

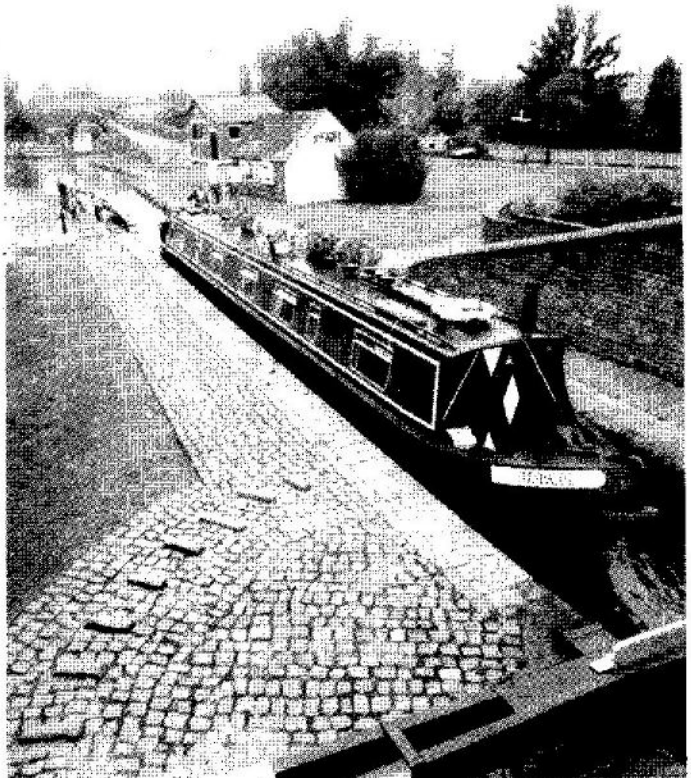


NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue No. 97/1: January 1997

Will lock use be restricted this
summer due to lack of water?

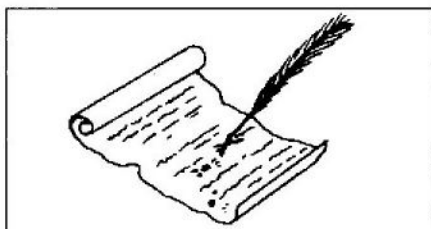
NABO NEWS



See page 6. Photo of Hawkesbury by Robin Smithett.

NEWSLETTER

Editor's comment



As you will see, your Newsletter comes with a New Look for 1997. Do you like it?

I am most grateful for all the letters in support of this publication - it makes the job worthwhile to know that you appreciate my efforts. And I couldn't resist publishing some of the comments! But equally, if you have any criticisms, I would also like to hear from you. So let me know your views on content, presentation, colour, anything!

Finally, brush up on your rain gear. It looks as though we are going to need them!

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. The products and services advertised in this publication are not necessarily endorsed by the Association.

January 1997

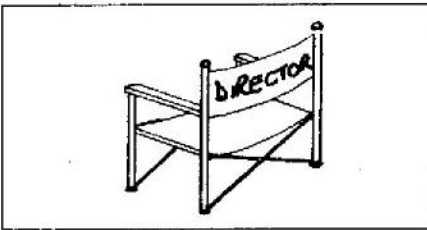
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Published by

**National Association of
Boat Owners**

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's comment



This has been a very busy time for your Council. Since December a lot of issues - some complicated, some less so, but all important - have had to be dealt with.

I spent part of my Christmas reading the new customer charter and licence conditions, and was horrified at what I saw. You can read about them elsewhere in this issue and make up your own mind. Penny Barber has done a great deal of work on the mooring conditions, while Jon Darlington (who he?) helped me with pointers on the licence conditions.

Nigel Parkinson and I attended a meeting of the National Inland Navigation Forum on 11th January. The customer charter, the licence and mooring conditions, and the latest on the Boat Safety Scheme and the licence fee increases were among the issues we discussed.

So was the campaign for more funds for the waterways. Please read my article about this elsewhere in this issue, and help us with it.

Stephen Peters and I have been working on a response to the Environment Agency's draft navigation strategy, which we have to send them by mid-February. Stephen is also monitoring what is happening in Parliament, ready to pick up anything which might affect the boater.

Neil Walker has finalised NABO's case to the Inquiry into the EA's attempt to obtain sweeping new powers over navigation on the River Wye. He has also written to BW giving our views on the new cycleways planned for the Kennet & Avon.

Denis Smith has been involved in the argument over BW's plans for Stourport Basin. BW was one of four organisations which commissioned a report to redevelop part of it, but they failed to consult us, the IWA, or the local canal society. Not surprisingly, they found very few people supported the plans. The issue has been taken up by Canal

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's comment (continued)

and Riverboat magazine (well done!) and there has been a major "to do" about it. I understand the local manager has now had to apologise for not consulting waterway organisations.

Roger has been working like a Trojan updating our membership records, and Nikki has been planning an even bigger, better newsletter. Andrew has produced updated accounts and budgets for us. Christine has developed plans for our rally presence and recruitment during 1997. Philip has drafted a letter to BW on the Code of Conduct for Anglers.

We have re-started our bi-monthly articles, "NABO View", in Canal and Riverboat. We are monitoring the waterways press more systematically, to pick up issues which affect the boater and need a response. We are also interested in press coverage of our views. So if you see anything which you think might be of interest in a canal society or boat club newsletter, please let Nikki or me know.

We would also like to hear from you. Are you happy with what we're doing? Could we do it better? What other things would

you like us to do? And - especially - how are the licence fee increases and the Boat Safety Scheme affecting you? Do you know of anybody being forced off the waterways because of them?

This promises to be an interesting year. Let's hope it is an enjoyable and successful one too!

The Numbers Game

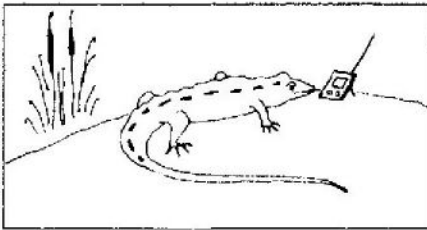
Our spies tell us BW's Chief Executive's boat boasts licence number 500000, which seems rather a coincidence. It raises the following questions:

- Is BW now following the DVLC's lead and charging for premium registration numbers?
- If so, how much did Dr Fletcher pay for his special number?
- If they are not charging, why not? This could be a big money spinner.
- When can we apply for our favourite numbers?
- And can we sell them on at a profit through special columns in the waterways press?

BW are pleading poverty - premium numbers could be the answer to their prayers (and ours...).

NEWS

View from the Council meeting held on 18th January, 1997



Cold weather is no good for us lizards. The frozen wastes of Hockley Port provided the venue for last weeks meeting and it was not only the new BW Licence Conditions that made the blood run cold. Here are some of the topics that were discussed, decided upon or generally chewed over.

The National Inland Navigation Forum meeting and any action to be taken as a result; a new Waterways group; the new Licence and Moorings conditions, and the revised BW Charter; the possible development of other services to members; putting NABO on the Internet; relations with the Waterways Press; the Newsletter; the Accounts of the Association; budgeting; membership, including who is paid up and who is not; the Boat Safety Scheme (of course); Stourport Basin re-development;

cycling on the Kennet and Avon towpaths; BW Code for Anglers; EA draft Navigation Strategy and last but not least, railings on the Lee & Stort. All this between 10am and 2pm followed by a Marketing and Recruitment sub-committee meeting.

Looking at my screen, one major aggravation stands out. No consultation by BW over the revised terms of the Licence and Mooring Conditions. If only a draft of the new terms together with the reasoning behind any changes had been circulated for comment, a protracted and public battle could possibly have been avoided. Yet again, BW have painted themselves into a corner. Dealing with complaints must take time and money which BW can ill afford and, as Dominic Miles reminds us, is provided by us as taxpayers and licence holders.

On another more usual source of complaint, Council would like members to write in to the Newsletter with any experiences they have with the BSS they would wish to share with others.

Space to watch: NABO on the Net!

NEWS

Water Resources for 1997

River water levels are low (see below), and so are canal topper reservoirs, especially in the south. At a recent Grand Union canal South User Group meeting, the waterway manager, Chris Mitchell, explained how serious the situation is as a result of the low rainfall this winter following a dry 1996. For example, at the beginning of January, Boddington reservoir was only 15% full, and the ground water resources which are critical for GU South, such as the Cowroast well, are all but dry. However, the situation is reported to be better in the north.

GU South are concentrating

their maintenance on stopping leaks, refurbishing pumps and even reinstating lock back pumps which have not been used for years. Some extra stoppages may be necessary to facilitate this program. However, unless there is significant rain in the next two months, BW may have to implement lock restrictions from the start of the summer. Passage of boats to Henley in August will only add to the problems.

It is unfortunate, too, that BW's increases in licence fees have coincided with what could be severe restrictions on the use of canals, especially in the south.

Low river water levels threaten navigation

The continuing low rainfall levels across the country have led to winter river levels being at a dangerously low level. The River Severn is presently running at below its normal summer level and the EA has acknowledged that the situation must be addressed. NABO has taken the initiative by requesting that the EA convene a conference to enable all interested parties to participate in resolving the

critical state of the rivers which could threaten the use of the Severn and Avon for navigation.

We have identified excessive abstraction for public and agricultural water supplies as one of the main causes of low summer water levels and will call for modifications to the Clywedog Reservoir Joint Authority Act 1963 to increase water releases to supplement the natural river flow.

NEWS

New BW Charter is not for customers

British Waterways' new Customer Charter cuts into BW's commitments to its customers. The new version of "Caring for Britain's Waterways", published just before Christmas, replaces the 1993 Charter. What follow are the main changes which will affect us (I have put some words in italics for emphasis).

Consultation

The main changes between the old and the new charters are in the area of consultation, "Listening to Users and Making Decisions" as the new booklet entitles it (it was just "Listening to Our Users" in 1993). The new version says:

"We use pragmatism and common-sense when we deal with users and when we make decisions. We want the consultation process to help and not hinder us making timely decisions. It therefore must be simple and not burdened with procedural complexity."

The commitment in the old charter: "We also consult representatives of our users and openly discuss our plans and choices for the future" has

disappeared completely.

A draft of the new Charter had been circulated to user groups during 1996. This draft had the old wording in it, not the new. These changes were made after that consultation took place, so we did not see them. We think they are aimed at NABO and other groups that complained about inadequate consultation, and are a perfect example of it.

Individuals may now attend local user group meetings at the discretion of the relevant manager. This was not possible before and is a change urged by the Ombudsman, Lady Ponsonby.

Complaints Procedure

The new Charter says:

"The Waterways Ombudsman will examine your case to decide whether or not it falls within the terms of reference. If it does, the Ombudsman will investigate and decide whether there has been maladministration. We agree to be bound by the recommendations of the Ombudsman *in such cases*, and will always take seriously any criticism of our conduct."

NEWS

New BW Charter (continued)

The old text was:

"The Waterways Ombudsman will consider your case and decide whether we have acted correctly. We agree to be bound by the recommendations of the Ombudsman."

The change is important because up to now, BW has accepted the recommendations made by the Ombudsman even when she did not find them guilty of maladministration, but decided they had not acted correctly. This, according to her reports, happened quite often.

They no longer commit themselves to do so. This reduces her powers considerably. The change did not appear in the draft sent out for consultation, and so has not been consulted on either.

User Friendliness

Various phrases in the old Charter have been removed:

Old version: "We are committed to setting standards that are important to us *and our users.*" New version: "We set standards which take account of user requirements and of legal,

financial and practical constraints."

Old version: "It (the Charter) takes a fresh look at what we do, how we are doing it, *and what you want us to do.*" New version: "It tells you what we do, and how we should be doing it."

Old version: "To improve our service, we need to know what you want, what you like, *or what we are doing wrong.*" New version: "To manage the waterways well and improve our service we need to talk and listen to our users."

All these taken together confirm that BW is hardening its attitude to users. We believe this is the approach of its new Chief Executive.

Water supply and Canal Maintenance

The sections have been re-written (as a result of a complaint to the Ombudsman) to make it clear that BW can't guarantee to keep canals open. The words in italics are new:

"*Endeavouring to ensure* there is the right amount of water in our canals and rivers." The old version said "Making sure".

NEWS

New BW Charter (continued)

"This (our work on canals) can mean that we sometimes need to close a canal or river in order to carry out work effectively and safely."

"We also *try* to make sure there is enough water in long dry spells or if a defect, accident or vandalism causes water to be lost from a canal."

"However, we always *try* to make sure that it is possible to use locks for a certain time each day."

There is no commitment (which NABO requested) to use best efforts to minimise restrictions or closures. However, the new charter does say: "When we need to limit use of the canal, we will consult with user group representatives and try to make arrangements that best meet their needs. If there is an exceptionally dry spell some canals may have to close, but we try to avoid this if we can."

We think these changes are realistic but we would have liked a commitment to keep closures and restrictions as short as possible.

Dredging

The new Charter says, "We plan to dredge the waterways, so far as is practicable and necessary, to their original profile." This replaces the commitment in the old charter: "Where canals were originally built deeper than five feet, we plan to dredge each one so that it is at least four feet six inches deep in the middle."

The change has been made as a result of pressure from DIG, the Dredging Initiative Group (which we belong to) and other users. However the qualification "so far as is practicable and necessary" makes the commitment almost meaningless.

Sources of funds

The new Charter, speaking of the government's grant in aid, says, "This grant is a way of recognising the value of the waterways to people who use them for informal recreation such as walking or jogging. It also reflects the value of the waterways as part of the land drainage system."

IWAAC, and most users

NEWS

New BW Charter (continued)

including NABO, would strongly disagree that the grant represents any such thing. If it did, it would be far greater. It is a somewhat arbitrary outcome of a conflict between competing spending pressures and a reluctant Treasury. But if BW says the grant reflects the value of the waterways, government may be happy to agree. BW could be shooting itself in the foot by publishing this statement.

Intriguingly, two commitments in the old charter have been removed from the new. The first is "We will not use our powers to grant boat licenses to influence commercial negotiations that affect land and property". The second is "Walking on towing paths is free of charge". Watch this space!

Other Matters

The section on looking after wildlife and the environment has been expanded. It now includes a worrying statement: "We may, where necessary, manage leisure uses including boat movements to minimise ecological damage." Think of the Basingstoke Canal!

Conclusion

The changes to the commitments on consultation and complaints represent a significant weakening of safeguards and will affect all users. These and the other changes I have mentioned suggest that BW cares less for its customers than it used to, and has removed or reduced to a minimum any commitments which might help the boater.

New Licence and Permit conditions revealed

British Waterways has issued new boat licence and mooring conditions. These came into force on 1st January and will be circulated to all boat owners when they next renew their licences. A copy of the new

conditions was sent to us in December for information. BW have not consulted user groups on them. Some are quite reasonable, but see what you think of the ones I have picked out below.

NEWS

New Licence and Permit conditions (continued)

Licences

Most of the licence conditions rephrase the old ones. Some are new, particularly those relating to hire boat licences and to "low intensity trading licences". These are for people who sell crafts etc from their boats.

Various requirements in the new clauses are objectionable. For example, hire boat owners must clean their boats (properly, mind, says nanny!), clean or replace laundry and linen, and service or run the engines between hires. Good practice I agree, but these are part of how the owner runs his or her business and should not be regulated by BW.

There is a requirement that "low intensity traders" must allow BW to audit their financial records. This has no legal precedent, and the drafter of the clause does not understand the meaning or implications of auditing accounts.

Clauses 22 and 23 apply to us all. They say, "You (the licence holder) agree to be responsible for any damage or difficulty caused by you or the boat however it arises" (22), and "As

far as allowed by law, you will be responsible for any damage to property that happens because of dangers caused by the condition of our property, however this happens. By issuing a licence we are not saying or implying our property is safe" (23). These clauses could cause boaters serious problems.

Clause 25 says, "You agree that we can come on board the Boat to inspect it before we issue a new licence. We will give you reasonable notice if we want to do this".

Clause 19 says, "We can withdraw the licence at any time" and clause 31, "We reserve the right to refuse to issue you with any licence in the future. You have no right under these conditions to the renewal of a licence".

While clauses similar to 19, 22, 23, 25, and 31 were in the old licence conditions, we consider them to be unfair and unreasonable as worded. We also believe that while the powers in clauses 19, 25 and 31 might sometimes be needed, guidance notes or statements of practice

NEWS

New Licence and Permit conditions (continued)

should be issued setting out when they would be applied. These notes or statement should be available to all boaters. Otherwise, the powers could be used improperly.

Moorings

The mooring permit conditions are largely new and contain several badly worded and unreasonable clauses.

Clause 9 requires the moorer to obtain any necessary planning permission. This might not be the moorer's responsibility; and in the past BW would often take part in the process with moorers.

Under Clause 11 the moorer cannot use the boat for business purposes - apparently even if he has a licence to do so.

Clause 16 forbids using the boat's engine (if it is capable of generating electricity) before 10:00 a.m. So you can't start boating from your mooring before then in future.

Clause 24 says the moorer "agrees to be responsible for any damage or obstruction caused by the boat (whether or not it is your fault)".

Clause 28 tells you "to keep the outside of the Boat in reasonable repair" (as does Clause 56), and Clause 29 requires you "To repair the Boat as soon as is reasonably possible if it has been damaged". The boat is its owner's private property. Providing the boat can still pass the BSS, its external condition is none of the Board's business.

Clause 31 puts the moorer under the obligation to let BW know if he or she notices any defects in the mooring or the adjoining waterway or premises. The penalty for absent-mindedness is not mentioned.

The Residential Boat Owners Association have written to BW about the new mooring conditions, covering these and other objectionable areas in detail.

Consultation

Whatever BW may say, they have not consulted users on these licence and permit conditions. There was a workshop on boat licences in 1996, which NABO attended. It was very useful, but it was a general and conceptual review of the basis of charging

NEWS

New Licence and Permit conditions (continued)

for licences and the types and categories of licences available, and it did not cover moorings. The mooring conditions are based loosely on a document prepared by the RBOA and NABO some time ago, but contain many unwelcome changes and new items.

A draft of these conditions never has been shown to us. Indeed, when we asked BW to consult us on them (which we did on three occasions), they refused.

This seems to me to follow BW's new approach to consultation: do not consult, but claim loudly to have done so,

perhaps on the premise that if you fib brazenly enough someone somewhere will believe it.

It is clearly essential for BW to consult on final drafts of documents, not just at the conceptual stage. We will press for this, and hope that all user groups will do the same.

NABO Council is considering whether to lodge another formal complaint in respect of the lack of consultation over these licence and mooring conditions, and whether any mechanism exists to repair any of their more obvious defects.

Fishing League hunt for barge

David Smithson from Kidsgrove sent us this cutting from his local "Sentinel", dated 4th January:

"Delegates to the Five Towns League could be seeking compensation from the barge owner who partially drained and then ploughed through the solid ice covering the Trent and Mersey Canal at Trentham last Sunday and ruined the final match of their Charity Fund Raising series.

The possibility of finding the culprit will be among the items for discussion at the meeting at the Wedgwood Club, Barlaston, on Monday, (8pm)."

Mr Smithson questions whether boat owners will now need permission from the local fishermen before being able to cruise in frosty weather! *But if the canal was frozen over, how were they fishing anyway?* - Ed.

NEWS

Third Party Liability Insurance

From 1 January 1997, BW is making third party insurance (minimum £1 million) mandatory for all craft using its waterways. However, we should stress that this only becomes effectively compulsory from the date of renewal of your licence (or if you take out a new licence), contrary to the impression we may have given in the last issue of the Newsletter.

All licence and river registration applications will require production of evidence of

insurance cover and to make the process easier the British Marine Industries Federation (BMIF) and BW have agreed a format for a document to satisfy the requirements, and these should be issued by your insurer free of charge.

The Environment Agency cannot presently insist on boats being insured on its rivers but NABO would urge all responsible boat owners to have effective Comprehensive Insurance to safeguard their own interests.

Broads Authority announces plans for a separate BSS

The Broads Authority has informed NABO that its plans for a Boat Safety Scheme for the Norfolk & Suffolk Broads are progressing and a working group is presently formulating a set of draft proposals.

It is anticipated that the draft BSS will be published in March/April 1997, to be followed by a year for widespread consultation and amendment before the scheme is introduced on a voluntary basis in April 1998. The voluntary compliance period will operate for 2 years

after which the scheme will become compulsory but self-certifying over a 5 year period. Craft will be inspected at random and at the expense of the Authority.

The scheme has been prepared with input from representatives of local boating interests. The Broads Authority was a member of the original BSS joint committee but withdrew from it when it realised that it was too controversial and impractical for the many older craft that are based on the Broads.

NEWS

Trent News: more on Gainsborough works by Peter Foster

I attended a meeting on behalf of the T.B.A. at Beverley on Thursday 12th December, regarding the major works at Gainsborough, with the Marine Safety Agency. Also present were representatives of Associated British Ports, BW, the Environment Agency and I.W.A.

1. Work at Gainsborough, directly downstream of the road bridge on the east side of the river, will take 12 months to complete. It is a £5 million contract, being done by Nuttalls. The width of available river for passage of boats will be reduced by about half - to 20 metres with a depth in excess of 2 metres.

2. The river is reasonably deep within 8 metres of the west bank but care will be needed if meeting any craft at this point. Remember the rules of the road in tidal waters. Those with the stream have priority. Those against need to give way and stem the tide if necessary.

3. Notices will be set up on bank sides above and below the work and at the tidal locks on the Trent. The work will be illuminated and there may be

traffic lights set up to control boats. Moorings will be made available above and below the work so boats can safely wait for a clear passage under the direction of the "controller".

4. A watch must be maintained by those going through Gainsborough on VHF Channel 6 in accordance with the Humber Navigation Bylaws (Channel 8 below Keadby and Channel 12 in the Humber itself). There will also be a phone link. A tug will probably be provided to shepherd narrowboats and other smaller craft where necessary and act as "controller".

5. As boats going upstream at Gainsborough generally do not travel at the same time as those going downstream, there should not be a congestion problem at the work site even though half of the river is not available for the passage of boats.

6. Protectors (using large diameter oil pipeline as used in places for moorings) will be put in place to prevent damage to any boats going too close to the work and to prevent any boat going inside the work area.

NEWS

Trent News (continued)

7. There are likely to be 6000 boats up and down the Trent during the continuance of the work. Approximately 4000 will be cruisers and 2000 narrowboats. ABP are very concerned about the safety of narrowboats on the tidal River Trent and would like to close the river to them - so don't do silly things and give them a good reason. Travel in convoy,

obey the maritime collision regulations, navigation rules and lighting requirements. If you have no VHF and cannot get one, a mobile phone is essential for your own safety. You must get in touch with the "controllers" before going through Gainsborough.

Happy boating, in whatever, wherever.

Environment Agency RFACs to be reconstituted

Navigation interests within the Environment Agency are represented by the (rather inappropriately named) Regional Fisheries Advisory Committees.

Following recent consultation in which NABO put forward its views, the EA has decided that the existing RFACs will be disbanded and the committees reformed with consistent representation across all regions. Those regions having direct responsibility for navigations will have more than one navigation seat on the RFAC, whilst all others will have just one. Conservation and recreation interests are represented on all

RFACs, frequently with multiple representation.

All NABO members are urged to offer themselves to serve on the RFACs where their intimate knowledge of navigation will add strength to them and ensure that navigation is given the higher profile that it merits. We have, in the past, nominated NABO members for several EA statutory committees but without success to date. Now is your chance to rectify the situation. Interested persons should contact their Regional Manager at the Environment Agency and ask for an application form for the RFAC.

NEWS

Boat Safety Scheme technical manual

Following representations made by our River Users' Co-ordinator the Environment Agency has undertaken to ensure that the Boat Safety Scheme Technical Manual (the large & expensive tome which is essential to understanding the scheme!) will be available for public inspection at all Regional Offices.

Previously, despite indications to the contrary in the "blue/grey" booklet, the Manual was only available in regions where the EA controls river navigations. This was an unsatisfactory state of affairs because a boat owner may live nearer to one regional office than another, or be unable to visit an alternative BW location, and yet hitherto it would not have been possible to view the documents which form part of a national scheme.

Thankfully, the EA saw the sense in making the manual more freely accessible and we thank to them for taking the interests of boat owners into account.

(NABO also has a copy of the BSS Technical Manual - please phone if you have any urgent problems.)

Proposed new byelaws for the River Severn

The Gloucester Harbour Trustees, whose remit stretches from Gloucester to Avonmouth plus the tidal River Wye, propose to introduce new byelaws which could threaten pleasure boating.

NABO is particularly concerned about a proposal to limit the speed of vessels to 12 knots except in the main navigation channel 3 hours either side of high water. Canal boaters may be surprised to learn that many river and sea-going boats regularly cruise at speeds of between 14 and 35 knots on open waters.

An earlier proposal by the Trustees to ban the use of sea-toilets has been dropped but the byelaws as presently worded would prevent the discharge of sink waste, bilge water and engine cooling water. There are some minor exemptions for "small craft" under 20m in length, but this would not exclude a full-length narrowboat.

A public meeting is proposed during February 1997 and NABO will be represented. We are optimistic that the byelaws will be amended to accommodate pleasure craft.

NEWS

A Cautionary Tale

Last July a NABO member was out cruising in her 30' narrowboat. She had reached the 10 mile pound between Knowle and Birmingham when circumstances demanded that she return home for a few days. Unfortunately, while she was away, the boat was broken into, set on fire and sunk.

The boat was insured, but due to the fact that the boat's permanent mooring had changed since the policy had been taken out, and the owner had omitted to tell her insurance company about this change, the insurers refused to pay more than half the claim. This blow was followed by

a large bill from BW for refloating the boat and towing it away.

NABO have been assisting this boat owner with her various claims, and we understand that she has now settled with BW, but that the insurers are unmovable. The moral of this sad story is firstly to be careful where you leave your boat - the cost of a temporary mooring in a boatyard could be money well spent. And secondly, if you do anything to your boat - add new equipment, change the engine, go to a new mooring - tell your insurers, even though you might think it a trivial item. It could be vital if you have to make a claim.

News in brief

Cycling latest

BW have decided to try a pilot scheme of charging for cycle permits on the Kennet & Avon canal, starting on April 1st.

The charge will be about £12 for an adult, which will include third party insurance. The money collected will be reinvested back into towpaths and towpath wardens. Boat owners will be

entitled to free permits for lock-wheeling. If the scheme is successful, it will be extended to the rest of the country in 1998.

Lock gate recycling

Weir Brake lock on the River Avon has had new gates this winter. The old gates were cast offs from the Thames - and are to continue their career on the Wey and Arun canal.

NEWS

News in brief (continued)

New Association

A new body, the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities, was formed in December last year. "This is the first time that canals and rivers have had a single voice", said David Fletcher, BW Chief Executive.

Could this be a response to the formation of the National Inland Navigation Forum?

Huddersfield canal grant

Restoration of the Huddersfield Narrow canal is now assured, following the announcement of a £14.8 million grant from the Millenium Commission. Some major blockages can now be removed, and the Standedge Tunnel restored. Together with the Rochdale, a restored Pennine ring will soon be complete.

IWA Jubilee Success

Just before Christmas the IWA reached their target of raising £50,000 in their Jubilee Year. The money will be used to help finance the Waterway Recovery Group. They have already bought them a new JCB, and fundraising will continue.

WRG Camps 1997

The Waterway Recovery Group has published its prospectus for canal camps in 1997, in association with Waterways World. This little book contains some encouraging accounts of the goings on at these muddy events, and a plea: "*Book now while locks last. There's one near you crumbling away as we speak.*"

Fire extinguishers: the latest

Following the publication of a harmonised European standard last May, all fire extinguishers, of whatever type, must be red. Only 5% of the external area may be of a different colour to indicate its contents, e.g. blue for dry powder, black for carbon dioxide. However, this standard, BS EN3:1996, applies only to new equipment, and existing equipment will not need to be changed.

We have also been informed that the British Standards Institution is now certifying extinguishers to this new standard, and therefore kitemarks are still allowed (but make sure extinguishers are marked 'EN3').

NABO BUSINESS

More cash for the Waterways

Canals and rivers need a lot more money spent on them. Not just now - today - to get them dredged, repaired and up to scratch, but every year from now on, to keep them that way.

BW alone estimate their maintenance backlog would cost over £100 million to clear. That's after the £15 million extra they got for the Caledonian Canal. They calculate their annual grant, £51 million, is light by £7million. The Environment Agency's backlog is lower, around £25 million, but several major locks on the Thames need rebuilding, and they too need a bigger grant for navigation - over £2million more.

Unless the waterways get more money, sooner or later one or more will have to close, or there will be a serious accident, or both.

But you've heard all this before...

So why are we telling you this?

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M P's and candidates listen to their constituents - especially at election time. If they get a lot of letters about waterways, setting out the problem and asking what they and their party intend to do about it, they'll listen.

What can you do about it?

Write to your M P and the leading opposition candidates. Draw attention to any navigable canals or rivers in or close to the constituency. Mention any major repairs needed locally that you know about. Tell them how important waterways are, not only for boaters, anglers, walkers, and the public at large, but for water supply. Do they know that over nine million people visit a canal or river each year, and that they support over 35,000 private sector jobs? Have they thought about the thousands of properties by (or floating on) a river or canal? Quote the figures for the shortfall in funding. Ask the M P or candidate what his or her views are; what the party policy

NABO BUSINESS

More cash for the Waterways (continued)

is, and how they intend to solve the problem. And tell them how you feel about the latest BW licence fee increases - and the impact it will have on the number of boats on the canals. Point out that this increase, 31% over inflation, adds up to only £1.5 million a year, so squeezing the boater off the water is not the answer.

If a candidate shows up on your doorstep, or addresses a meeting and you are present, you know what to ask. Don't be put off by a dismissive answer. If they don't have any answers, we'll give them the information, to help them with their homework.

We're not asking you to send in a form letter. Politicians ignore those. But they cannot ignore many different letters, all putting forward the same views.

Address

If you are willing to write, but don't have the name and address of your M P or the candidates, drop us a line or give Neil Walker or Peter Lea a call. Give us your constituency's name and your name and address. We should be

able to provide you with the information.

We - and all the waterway user groups - want to make this a high profile, important issue. We want the next government to find a permanent solution to the problem, not just scrape up an extra couple of million for a year or two to keep us quiet. With your help we might succeed.

BW/EA Boat Ownership Questionnaire

British Waterways and the Environment Agency have commissioned a company called Steer Davies Gleave to conduct a survey of the boating market, and questionnaires are being sent to a random sample of boat owners. They want to know quite a lot about you, including how much you paid for your boat, where you got it from, how many boats you have owned previously, as well as your age and monthly income.

Have you received one of these? If you have, please let us know your reaction to it.

NABO BUSINESS

Canals on the Internet

Any boater with a reasonably modern computer can connect to the internet where they will find some excellent resources. All you need is a computer and a modem, and you will have to find an Internet Service Provider (ISP) through whose server you will connect to the information super-highway.

ISPs generally charge for their service. Some charge a flat rate; mine for example charges £100 plus VAT a year for unlimited access. This means that if I could afford the telephone bill my computer could be connected to the Internet for 24 hours every day. Other ISPs also make a charge for time "on line", so it is better (cheaper) to find a service provider who allows unlimited access. Most providers have local telephone access, which means that you only pay for calls at local rates (off peak about 1.6p/minute Monday to Friday or 1p/minute at weekends). Many providers also include a subscriber's own web site in the fee for service provision.

Once connected you will need some software to read the news

and receive e-mail. Most providers give you an e-mail reader and a web-browser, which will enable you to connect to the Internet, as part of their service. They also offer detailed instructions to set up the system. Microsoft have recently released their new "Explorer" browser which is free, and their main competitor Netscape have also recently released version 3 of their browser which again is free for private use.

Having got connected there are several different resources you can use. Browsing the World Wide Web you will find lots of canal sites, the best of which is George's canal pages at location (URL) <http://www.blacksheep.org/canals/index.htm> Type this into the dialogue box in the browser to transport you to this site; from here you will find lots of links to many other canal related sites including British Waterways site (URL) <http://www.britishwaterways.com/home.htm> or the pages of the Waterways Recovery Group (URL) <http://www.man.ac.uk/CME/WRG/wrghome.htm>.

NABO BUSINESS

Canals on the Internet (continued)

There is also a special news group (usenet group) which has special relevance to canal enthusiasts, it's called uk.rec.waterways. This is a lively, friendly group which discusses all sorts of issues around the canals - everything from the politics and implementation of the dreaded BSC through to wildlife on the cut and food for free. Seriously though, there are some very knowledgeable folk in this group who are always ready to welcome newcomers and share their knowledge with everyone. There are also overseas contributors from Australia, the USA and even South Africa.

Running parallel to the usenet group is the mailing list which acts as a mirror to the usenet group (i.e. the same messages are relayed on both). The way to join the mailing list is to send an e-mail to `with` the word 'subscribe' in the main body of the message. The blacksheep server will then automatically route every message to your electronic in-box.

Last year the net surfers canals group met at Ansty for a

weekend and many new friends were made, especially those from overseas. This year there is to be Get Together at Hopwas on the Coventry Canal, on 16 August. Hopefully we will see lots of NABO members. Several folk from the group have joined NABO as a result of being on the Internet. Why, even our illustrious chairman Peter Lea has succumbed and can be found engaging in debate in the usenet group.

Finally, NABO will have it's own web site, so for the most up to date information point your browser to <http://pipemedia.net/users/jeffd/index.htm>. You will also find details of my company here (also to do with canals).

Get linked up and come and join the fun. See you in the surf.

Jeff Dennison

For simple, old fashioned communications by letter, don't forget you can use our freepost address: NABO, FREEPOST (BM 8367), Birmingham, B31 2BR.

OPINION

Time for Reflection, by Denis Smith

Talk to a fellow boater and whilst the first topic of conversation remains the nearest sanitary station, a topic of increasing importance and concern is the demolition of some old dilapidated building on such and such a waterway. Combine all these 'odd' buildings etc up and down the country and a picture emerges of our waterway heritage being gradually destroyed but at an increasing rate - even the original company offices of a popular Midlands canal are now apparently under threat. Why? Presumably the argument/excuse for such wilful vandalism, because make no mistake, that is what it is, is that awful word 'commercialism' or an even more distasteful expression 'bottom line' (with apologies to some current NABO council members in the number crunching profession). Greed and

Selfishness are words probably nearer the mark

O.K, so refurbishment/renovation/restoration or whatever cannot be undertaken at this very moment due to lack of funding (or even money) but HOW DARE the present incumbants of decision making in the ivory towers of power deny our descendants the benefit of buildings etc erected by our forebears over two hundred years ago. Some structures could be at least made safe/tidied up and therefore saved from demolition if less money was spent on (non) consultative reports and then who knows what will happen in the next decade(s) - a daily lottery may produce sufficient funds to bring all these threatened places back to life, and maybe with even more towpaths sanitised - which is where we came in.



OPINION

The shooting of wild herons, by Stephen Peters

As users of rivers and canals, boat owners love to observe the abundant wildlife in its natural habitat. The flora and fauna along our waterways add immeasurably to the enjoyment that we all gain from our restful pastime.

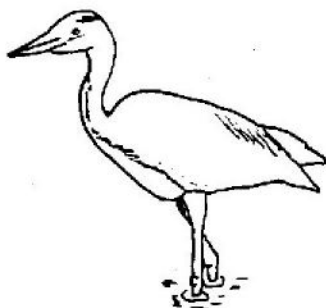
The wealth of birdlife, in particular, adds colour and interest to even the shortest voyage. Perhaps the most spectacular wild bird that we meet is the heron. It is large and therefore easily seen and frequently stands perfectly motionless whilst we pass it in our boats. When it does take to the air its large wings and slow but sure wing beat demonstrate just how graceful this gaunt bird really is.

It may come as a surprise, then, to our members to learn that herons are being lawfully destroyed by shooting every year, ostensibly to safeguard fisheries. Cormorants, goosander and merganser are also controlled by shooting which is monitored by MAFF and one of the most important regions for permit applications is South-Mercia which includes the River Wye.

One could perhaps sympathise with some land owners who are troubled by visits from herons, but can they not protect their fish in some other, non-destructive way?

Of greatest surprise is the fact that last year 12 herons were licensed to be shot under permit along rivers and just 3 on still water. Why is this destruction permitted and what possible benefit can be gained by killing such a small number?

The majority of herons are actually shot during the first few months of the year, when they are struggling to survive the harsh weather. It seems rather cruel to kill an innocent bird simply because its main diet is fish and it poses no threat to the food supply of human beings.



REPORTS

Chesterfield canal news from Peter Sterry

At the recent meeting of the Chesterfield Canal User Groups BW manager Richard Mercer explained his latest tactics in the continuing battle against the weed that perennially attacks this canal. In the past, many thousands of pounds have been spent on the not-always-successful attempts to eliminate the weed, but this year he has introduced a weed cutting boat, which seems to have achieved a measure of success. Regular users of the canal confirm that this has been the best year for cruising, as a result of the introduction of this boat. Mr Mercer told users that the boat cost BW some £44,000, with annual running costs of £16,000, made up of depreciation of £4,400 (10%), wages £6,500, and maintenance costs of £5,000.

BW are hoping to introduce a new type of paddle gear on the canal, and we were given an extensive presentation of this by the manufacturers. It will be easy to use, and should be difficult to vandalise, but there are still a number of technical problems to be sorted out before they can be fitted.

I cruised this canal myself in June last year, and I found that the weed was by no means the obstacle I had been led to expect. It was there, particularly in the top pound up to Worksop, but I found it more of a nuisance than a deterrent, and the piles of rotting weed heaped along the towpath gave evidence of the efficacy of the weed cutter. Certainly prospective visitors to this canal should not be put off by any 'doom and gloom' merchants, as the attractions more than compensate for any drawbacks. There are sections where the scenery is as attractive as on any canal, there are a number of excellent canalside pubs, an extremely hospitable boat club at Clayworth, and two very handy shopping centres, at Retford and Worksop, within five minutes walk. What is more, on arrival at Worksop, I was taken on a tour of the section of canal awaiting redevelopment, by the most enthusiastic chairman of the Chesterfield Canal Society, who showed me that the course of the canal is in such good condition up to Norwood Tunnel that restoration is probable within the

REPORTS

Chesterfield canal news (continued)

next few years. The local councils want it, BW wants it, and with the Canal Society urging them on, the future looks bright.

Obviously, in order to visit the Chesterfield Canal you have to cruise the tidal Trent, which many boaters find a somewhat daunting prospect. However,

provided that you treat this section of the river with respect, it is no more hazardous than many other navigable rivers. You must take advice from the lockkeepers, and it is recommended that you are equipped with VHF radio, or, at least, a mobile phone.

SE Region user group meetings: report from Neil Walker

A few points of interest from user group meetings held in the Southern Region towards the end of last year.

Oxford and Grand Union North

Not uniquely, a lack of both money and water affected the waterway this year. Increasing reservoir capacity could help, but it would cost £1/2 million to dredge out extra capacity in Naseby equivalent to one weeks supply, and as the total cost of back pumping on the GU was only £50,000 for the season, pumping looks the best use of available cash. However a feasibility study on increasing capacity at Boddington is being carried out.

It was also disappointing to

hear that the imaginative Tooleys Dock development in Banbury was now possibly to be modified to exclude the working dock.

London Canals

Boaters on the Lee and Stort will be pleased to learn that following the refurbishment of the perennially shut South Mills lock gates, it is intended to dredge into Bishops Stortford, a town which was rapidly becoming inaccessible to boaters.

Fishing, Vandalism and Cycling are always hot topics at London Canals meetings. It was stated that BW income from Angling had increased overall by £250,000, most of it from the Southern Region. Boaters will be pleased to hear that there would

REPORTS

SE region meetings (continued)

appear to be a growing preference on behalf of anglers for highly stocked reservoir and pond fisheries as opposed to canal fishing. Vandalism was reported to be on the increase on and around this waterway, and the use of paddle security devices is to be extended.

Finally, several days after this user meeting, it was learnt that the £10m Single Regeneration Budget bid for the London Canals had been approved.

Kennet And Avon

News from this waterway has been dominated by the success of the bid for a Lottery Grant. £25m will now be available over the next five years to refurbish the canal.

The Caen Hill flight back-pumping that became operational in August 96 has enabled the flight to be made available to allcomers as from the 27th March without pre-booking. This is a major advance and is a credit to those involved.

Thames River Liaison Group

This meeting is held under the auspices of the Port of London

Authority and deals with matters on the upper Thames within the Authority's jurisdiction. Any matters discussed are specific to the tideway.

NABO informed the meeting of the likelihood of an increased number of canal craft using the tideway as a result of Henley 97. The PLA were asked if they could provide boaters with safety information at the Rally.

Southern Region User Group Forum

At this meeting BW presented highlights of their Southern Region Business Plan. This would appear to be something of a wish list bearing in mind the reduction in Grant Aid and the uncomfortable fact that a major structural failure would blow it out of the water.

User Safety Management was also given a presentation. BW would seem to accept the fact that improving one person's safety can impair another's, lock railings being a prime example. This makes risk assessment critical if any works undertaken are to be effective.

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LETTERS

The end of 'ordinary' boaters?

I want to let you know how much I appreciate the Newsletter and all the efforts that the Association makes on behalf of members - and, indeed all boat owners.

The hike in licence fees promised for next year and then year on year afterwards confirms a suspicion I have entertained for some time, arising from many of the aspects of the Safety Certificate, that BW have a hidden agenda, which is to get large numbers of ageing, not particularly glamorous, but much loved boats belonging to ordinary, not particularly glamorous or well-off people, off the water altogether. You only have to look around the marinas and cruise the cut and to read the waterways press now, to realise that there is a significant body of very well-off owners of luxury-class boats, who would be willing - possibly glad - to pay almost any sum in licence fees if by so doing they could get the hirers and what they regard as the "hoi-poloj" off the water. Wear and tear on the system, maintenance of water supply in the face of lack of investment, demand for

moorings, are all problems for BW which would solve themselves if fewer boats were around. How much easier and more economic for BW to glean their income and pay themselves their salaries from the proceeds of, say, 1,000 boaters paying £2,000 per year as opposed to 10,000 paying £200 a year! No wonder consultation is no more than a bad joke!

As a leisure boater, I am an associate member of the Commercial Narrowboat Operators Association, and commercial carriers are having no easier time than us. Every new measure introduced by BW to affect commercial boaters would seem to indicate that they, too, are no longer wanted on the system.

I see no end to these moves against "ordinary boaters". I am a relative newcomer to canals, and from the south of England where narrowboats are virtually unknown, but I have always understood canal boating to be an activity for those of modest means. Certainly it seemed to be ten years or so ago when my young sons and I took our first relatively inexpensive hire-boat

LETTERS

The end of the 'ordinary' boater? (continued)

holiday and still seemed to be when I bought my second-hand Springer four years ago. Now I am not so sure. I shall struggle against any odds to keep my boat, but how many people will, I wonder, give up in despair in the face of escalating cost and increasing bureaucratic interference.

We must all become more vigilant and vociferous in defence of our chosen pastime. The consultation we were promised on the Safety Certificate and licence fees has not been delivered. An intriguing thought - just what would BW do if ALL boaters, when their next year's licence demand comes in, were to tender this year's fee, plus an element in respect of the current

official inflation rate? Perhaps we should stop being docile, law-abiding English and take a leaf instead out of the French truck drivers book!

Incidentally, D H S Cragg of Oswestry (issue 96/5) was not the only boater by far to witness BW's chairman being escorted like royalty through the system, with all giving way before him. I moor at Braunston, that crossroads through which all boaters pass some time or another, and I met a number of people this Autumn who had been witnesses to his august passage. I am told he had acquired quite a dent at one point - legend does not recount how!

Ann Berry, Chichester

In support of Dominic Miles

I write to you to express my delight at the article by Dominic Miles in the latest newsletter. At last someone is saying what so many people are thinking. There is little doubt in my mind that this is yet another scheme to make the waterways and the pastime of boating less and less

attractive, with the eventual aim of driving away most ordinary boating enthusiasts.

There are newer and more subtle ways of destroying the waterways system than ever before, and "killing with kindness" is just one of them. "You want more moorings? Of course -

LETTERS

In support of Dominic Miles (continued)

continuously along both banks." Or, "towing-paths - of course, all tarmac-surfaced and floodlit." Or even, "we have a duty to our users to look after their safety (as if they could not do it themselves), so let's regulate them out of existence and if that does not work, make sure that we charge them excessively instead."

Over recent years, we have seen many strange events - all in the names of those esoteric Gods, "Progress", "Efficiency" and "Safety". Just by way of examples; hydraulic paddlegear, standardisation of paddle-spindles (one-size-fits-none), cabin wrecking handrails on lockgates and even locks built too short. I have long assumed that

there are two theories of history, the "cock-up" and the "conspiracy". Previously, I thought the latter to be beyond the ability and organisation of BW, but now I am beginning to wonder.

Many of us have tried negotiating with BW for many years and have eventually realised that however many times one kisses this particular frog, it will never turn into a prince. I suggest that Mr Miles' article be taken as the basis for NABO policy and that any other waterway organisation with sufficient concern for its members and sufficient "fire in its belly" be urged to take up the same policy.

Paul Monahan, Hebden Bridge

More in support of Dominic Miles

This is actually the first time I have written to the NABO Newsletter (or any other publication for that matter), but a number of things crossed my mind and I thought it was about time I put PC to paper so to speak.

First of all, congratulations on an excellent Newsletter. I look forward to each issue for an

immediate read. NABO Newsletter is not only well written, sometimes funny and always interesting, but it actually deals with the realities of waterways today, whereas the other newsletters and the boating press seem to me to gloss over the difficulties somewhat. It is hard hitting and to the point - keep it up.

LETTERS

More in support of Dominic Miles (continued)

In the December issue, Dominic Miles put forward his opinions in an article titled "Just Say No!". I would be grateful if you could pass on to him my support for his views. As I read through the article, I could hear myself saying 'Yes, yes, that's right! I agree that we should all offer payment for our licence fees when they are next due, but not supply anything else. This is direct, non-violent action that we

should all support. It is time that a supine boating community made its feelings known to BW about the BSS. I certainly shall be doing so. Thanks Dominic for putting the idea into our collective minds - I hope sufficient others follow suit and that NABO could take a lead on this.

Dr Peter Fellows
Bonsall, Derbyshire

Ex-Chairmen for President!

When a person is keen enough to take on the position of chairman for a national association such as NABO it is very likely that when they stand down they will continue to help in the work of the association in whatever way they can. The title of "Chairman" is a great deal more powerful to those that they deal with in the outside world, than the title of "ordinary member", and I feel that the time has come to create posts that will give our past Chairmen the credibility they deserve in any future dealings with the Waterways Hierarchy.

I am the first to admit that we should keep NABO lean, fit and able to act, while others who shall be nameless are deciding what to do, but a president and a couple of vice-presidents add a great deal of weight to any association, and are able to stand in, when meetings are threatened with flu etc. Finally we must remember that our ex chairmen are both founder members and as far as I know have not yet fallen out with each other. This fact will be blamed for the success of NABO in 45 years time at the Windmill End Fiftieth Birthday Party.

B Morris, Bromsgrove

LETTERS

Note on part payment of licence fees and non-compliance with BSC requirements: while the NABO Council is sympathetic with the views expressed by members in this Newsletter, it has decided that it cannot endorse a campaign which would lay boat owners open to severe legal and financial penalties. Such non-compliance will have to remain a matter for individual members' consciences. Full explanation of this view in the next issue.

Praise for BW on the Staffs and Worcester canal

We have been NABO members for some years now and heartily applaud the work the Association is doing on our behalf.

It seems that a great many people have a 'down' on BW and BW staff but I have found them to be friendly, courteous, and extremely helpful, not only on the Staffs & Worcs and the Shroppie but in most other areas also.

I am registered disabled and live aboard. Last Winter I was quite seriously ill and BW staff were more than helpful, even to the extent of making a garden for me with a bird table to give me an interest. The patrol officers too have worked hard to get my moorings sorted out, with regard being paid to my regular hospital visits, and have now got things sorted nicely.

Apart from that, can any boater using the Staffs & Worcs or the Shroppie deny the

standard of upkeep is far better than many other waterways? We all know about shortages of water but in our area at least they have done their best with the resources available to them, even with the heavy traffic engendered by the last two National Festivals.

I have seen a lot of water wasted unnecessarily and quite a few of the boats responsible, I'm sorry to say, carried NABO stickers. Praise where praise is due. There are good and bad in all walks of life, but in my belief no-one is wholly bad or past redemption, not even BW. Perhaps the higher echelons of BW should take their own customer care course, and perhaps learn from their employees who, when not racing around after them, get on with being, overall, very nice helpful people.

Paula May, Gailey, Staffs

LETTERS

Comments on marina malpractice

I refer to the letter from Anne Simmons of Watford in the December 1996 issue of the Newsletter on the subject of racketeering by marinas.

I have not personally come across the practice of a surcharge being imposed by a marina in addition to the invoiced charge made by an "outside" contractor, but I know many marinas do have a "No outside contractors" policy. Many of these establishments have marine firms based on the same site under tenancy arrangements and no doubt they have some form of legal contract with them to discourage any competition. Suffice it to say, most boat owners will feel too intimidated to challenge such a policy. After all, the marinas can simply refuse a licence for a mooring. And then where can you moor legally?

It is a cruel fact of life that marinas (mostly operating in conformity with BMIF standard conditions) can and do impose whatever restrictions and conditions they choose. The argument of the Office of Fair Trading in the past when asked about these practices was that a boat owner does not have to enter into a mooring agreement on terms he disagrees with. There is a free market and he can take his business elsewhere! It appears that marinas and similar establishments who merely grant "licences" to occupy a berth can impose any conditions they wish, and it is not illegal.

Is the answer more facilities owned and operated by the boat owners themselves - in the interests of boat owners, not big business?

S. Peters, Birmingham

More comment on marina malpractice

I read with interest Anne Simmon's letter in the December issue of the newsletter. As a practicing engineer on the waterways I have long been familiar with the issue of marina

'bunceing' on private contractors' fees.

In their defence, marinas will point to their operating costs, and the fact that the contractor is using the marina services and

LETTERS

More comment on marina malpractice (continued)

facilities such as electricity to further his trade. In addition, if the contractor is any good, the marina 'grapevine' will provide further work, which could be seen as a form of advertising.

In my experience, marina fees vary from 10% to 20% and may not be payable on materials as well as labour. When you add the VAT, it is a fairly hefty wedge of tax for the boater to pay out, but savings can be made.

Probably the most obvious is to have the work done on the towpath, but few marina-dwellers are prepared to leave the comfort and security of their home mooring, and the contractor may object to the lack of usual facilities.

If the commission covers materials, why not buy the materials from the contractor off-site. In this way business is not done on the marina's premises.

The value of the invoice is surely a private arrangement between the boater and the contractor. It would be morally questionable to submit a bogus invoice to the marina on which commission is levied, only to

settle up the balance in cash in the pub round the corner, but if, as claimed, rates are extortionate, people will always try to work a 'flanker'.

In general, the payment of some sort of commission has already become a de facto standard, however Ms Simmons can take heart that her local boatyard, Bridgewater Boats at Cassio Wharf, has a positive attitude to the matter.

Best Wishes for 1997.

Name & address supplied

ANYTOWN COLLEGE 1997

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PERHAPS WE SHOULD BE TALKING**

AMUSEMENT PAGE

Internet fun?

Apparently, there are some very silly messages flying about through the ether, and if you have access to the Internet (see instructions elsewhere) and plenty of spare time, you could catch a few gems, such as these. (*For the uninitiated, the Internet is an expensive computer toy that grown people can play with in order to avoid having to do the washing up, involving a lot of @/, international phone calls and an incredible amount of time sifting through mud, just in case one of the messages is for you! The following could convince you....*)

Stray cats

This began as a learned discussion on the merits of using Easy-start spray in diesel engines...

"...only when I started (boating) 30 years ago... can I ever remember using a stray in the air intake..."

"An excellent idea. A stray cat in the air intake warms the air, leading to easier starting. Also restricts the flow, giving a richer fuel/air mixture. Can cause furring of the cylinder, though, if used on a long-term basis. In a two-stroke petrol engine, has also

been known to cause whiskering of the plugs."

Finally: "Three Men in a Boat is a novel form of overcrowding" Whatever next? - Ed.

BW Buys an Airfield

"A colleague of mine told me that BW have bought an airfield for storing boats which have been confiscated for being unlicensed and/or having failed the BSS..."

"Ermmm - I am trying hard not to write anything facetious here - so I will settle for : how exactly are they stored? Is it flooded, are the boats to be hauled out or whatever you call it? Or what?"

"Actually it's for servicing the large fleet of flying pigs that they have recently purchased as part of a drive to improve the efficiency and customer-awareness of the organisation..."

BW in action

"I understand BW changed its uniform from blue to green so that you couldn't see their workers taking a nap in the reeds."

"I once passed some BW workers having a sit down.

AMUSEMENT PAGE

Internet fun? (continued)

Suddenly one jumped up, grabbed a spade and bashed it on the ground, killing a snail. When asked why, he said it had been following him ALL DAY!"

"They don't laugh. In July we met up with some very intimidating snails (slugs?) along the towpath. We were able to keep ahead of them though without resorting to violence."

Canal books to cherish

"I'm often trying to convey the charm of the canals to American e-mail friends. I'm a one-man free PR department for BW, I am. ... does anyone know of a cheap brochure style-book that I could buy and send overseas friends?"

"A search for "canal" at <http://www.bookshop.co.uk> should give a list of about 80 titles..."

"Yes, including the riveting "Why Canal Root Therapy". No coffee table is complete without it!"

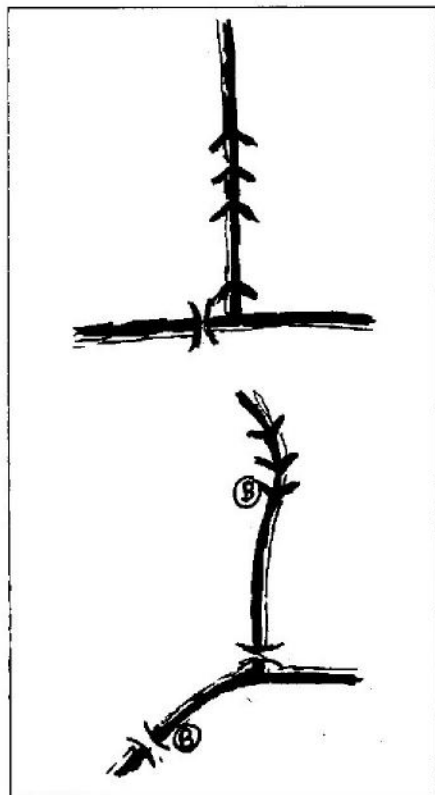
"Something to get your teeth into?"

Well, I did warn you at the beginning that it was a huge time-waster!

Puzzling junctions

How good is your canal junction recognition? Below are drawings of two well-used junctions, with only the locks, bridges and towpaths as clues. Hope they will keep you guessing for a while!

Answers next time. And another puzzle!



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Roger Davis
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Christine Denton
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Peter Lea
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Philip Ogden

Nigel Parkinson
(Vice Chairman/Eng Officer)

Stephen Peters
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Denis Smith
(Midlands Rep)

Andrew Sherrey
(Treasurer)

Peter Sterry
(NE Rep)

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