated as holiday homes and caravans and do not require a licence.

Houseboats and hire craft are naturally treated differently, and do require a TV licence. If you think this is unfair, take comfort in the fact that even HM warships must have a valid TV licence!

NEWS

BCN stoppages

Imminent canal works are scheduled on lock flights on the BCN to replace paddles and paddle frames with new plastic ones, part of BW's "improvement programme to conserve water".

Factory locks: 26-30/9/94

Smethwick locks: 3-7/10/94

Brades locks: 10-14/10/94

Spon Lane locks: 17-21/10/94

Canal closed?

There appears to be a recent proliferation of "Canal Closed" notices, put up by fishermen during matches in the hopes of deterring boats from disturbing them. If you find one, take it down and send it with details to your local Waterway Manager.

Then put on your hard hat and ear-protectors, and carry on cruising!

NABO BUSINESS

The NABO stand at Waltham Abbey: Penny Barber reports

The sun shone for three whole days (was I really in the UK on a Bank Holiday?) and we had an excellent pitch opposite Information, just round the corner from the beer tent.

It was great to meet existing members and hear about their boating experiences and views about NABO. The latter were virtually all positive to the point of being embarrassed by the praise - please note we DO want constructive criticism!

One concern we had, solely from the point of view of the

effectiveness of our attendance, is that the event appears to be increasingly oriented towards the general public "thinking of getting a boat sometime" rather than focussed on boaters. Whilst we think it is still worthwhile financially and politically to have a presence at the National, other rallies might offer more concentrated exposure to boaters.

Many thanks to everyone who helped and a very warm welcome to our 46 new members recruited over the weekend.

NABO BUSINESS

Selling advertising space in NABO publications

At various times in the last 3 years the question of allowing advertising in our publications has been brought up, with a fairly strong body of opinion on the Council believing that it should be avoided. There are two main reasons for thinking this:

1. NABO should be independent of finance from sources which might be able to influence the way NABO behaves, or what it says. We would not want to be in the position of not saying or doing something that should be said or done for fear of offending someone who provides us with advertising revenue.

2. There is a danger that our publications may start to look like some other waterway magazines, which seem to be practically all adverts. This would tend to detract from the substance of the publication.

Recently the question of advertising has appeared again with a slightly different emphasis. The question has been asked if advertising would be acceptable if (a) it is limited to say 4 centre pages of the newsletter and (b) the income derived is used for a purpose other than running

NABO, such as financing a fighting fund. Another suggestion is that advertising might be used to provide benefits to members in terms of: (a) including a classified section free to members in the newsletter, and (b) improving the appearance of the newsletter in terms of adding some colour and perhaps a cover. Again 4 centre pages only of adverts has been suggested.

The other view which some Council members hold is that advertising need not be restricted at all.

What do you think? If you have views on this issue, please send them to Jon Darlington as soon as possible.

The 1994 Annual General Meeting

Date and Venue

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 26th November 1994 at 2pm at the Friends Meeting House, Church Road, Northfield, Birmingham. A map showing how to get there will be included with the next newsletter.

NABO BUSINESS

The 1994 Annual General Meeting (continued)

Nominations for Council

Nominations must be received by the Secretary by 15th October. Nomination form below. If you don't know any other NABO members to nominate/second you, members of Council will do this for you. Just complete the details about yourself and send it

off as soon as possible please.

Resolutions and alterations to the Constitution

Resolutions must again be received by the Secretary no later than the 15th October. Any resolution should be accompanied by an explanation of the reasons for proposing it.

Nomination form

Proposed candidate _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

I am willing to stand for election to the NABO Council

Signed _____

Proposer _____

Address _____

Proposer's signature _____

Secunder _____

Address _____

Secunder's signature _____

P.T.O.

NABO BUSINESS

Collection of information on stone-throwing incidents

We have collected quite a number of records of incidents involving stone-throwing and other abuse of boats and boaters. We shall be collating all this information at the next Council meeting on 15th October, so if you haven't yet reported on your experiences, please do so soon.

One tip which has been passed on by two members for times when trouble threatens from a bridge - if a crew member jumps off the boat and walks along the towpath to the next bridge, or stands on the bridge while the boat passes, the trouble often melts away.

Nomination form: brief details of candidate

Please include a few words about yourself, your experience and why you would like to stand for the NABO Council:

NABO BUSINESS

Have you had problems with a Vetus bowprop?

Mr J Clarke has written to NABO to ask if anyone can help him in compiling information concerning the reliability of the Vetus Bowprop 3kW. He has one fitted in his narrowboat 'Pipant', but has not found it to be reliable. His dealings with Vetus have led

nowhere, and he has been assured that his complaint is extremely rare. Has anyone else had experience of this bowprop? If so, please contact Mr Clarke at

Only 84 shopping days to Christmas!

The NABO sweatshirt is now available with an embroidered logo, plus your boat name, at the bargain price of £17.50. The quality is excellent - Penny reports that her much-worn two-and-a-half year old sweatshirt has not shrunk, faded or gone bobbly!

Don't forget T-shirts and pennants are also available. Details of all items are below - to order, send list of items required (type, colour, size, logo size/colour/type, boat name if applicable) to Penny Barber, together with a cheque payable to NABO.

T-SHIRTS in heavyweight cotton, only **£7.50** each. *Colours:* white, red, sunflower, navy, black, grey, bottle green, emerald. *Sizes:* small (36"-38"), medium (40"), large (44"), X-large (46"-48").

SWEATSHIRTS in heavyweight polycotton with either raglan or drop shoulder (please specify), only **£12.50** each, or **£17.50 with embroidered logo and boat name** of up to 15 letters. *Colours:* white, red, sunflower, navy, black, royal, bottle green, charcoal, heather grey. *Sizes:* small (36"-38"), med (40"), large (44"), X-large (48"-50").

LOGO available on both in either black or white. Please state preference for large (full chest) or small (pocket size, printed on left). Embroidered logo (small) + boat name available on sweatshirts only.

PENNANTS with rope and toggle only **£8.00** Pale blue with black logo.

REPORTS

User group meetings in the BW Southern region

Nikki Timbrell and Peter Lea attended both the recent BW User Group meetings in the South - the first at Marsworth on September 13th (Grand Union South - Chris Mitchell's patch) and the second at Stoke Bruerne on September 19th (Southern region - managed by Peter Coyne). At both meetings, dredging was a big issue.

Chris Mitchell had invited delegates to send in questions and a list of topics which should be discussed at Marsworth. The majority answered "Dredging"! Four people were invited to speak on the issue. Peter Lea included, and the debate was lively and lengthy. But the overwhelming decision of the meeting was that BW should not mess around dredging the odd spoonful here and there, but do a proper job, even if it took longer to get round the system. Chris Mitchell gloomily predicted that this would take 30 years in the Southern region. Interestingly, by the following Monday at Stoke Bruerne, Ian Marmont (BW, responsible for dredging the South) had produced figures which proved that it would take

no less than 38 years to dredge the region to our satisfaction, given the current level of funding. The budgetted sum for dredging in the region over the next four years is only £600,000 p.a. Increasing this to £1 million p.a. would reduce the time taken to 23 years, so the message from this meeting was that BW should look to their budget priorities!

BW plan to dredge in order of priority - this is determined by the amount of 'blockage' in the canal multiplied by the 'usage'. The GU(S) meeting expressed its concern at this method - it could mean that underused canals (such as the Slough arm) will never reach a priority level sufficient to be dredged at all, and could therefore be abandoned.

BW have won important exemptions to the Environmental Protection Act which means that the problems of disposing of dredgings is not as acute as it was. 50tons/m of spoil can be deposited on a canal bank (or the field behind it), providing that 'beneficial conditioning' of the land can be shown to result. If dredging can take place from the

REPORTS

User group meetings in the BW Southern region (cont)

bank, and the dredgings deposited immediately, the cost is high; if the spoil has to be transported to another location, the costs multiply by 5.

The problems of cyclists misusing the towpath were given a good airing at the GU(S) meeting. There were many complaints about racing mountain bikes, especially in the Rickmansworth and Watford areas. From January next year BW will issue free permits to cyclists, together with a copy of the 'Code for Cyclists', but whether this will have any effect remains to be seen.

At the regional meeting, Tim Sidaway (BW) gave a presentation on Waterway

Standards. Peter Lea expressed his concern that no consultation had taken place over the base document, and that the Standards could only be viewed by visiting a Waterway Manager's office. Peter Coyne replied that standards applying to a particular canal could be discussed with the relevant Waterway Manager, but this did not answer Peter Lea's point about the way in which the overall standards had been drawn up - with no reference to users. The problem of lack of access to the standards was endorsed by many others at the meeting. Peter Coyne indicated that the BW Executive was aware of this problem, and that he would take these concerns back to them for reconsideration.

LETTERS

BW versus our heritage

When we pick up the many BW glossy leaflets which abound - the word "heritage" often crops up - its a very popular word nowadays. But, is it being protected?

Most people have forgotten, or

didn't know in the first place (the newer waterways enthusiast, that is) how many lovely old lock cottages, bridges, wharves, canal arms etc have been lost or destroyed by British Waterways over the years.

LETTERS

BW vs our heritage (cont)

However, they are still nibbling away at these old structures - i.e. Calcutt lengthsmans hut, Banbury Dry Dock as well as the well-known basin developments.

The most dangerous destruction of heritage, to my mind, is the destruction of what we have inherited in the way of "canal traditions". My memories of the mid-Sixties when I first started cruising, are of a carefree, happy-go-lucky way of life, where one boated on a shoestring and moored anywhere.

Of course, things have got to change to a certain extent with the increases in boat traffic and other users such as anglers etc. This is where education of Waterway Managers and staff must come in.

In this respect, I feel NABO is doing a very good job. Please keep pushing against unreasonable mooring restrictions - Also, keep pushing against the so-called "narrow" section of the G.U.C. and the new "narrow" Leeds & Liverpool - is this really true or a hoax?

Peter Mills, Boston, Lincs

Mr Wyles replies to your comments

I note that my original letter to you has sparked off some quite interesting correspondence, and would like, if possible, to reply to some of the remarks which have been made. With regard to the correspondent from the Coventry canal, I am not sure what he means by "Mass produced floating coffins". My boat is a twenty four year old Springer which I have had from new, and which by dint of regular cleaning and painting still presents a reasonably smart appearance. I never commented about position in life, that is irrelevant, and said nothing about having the best boat, those were his words not mine. Like him, I love and enjoy the canals, so for him to suggest that I should give them up is a gross impertinence.

Mr Bertram says that he likes to stay for a week or so at one spot, there can be no possible objection to this, provided, as he says, he is not in anybody else's way. Where we do differ is when he asks would I trust BW with my home. My answer is a resounding no, but then I live in a house for which I pay Council Tax, water

LETTERS

Mr Wyles replies to your comments (continued)

rates etc. If Mr Bertram thinks that the C of C policies will do anything to deal with the ill-maintained boat problem, he must be a great optimist, as most of them don't even have a licence; and before anyone says anything, my boat DOES have a C of C, even though I was not required to have one. I thought that it was only right to try and comply with the spirit of the rules that were being made, by and large, for everyone's safety and well being.

One correspondent implied that my boat possibly didn't travel

far from its home base, or that I had unlimited time to cruise; well, just for the record, I am retired (and had a full time job all my life up to retirement) and this year have, so far, visited points as far apart as the Peak Forest canal and Sharpness on the Gloucester & Sharpness canal. My base is on the Grand Union canal.

In conclusion, I am all for tolerance on the canal system, but let's at least try to play the game according to the rules; that would be best for everybody.

V K Wyles, Bugbrooke

Mowing to the edges of the towpath

Can NABO do something about towpaths? Nearly all the Grand Union from Norton junction to Bulls Bridge is cut back right to the edge of the canal giving improved visibility for all users of the canal and of course safe, easy access to the towpath by the boater.

If the Grand Union can do it, why is the rest of the system which I visited not like it i.e. the Leicester arm, the Oxford, the

Coventry and the Trent & Mersey?

A R Green, Nottingham

The answer is - User Pressure! The issue of grass cutting was discussed long and hard at Grand Union (South) User Group meetings, and BW had to give in and mow the whole towpath. Leaving a waterside fringe was favoured by BW as being wildlife friendly - and of course cheaper!

NABO REPRESENTATIVES

Council members contact addresses

Penny Barber

Christopher Barnacle

Phil Bland

Jon Darlington
(Chairman)

Melanie Darlington
(Treasurer)

Roger Hancock
(Secretary)

Neil Hutchinson
(Navigation Officer/NW Rep)

Peter Lea
(Vice Chairman/SE Rep)

Colin Paillin
(Midlands Rep)

Stephen Peters
(River Users Co-ordinator)

Christine Potter
(Membership Secretary)

Peter Sterry
(NERep/Publicity)

Nikki Timbrell
(Boater/N'letter Editor)

Harry Winter
(Engineering Officer)