

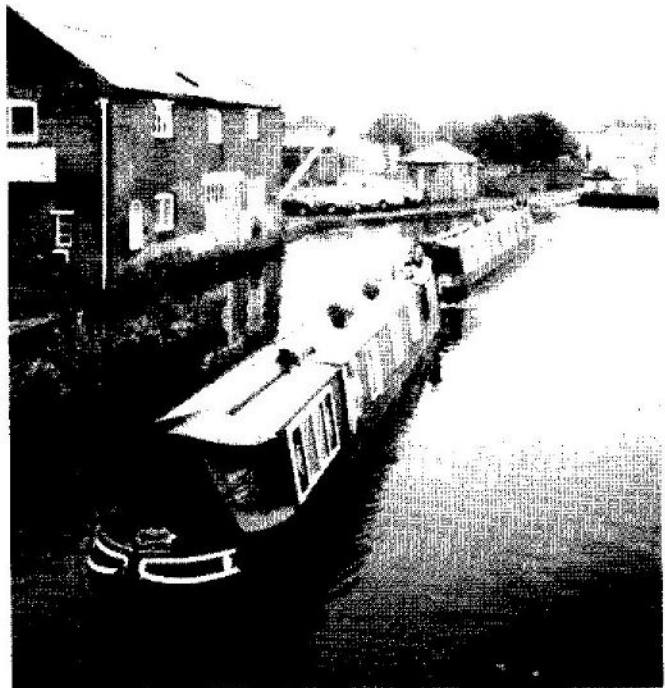


NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue No. 97/4: June 1997

Stourport basin: it could look very
different if plans to develop it go ahead

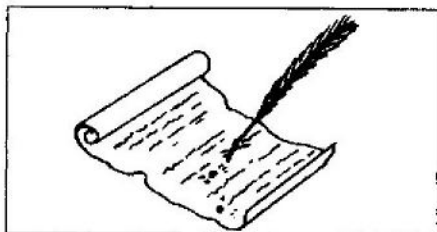
NABO NEWS



Meet the NABO Council at Stourport on 2/ 3 August;
they will be there to chat and help with the locks.

NEWSLETTER

Editor's comment



I am always pleased to hear your views, but I have been rather bowled over by the response to Mr Simmonds letter about his unfortunate experiences in Worcester. The criticism is not only of Mr Simmonds for running his generator late at night, but also of me for publishing the letter. Perhaps I should have been a bit heavier-handed, with the editing! But I do try to publish all letters which make a valid point, and it is good to find something that gets you all writing!

Not a good note on which to ask you this: would you like my job? See page 5 for details.

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.

June 1997

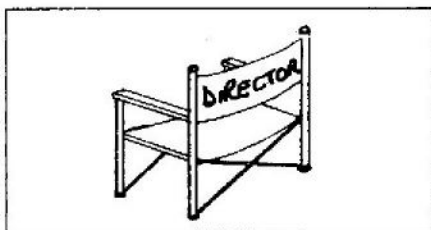
Newsletter	2-5
Editor's comment.....	2
Chairman's comment	3
New Editor required.....	5
News	6-13
Council meeting.....	6
Ombudsman retires.....	7
Lock volunteers needed ...	9
Stourport basin update ...	10
New Government	10
Severn restoration.....	12
NABO Business.....	16-19
Marketing news	16,19
Sweatshirt order forms ...	17
Tale from the Towpath.....	20
Adverts	14,15,21,22,29
Letters	23-28
Amusement pages	30-31
NABO representatives.....	32

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**National Association of
Boat Owners**

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's comment



Ombudsman retires

You will read elsewhere in this issue that BW have advertised the position of Waterways Ombudsman, and that Lady Ponsonby has decided not to re-apply for the position. I personally doubt she would have been re-appointed if she had applied, as rumour has it that BW's supremos were mightily put out by her recent decisions on the BSS' electrical wiring rules, and BW's failure to consult over the licence fee increases. What is the point of having an Ombudsman at all if you're not going to accept the occasional adverse decision, and learn from your mistakes?

We will be watching with interest to see whether the new appointee has the impeccable qualifications for the job that Lady Ponsonby has - and whether his or her terms of reference are

the same. Nobody would be too surprised if BW tried to win more often by changing the rules.

The answer of course is that the Ombudsman should be a Department of Environment appointee and they should fix the terms of reference. This was urged by Lady Ponsonby herself at a Parliamentary Waterways Group meeting I attended a couple of years ago, and BW are on record as agreeing with her. Its a pity the last government wouldn't do something about this - maybe we can persuade this one to. That might stop the risk of the poacher nobbling the game-keeper!

NABO has taken several complaints to the Ombudsman over the years, and have won some and lost some. We have always accepted her conclusions with good grace, even when ours might have been different. Her decisions have been fair, carefully thought through, and backed up by a detailed knowledge of the issues.

Lady Ponsonby has been a good and impartial Ombudsman and a good friend to the

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's column (continued)

waterways. We are sorry to see her go and wish her well in future.

Consultation at last

Following NABO's letter to David Fletcher setting out no less than twenty two proposed changes to the Licence and Mooring Permit Conditions, BW's Carle Legge has written to all user groups inviting comments on them. His letter says that BW "always intended to consult" over them, but this is very different from what BW were saying last year ("We have consulted over them. No you can't see a copy of them.") I can't help but wonder, like "Waterways World", whether the Ombudsman's decision on consultation influenced the change of heart, or whether it came about because we pointed out some of the nonsenses in the conditions to David Fletcher and Bernard Henderson when we met them early in March. Either way, we pushed hard for consultation, and eventually got it.

Chief Executive meets Council

BW Chief Executive David Fletcher attended part of NABO

Council's last meeting on 7th June. During the two hours he spent with us, he listened carefully to our views on a number of issues, including maintenance on the River Trent, the draft Waterways Code for Anglers, proposed standards for canal channel profiles, the Kennet & Avon cycle permit scheme, the financial impact of the Licence increases and the BSS on boaters, and railings at bridgeholes and locksides. He also told us about the Board's plans in a number of areas, including future maintenance and improvement of the track.

We did not agree on everything, but it was an extremely helpful exchange of thoughts and I think by the end both sides had a better understanding of each other's views.

Waterways Code for Anglers

BW began consultation over a revised Code at the start of the year. NABO put forward six suggested amendments to the present Code. The revised, supposedly final draft of the new Code was sent to us recently. Not

NEWSLETTER

Chairman's comment (cont)

only did it contain none of our proposed amendments, three of the most important items in the present Code have been dropped.

BW believe, as we do, that there is room for considerable improvement in the relations between anglers and other waterway users. The removal of those three key requirements is an almost infallible guarantee of open conflict between us. We have written to the Code's author to say we cannot accept the draft Code as it presently stands. We hope BW will think again before publishing it. Of course, many anglers have never heard of the Code, let alone read it, but it should say the right things anyway.

Summer rallies

We will have our marquee at Henley over the August bank holiday. NABO Council members will also be at Evesham over the weekend of 12th/13th July, Stourport over the weekend of 2nd/3rd August, and Farndon on the Trent over the weekend of 13th/14th September. Come and see us!

Newsletter Editor required

This Editor, who has produced the NABO Newsletter for the last four years, will not be standing for re-election at the AGM next November.

So a replacement volunteer is urgently needed - do you think you could do the job?

Apart from being a lover of words, any potential candidate would need to have suitable computer equipment and printer for Newsletter production. I use an Apple Macintosh with Quark Xpress and an ink jet printer, but other DTP packages would be just as effective. The Council have always been pressing me to have fax and e-mail, but I have managed fine without!

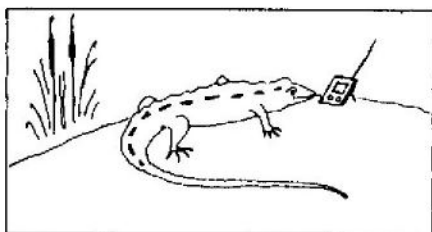
The Newsletter is produced as camera-ready copy for a printer in Birmingham. Distribution (envelopes, labels, posting) is not the Editor's responsibility. I have so far dealt with most of the advertising (it was my idea!), but Neil Walker is newly appointed as Advertising Manager.

If you would like more details of the job, please give me a ring (daytime) on

Nikki Timbrell

NEWS

View from the Council meeting held on 7th June, 1997



Council at its last meeting decided to take itself into the wilds of Warwickshire and actually meet next to a Canal. This was officially so that all the members could see the new promotional material (and hopefully make more storage space for the Dentons) but actually was as an initiative test for David Fletcher (yes, the one from BW) who was to come to talk to your Council.

Subjects discussed with David Fletcher included volunteer support for BW, where Council thought that while the restoration movement was well looked after, some members might be interested in operational support, like the assistant lock keeping mentioned elsewhere.

Also covered were the maintenance Standards that need to be applied to the Waterways and David accepted Council's view

that there must be absolute numerate standards set as targets for the ultimate condition of a waterway navigable channel. These targets would be set by reference to the built dimensions of the waterway and the size of boat which could use the fixed structures. Targets and actuality are different things so Council accepted that progress toward the targets would need to be driven by available cash and priorities set. There would also need to be standards for things like the towpath, provision of amenities (water, sewage disposal etc).

In a question and answer session Council set out views on towpath cycling, the revision of the Angler's Code and the need to work openly and constructively for the long term benefit of the waterways.

All in all, it seemed a useful meeting and David is certainly better placed to understand what NABO are seeking and why.

After David Fletcher had left Council got onto other things.

The marketing raffle is going very well and has more than covered its costs. Council thought

NEWS

View from the Council meeting (continued)

about who might make the draw and after various suggestions from Baby Spice to Michael Heseltine (Henley is his constituency) a name was selected..... watch this space for details. Rally attendance was going well with good results from Canalway Cavalcade, Braunston and the Ashby Canal Association Rally. Great things are expected from Evesham, Farndon and of course Henley. Membership continues to grow satisfactorily but more members are always needed. Numbers seem to count for much more than sensible reasoned argument!

Council members will be found at Stourport on 2/3 August working the River locks and

talking to members and prospective members. This will enable them to find out what you think, recruit a few new people and hopefully publicise NABO on the River Severn. If you will be around that way, that day, and want to talk to the Council, contact Dennis Smith for details.

Our Chairman apparently had a thoroughly enjoyable day boating with Lady Knollys of IWAAC. He reported that she was well briefed, understood the issues and seemed likely to be a valuable Chairman for IWAAC.

Well thats all for now; back to lazing in the sun, even if at the moment its the sort I could float in!

Ombudsman not seeking re-appointment

Lady Ponsonby, the Waterways Ombudsman, has informed BW that she will not be putting her name forward for re-appointment when her second term of office ends on 31st August.

She is the first person to hold the appointment, and quickly made herself known for her

independence, fairness, and skill in handling the complex cases involved. She is highly qualified - she is a barrister and a member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators. Such qualifications are not mentioned as requirements in the advertisement for the post which appeared in the Times in June.

NEWS

Ombudsman not seeking re-appointment (continued)

It will be interesting to see whether the new Ombudsman has the independence, expertise and experience to properly excise his or her function. It will also be interesting to see whether BW will take the opportunity to change the terms of reference for the Ombudsman. At the time of going to press, BW were unavailable for comment on this point.

When Lady Ponsonby addressed the Parliamentary Waterways Group some time ago, she argued that the appointment of the Ombudsman should not remain with British Waterways.

Improper influence could result from the fact that BW choose and pay the Ombudsman. The last Government could not be persuaded to make the necessary changes. Hopefully the new Government will react differently.

Meanwhile, all lovers of the waterways should thank Lady Ponsonby for the excellent job she has done as Ombudsman. She has certainly earned the respect and admiration of NABO for the way she has carried out her responsibilities and handled the complaints we have taken to her over the last four years.

Environment Agency licencing: a new system

The EA called a meeting of representatives of boaters and fishermen in Northampton on 18th June (with lunch!), to explain their proposals for a new computerised licencing system for both rod licences and boat licences.

The system has been developed in America, and several states now use it for fishing and hunting licencing. It is controlled from a central database, and

licences are sold through retail outlets (e.g. fishing tackle shops or boatyards), using terminals rather like the lottery.

The system would have a number of advantages for the EA, not least the automatic collection of data about fishermen, boaters and their use of angling and navigation facilities. The EA are seeking everybody's views on the idea; at the moment they are just investigating possibilities.

NEWS

BW call for lock volunteers

British Waterways is asking User Groups if they could find part time volunteers to assist in the manning of selected locks during the summer.

The object is to help the lock keepers in the control of boats so that waste of water is prevented. Also, to show inexperienced boaters the correct method of lock operation, and provide other advice, such as use of the "Thrift Code". Volunteers will not be expected to work locks.

Volunteers would be under the control of the BW local lock keepers. They would have some basic training, and also have some means of identification, i.e. tee shirts or armbands. They will be insured against accidents by BW.

BW are putting in a great effort to ensure that water problems do not affect the use of the canals, and if we can assist in any way our efforts will be most appreciated by BW and boaters.

So please think very seriously about putting your name forward. The job will be very rewarding, and you will meet plenty of interesting people. We

might even recruit more members.

Philip Ogden is co-ordinating the response from NABO members. Prospective volunteers should notify him by letter or phone, giving their name and address and stating the area in which they would like to be placed. At this stage they will not be committed. In due course BW will offer them a part time voluntary job, which they will be free to accept or reject as they wish.

Contact Philip Ogden at

THRIFT CODE

- T** - Two in a lock, or more
- H** - Have you shut up gates and paddles
- R** - Report any leaks
- I** - Invite oncoming boats through
- F** - Follow advice from BW staff
- T** - Think ahead -choose routes to minimise the use of locks

NEWS

Regeneration of Stourport basins: news from Denis Smith

Readers of the March issue, and of Canal & Riverboat magazine, will be aware that the Pidea report on the regeneration of Stouport basins had caused a bit of a rumpus due to the fact that it had apparently been prepared with negligible input from boating organisations such as ourselves, the IWA and the local canal society.

Subsequently, NABO received assurances from BW and the local council that we would be consulted in the future. In addition, I also made contact with the then local Tory M.P. who had invited me to represent NABO at a meeting chaired by him last March which was attended by all interested parties. The next meeting to discuss progress was

scheduled to take place in September but this is now in some doubt following the enforced retirement of the MP in May.

I therefore made contact with the new Labour MP, David Lock, who was honest enough to admit that he had not read the Pidea report but promised to obtain a copy. I have since received a letter from him confirming this and undertaking to contact me in the event of any progress on the development of the Basins.

NABO therefore now has firm commitment from BW; local council and the local MP that we shall be consulted in the event of any future developments regarding the regeneration of Stourport Basins.

New Government, New Parliament - New Opportunities and Threats!

The recent General Election has resulted in many changes to the old order, and many new faces have entered the scene for the first time.

Out goes the old Minister with responsibility for the waterways -

Robert Jones - lost his seat! In comes Angela Eagle as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment with the inland waterways remit. She is the new Minister who sets the targets for BW.

NEWS

New Government (continued)

The loss of many familiar faces has had repercussions within the Parliamentary Waterway Group too. We understand that Bill O'Brien MP will become its new Chairman in succession to Sir Anthony Durrant who has retired as an MP. Ann Winterton is likely to replace him as the Conservative member whilst Lord McNair represents the Liberal Democrat interests on the PWG.

Previous MP members of the PWG who have retained their seats are John Spellar, and Donald Thompson so we hope to see them continuing to support the Group which provides an important link between legislators and users.

Stephen Peters, our River Users' Co-ordinator (and sometime amateur politician!) receives weekly bulletins from the House of Commons which he trawls through for any items of relevance to boat owners. For instance, Transport & Works Orders, Private Bills (such as the recent BW Bill), EC directives, white papers, green papers and any other colour papers.

He has a complete list of Members of Parliament, their constituencies, Government offices and names of ministers, etc. together with information about the House of Lords. So, if you wish to contact your MP about some matter of concern to you as a boat owner please feel free to contact Stephen for the name of your own MP or any other details you require.

We have recently written as an Association to all new MPs who have a navigation passing through or close to their constituency and the response to date has been most encouraging. We shall continue to keep them informed about the waterways and the need for more public expenditure on this public amenity. After all, it is not just boat owners who derive benefit from keeping canals and rivers navigable.

It is still early days and we do not know what the 58th Parliament has in store for us. Whatever happens, we shall continue to keep a keen eye on Westminster and Brussels.

NEWS

Severn Navigation Restoration plans: Stephen Peters

A charitable trust is working to restore navigation to the upper reaches of the Severn. We know that some of you already support the project, but for those of you unfamiliar with the waterway which passes through Shrewsbury, Ironbridge, Bridgnorth and Bewdley, here are some details.

The River Severn is presently navigable as far upstream as Stourport-on-Severn which is the limit of BW's jurisdiction. Beyond this point there is no navigation authority but small craft and water skiers are able to use certain stretches of river. Larger craft have ventured up to Bewdley with the assistance of flood water and campaigning rallies have been held there to highlight the ambitions of the Severn Navigation Restoration Trust to re-open the river for navigation up to Shrewsbury.

The Trust plans to construct locks and undertake other works to improve the state of the river whose ecology is being damaged as a result of excessive abstraction. The river at Bewdley is in a sorry state - low water levels in the summer, extensive shallows and poor fishing conditions. And

yet there are mooring rings along the quayside bearing testimony to the town's history as an inland port of considerable importance.

The restoration project would be funded by a partnership between public and private bodies. The Trust would become the Navigation Authority and be responsible for maintenance. Initially, it intends to construct a lock and weir downstream from Bewdley which will create a deep water amenity of benefit to boats, anglers and wildlife. Boat traffic would attract visitors and tourists and this would create jobs and contribute to the local economy.

As with all ambitious schemes, there is opposition from various pressure groups who believe the river will suffer rather than benefit from the impounding of the water. However, a weir has been built in Shrewsbury by the Local Authority to provide a deep water environment through the town and it cannot be argued that this has been anything other than an improvement for all concerned.

The Trust is seeking to recruit more boat owners as members

NEWS

Severn Navigation Restoration (continued)

and if you would like to give moral (and financial!) support, please contact Mr Charles Kenchington

Annual membership costs just £10 - a small price to pay for the creation of a such a wide ranging leisure amenity.

Basic Boat Liability Co. shortlisted for award

The December issue of NABO News included an article about basic third party insurance for boats, as offered by the Basic Boat Liability Company of Hammer-smith. This company is now in the running for one of the insurance industry's most prestigious awards, hosted by Post Magazine. They have managed to impress a judging panel of senior insurance figures with their high standards. The winner of the award will be announced later in the year.

Mark Dix, Managing Director of The Basic Boat Liability Company, commented on their sense of achievement at being selected as one of four finalists, and went on to pay tribute to the foresight of the boating press and the RYA for their endorsements of the product.

Inland Waterways Boat Listing is published

This is the very first time NABO News has been sent a book to review! Douglas Maas' ambitious project to list all the boats on the inland waterways has at last come to fruition.

At first sight, you might think that the book would only interest those 'train-spotter' types with a passion for details and cross references. Certainly it will be heaven to those people. But I found myself drawn into it - "I wonder if such-and-such boat is listed?" "Are there other boats with the same name as ours?" "Is that my father-in-law's boat?"

I learned some interesting histories, I discovered that a boat moored near us was named after a lady of some repute from the 16th century, I read a few theories about names... well, you'll have to dip into it yourselves!

AN ADVERTS PAGE

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- Hatton and Lapworth Canal Shops, Warwickshire
- Middlewich Narrow Boats, Canal Terrace, Middlewich, Cheshire
- Nantwich Canal Centre, Chester Road, Nantwich, Cheshire
- Rose Narrowboats, Brinklow, Warwickshire
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Or ask your local chandler or bookshop to get it

Or for full description and stockists phone 0116 - 2750746

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NABO BUSINESS

Marketing and Recruitment news from Christine Denton

Since the last NABO News we have been represented at a number of events. Our chairman, Peter Lea, was at Little Venice over the first May bank holiday. He recruited new members and met many existing members.

John and I attended the Sutton Stop Protest Rally and the Ashby Rally over the same May bank holiday weekend.

We were at Braunston and had a really good three days over the 24/26 May. Recruited many new members and almost sold out of Dunton Double windlasses!

Roger Davis, our Membership Secretary was promoting NABO at the Wendover Rally over 24/26 May and we have received numerous requests for advertising material from members who wish to promote NABO at their local events.

Denis Smith, Council Member, will be promoting NABO at a rally in July at Evesham. Do make yourself known to him.

We will have a presence at the rally to be held on 13/14 September 1997 at Farndon, Newark.

If you are attending a local rally and wish to promote NABO please do let me know and I will send you leaflets, membership forms etc.

We do need more volunteers to help man our stand at events - we will give you training - please contact me on We have had to turn down organisations who have offered us space to promote NABO simply because we do not have enough manpower. We want to create a list of people we can call on to help.

Notice posted on locks in Grand Union canal, South:

**PLEASE CLOSE
TOP GATES
BEFORE
LEAVING
THE LOCK
THANK YOU**

NABO BUSINESS

NABO Sweatshirts - treat yourself!

As reported in previous Newsletters, the NABO sweatshirt is now available with an embroidered logo and your boat name, as well as with printed logo (large or small). T-shirts and pennants are also available. They are good value, as the quality of T-shirts and sweatshirts used by the manufacturer is very good, and they wash and wear well!

T-SHIRTS

Heavyweight cotton, only £8.00 each.

Colours: white, red, sunflower, navy, black, grey, bottle green, emerald.
Sizes: small (36"-38"), medium (40"), large (44"), X-large (46"-48").

SWEATSHIRTS

Heavyweight polycotton with either raglan or drop shoulder (please specify), only £13.50 each, or £17.50 with embroidered logo and boat name of up to 15 letters.

Colours: white, red, sunflower, navy, black, royal, bottle green, charcoal, heather grey.

Sizes: small (36"-38"), med (40"), large (44"), X-large (48"-50").

LOGOS

Logo available on both in either black or white. Please state preference for large (full chest) or small (pocket size, printed on left).

Embroidered logo (small) + boat name available on sweatshirts only.

PENNANTS

Pennants with rope and toggle - only £8.00

Pale blue with black logo.

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NABO BUSINESS

NABO Sweatshirt order form

Please send completed order form, together with a cheque made payable to the National Association of Boat Owners, to Penny Barber,

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Item colour			
Item size			
Logo type			
Logo colour			
Logo size			
Boat name			
Price			
Total Price:			
Your name, address and phone number:			

NABO BUSINESS

Rallies, merchandise and surveys

Waterways Festival - Henley on Thames - NABO Stand

We have received offers of help from some members but do need more helpers please. A couple of hours is all you will be asked to do - an experienced person will be with you. Ring Christine Denton on

Thrift Campaign - British Waterways Initiative

In response to the above initiative NABO Council Members will be manning Stourport Locks during 2/3 August. If you are in the area do come and see us - obviously if you are going through the locks we will be able to chat to you and take note of your views

Raffle News

Many thanks to all of you who have returned your raffle ticket stubs. If you haven't returned your stubs yet, and wish to participate, please return them as soon as you can.

Will you be at Henley? Care to help fold raffle tickets? Ring Christine Denton please on

Dunton Doubles 1997

The response has been so good for our Dunton Double Windlasses offer that we have had to order more!

We are selling these at £15.00 each exclusive of postage. They make excellent birthday, thank-you presents.

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

Survey of BSS costs

NABO, along with other user groups, is conducting a survey into the true costs to boaters of the Boat Safety Scheme. Questionnaires are being sent out with subscription renewals. Please treat this survey seriously, and return the questionnaire to us as soon as your boat has passed its BSC Examination - we will be keeping the survey going until the end of 1998, by which time everyone should have been through the process.

From the survey we will be able to inform BW and the EA of true costs and difficulties of the BSS, and it is important that we collect as much information as possible.

TALES FROM THE TOWPATH

The Iron Ball on the Llangollen

Whilst the Llangollen seems to be a popular topic, maybe this bit of trivia could be of interest. Back in the early eighties I was moored just round the corner from Trevor Basin at the beginning of the section which goes on to Llangollen itself (on the right hand side of the canal facing towards Llangollen). You couldn't go all the way to Llangollen then. It was a dull wet afternoon so I got engrossed in one of Tom Rolt's books about his early travels on the system with 'Cressy'. It quickly became apparent that I was moored in exactly the same spot he had moored 'Cressy' some thirty years earlier.

He was explaining about the building of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. I can't remember the exact details, but it was obviously a mammoth task in the hitherto virtually unknown practice of using iron to build bridges, never mind aqueducts. They had to build the iron foundry virtually on site. He went on to say that there must have been a big explosion during the smelting as he, quite by accident, when walking through some bushes at

the back of the mooring came across an enormous iron clinker which must have been three or four foot in diameter. (I can't remember the exact size, but it was bloody big.)

I looked up from reading the book, and there next to the mooring was a copse of bushes and small trees. It was like seeing a ghost. "Here goes" I thought, taking a deep breath as I disappeared into the bushes feeling like Indigo (*sic*) Jones looking for the lost Ark. Low and behold within a few yards into the undergrowth, there before me stood an almost perfectly spherical ball of iron. I felt as if dear Tom Rolt was breathing down my neck. It was like discovering something very personal and secret that he was sharing with me. It was certainly big. If I remember rightly it must have weighed a few tons. As he said in the book, it must have been a hell of a big accident.

Forgive any inaccuracies, if they are there, as it was a long time ago. I wonder if that wonderous ball of iron is still in the bushes?

Roger Murray

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AN ADVERTS PAGE

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LETTERS

BW National Personality of the Year

A group of people met at Tardebigge top lock on 9th May to present Dave James, the Area Foreman for British Waterways, with an award for becoming the inaugural Personality of the Year. "Canal & Riverboat" sponsors this national award, and it is won by the person who is reported most favourably by users of the waterways, and the readers of "Canal & Riverboat", after receiving help or kindness above the norm from a BW employee.

Bob Clarke, representing "Canal & Riverboat", presented an engraved tankard to commemorate the occasion, and David Fletcher, the British Waterways Chief Executive, presented a cheque on behalf of "Canal & Riverboat". Both speakers stated that Dave's personality, his long under-

standing of canal working, and his enthusiasm, makes him the best man to have around when things are not going smoothly. Other people there who agreed whole heartedly with the comments were Andrew Stumpf, Area Manager, Mel Bannister, Communications Manager at Fazeley, Tim Parker, Director of Black Prince Holidays and John Lucas, Manager of Black Prince at Stoke Prior Wharf. Denis Smith represented NABO, and Yours Truly, though we are NABO members, were there on behalf of the Worcester & Birmingham Canal Society.

Brenda & Barrie Morris

Congratulations to Dave James on his award. I am sorry that we could not reproduce the picture of him sitting on the lock gate at Tardebigge holding his tankard - Ed.

Noise at night in Worcester (and elsewhere)...

Following the publication of Mr Simmonds' letter in the last issue of NABO News, I have been deluged with correspondence - the biggest response since the 'single-handed boating' issue! There were comments about the

crime of removing the generator, and the fear of crime (see later) but the bulk of the letters concerned the noise pollution from running an engine and generator at 11.30pm. Here are some extracts....

LETTERS

Noise at night in Worcester (continued)

A Cautionary Tale indeed! Surely the letter from Mr Simmonds should not be subtitled "beware of Worcester" but "beware of boat owners like me!" It should not be seen as normal behaviour to admit to running, not just one, which would be quite bad enough, but *two* internal combustion engines at *nearly midnight*. Had I been there, either enjoying the quiet of the night or trying to get to sleep, the temptation to sling at least the genny in the long grass would have been great indeed!

I refer to the question posed on your May cover - "Would tranquillity be lost?" Certainly not for the people of Worcester, Mr Simmonds has gone - oh silent night!!!

Jim Addison, Ashbourne, Derbys

I see in issue 97/3 that T. F. Simmonds felt threatened in Worcester. If T. F. Simmonds makes a habit of running generator and engine until nearly midnight the threat will follow them round the system. It should be no surprise that people object to engines running in the evening, in quiet conditions noise

carries a long way over water.

The proposed BW Mooring Permit Conditions - Condition No. 16 limiting static engine running to 10am - 8pm receives my support; in fact I would be happy to see this condition in the boat licence conditions.

On the front cover of the Newsletter you pose the question "Would tranquillity be lost?" I would suggest that has already been lost on popular moorings, but with a little consideration could be regained.

I Evans, Mirfield, Yorkshire

Does it not occur to Mr/Ms Simmonds that perhaps the people who removed his generator were not thieves, but others on the river who were utterly fed up with some selfish boater running both a generator and an engine at 11.30pm?

Congratulations to these eco warriors! As a suggestion, how about installing a 12v TV and lights, and a suitable battery system so that others can appreciate the river without having to suffer a floating noise nuisance next door?

Mike Ortman, Dursley, Glos

LETTERS

Noise at night in Worcester (continued)

Re the letter NABO NEWS May issue from Mr Simmonds. I would say that running both his engine and his generator at 11.30 at night he was lucky to only have his equipment stolen. I'm surprised other boaters moored nearby hadn't taken more positive action and dumped his generator closely followed by Mr Simmonds into the Severn.

I S Hammond, St Albans, Herts

In the letter "Another Cautionary tale: beware of Worcester" we are told of boat moored, in previously quiet area, where the occupants have both the engine and a generator running at 11.30pm.

My sympathy is with the folk who stopped and moved the generator. I would have been tempted to take some, perhaps less drastic, action myself earlier in the evening. Owners of the boat, and any others who have such little regard for the peace and tranquility of the canals, *take the hint.*

Was it burglary or just a positive way of getting the message across? Nothing was stolen, except the atmosphere of

being away from it all that most of us cherish as *the* attraction of canal life.

Sadie Dean - Straw Bear

In response to a recent letter from a T F Simmonds who claimed to have had a burglary attempt made on his Honda 1000 generator while it was running, charging his lights and T.V. Oh, and don't forget his engine was running to provide a "little charge to his batteries", all this at 11.30pm.

I would like to suggest to Mr Simmonds that the would be 'criminals' were possibly none other than insomniac neighbours moored nearby, fed up with the genny *and* the engine running!

The whole point of living on the canal (or holidaying) is the peace and quiet and simplicity of life. My advice to the T F Simmonds's of the waterways is to watch less TV, buy an oil lamp, moor out in the country, that's the green bits, and look out of the window for a few hours, much better than telly, either that or buy a caravan in Skegness, but please don't moor near me!

Steve, on "Max"

LETTERS

... and the fear of crime

I write regarding T F Simmonds' paranoia inducing letter concerning the theft from their boat in Worcester. I quote, "...when in Worcester, don't leave your boat, chain everything up...remember someone is always watching you."

Be careful by all means, use common sense at all times, but if you let the very small criminal element give you a fortress mentality you might as well give up boating. Thefts, burglaries and acts of petty vandalism take place on all parts of the system. They are committed by a very small percentage of the population as a whole.

I have sympathy with T F Simmonds as I do with any victim of crime but to publish that letter without any qualifier seems to me to be irresponsible and grossly unfair to the vast majority of the population of Worcester. Has the crime been reported to the police? If not, why not? Police can only respond to crime if they know where it is occurring. The fact that the generator was recovered is an irrelevance. If it was reported,

was any kind of victim support offered, any reassurances made? Again, if not why not?

Crime is a problem, of that there is no doubt, but by far the biggest problem is the fear of crime itself. T F Simmonds' letter does nothing to combat either.

Greg Page, New Malden, Surrey

...in my opinion it is not a good idea to get paranoid about a comparatively safe mooring such as Worcester and deter other boaters from venturing there. The more boats and people there are around, the safer it will become. As Mr Simmonds points out BW have done a lot of good work in making such moorings attractive and I think we should respond by spending more time enjoying the lovely City of Worcester.

Jim Addison (as above), Ashbourne

LETTERS

More on our favourite topic, the BSS

Martin Howes's letter about the BSS reiterates an old BW chestnut. That is the idea that money spent on obtaining a BSC will bring a handsome return in that the boat will realise an increase in value. The reality is that the BSS actually devalues boats that do not yet have one, and the owner has to fork out additional monies to realise the prices s/he *would* have been able to obtain before the scheme was introduced.

A quick tot-up of Martin Howe's figures shows expenditure of £279. A snip! I am sure that sections of the boating community, particularly those less fortunate who form part of this country's unemployment statistics, (and the many in badly-paid work) will find no trouble meeting this out of their £46.25 weekly job seekers' allowance. I know it has become quite acceptable for many "haves" to sneer at "have-nots" over the past 18 years, but now (and may I say unashamedly, "Thank God") we have a new government which seems less inclined to dismiss the needs of whole sections of our population.

I suppose £279 is a small price to pay in return for driving the hoi-polloi off the cut, if that is what some really want. A monoculture of fairly well to do *naice* middle class people (like me, I own up!) untroubled by those with funny haircut etc. There should be room for all. Variety is etc..... As I wrote, the BSS seems to be little to do with safety and a lot to do with removing the less well off from the canals - catering for just one section of society. We had a government that did that. Those of you who have just recovered from the celebrations will recall the resounding boot up the backside they received from the electorate.

Just in case any reader thinks that the scheme *is* about safety, consider the following: I wrote to David Fletcher (BW) and Audrey Smith (IWA) asking for what detailed research and reliable statistics they had that led them to support such a scheme. It must have been carnage out there! The answers? David Fletcher: "*We do not have comprehensive statistics*". John Bayliss (on behalf of the IWA): "*There is a paucity of*

LETTERS

More on the BSS (continued)

data...". In other words, the scheme went ahead without a shred of reliable evidence as to its necessity. That's good management/boat owner representation? The words "piss-up" and "brewery" spring to mind.

Heartening to know that such thorough research was undertaken by well-paid public servants and an organisation

representing, and largely funded by, many boat owners, before launching/backing this obviously essential scheme. Let's hope that John Prescott applies the same ethos to BW as is proposed for the NHS - less overpaid bureaucrats, more patient care.

Dominic Miles, Saul, Glos.

For details of NABO's survey into the costs of the BSS, see page 19.

Environment Agency Euro signs

I refer to a marvellous bit of creative accounting and media writing in reports that the EA are to put up new signs on the Thames and other waterways. These signs will conform to Euro standards and are all square (?). The EA reminds their users that the cost of the signs was already made available within the agency's set-up costs!

Now, before they were the EA we know that the water bit of the EA was the NRA, so did the NRA pay the bill for the signs? Or did the Government present the EA with a 'new signs budget' when it was set up? - one can almost imagine the meeting, with the EA refusing to be born until it got its

money...

Obviously the new signs money came from somewhere and, given that the EA was an amalgamation of various Government Agencies, that somewhere originally acquired the money from the public.

The bottom line is that wherever the money came from it is to be spent on signs replacing other signs (just like BW likes to do) rather than developing the waterways. Having sampled some EA waterways, given a choice between new square Euro signs and more facilities, I know which I would vote for.

David Cragg, Oswestry

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AMUSEMENT PAGE

Orph's New Licence Initiative...

The light has dawned!!!

I was considering all the views on the BSS and I have realised that it is possible to spread the grief more evenly and provide new jobs and increase revenue to BW at the same time. How? Listen to this.

1. All anglers must have a certificate of competency... available from BW on completion of a mandatory 3 day course supervised by some angling federation or other and the RYA (they seem to get in everywhere). Lets say £15 for 3 years (plus course etc).

2. All rods must carry a kite mark and be checked every 5 years to establish that they have not been modified illegally... say £1 per rod (50p for BW, 50p for examiner).

3. Every tackle box (large variety on wheels with compulsory padded seat and bait box stand) must be fitted with a kite marked extinguisher to be used on bankside fires and excessively hot thermos flasks. Anglers failing to comply can have their kit confiscated (for their own safety). BW can then have regular tackle sales to generate more revenue.

All anglers must have compulsory 3rd party insurance. This will enable boaters, who get their craft damaged by anglers, or BW, to claim off them. Failure to comply — see 3 above.

Seems only fair to me.... How say you all? (Now why didn't BW think of this - or are they just biding their time?)

... and more Initiatives

Just think of the paltry sum they are charging cyclists with no compulsory 3rd party insurance. I reckon there will be more accidents caused by cyclists running into anglers and pedestrians than there will be from boats and boaters.

Perhaps Orph's ideas should be adopted for cyclists and pedestrians too.

We could have BSC (Bike Safety Certificate), train a whole load of new inspectors or give those poor unfortunate souls who

AMUSEMENT PAGE

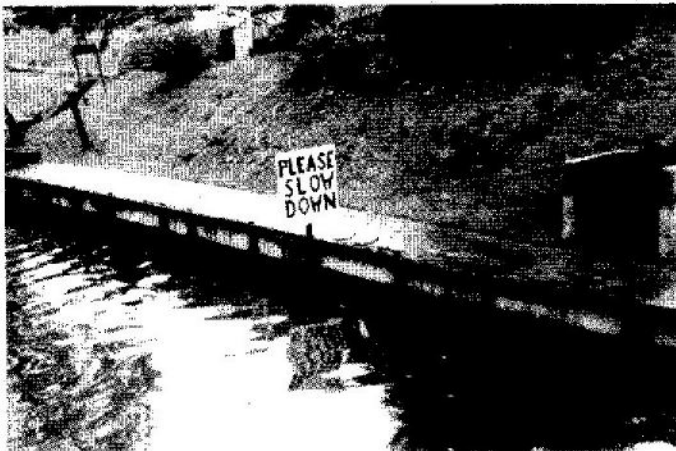
... more initiatives (continued)

have done the boat one a chance to earn a few more bob. Would include things like tyres, steering, lights, audible warning systems with a special bell code (just like the horn signals on boats). Would also have to carry a full puncture repair kit, wet weather gear. The scheme could also carry a section of how to retrieve your bike from the cut so as not to cause an obstruction to boat movements and how to negotiate the poles during a fishing match.

Additionally we might need the RSC (Ramblers Safety Certificate) this would have to apply to all pedestrians using the towpaths for whatever means

unless you have one or other of the BSC's, then you would be exempt. The RSC might include a full written paper on the country code, dog handling and pooper scooping, how to negotiate the bank during a fishing match, the right type of footwear and wet weather survival clothing. All examiners will have to have the Full Mountain Leadership Certificates. All walkers without the RSC would immediately upon summary conviction go straight to jail for a period of not less than three months.

This could be the solution to the lack of funding BW keep telling us about...



No rules yet for ducks?

Photo from David Cragg - can't just think where it is!

Please send your photos, comments and ideas to me, I'm always pleased to hear from you!- Ed.

NABO REPRESENTATIVES

Council members contact addresses

Penny Barber
(RBOA Liaison)

Phil Bland
(Rep for Disabled)

Roger Davis
(Membership Secretary)

Christine Denton
(Marketing & rallies)

Peter M Foster
(NERep)2

John Griffiths
(NW Rep)

Peter Lea
(Chairman)

Philip Ogden

Nigel Parkinson
(Vice Chairman/Eng Officer)

Stephen Peters
(River Users Co-ordinator)

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