



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue No. 97/3: May 1997

BW want to encourage more
users onto the canals: any ideas?

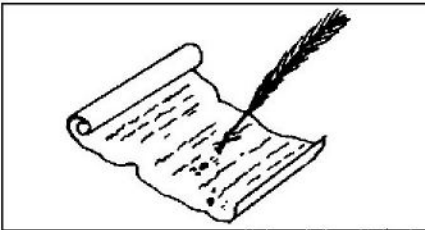
NABO NEWS



Would tranquillity be lost? Photo by Robin Smithett.

NEWSLETTER

Editor's comment



We do welcome your opinions on any topic related to boats and boating, and will gladly publish them, however radical. But readers, be aware that not all that is published in these pages corresponds with NABO official policy.

Water supply has to be the worry of the moment in the south, and the rain that is falling as I write this is most welcome (yes, even if you are out working a lock flight just now!). I know that BW at GU South have been perfecting a rain dance; great success, but I think they went a bit far with the snow and hail!

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.

May 1997

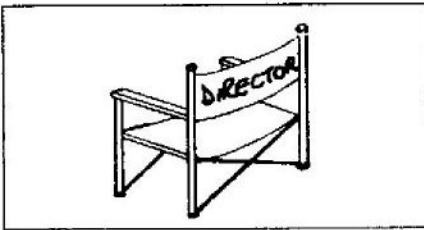
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Published by

**National Association of
Boat Owners**

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's comment



NABO's victory in the decision by the Waterways Ombudsman, Lady Ponsonby, that BW were guilty of maladministration by not consulting over the three year licence fee increases, is a victory for fairness and commonsense. It has been reported by all three waterway magazines, with specially good coverage in Canal & Riverboat and Waterways World, and the IWA has issued a press release supporting the decision. BW has made no public statement so far. We hope it will learn from its mistakes and return to the road of full, open and fair consultation.

Following our meeting with BW, reported in the last issue of NABO News, we have sent David Fletcher a list of nearly twenty changes we believe are needed to the Licence & Mooring Permit Conditions. Some of our suggested changes would improve

the rules for river users, commercial carrying, and end of garden moorers, as the Conditions do not seem to have been drawn up with them in mind. NABO members will know of many of the objectionable clauses from the report in the January "NABO News".

The Public Inquiry into the Environment Agency's application for an Order to become the Navigation Authority for the River Wye started in mid-April. NABO has lodged written objections against this. The IWA has secured quite a number of concessions from the EA, which meet many of our concerns. However, we have not withdrawn our objections, unlike some other waterways associations. We believe the proposed Wye Navigation Advisory Committee is still heavily weighted against boat owners, and that traditional rights of navigation enjoyed since the 13th Century could be extinguished without proper representation.

By the time you receive this newsletter, a new Parliament will have been elected. This is a crucial time for the waterways: if

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's comment (continued)

we can attract the attention of MP's now we have a chance of persuading them waterways matter, before they become involved in a million other things. May I ask you all to please write to your MP, pointing out the desperate need for more funding? Mention the fact that millions of people, including casual visitors, walkers, anglers, nearby residents, etc, benefit from rivers and canals, and ask the MP to consider joining the Parliamentary Waterways Group. You can get some more ideas from the article on page 20 of the January "NABO News". A letter from you, a constituent, will count for far more than a letter from an organisation. This is very important: a letter from you now really will help.

It was reported at the January meeting of the Boat Safety Scheme Advisory Group that while some boaters paid up to £1000 for alterations due to the BSS, the majority were under £150, with the average falling between £130 and £150. Where the bills were very high it tended to be because large maintenance jobs were needed, for example a

fuel tank being replaced because it leaked. However, at the April meeting, David Smith reported that an AWCC questionnaire indicated average remedial costs of £385. We shall be circulating our own questionnaire to all our members in the next few weeks, and would very much like to know what the BSS has cost you.

On 15th April, I attended a National Navigation Users Forum meeting organised by the Environment Agency. It is nice to be able to report that it, as well as BW, has received some extra government funding. The EA has received an extra £600,000 for navigation, which will be spent on providing new facilities and repairing or replacing unsafe structures. I was less pleased to hear that the reciprocal licencing arrangements, which give private boaters licenced by the EA or BW an opportunity to use the other authority's waters free for up to 15 days a year, are only in place for this year. It will be decided at the end of the year whether to extend the arrangement to 1998.

I was also very unimpressed to hear John Redmond of the EA announce that all boats visiting

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's comment (continued)

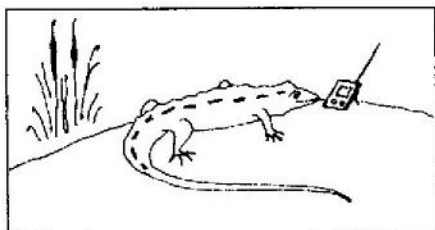
EA waters (and specifically the Thames this summer) had to comply with the BSS in full, or they would be committing an offence. This in spite of the fact that a great many boats licenced by the EA do not have to have a BSS Certificate yet (the same is of course true of BW licenced boats). Although boats visiting the

Thames have always had to certify they complied with the Thames Launch regulations, this new requirement strikes me as being over-zealous and unfair.

I will be visiting the NABO stand at the Braunston Boat Show, and hope to see many of you there - or while boating during the summer!

NEWS

View from the Council meeting held on 12th April, 1997



My screen is very blurred at this moment. The picture looks as if it were under water, which is an extremely contrived (and poor) way of introducing the major topic of this Council meeting. Water and the lack of it is almost outweighed by the number of statements and articles on the subject. Whether this

dryness is part of a permanent change or not, only time will tell. In the meantime, everyone involved has a responsibility. It was agreed that the Daventry meeting has demonstrated that BW are taking the matter seriously and are without doubt mounting a major effort. Others have responsibilities too. Hire operators could persuade their customers to take things more easily and not try to circumnavigate the Midlands or Cheshire or whatever at high speed, but just to take things a little bit easy. The Thrift Campaign is just as important as

NEWS

View from the Council meeting (continued)

how the fridge works. Boat Owners have an even heavier responsibility as they are supposed to know what it's all about. They must ensure that their use of the waterways is water efficient. Use it and lose it.

Council was very concerned about water extraction principally by agricultural interests. It is up to Boaters to report to the local Waterway office if they see water being drawn from the rivers or canals under dubious circumstances, particularly at night.

We shall be forwarding ideas on water conservation to British Waterways. Members ideas will be welcome, constructive though please. This request for ideas was made at the Chairman to Chairman BW/NABO meeting. At the meeting we were also asked for ideas on how to encourage young people onto the cut, and older people to stay. In this lizard's view it ain't as simple as all that. Older people like the tranquillity the waterways provide, cost is a factor for both groups, and are there enough boats already? Tranquillity is under threat, costs are up and rising, water is short; less use,

more water, less boats, higher costs, less boats, more tranquillity - where were we?

Incidentally, the meeting with BW was described by the Chairman as better in substance than in style. Contact will be kept and undertakings followed up.

Despite our avowed support of the scheme, a Council meeting would not be complete without a BSS clanger. The cost of modifications which may be ordered by an examiner is causing concern. Are members being charged correctly? Are the charges for what are sometimes only simple jobs reflecting current commercial practice? If you have any doubts let us know. BW set up the scheme and if Boaters are being exploited as a result, then they should know and be asked to do something about it.

And finally, Fibreway is on the move - a 2' deep trench, 20 gangs, 500m a day, kilometres and kilometres of towpath will be dug up and reinstated as before without damage or disruption, and it will rain all August!

Back to the sun. - Monitor.

NEWS

BW moves water to fight drought, by Peter Lea

British Waterways revealed a ground-breaking plan to move water from the Midlands to supply southern canals badly hit by drought. The exceptional measures were announced by BW Operational Director Stewart Sim, who said the canals had not faced conditions like this since they were built 200 years ago.

BW's hastily assembled drought-busting team identified sources of additional water supply in Birmingham, where a previously unused well is being brought into operation and extraction from an existing supply increased. These should supply some 23 million litres a day more water. It will be run down the ten-mile pound on the Northern Grand Union and Hatton, and backpumped to the Braunston level. From there water will be pumped up Napton to the Oxford summit and Watford locks to the Leicester summit.

Additional water supplies will be obtained from the River Anker for the Coventry and Ashby canals, and from the rivers Ouse and Tove which will be back-pumped up to Marsworth on the

southern Grand Union. Further sources are also being sought closer to London. Other ideas being considered are the dredging of the Minworth pound and the Northern Oxford to improve their water storage capacity.

The scheme was announced to user groups including NABO on 28th April. At that point negotiations with contractors over the installation and commissioning of pipes, pumps and metering were nearly completed, and the whole system is planned to be operational by the end of May.

Stewart Sim said that movement of water on this scale had never been attempted before, and it will enable water to be sent around the central and southern parts of the canal network in any direction. The whole project will cost close to £1 million out of BW's contingency fund. It will be kept in place so it can be used when needed.

However he warned that the work was being carried out in a rush to meet the immediate demand, so there will be some untidiness and perhaps a few

NEWS

BW moves water (continued)

teething problems this summer. He asks us to bear with them, and the installations will be tidied up over next winter. He also asked users to warn the local BW office if they notice anything which might be going wrong with the pumps or pipes.

Stewart Sim is also still concerned over wastage of water, particularly by inexperienced boaters. He has asked whether users would be willing to man selected locks as part-time volunteers under a sort of water saving partnership between BW and the user groups. They could provide advice and assistance to boaters (not act as lock-keepers!) and encourage observance of the "Thrift" code. They would be provided with some basic training and an identifying tee-shirt. This could be very useful at locks near boat-yards and hire bases on summer weekends. Could any members who might be interested contact me for further information.

I think BW have put a great deal of hard work into tackling a serious problem which could have resulted in much of the Southern network being closed

early this summer. They have put together a large-scale and well-thought out plan which should improve water supplies significantly for several years. And if everything goes according to time-table the whole scheme will be operational within two and a half months of inception. I believe BW deserves praise for their efforts, and have written to both Stewart Sim and David Fletcher to say so, and to offer our support for the scheme.

NABO continues opposition to EA's Wye Navigation Order

NABO is continuing its objections to the Environment Agency's proposals to become the navigation authority for the River Wye. In spite of the concessions announced by the EA before the start of the Public Enquiry into its draft Order, NABO believes that the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee is still heavily weighted against boat owners. NABO has requested additional members on the Committee to represent boaters' interests, in line with the EA Advisory Committees in other regions.

NEWS

Fibreway: news from Phillip Ogden

BW and Fibreway Ltd have reached an agreement to build a nationwide optical fibre link along parts of the canal network. Two telecom operators have already signed up to use the new cables, and there is room for many more. The Fibreway Project will be a major source of income for BW, which will increase as more operators join in.

The canals to be used as part of the Fibreway route in the first phase are as follows:

- From Camden Lock along the GU to Bordesley Junction
- From A448 at Tardebigge along the Worcs and Birmingham to Worcester Bar
- B'ham and Fazeley Canal from Snow Hill bridge to Fazeley Jn
- Birmingham and Warwick Canal to Salford Junction
- Coventry Canal from Fazeley Junction to Fradley Junction
- Trent and Mersey Canal from Fradley Junction to Shardlow
- Huddersfield Narrow Canal and Ashton Canals from Huddersfield to Store Street, Manchester
- K&A Canal from Bath to Trowbridge, an isolated section

These lengths will be completed by the end of 1997, and the second phase will then follow, involving more canals.

The methods involved in laying the cables will vary according to the site conditions. They will include trenching by excavator, tunnelling by means of a mole, and hand digging. A number of gangs will be working at the same time, the hours being 6am to 10pm on five days per week, ie not at weekends.

The contractors will have to take great care over the reinstatement as well as the actual work. BW employees will be with each gang, equipped with cameras and telephones to record and report problems. The reinstatement will be carried out as work proceeds.

I do not feel that the project will greatly affect most of our members, but I have confirmed that if any members boat is damaged, or crew injured as a result of the works, claims should be made to the Contractors who will accept responsibility. The Cables will be laid near the hedges and deep enough not to be damaged by mooring pins.

Details of the work programme can be obtained from the 24 hour helpline (charges at local rates) 01203 565666.

NEWS

Heron Trail: further information from Denis Smith

The last issue of the Newsletter contained an item regarding the Staffordshire based Heron Trail Group and in view of the somewhat alarming content it was felt that perhaps some enquiries should be made as to its background and future intentions.

BW have confirmed that the Trail originated as a joint initiative between themselves and Gnosall Parish Council to make the towpaths and access points suitable for use by ALL groups of people ie disabled and able-bodied alike.

The official leaflet produced by the Heron Trail Group themselves states that it is a community project enabling access to the Shropshire Union Canal at Gnosall to be enjoyed by the whole community and especially the disabled.

As to the future BW say that this initial project at Gnosall is being used as an example when talking to other parishes and local authorities. The chairman of the Group Stuart Nadin, enthusiastically says that with the possibility of a County Council grant of £130,000, local council grant of £10,000 and Millenium funds in the offing the project is set to expand. This seems to be borne out in the press report that the Group wish to convert some 90 miles of towpath along the Staffs & Worcs, and T & M canals as well as the Shroppie.

It remains to be seen whether the likes of towpath concerts (Wet,Wet,Wet!) regattas, theatrical events and sports activities as reported in the press form part of current thinking - and perhaps a watching brief needs to be maintained?

Reciprocal licencing: the full story from Stephen Peters

Boat owners have received some rather confusing and contradictory information over recent months regarding the introduction of reciprocal

licensing on BW and Environment Agency navigations. NABO can now reveal the full extent of the proposals on a waterway by waterway basis.

NEWS

Reciprocal licencing (continued)

Agency licences on BW waterways:

Environment Agency private annual licences will be valid on all BW waterways for up to 15 days in a year. The days need not be consecutive. Agency licence must be displayed.

Manchester Ship Canal Co. licences:

Holders of private MSC licences to use the Bridgewater Canal can travel free for up to 7 days in a year on the following BW canals:

- Leeds & Liverpool Canal - Leigh Branch, Wigan to Burscough and Wigan to bottom of Blackburn Locks.
- Trent & Mersey Canal - Preston Brook to Harecastle Tunnel.
- Shropshire Union Canal - Middlewich Branch from Middlewich to Barbridge Junction.

Holders of MSC licences can purchase a BW annual licence for the price of a 3 month licence commencing from January 1 each year.

BW annual licence holders can use the Bridgewater Canal for up to 7 days in a year.

Visiting Environment Agency Rivers:

BW private annual licence holders can visit the River Thames free for up to 15 days in a year but must register their boats in advance or on arrival and then display the free visitors licence plate. The reciprocal licence only applies on the Thames for 15 consecutive days or individual days up to a maximum of 6, free of charge. A free 15 days licence can be extended by purchasing another 15 day short term licence.

BW private annual licence holders visiting the Anglian and Southern region rivers can do so free of charge for up to 15 days in each year (the days need not be consecutive). Visitors must fill in a form and maintain a log and display a visitors licence.

Agency licences are accepted on the River Cam.

Environment Agency Intra-Region arrangements:

Holders of Agency private annual licences can obtain one free 15 day consecutive visitor's licence to visit each of the other region's waterways.

Quite simple really isn't it?

NEWS

Towpath cycling: new scheme details from Philip Ogden

Terry Kemp of BW gave a presentation at Hatton on 10th April concerning cycling issues, including conflict with other users, accidents, increased towpath maintenance, and concern of users over problems.

BW Cycling Review

The objective was the safe use of towpath for cycling and other users. To date the following has been done. A major safety survey, closing off lengths of towpath unfit because of poor standard or maintenance needs, signs erected, free permits issued, also a cyclist code of practice. Cycle sales are rising. On the K&A Canal 10,000 permits were issued in 1996.

IWAAC Report 1996

Stated that "On the towpath, walking, angling, and cycling sometimes conflict; these problems need to be tackled. Closer and more proactive management of both use and users will be needed. On some stretches a ranger service may be part of the answer.

Options

To do nothing - this will not resolve the issue

Close the path to cyclists - too difficult to enforce

Positively accommodate cyclists - by charging for the use of paths, and paying for insurance and maintenance and improvement of paths and use of rangers.

It was decided to take the last option, and the Kennet and Avon Canal was selected for a trial scheme. It already had a towpath ranger, and had a heavily used towpath. There were existing points of sale for permits.

The Package

Two rangers will be employed to manage and enforce. Permission will be given to use identified towpaths. One free pass will be issued for each boat licence holder for lockwheeling. £2 million 3rd party liability insurance and personal accident insurance will be arranged for each cyclist. A newsletter and code including maps will be issued.

The annual licence charge will be £15, or £12.50 advance payment. Short term licence valid for one month will be £5 (advance payment £4) Under 16 no charge. The scheme will start on 1st July 1997.

NEWS

Gloucester Harbour byelaws could threaten pleasure boating: the latest from Stephen Peters

Following publication of the draft proposed byelaws which the Gloucester Harbour Trustees intend to apply to the tidal River Severn for the first time ever, NABO offered its comments and observations to the Trustees.

We pointed out a number of matters of concern to us including the imposition of restrictions on pleasure craft and small vessels. The Trustees have now responded but apart from making some minor adjustments there remains much for us to be concerned about.

All vessels exceeding 20 metres overall length will be compelled to notify the Harbour Master before navigating tidal waters. This will mean that full length narrowboats will be subject to possible restrictions. In addition, the Trustees have now stated that the exemption from this requirement will NOT apply to vessels which are designed primarily for navigation in non-tidal waters. Application of this regulation could effectively spell the end for narrowboats and other inland waterway craft

wishing to make the passage, in good weather, from the Severn via Bristol to the K&A Canal.

The previous concession which will permit vessels to exceed 12 knots when navigating in the main navigation channel has been confirmed but they will be expected to adjust their speed if forced to leave the defined narrow channel by the presence of larger vessels. This means no more short cuts will be permitted!

We pointed out that the prohibition of any discharges from vessels would mean that engine cooling water, bilge water and sink discharges would be illegal. The Trustees have responded that no other harbour authority permits such discharges. Room for some further improvement here!

NABO has asked to be advised when the proposed byelaws are submitted to the Secretary of State for approval so that we may continue to seek improvements and relaxations. Owners of vessels using the tidal Severn are invited to contact me to express their views.

NEWS

News in brief

Residency on boats is not a problem to BW

BW have stated that live-aboards going quietly about their own business in a low profile manner, providing they are not causing a problem for the neighbouring moorers, land-owners, other users or the planning authority, are not likely to be an issue for the Board. Houseboat certificates (recognised residential moorings) will probably be more appropriate for 'high profile' residential occupiers, e.g. those with children.

New Stourport MP

As the plans for development of Stourport basin continue to be discussed, one of the leading players has necessarily changed - the Conservative MP lost his seat!

Green for harmony

It has recently been reported that teachers are being encouraged to use green ink rather than red for marking their pupils work. Red is an aggressive colour, whereas green "gives off a more relaxed message of harmony, balance and universal love". Now we know why BW changed to green trousers!

Stoppage at Knowle changed

The replacement of lock gates at Knowle has been brought forward due to the early availability of the replacement gates. The stoppage is now 28 April - 4 June.

TBA Chairman becomes a 'landlubber' after 46 years

Don Woolhouse, Chairman of the Trent Boating Association, has sold his boat. Some of the reasons he gives are "the hassle of the Boat Safety Certificate and general bureaucracy now connected with boating, coupled with ever increasing costs".

Launch of Inland Waterways Boat Listing

Douglas Maas has spent a year of painstaking work compiling his listing of all inland waterways boats, and it is to be launched at the Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne on 5th July.

The book promises to be a good read, full of interesting information about every kind of boat. It should appeal to old canal hands, boat watchers and spotters or anyone experiencing the canals for the first time.

AN ADVERTS PAGE

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GRAND LAUNCH

SATURDAY 5th July STOKE BRUERNE 2pm
(Call and join in if you're passing)

Available from good canal bookshops, including:

Batterdale Books, 10 Batterdale, Hatfield, Hertfordshire
Canal Museum, Stoke Bruerne, Northamptonshire
Cowroast Marina, Fenny Compton, Warwickshire
Foxton Boat Services, Foxton, Market Harborough, Leicestershire
Middlewich Narrow Boats, Canal Terrace, Middlewich, Cheshire
Nantwich Canal Centre, Chester Road, Nantwich, Cheshire
Sileby Mill Boatyard, Sileby, Leicestershire

Or ask your local boatyard, Chandler or bookshop to get it
Or ask for full description and stockists by calling:
0116 - 2750746 (just leave name/address and we'll send info.)

Or write: IWB, FREEPOST (MID 15159) LEICESTER LE9 5FZ
Publisher: Inland Waterways Books, 8 Clover Close, Narborough, Leics.

NABO BUSINESS

The Boat Safety Scheme: practice and statistics

For most boat owners, 1997 will be the "year of the BSC"! We have written much practical advice on how to go about obtaining your certificate, but if you still have doubts, please do contact our Engineering Officer, Nigel Parkinson.

When reading through the blue/grey book and other notes in preparation for your boat's examination, please note that if a particular item is not mentioned in the documentation, then it is not relevant to the scheme. If your inspector subsequently recommends that things are done which are not part of the BSS and refuses to issue a certificate without, then contact the BSS Office in Watford immediately - this is not allowed!

If you decide to get preliminary advice from an inspector to identify items of potential failure, it is vital that any such examination is carried out in conformity with BSS procedure, and that you are issued with a Fail Certificate and failure check list. The reason for this is that only a collection of Fail Certificates will allow meaningful statistics to be

compiled at Watford, without which they will never know which items cause the greatest problems. A Fail Certificate will also allow you to licence your boat - you then have 6 months in which to remedy the faults and submit your BSC.

If your inspector considers a particular item to be a 'failure', and you do not, you should challenge him. You can always telephone the BSS office for clarification.

If your boat fails but you believe that the inspector has not complied with the guidance notes, then advise the BSS office in writing (and send a copy to NABO). The BSS managers genuinely want to hear about transgressions by inspectors. In the last resort, you can lodge a formal appeal - procedure still pending.

NABO is gathering information on how the BSS is affecting ordinary boat owners, and you will soon be sent a questionnaire. Please let us know your experiences, especially with regard to costs. If you already have a CofC, it should be cheap and easy to get a BSC - let us know if not.

NABO BUSINESS

Marketing and recruitment news from Christine Denton

You will by now have received the £5 of raffle tickets to sell. Please return the stubs/money to me in the envelope provided. This is your way of helping us and we thank you in anticipation. If you want more raffle tickets to sell give me a call or come and collect some from us on the NABO stand at the Braunston Rally 24/25/26 May.

If you are at Braunston during the above weekend do call and see us - we do like to meet our members and hear their views. Peter Lea our Chairman will be "manning" the stand during the afternoon of Sunday 25th May. Peter will also be on our stand at Little Venice at the start of May.

Roger Davis our Membership Secretary will be at the Wendover Rally - do make yourself known to him if you are there. John and I will be at the Sutton Stop protest rally at the beginning of May, and we hope to have a presence at the Ashby Rally again in May.

We still need good quality photographs of typical problems encountered whilst cruising, picturesque scenes, helpful Waterways personnel? We will

copy these, and return the original to you. The copy may be used on our display stand.

Anyone willing to promote NABO at local boating clubs/associations? We will provide an advertising/information pack to make it easier and ensure that the message is consistent. We need volunteers to leaflet boats - give me a call please.

DUNTON DOUBLES 1997

We have available to NABO members DUNTON DOUBLE WINDLASSES. We are selling these at £15.00 each, exclusive of postage.

Contact Christine Denton on [redacted] to place your order. Leave your [redacted] address and telephone number.

Birmingham meetings

Until now, all NABO AGMs have been held in the Birmingham area. Do you have any strong views about this, or can you suggest an alternative venue? Please let Peter Lea know if you do.

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REPORTS

Midlands User Group meetings: Denis Smith reports

Four meetings have been held over the past few weeks and a few points of interest have emerged.

'Fibreway' is happening and will be the 'in' word for the next year or so - more of this in a separate article. Any short term towpath disruption must be compensated by the envisaged long term substantial income (several million pounds increasing annually) to BW - to be invested in the track? Judging by the number of BW secondments, BW are determined that the shortcomings experienced in Scotland will not be repeated.

The Ocker Hill development (comprising the new admin HQ for the Black Country and Birmingham Canals, moorings (including residential), information and educational centres) is proceeding.

There are now only 68 boats nationally on the residential moratorium of which 20 are on the Midlands canals.

The standard covering for towpaths in the Birmingham and Black Country area is black ash whilst in the more rural Staffs

and Worcs/south Shropshire the standard appears to be the red brick coloured stuff.

A lengthy discussion centred on the suitability/need for a floating restaurant (and not of narrowboat size!) in the Gas Street Basin complex.

The viewpoint seemed to depend on whether you were a boater, Brummie or tourist, but at least the waterway manager certainly had the feedback he had requested on this one!

The award to BW of Statutory Consultee Status on planning applications could be a mixed blessing. Dependant on the keenness of the Local Authority each waterway manager could be faced daily with details of applications ranging from new marinas to garden sheds at the bottom of gardens adjoining canals!

Water resources is clearly a common theme of which no doubt we shall all hear a lot more over the coming months. Flavour of the month at meetings up and down the country seems to be agricultural abstractions - one suggestion is that adjacent to the

REPORTS

Midlands meetings (continued)

abstraction points there should be a sign giving details of the authorised abstraction. It was pointed out that details of licences are published in the London Gazette and any objections can be made through that medium if required.

Dog fouling, cycling and vandalism are discussion points which emerge at each and every User Group Meeting whether on the Agenda or not and the present round of meetings proved no exception - anybody out there with the ultimate answer, apart from the obvious?

Early indications of the 1997/98 stoppage programme involving the Shroppie and T & M emerged. A North/South window will be maintained by keeping the former open prior to Christmas and the latter after.

Strangely, dredging did not feature too prominently - are boaters being gradually conditioned not to expect too much? However, the Fradley meeting was positive, with priorities being Fradley to Fazeley, Rugely to Alrewas and the Ashby, in that order.

Simple boating!



Jeni Parsons, the curate at Halesowen Parish Church, in her coracle at Kinver on the Staffs & Worcester canal.

Note the BW number!

LETTERS

Customer's letter to 'everyone at BWB Watford'

Dear BWB,

Enclosed is my cheque for my boat licence. Also Certificate of Safety and Third Party Insurance. Please forward my window disc soonest. Thank you.

I have read in a recent copy of your publication 'Waterways News' that you intend to raise charges to the limit the market will bear. In my language this means until the pips squeak. I presume raising licence fees by 30% over the next 3 years is part of this exploitative process. As the administrators of our waterways you are to be despised for taking financial advantage of your monopoly position. What other increased charges do you have in the pipeline? When will they come into effect? After 15 years, when do I get out of boating?

So please be advised you have already reached the limit of the elastic in my purse and I have had to struggle very hard to scrape together the above. Indeed the last £50 has come from someone else's pocket in the form of a loan. I have forfeited much to pay your inflated bill.

Further I do not want extra facilities that can be used to so-call "justify" increased charges. Certainly shower blocks are not preferable to dredging. Towpath improvements are not preferable to dredging. Enhanced harassment from Waterways police is not preferable to dredging. Endless volumes of "aren't we wonderful" literature is not wanted particularly when it is so patently not true and we are paying for it! Nor do we want you to employ expensive lawyers to fight actions that are not in our best interests.

So in line with NABO guidelines, I need to advise you I am unable to accept all your new boat licence and permit conditions issued Nov 96. Rule 23 in particular, along with others, is quite unreasonable and no reasonable organisation would oblige its customers to sign under the threat and duress of licence withdrawal. Assuming there is a reasonable face to BWB I suggest you please cash my cheque without my signature.

Yours unhappily,

Mary Babe & Simon Greer,
Macclesfield

LETTERS

Thoughts on our favourite topic, part 1...

Having read over the last few months the correspondence about the Boat Safety Scheme, particularly that generated by Dominic Miles' outspoken views, I feel there is another side to this matter that should be considered.

There are now far too many boats on the system with either a BSC or C of C to make a boycott of the Scheme anywhere near effective. These certificates have been obtained by owners with new boats, who understandably have insisted that construction meets the requirements, vendors who found the prospect of spending several hundred pounds to realise thousands sensible economics, and others who complied to save £20 per year on their licence fees. During the current year they have been supplemented by those whose licences have become dependant upon an examination.

This latter category is the one in which I found myself some four months ago, and caused me much soul searching. I decided upon a course of action to renew my licence for at least the length of the cruising season, and put off any definite action until the

general mood could be more clearly established. (Fences are not too uncomfortable until they start rocking!) Initially, my thoughts were to obtain a fail certificate, but reading through the various blue and grey books made me think that perhaps the standards weren't that draconian.

The more I looked, the more it seemed senseless to make no attempt to comply, so I decided to attempt to rectify those items I felt to be constructive. The majority of my work has been in installing ventilation, an area where I had previously relied mainly on open windows and what I felt was an ingenious design of side hatches. With interior trims (and the cost of jigsaw blades!) I spent approx £110 on ventilation. A further £20 was spent on two new fuel lines that are fire proof for thirty minutes (a real necessity!!!), and £75 to replace fire extinguishers which I initially balked at, but subsequently discovered to be time expired. A further £9 was spent to remind me that I should not put water in the diesel tank and vice versa, and perhaps another £25 on other incidentals.

LETTERS

Thoughts on our favourite topic, part 1... (continued)

The next expense was the actual examination. Had this remained in the hands of the "chosen few" who had previously conducted the tests, then I think I would not have felt so amenable, but the opening up of the scheme to Examiners as well as Surveyors has really proved the economic law of supply and demand. The advise I would offer here is to examine your examiner. Find out his views of the scheme, what he considers its objectives, and how effective he considers it to be. If he does not want to discuss such matters, then maybe he is not the person to examine your boat. Finally, do not forget to ask his price, and whether this includes your certificate and any re-examinations.

At our Club, we negotiated a group discount, which brought the cost down to £40 each. Our examiner was objective, and, I would like to think, was encouraged that we had made an effort to take the matter seriously. The result was that most of us obtained our certificate at the first attempt.

Perhaps if we boaters adopted

a more positive attitude to the scheme, then through the examiners, maybe the feedback would continue that has produced the current exemptions. I am not saying that we should be complacent because the whole thing needs to be tuned, but on the other hand, I would not like to think that I am mooring next to someone as inconsiderate as the individual who destroyed half a hire fleet and several private boats on the Grand Union last year. *(If this refers to the incident I think it does, this is a total exaggeration; an accident caused by use of petrol on a hot day, which no amount of BSCs would have prevented. - Ed.)*

In closing, the BSS is perhaps like the cuate's egg, good in parts. Let's keep the best parts, I'm sure it's what we all want. We must continue to press for its improvement, but in doing so we should not deter BW from attacking the areas it was originally intended to control.

Martin Howes

Telford, Shropshire

LETTERS

Thoughts on our favourite topic, part 2...

With reference to the C of C, although I am sure that the technical aspects are very important, the part that concerns me is where I have to mark the switching positions of all the

onboard services. This I feel would make living onboard very easy for anyone breaking into my boat. Am I the only member with this concern?

Roy de la Haye, Aldershot

...and a final twist in the tale

It's a bit rich for Dominic Miles to accuse Peter Lea (NABO News 97/2) of performing a "remarkable U-turn" when he appears to have committed the mother of all U-turns himself.

In the Feb edition of *Waterways World* he wrote an article entitled "Isn't it cold in Winter?" in which he dispensed the wisdom he had gained "whilst living happily and permanently afloat for the past four years".

The article was written for the benefit of what he called "intrigued gongoozlers" and as well as letting his readers in on such facts as that water has to be fetched and toilets emptied, he also wrote "...it would be wise to ensure that your intended dreamboat has a Boat Safety Certificate.....". That's right. That's what he wrote!

Mike Russell, Birmingham

Dominic Miles replies:

Quite right. Exactly what I wrote. The BSS is now in place, and no membership body or association involved with the Inland Waterways has successfully opposed its introduction. For someone considering buying a boat, I would suggest that it was the right advice.

It does not mean I agree with the BSS. I also believe that if enough existing boat owners refuse to comply with it, it might become unworkable. I had the impression that NABO were, in the main, opposed to it. Peter Lea and the NABO Council have decided that to recommend a boycott to their members would be too fraught with risk. Perhaps they are right, or perhaps that risk is worth taking. You decide. That's the thrill of living in a democracy!

Enough! This is all getting a bit personal - Ed.

LETTERS

Another Cautionary Tale: beware of Worcester

Since beginning our summer cruising in early April, circumstances have prompted me to write this letter to you, in the hope that it may serve as a warning to other boaters in one of your NABO publications.

My wife and I had moored our narrowboat at the racecourse end of the Severn at Worcester, near the pedestrian bridge. It was 11.30pm, and I had the boat engine running for a little power to the batteries, and our Honda 1000 generator for power to the boat (TV and lights).

Suddenly the lights and TV went off and I heard a bump on the back deck.

Thinking the generator had fallen over, I made for the door, switching the back deck light on at the same time. On reaching the back deck I was shocked to see no generator at all, and realised we had been burgled. Voices at the top of the bank suggested to me that all was not lost, so I gave a loud shout and pursued them up the bank. By the time I reached the bank's summit I could see two figures disappearing into the darkness and I gave pursuit. As I

reached the rowing club they had gone from view.

As I strolled back to the boat I noticed our generator in the long grass, luck was on our side. They must have dropped it when they heard me in pursuit. Why didn't I have the generator chained up? I have now. I have heard of generators being stolen from the bank, but not when the burglar has to get on board.

Anyway the moral of the story I wished to portray is, when in Worcester, don't leave your boat, chain everything up if you can't keep it out of sight, remember, someone is always watching you.

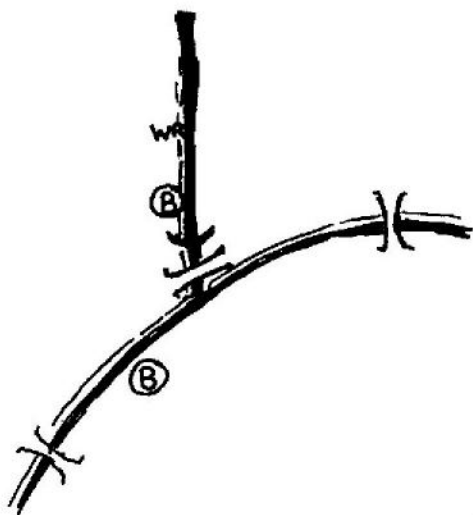
We retreated into Diglis basin, where it is comparatively safer than the river mooring, even though here the threatening atmosphere is still present. In fact we didn't feel at all safe until we had left Worcester and its outlying areas far behind, which is a great pity, as Worcester town has a wonderful shopping area and BWB have done a great deal to make the waterways very pleasant and tidy.

T F Simmonds, Cheltenham

AMUSEMENT PAGE

Another junction teaser

Can you work out the locations of these two junctions from the sketches sent in by David Cragg?



Answers to location puzzle

Did you know the locations of the two pictures in the last issue? I guess you were all flummoxed, as I received no postcards!

The 'Statue of Liberty' is in Leicester, photographed from the River Soar. The lock is Kent Green Stop lock on the Macclesfield canal. The fact that this is the only BW lock with one bottom gate and two top gates should have been the clue!

More from the Internet

Quote from the proceedings of the House of Lords: It concerns the removal of local authority powers to licence pleasure boats, unnecessary as BW also have these powers. After this was approved, Lord Williams asked:

"For the benefit of the House, can he (Earl Ferrers) explain what is British Waterways Board?"

Reply: " My Lords, the British Waterways Board is a board which is responsible for running such things as canals, waterways and so forth. They are paid members and they do their job with remarkable expedition and efficiency."

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