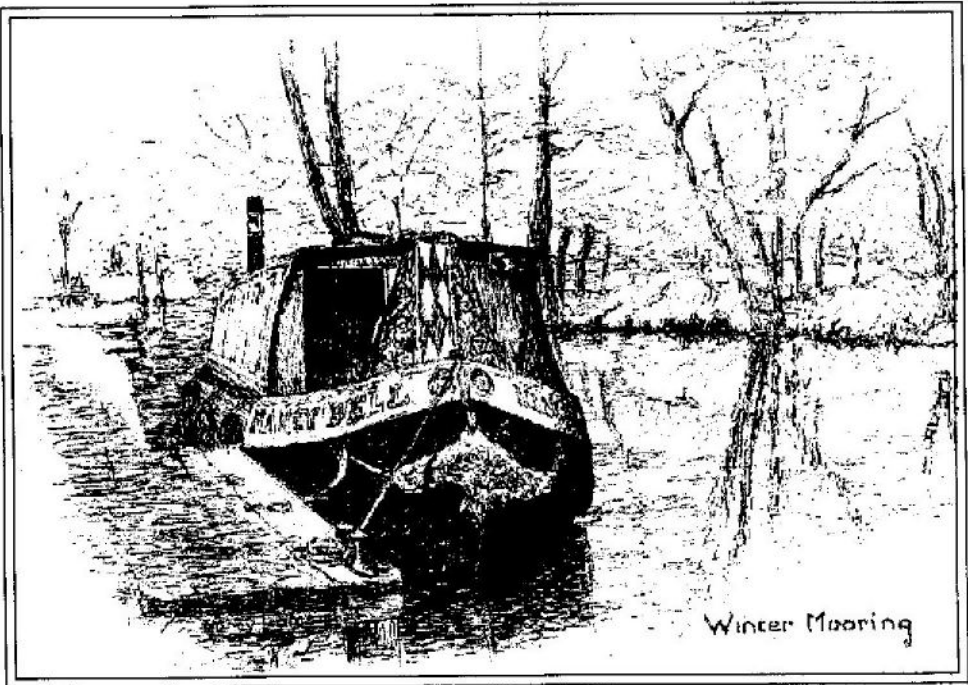




NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue: 8/98



Winter Mooring by Nancy Larcombe

NABO News

Editorial

Well, you voted in favour of the resolutions at the Annual General Meeting.

NABO can now offer associated membership to people who are not boat owners but who do support our aims. I imagine that most people interested in taking out this type of membership will either be between boats or have left the waterways for many reasons, not least British Waterways. The members will receive a copy of this newsletter and may attend the AGM as observers - they will not have a vote. They will not be eligible to stand for Council, although Council can co-opt anyone they consider will assist them in their aims. Their membership fee will be £10.00 per annum.

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Affiliated membership is now available to boating organisations who support NABO and its aims. They will receive one copy of the newsletter.

I would urge everyone who is eligible to keep their individual membership and encourage others to do the same. NABO needs to have a large membership behind it to tackle the issues with British Waterways and others. Full members will always have the full support of NABO to fight for them. Associate members will be given advice if they have need of it.

£10.00 a year is very little to pay for peace of mind, and for 8 personal copies of this very readable magazine!

I look forward to seeing those membership figures rise as the year passes.

Best wishes for the new year from your Editor. *Wendy*

Published by
National Association of Boat Owners

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CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

The most important piece of news as I write this is that the future of British

Waterways is about to be decided. Alan Meale MP, Under-Secretary of State for the Waterways, told waterway user groups that the DETR review is nearly complete and his decision will be announced in mid December. The front runners are BW's own trust proposal and some form of public/private sector partnership with BW remaining in the public sector. He also said franchising is no longer being considered, and that any form of sale or lease of the canal track has been ruled out. We believe the question of how a BW Trust would be accountable is a key factor in the deliberations.

Mr Meale also promised a white paper on the future of the waterways, to be issued in mid-January (perhaps at the Boat Show?). There will be discussions with interested parties throughout January, February and March.

The Minister was speaking to representatives of national boating groups at the DETR on 19 November. He stressed his concern over BW's large backlog of

maintenance, and the debt it accumulated over the years. He wants to see them reduced and hopes this can be achieved by additional funding and by contracting out services to save money. He also believes in simplifying bureaucracy! An announcement will be made about future years' Grant-in-aid when the white paper is released; hopefully there will be an increase.

DETR review is nearly complete. Decision will be announced in mid December.

He would like to see fiscal measures introduced to encourage waterway freight carrying, and has set a target of

diverting 3% of road traffic to water-borne transport (including coastal carrying). He recognises that this would require considerable additional investment. A white paper on waterway freight transport is to be published later next year.

Mr Meale believes in consultation and has promised he will meet us once or twice a year to discuss matters of concern. He says BW's Customer Charter will be maintained and wants BW to widen its consultation to include further customer representatives. He has promised to consider whether there can be further

informal consultation over BWs minimum channel dimensions before formal consultation process starts.

At our request, he promised to discuss with the Ministers responsible for planning whether a more formal evaluation of heritage factors can be built in to the planning process. However, he avoided answering an IWA question about a promise made previously that the DETR would consider issuing guidelines on navigable culverts in new roads for canals undergoing restoration. He supports urban regeneration, and BW's commercial development projects. He was at pains to assure us that the Environment Agency's water abstraction licensing plans are aimed at private developers and agricultural and industrial users, and it will not cut off water supplies to canals.

It was a very useful meeting, even though time constraints meant that we were not able to discuss all the topics we had tabled beforehand.

Boat Safety Scheme

More silliness from the BSS team. This time it involves new plastic fuel tanks, made in Europe to appropriate standards, officially tested, and CE marked. This means they can legally be installed in any new boat being built: it will fully comply with the European

Craft Directive, and can legally be used on any river or canal in Britain. Unfortunately the BSS gestapo said the tanks don't comply with the BSS, and the resulting row led the importers to complain to their MP. Now the Minister for Trade and Competitiveness at the DTI had written to confirm these tanks can be legally sold in the UK, and to underline the point sent a copy of his letter to David Fletcher. Rumour has it that the DTI is well and truly annoyed with BW for trying to put itself above the CE mark system. It will call come to a head in four years from now when the first CE marked boats with plastic fuel tanks, diesel spill pipes, et al will be inspected, fail but continue to be legal! Of course, David Allison may not be around then.

The BSS team now has a new Technical Manager, John Akhurst, who joins them from Lloyds Register with an impressive list of qualifications. I hope Mr Akhurst will introduce a bit of sense into the BSS, which until now has appeared to be dedicated to bring Kafkaesque confusion to the canals. However, I would like to know what experience he has of inland waterway craft, particularly canal boats.

Middle Level By-laws

Draft by-laws being considered by

the Middle Level Commissioners include a number of precious items, such as the one requiring all boats to be tied up in locks while they are being operated. Another less funny example would ban the discharge of all waste ("grey") water, as well as sewage, from boats. To our knowledge, no waterway authority in the UK bans waste water, not even the EA on the Thames, and no boats are built with suitable holding tanks for it. Are the boaters and boatyards on the Middle Level aware of this threat? We are seeking a meeting with Commissioners' staff to explain the problems with these and other clauses and to obtain changes.

And Finally

In spite of our appeal in the October issue of NABO News, we still do not have a North West Region representative. We do however have a few volunteers who are prepared to attend local waterway meetings. The job of Regional Rep is not particularly onerous (probably the hardest part is attending NABO Council meetings!) but it is extremely important. It does involve a certain amount of driving, but petrol is paid for. Please do phone me if you think you might be able to help - it is very worthwhile and will help all our members in the area.



It pays to advertise?

Photo: Trevor Wells

NABO member, Bill Finch's van in the K & A, proudly displaying a NABO sticker. "Stick it in your window!"

NABO STATEMENT ON LONDON REGION DREDGING POLICY

NABO is concerned to learn that the Regional Manager for BW's London Region, Mark Bensted, has refused to commit himself to implement dredging to original channel dimensions on any of London's waterways.

This appears to be at variance with BW Head Office policy which has been stated publicly by Chief Executive David Fletcher and Operations Director Stewart Sim and is part of the new Waterway Standards and navigable channel dimensions. This policy is that waterways will always be dredged to original channel dimensions unless there are significant engineering or safety constraints.

Mr Bensted states that the policy would be applied except where there are engineering, environment, usage or cost reasons not to. This range

could of course be used to justify an exception for every waterway in Britain.

NABO has written to Mr Bensted and Mr Sim to query the apparent differences between Head Office and regional policy.

NABO would be very concerned if the policy stated by Mr Bensted were to be applied, as it would represent a major U-turn by BW and their abandoning the commitment made, before consultation on the new Waterway Standards has even been completed. It would also lead to a serious loss of confidence in BW's integrity on the part of users to whom the Head Office commitment has been given.

PSEUDONYM'S View from the Council

Pseudonym is back !

I didn't get thrown out with the change of council, I just went on holiday and saw some foreign rivers. They look the same! Anyway back to business. The first meeting after the AGM was very pleasant, greeting old faces and welcoming some new ones, although the ones that have escaped will be missed.

We all have jobs, mostly the same as last year except Geoffrey who is Vice Chairman. Philip is looking after the disabled and our newcomers fill much needed reps posts.

Cycling occupied us for a while whilst our brains worked overtime imagining cycleways at Soulbury Locks and past the Globe. Apparently a cycleway on the Grand Union is planned, with the tow path being upgraded to 2mtrs. Who is paying for the installation and upkeep? Also, surprise, surprise, the cyclists on the K & A are not being charged as BW can't enforce it, so the council is paying for them. The BW cycle licence included insurance, will the council pay for this as well? Will the council pay for my boat licence and insurance? Maybe I could put two wheels on my boat. It would probably fit on a two metre towpath. Alan Meale is to let us know whether BW get a Trust; the franchise idea has been

dropped, they are now calling it a PPP. Sounds like a private pension plan but apparently it's a Private Public Partnership. We will all be wiser in due course. Mr. Meale is also very keen on urban regeneration, so good-bye heritage.

The Boat Safety Scheme lingers on with BW employing a Technical manager. One more wage to justify the expense of the scheme. So far 4600 boats have failed; of these 1400 have since passed. So there are 3200 boats out there with failure certificates, poor souls! Get in touch and let us know how you are getting on. It is interesting to note that you can buy a new boat with all the required CE marks which is completely legal, but it still won't get a certificate as BW are refusing to accept certain fittings and are even invalidating warranties on engines by insisting on modifications that the manufacturers don't recommend.

The middle level commissioners are trying hard to bring in new by laws. If they do you won't have to worry about charges as you won't be travelling on the level anyway. They are suggesting that all waste water goes into holding tanks. Horns are to be sounded every minute in foggy weather.

(the booms of the Bitterns will be heard). You must tie up fore and aft when in a lock. That should get rid of a few boats. Don't tow another boat, you need the commissioners' permission first. Good luck Sadie, you are just the person to explain to them.

Christine gave a rally report. There is a mini stand available for anyone going to an event that may be interested in NABO. Take it with you and put it beside your boat when you are on board. It doesn't have to be manned all the time just when it's convenient to you.

If you have a BW mooring don't improve it. One disabled boater did at his own expense and with BW permission; now he has to pay one of the highest charges for his canal on the moorings' matrix. Finally the high intensity cruising licence hasn't gone away, it is being repackaged and reissued with some "benefits" thrown in,

then we get a chance to give our opinion.

NABO is committed to helping the continuous cruisers and hopes to discover and publish details of cheap moorings and any other information that may help. In the meantime, check that you are not on BW's books as a continuous cruiser. The letters on your licence stand for which canal gets your money and is linked to your address. That is, an address in Oxford and the OX ford canal gets your money, an address in Kent and the Grand Union is the lucky recipient. If the numbers following the letters are 99996, 99906, 99916 or 99926, then BW consider you a continuous cruiser. I have a mooring off the BW system and yet BW have classed us as continuous cruisers as they have another boater who has a year Thames license as well as an annual BW licence.

The Parliamentary Waterways Group Meeting

Or the Joys of being on Council

After the AGM Peter asked who could attend the Parliamentary Waterways Group meeting. Silence reigned. So jumping in with both feet I said that I would go. Going to London was no hardship, I love the place. Going to Parliament and maybe having to speak was quite another.

I arrived at the correct door with the help of the police sentinels and marching right past the queue of sightseers I stated my business and walked straight in. Being very early I was able to stroll around and look at the fantastic building. I also bumped into another person that I knew, so sticking close to him I found my way to the correct

room that overlooked the Thames. I then began to relax as I knew several of the people attending.

This meeting was about Nature and the waterways. It was opened by the Chairman Bill O'Brien MP and passed to Baroness Young who gave a talk on how important the waterways are for wildlife especially as habitats were disappearing elsewhere. Four million people support English Nature financially and she felt that the legislation surrounding SSSI's was not strong enough but this would be reviewed in the near future. BW is drawing up a Biodiversity Action Plan Strategy or B.A.P.S. (just right to feed the ducks). 23 sections of canal are SSSI's at present but only 7% of

the country is so designated. A strategy of integrated waterways would be preferable. It was admitted that the canals are artificial and that restoration produces gains for wildlife.

There followed a question and answer session with questions from various canal societies. The Basingstoke has a future problem with income as 85% of this canal is a SSSI and boat movements are restricted. The Pocklington needs a proper appraisal as a whole not a piecemeal approach. There was a complaint that English Nature doesn't create the waterway habitat but controls it once it has been restored

Michael Handford stated that the key elements should be changing

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policy as Government money was spent on opposing issues. Baroness Young agreed with Michael and stated that the common agricultural policy is the enemy of wildlife.

Adrian Stott ascertained that the destruction of habitat has led to

waterways being islands of wildlife and therefore an unfair burden on canals.

The Fibreway is creating havoc with hedge roots being destroyed but the biggest disturber of wildlife is dogs off leads.

So ended a most enjoyable day.

MIDLAND REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

A few snippets of information gleaned from the official BW notes of the Autumn round of User Group Meetings involving the Norbury, Lapworth and Fradley Waterway Offices.

Vandalism continues to be a problem at Kings Norton (Worcester & Birmingham Canal) It is requested that any kind of criminal damage or threat should be reported to the police to ensure that the incident is logged. It appears that a boater who threatened his assailants is being prosecuted by the police - following complaints by the vandals!.

Lack of consultation over the **Stoppage List** was a subject put to Waterways Manager Roger Herrington who agreed that he would present "a list outlining the priority works based on a national priority list for works to be undertaken over the next five years" at the April User Group Meeting each year to allow consultation with local User groups prior to the Stoppage List being printed in its final format. Very laudable and it will be interesting to see how this is followed through to the

National Stoppage Meeting held in June annually and at which, certainly for the past two years, the BW representatives have been less than enthusiastic with any idea of local consultation - due mainly to time constraints. If successful however, there is no reason why other Waterway Managers cannot follow the same path.

Fibreway is a regular topic at all meetings. Importantly and in reply to a very specific question, Waterways Manager, Andrew Stumpf stated "It will not be the moorers fault if the cable is damaged using a normal mooring spike as the cable should have been laid deeper than the spike or protected" - members would be well advised to remember this.

Discussions continue regarding the possibility of having **pontoons installed in Stratford Basin** - maybe 10 fingers over a 60m length for holiday boats to moor over the winter "leaving plenty of room for winter visitors". An interesting question

"where will the pontoons go in the summer months? Will the cost of removal mean that they become permanent?" was answered with "The matter of the pontoons still requires much further thought ..." Do we have another Stourport saga here, although there does seem to be a distinct difference in that following considerable publicity Stratford District and Town Councils are presently "less than keen on the idea which appears to have been formulated by one particular company who are willing to pay for installation".

NABO would welcome views on this one.

Whilst on the subject of **Pontoons** Waterways Manager Roger Herrington has advised NABO that "There is no intention, currently, to install pontoons at **Penkridge** (Staffs & Worcs Canal) although this option may be evaluated as a possible way forward". However, he goes on to say "I would like to assure your members that winding facilities will be protected for their future use where BW own the winding holes".

How interesting that his User Group Meeting notes made specific mention that up to 12 overnight moorers had been accommodated in **Stourport Basin** this last summer. Good, but probably thanks more to the flexible and informal approach of the Basin Attendants than the official line - members will recollect that the initial plans for the Basin had no provision for any overnight moorings until we objected.

As mentioned in previous reports, there does seem to be a tendency to increase **Mooring Fees** by more than the rate of inflation i.e. so called market forces - members should ensure that the matrix mechanics are followed.

Following a joint agreement with the local authority, **Doggy Waste Bins** have been provided on the towpath at Wheaton Aston and Brewood (Shroppie) - a similar approach is to be made at Stourport. This seems a worthwhile initiative which can perhaps be pursued in other areas - members could well make an initial approach to local councillors.

It was stated that **Dredging** is now funded on a national basis and that the Midlands canals are not the area of greatest need (this prompted our representative to comment "then some areas must be really bad!"). However, Waterway Manager, Stephen Goode was complimented on the result of the recent dredging between Fradley and Glascote, Coventry Canal, and dredging started in October from Colwich to Wood End at a cost of £0.5million.

Finally, as this is my last report as Midlands Representative I would like to thank all those members who have contacted me over the past three years with their concerns, problems and complaints. Feedback is of vital importance to NABO - very often what appears initially to be an insignificant local issue surfaces

NABO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the recent AGM, held at the Waterways Museum in Gloucester, over 50 members heard the chairman make the following report:-

Looking back over the last year. I'm amazed by how much work your Council has done. A number of major issues, some of fundamental importance to the future of waterways have taken up much of our time. but we somehow managed to cope with all the other work which goes on behind the scenes as well.

NABO was consulted on the following major national issues:

- The abolition of the coarse fishing close season on canals. The EA delayed the abolition of the coarse fishing close season after determined opposition from us and other user groups.
- Proposed navigable channel dimensions for canals and rivers. We secured some changes to the initial waterway standards proposals and continue to press for major improvements to the channel dimensions put forward by BW
- The EA's proposals for water abstraction licensing.
- Reciprocal licences between the EA and BW. The consultation on reciprocal licensing came about partly

as a result of my putting pressure on BW and the EA behind the scenes.

- BW's new Waterways Code. We obtained numerous amendments to this.
- Proposed high intensity cruising licences. BW have been forced to put their high intensity cruising license on hold after their inept attempts at consultation were met with a united front from users and threats to take the issue to the Ombudsman and Parliament.
- Changes to short term licenses and the introduction of charges for the use of locks. Working with other groups we got several concessions on the short term licences and lock charges.

I would like to thank Philip Ogden, Nigel Parkinson, Peter Foster, and Stephen Peters for their help in drawing up our responses on those subjects.

We have also commented on:

- The various ideas put forward for BW's future which are being studied by government;
- The EAs 1998/99 Corporate Plan;
- BW's proposals for managing the rivers Nene and Great Ouse. One of our members in East Anglia, Mike Smith, gave us a lot of help with our responses on the Nene/Ouse turf war between BW and the EA;

- The recent BSS Certificate price increases;
- BW's attempt to reduce the navigable channel of the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation
- The 1998/99 winter stoppages program;
- We started a letter writing campaign aimed at Euro MP's for the retention of a reduced rate of duty on red diesel;
- We questioned the major waterway authorities about facilities for disabled boaters.

Local issues Council members have been involved in include:

- The installation of pontoons at Stourport Basin (Denis Smith);
- The planning application for a junk restaurant in Gas Street Basin (Penny Barber);
- BW's disclaimer of responsibility for navigation on the Severn (Stephen Peters);
- Investigating harassment of moorers on the Kennet and Avon (Geof Rogerson);
- Facilities for moorers at Kinver (Denis again);
- A mooring matrix rating problem on the Leeds and Liverpool canal (Geof Barnett);
- Floating rubbish and toxic waste disposal on the River Trent (Pete Foster);
- Planning applications for floating restaurants at Peterborough;

- Draft Middle Level by-laws (Sue Burchett);
- The Waterway Character Projects on the Grand Union and Leeds and Liverpool canals;
- The campaign to reinstate navigable culverts in the plans for the Birmingham North Relief Road.

Chris Boxall (a former Council member) wrote a research paper on the fibreway installation; Philip Ogden undertook a major exercise on navigable depths and widths of canals and rivers; Nigel Parkinson dealt with enquiries and complaints from boat owners and inspectors on the Boat Safety Scheme.

This is apart from attending countless meetings: local waterway meetings, regional and national BW and EA meetings, meetings on specific issues; BSS meetings; iWA committee meetings we attend as observers; meetings with government; meetings at Parliament; meetings with other waterway groups; letters, phone calls, informal discussions. The list goes on and on.

Christine Denton organised our presence at major rallies and recruited over fifty new members. Wendy stepped in as Newsletter Editor a year ago and has given NABO News a new look, while keeping it interesting and

readable. On the administration side, Roger Davis has continued his sterling work as membership secretary; Andrew Sherrey has grappled with our ever more voluminous accounts; John Denton has tried to make us better organised; Sue Burchett has kept the Council minutes, and Melanie Darlington has acted as post-mistress for the scattered Council.

There are three people standing down from Council whom I would like to thank specially. Penny Barber has been on Council since 1991, and has given us a great deal of useful advice, as well as the view of the residential boater. She promises to return once she has completed her MBA course, and invites us all to visit her at Hockley Port. Nikki Timbrell, another Council member since the very first days of NABO, has been both Secretary and Newsletter editor. She has been the voice of the waterway business on Council. Denis Smith has been a member for six years and on Council for three, as Rally Organiser and Midland Region Representative. A relentless campaigner for truth and fairness, his hard fought battles with the local managers have become

legendary in his lifetime. We will miss all three of them greatly.

I must at this stage also say a personal word of thanks to our vice Chairman, Nigel Parkinson. Nigel's skill at understanding and communicating in the oblique language used in Whitehall has helped NABO enormously in getting our views understood and appreciated there. As a result, we have built up a good working relationship with the civil servants responsible for waterway matters. He helped draft several of our formal responses on the major issues I have already referred to, as well as important letters and press releases. All this on top of spending many hours dealing with individual problems arising from the Boat Safety Scheme. Thank you, Nigel.

Our successes have also been built firmly on working closely with other waterway groups. A good example is the firm and united user group opposition to BW's high intensity cruising licence proposals. The joint press release issued by the IWA, NABO, the AWCC and the RBOA in June, vigorously attacking them, was extremely effective - and broke new ground.

But what of the future? I would like to set out what I think are the key issues the new Council should

address in 1999:

Firstly, the question of paying a fair share" towards the maintenance of the waterways. I believe we pay more than our fair share. BW always targets us boaters because we are a soft touch, while ignoring cyclists and other users. We must push BW and government to act on IWAAC's 1997 report and broaden the charging base to include all beneficiaries, while resisting further unfair increases aimed at us.

Secondly, I don't believe BW's senior management is really interested in the heritage of the canals. They are happy to sell off old wharves and docks and approve plans for "junk" development. It is no good David Fletcher saying his waterways trust would be similar to the National Trust. BW doesn't have the same ideals, and its objectives are commercial, not non-profit making. It is therefore the wrong body to set up or run a trust. We must ensure this is recognised. We must also urge BW to evaluate its historic assets and ring-fence those above a certain grade from sale or inappropriate development.

Thirdly, we should continue to challenge BW to adopt adequate navigable channel dimensions for their Waterway Standards, particularly for rivers.

Fourthly, we must continue to

expand our coverage of local waterway meetings. I am particularly keen that we should have more representatives in the north west of England, and on the Thames. If anybody is prepared to help or knows somebody who might be persuaded to, I would very much like to hear from them.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of NABO. You have given your Council a great deal of support and encouragement over the last two years. Many of you have written letters or notes on the back of renewal forms. Keep them coming - they are appreciated. And thank you all for coming here today."

The two resolutions were well discussed by all present and both were passed with more than the necessary two-thirds majority. This means that NABO can now offer both Associate members for individuals and Affiliated membership for organisations. A copy of the amended constitution will be circulated to all members via the next issue of NABO news.

Thanks were expressed to Tony Condor and the Waterways Museum, who had made us very welcome, for their hospitality.

It is hoped to hold the 1999 AGM in a northern location.

TOWPATH TELEGRAPH

Waterways Festivals

Christine attended the Salford Quays Festival on behalf of NABO and she says " We eventually found our 'spot' at Salford Quays at 8am on Friday , having been moved 3 times! We erected the tent and set up our stall.

Why is the Waterways Festival now three days? The Friday is a waste of time (*personal view*). Many of the exhibitors were complaining about this!

Thank you to the few of you who helped on the stand giving John and me a rest. We do need more helpers - please volunteer.

We had a good response to NABO and recruited 39 new members - welcome to them all. We sold many Dunton windlasses and bunting. It appears that some chandleries are selling these windlasses at the same price as NABO - but who do you want to support? was asked by one of our members. The answer should be NABO.

See you next year at Braunston and Worcester.

1999 Festival

The Festival will be held from 27 - 30 August at Worcester. There are very good facilities on offer

with both the caravan site and boat mooring adjacent to the Festival site. Water and drainage are already in place and the administration can be housed in existing buildings.

Brian Saunders is the contact for media and marketing

An innovation for 1999 is to be a "Craft for All" stand. IWA members are being invited to contribute a home-made art or craft item for sale in aid of IWA funds on the stall, which will be manned by volunteers. This stall will be organised by Mrs Pennie Vigures who can be contacted on

The Fens

The Fens Tourism Group, a consortium of local authorities, has published a colourful and informative guide to boating on the Fen Waterways. The guide is available free of charge from the Fens Tourism Group who can be contacted on 01775 762715

NABO Council Meeting Dates 1999

17 January, 13 March, 24 April, 12 June, 24 July, 4 September, 9 October, 27 November.
The AGM will be on 29 Nov.

Fibreway Projects

Chris Boxall has volunteered to be our co-ordinator of all information on Fibreway projects - and problems. contacted :



Russell Newbery Register

Formed some four years ago for owners of Russell Newbery engines and National engines built to Russell Newbery patents, the Register now has over 140 members. It costs £10 to join and members have a quarterly newsletter and help and advice with any problems or help to find spares. Membership details are available from Mrs Chris Mathews,

Their second members' rally, with workshops, will be held from 13 - 15 August 1999 at Saul Junction & Gloucester Docks. Boats meet on Friday at the RW Davis boatyard at Saul and then cruise in convoy to the Gloucester Docks on the Saturday morning. Day visitor entry forms are available. Contact Rob Davies, Rally Administrator,

NABO News 1999

Contributions, of any kind, are always welcome. Articles or photographs may be held until there is space, but they will all be acknowledged.

Copy deadlines for the rest of the year are as follows;

Copy Dates	Publication Dates
24 Jan	7 Feb
28 March	11 April
2 May	16 May
20 June	4 July
1 August	15 August
12 September	26 September
17 October	24 October
5 December	12 December

Publication dates may be subject to alteration due to circumstances beyond my control.

A Voyage between Two 'L's

More than 17 years have passed since I ventured into Liverpool for the benefit of those who enjoyed BBC North's *A Voyage between Two Seas*. This year I risked taking another recently painted vessel to the terminus and back. Our narrow beam barge *mv Silaskar* was on her way from her place of birth, Brighouse, to her first mooring at Leeds, having turned heads all the way through Stratford, Gloucester and Ellesmere Port. With time to

spare after beating the angling match and Barton Aqueduct closure on the Bridgewater, we decided to call in at the Wigan BW office to see what was involved for an individual private boat to visit the city of Liverpool.

"It's bandit country", we were told, "we know, we moor down that way." "You'll need someone on the bows directing you through the weeds," said a seasoned navigator. "We were in and out of

the weedhatch like a jack-in-a-box!"

The lady in the Wigan office was much more positive, "It's a very pleasant trip and there are secure moorings at the terminus." Who were we to believe? In for a penny as they say - we booked an assisted passage for 8.00 am Monday morning. "Be at Bridge 16 by The Running Horse and you'll be seen through all the swing bridges into the city."



Barton Aqueduct

So with plenty of time to spare we potted down to Burscough Junction. Beautiful canal settlement - yes. Visitor moorings - no. Last time I had stayed there it had been in the dry dock having one of Sam Springer's special keel cooling pipes

rewelded, after an involuntary encounter with the U-shaped bottom that prevails around Parbold.

"There was a boat torched here last week", we were informed by some passing youngsters. "Its

fuel tank exploded when it drifted under Burscough Bridge." Sure enough when we passed there were two mooring ropes dipping into the water and some charred fibreglass just visible above the surface. That and two other unbouyed wrecks did nothing to boost confidence. However we were soon away from 'civilisation' and enjoying more of the under-rated countryside that awaits those who turn left at Wigan.

Why am I writing this article? - Nothing happened!

Perhaps the most worrying part of the trip so far was keeping on top of necessities. We wanted to avoid the weekend so were spinning it out - and the washing! Our new guide book in glorious colour with north at the top of the page no less, showed not one little blue tap beyond Burscough. A hospitable local boat club gave us water, and if you need diesel, the Caravan Centre at Scarisbrick is well worth a stop.

Monday morning at 8.00 on the dot, one, Robert, in BW green, emerged from his white Astra van, greeted us in his best King's English and swung open the first of the succession of bridges that are probably as much of a deterrent to those debating the merits of the trip as anything borne of rumour.

We met the first weed around Aintree and it stayed with us right through the suburbs. By maintaining a moderate speed, a carefully chosen course, and shaking off any accumulation with a touch of reverse, we traversed the stretch without stopping. As for rubbish, apart from what we saw on the banks or aboard mudhoppers, there is probably less here than in the many other stretches of urban water we had traversed. Once into the ex-industrial territory there were a few truck tyres to avoid, and the odd fence post. On the whole the water was very clear, but tarry smelling evil bubbles rose as we disturbed the water along one length. The end was in sight in time for a late lunch.

One passes the entrance to Stanley locks and then under a bridge into the carefully landscaped but truncated terminus arm, overlooked by the Eldonian Village Hall (cheap beer) and the Sports Centre where there are showers now and hopefully full boaters' facilities to come. Surrounding the area is a rather confusing but reassuring array of fences and gates, and a new housing development. Boats exceeding about 50 ft cannot turn in the arm, we had to back out, turn above the locks and reverse back onto the mooring, so we

would be ready for the next morning's 8.00 am call.

The walk into Liverpool would have been a lot easier if they had left the canal its full length, but there was enough of the day left to see some of the sights. When they make it more practical to stay we will give ourselves a few days to see the city properly.

On the return journey we were getting a little more cocky and attempted to retrieve some fence posts for the stove. A boat hired by BW for a

"notices survey" had arrived the previous afternoon (and been punished by the local kids for travelling out of school hours, we hear), and was to follow us up, so we felt we had time to spare. It was the weed that punished us for venturing out of the clear channel. We got the wood, by my ambition to go in and out of Liverpool without a forced weedhatch stop went by the board, or post! The survey boat was breathing down our necks as we returned through Aintree, and I let them past at the next swing bridge, giving them the choice of either going at our pace

with Robert opening the bridges, or doing them themselves. They chose the latter, and we caught up with them by Lydiate! Having encountered them on the way down I was happy to let them plough on, seemingly regardless of bank wash, moored boats, etc, and showed Robert our gratitude with the usual liquid currency.



With the apprehension of "Bandit Country" now a thing of the past, the next hurdle was the dreaded Wigan 21. We were booked in for 8.30 am this time on a fine cool

morning. The only thing that could be ideal about the Wigan Locks was the weather. BW's service wasn't bad either (more fermented catalyst helped) and were able to enjoy a somewhat more civilised, bathed and refreshed evening at Red Rock. We had friends to help us at Johnson Hill; it was the Blackburn flight that was the killer. Not another boat or a fleck of BW green in sight and those dreaded handcuff locks again.

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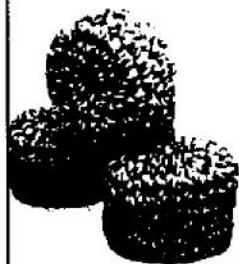
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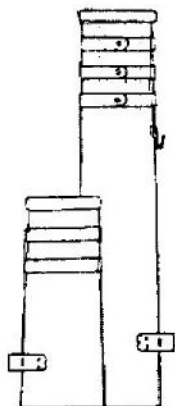
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PERHAPS WE SHOULD BE TALKING**

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Please note: This form is not a proposal and does not commit you or the insurers to a contract of insurance. A quotation will be submitted for your consideration together with a proposal. A specimen policy can be provided on request.

Name
Address
Post Code

Craft Details

Name		Type	
Age	Value	Length	Beam

Hull Construction:	Steel <input type="checkbox"/>	Use of Craft:	Private Pleasure <input type="checkbox"/>
	G.R.P. <input type="checkbox"/>		Residential <input type="checkbox"/>
	Wood <input type="checkbox"/>		Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>

Engine	Diesel <input type="checkbox"/>	HP.	Inboard <input type="checkbox"/>
	Petrol <input type="checkbox"/>		Outboard <input type="checkbox"/>
	Steam <input type="checkbox"/>		
	L.P.G. <input type="checkbox"/>		

Maximum speed of craft (M.P.H.) _____

Normal Mooring _____

Cruising range required: inland non tidal	<input type="checkbox"/>	U.K. Coastal	<input type="checkbox"/>
inland with coastal use	<input type="checkbox"/>	Breste/Elbe	<input type="checkbox"/>

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What percentage No Claims Discount are you able to transfer? _____ %

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BASIC INSURANCE

Have you ever wondered exactly how basic is Basic Boat Liability (p22) Well I have, so recently I spoke to Mark Dix, their Managing Director, and I thought you might be interested in some of his comments. He was not pushy, in fact he showed a genuine concern for the dilemmas facing boat owners both users of inland and coastal waterways.

WH Mark, in very simple terms what is liability insurance?

MD I think the best way to put it Wendy, is to draw a parallel to motor insurance. Most of us drive and have either fully comp., third party fire and theft, or third party only cover. Our policy would compare alongside the third party only cover in relation to the above.

WH Why do you only offer liability when clearly comprehensive premiums would tend to be higher and therefore one assumes your own income would be higher?

MD Yes that's a good question and whilst logically you are correct we feel that small is beautiful. By specialising in one area we are not only the experts but our administrative systems can be streamlined. This results in low overhead costs to ourselves and we pass this on to the boat owners

in the form of lower premiums. It's plain old fashioned first year economics, I am sure your members remember those early lectures on the Division of Labour and Specialisation etc., etc.

WH: In August this year you were quoted in the Financial Mail on Sunday as saying that boat owners without any insurance ran the risk of bankruptcy - could you explain this?

MD Certainly Wendy, even accomplished experienced sailors can be just plain unlucky and in the event of a collision the aggrieved party would seek to recover from the offending party either compensation or at the very least a straightforward reimbursement for cost that they have incurred resulting from the accident. Should the aggrieved party discover that the offending party was uninsured then they would have no option other than to pursue offending party personally. If there were serious injuries involved this could amount to large sums being awarded.

WH So what's the answer to such problems?

MD We say at Basic Boat not simply to get insured, we say at

our prices (starting from as low as as £27.00 for a million pounds cover) can you afford not to be covered?

I want to take you away from boats for now to illustrate my point, so please bear with me. I want you to imagine that you are an inventor..... OK?

You have invented a machine and this machine has a trip wire inside it that recognises when a calamity occurs. As soon as the trip wire is actioned this machine starts printing money. The machine will carry on printing up to one million pounds if the calamity demands it. You are now faced with a commercial decision would you insure that machine for £30.00?

WH Well, put like that Mark I think anyone would.

MD I fully agree with you and I would like to remind you that all uninsured boat owners are that machine. However, I do have considerable sympathy with today's boat owners because they really don't know where they are with regards to insurance requirements of the many regulatory bodies. Do all water regulators require you to have insurance at any level? Well Wendy, as the song says "some do and some don't". At the risk of repeating myself I ask all sensibly

mindful individuals if it's worth the worry when for as little as £27.00 you can take your boat anywhere in the U.K. with one of our policies.

Finally, Wendy, perhaps you will allow me one little advert - your members are narrow boat owners and our policy has been extended especially to cover such craft up to a length of 75 feet for £45.00, less for R Y A and I W A members.

WH I found that very interesting Mark, thank you very much and I am sure that you can expect a few calls from some of our members.

Basic Boat Liability Co., can be contacted on 0181 741 4914 or faxed on 0181 741 3350 or written to at Royal House, 74 Dalling Road, London, W6 OJA.



LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I have been a member of NABO for a couple of years because I applaud the efforts of the Association in protecting the interests of boaters. I believe that there is room for NABO to operate alongside other organisations such as the IWA in seeking to protect our national heritage.

In common with many members, I display the NABO stickers on each side of my 60ft Narrowboat.

I believe that it is imperative that those who seek to lead any organisation must strive to uphold the best possible standards for others to follow. I was thus extremely disappointed to observe a case of speeding on the Grand Union Canal just north of Stoke Hammond Lock back in the summer.

I was at the time moored up, using pins, enjoying a pleasant lunch. The peace was disturbed by no less a person than the NABO Chairman who seemed to be blissfully unaware of the presence of any moored boats and was travelling at sufficient speed in his own large narrowboat to extract one of my mooring pins. I was tempted to remonstrate with your chairman on the spot but refrained from doing so on the basis that I might well have said something

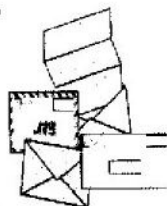
extremely rude.

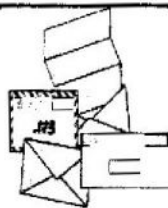
Speeding past moored boats is an ever growing problem as I have become only too aware since mooring my boat at the end of my garden. Unfortunately, speeding is not the sole preserve of hire boaters who, it might be argued, do not know any better. There are more and more private boaters who either do not slow down at all or slow down far too late and are causing damage which ultimately will involve BW in expenditure that they can ill afford.

I would like to think that NABO members, and Committee members in particular, should set the necessary example that is so desperately needed and slow down to tick over speed when approaching and passing moored craft

David Stuart-King

On being shown your letter, our Chairman stated that he "considered himself to have been admonished". Editor





Dear Editor,
I am at this time contemplating the replacement of the stove in my narrow-boat after only 6

years of light use. The reason for this is that the top plate and front panel have cracked making repair uneconomic. The manufacturers have been less than helpful suggesting that the humid conditions on the canals cause ingress of dampness and subsequent corrosion if the stove is unused for periods during Winter. This is the sort of usage common to most boaters not living on board. I mention this so that other boaters contemplating such an installation can also consider the possible replacement costs if my experience is the norm.

John Bendall NB Lucy No2.

Dear Wendy,

I was sorry to read in NABO News that you had a break-in to your narrow boat. I had one too, my tow-path mooring is in a group of six boats, we were all entered and all done with minimum of damage, I lost camera, generator, etc. and our full-size cooker was carefully detached from wall and gas and left on our front deck !

All a long way from you 3 miles South of Preston Brook on the

Trent & Mersey. All six boats had similar disturbances with some very secure bolts/locks carefully broken.

My mooring is a tow-path one but rented from a boat yard manager. He is trying to put up the costs by over 20% saying that BW have increased his rent by 22%. I wonder if you have heard of any similar circumstances. We six are wondering whether to move along the tow-path and get direct BW moorings.

Bob Powell (n/b 'Ability')

Dear Editor,

During May last year, I responded to an advertisement in NABO for breakdown cover offered by the company (I think that the ad also appeared in IWA Waterways) This month I had occasion to request assistance on the emergency telephone number provided only to get an unobtainable response. The number for their registered office is similarly unobtainable. I am mentioning this if only to alert other boaters who may have subscribed like me, and think that they have breakdown cover and to publicise the fact that the company is apparently no longer operating

John Bendall (NB Lucy No 2)

I have looked back through old copies and am not sure which company is involved. Has anyone else had trouble? - Editor

Dear Editor

BW have finally got through to me with their excessive licence charges, and more to come. The ludicrous safety certificate scam, and more price rises to come, and with the charges they levy on marina owners, they are forcing mooring charges up.

Early next year we will be leaving BW waters for the French canals with our nb "Shire Oak" and at this point in time do not intend to bring it back.

D J Wetton Bristol

Dear Wendy

I had a tussle with BW to get my licence this year. Maybe NABO would be interested. I understand that others encountered the same problem.

My insurance certificate runs out concurrently with my BW licence. So I sent off the application with my old certificate that ceased 7 days before the new licence was to commence. Naturally I did not have my new insurance certificate yet - the insurance company had not yet sent me the reminder. BW refused to give me a licence until I provided a valid certificate. In their letter they sent a very aggressive note saying that if I failed to provide a certificate my local manager would be informed - with the power to remove my boat from

the system. All for 7 days! I contacted my local manager (Andrew Stumpf) who was very annoyed (with BW!).

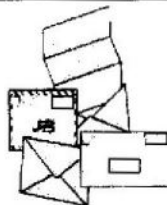
After some delay - and another aggressive letter BW decided to start my licence 1 month earlier and give me a month's rebate.

I noted from my bank statement that BW cashed my cheque even though it was in dispute and they had not given me the licence. I think that this may be fraudulent - and illegal.

A large amount of effort has been wasted (mine and BW's) on this silly administrative arrangement. I am informed (by BW) that many others were in the same situation. Clearly needs a way to fund this mess.

Chris Boxall

I was in the same situation this summer, and to add to the difficulty was away on an extended cruise at the time. My insurers were most helpful and agreed to fax to BW stating that I had a current certificate and the date on which cover started. BW were happy to accept this and our licence was awaiting us on our return. We are planning to change either the insurance or licence renewal date before next year!
- Editor



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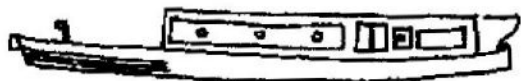
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END PIECES

Grand Union Canal Walks

The Chiltern Society, a volunteer organisation that aims to maintain the quality of the Chilterns area, is appealing for someone to regularly walk and report on two canal walks. Both are circular, one between Kings Langley and Hemel Hempstead and the other between Berkhamstead and Hemel Hempstead. There are folders showing the walk and giving details of the task involved. Anyone interested, contact John Rowe

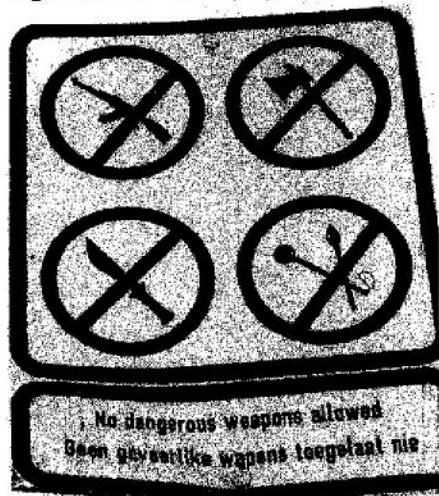


British Cycleways

IWA Web site:

A Sign of Things to Come ?

How long before we see this sign on our waterways?



With thanks to Denis Smith - a souvenir of his holiday in South Africa

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