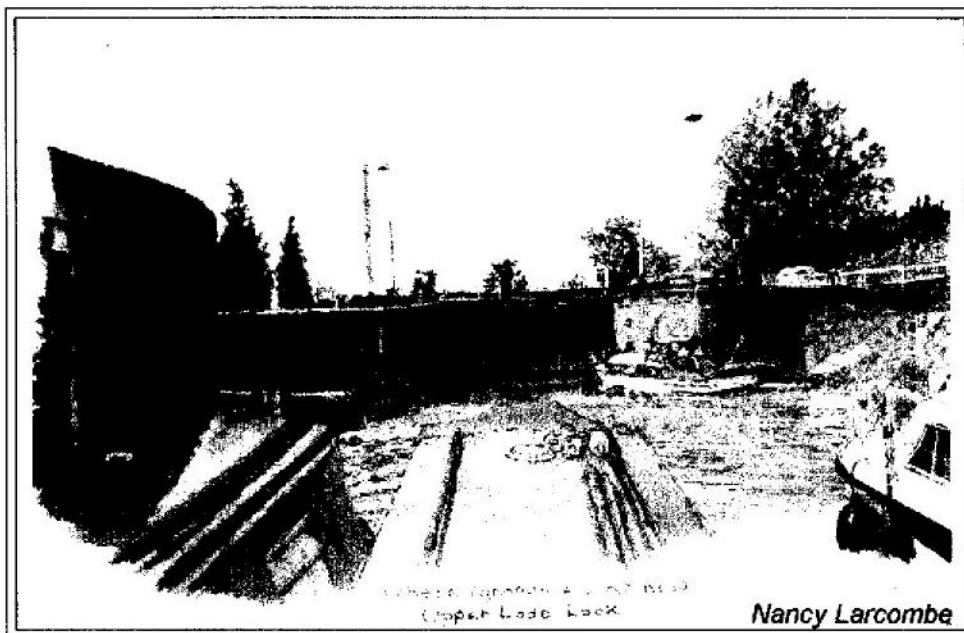




NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue: 2/99



3,000 for 2000

See page 19

NABO News

Editorial

Thank you for all your letters - I have had so many recently that I have had to hold some over to the next issue, again! Some of the letters published this time were from just before Christmas. I am delighted to have such a response, please continue to write.

In fact, there has been so much to fit into the pages that several snippets have had to be kept for the next bumper issue!

Some very important matters are happening in the boating world and I would draw your attention to the articles on pages 14 and 26, and in particular to our Chairman's comments.

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On page 19 you will find a special offer that cannot be missed. Just one new member recruited will gain you a 6 month bonus in your membership. If each existing NABO member does this, then we will easily reach, and exceed, our target - and we all no our those in power like to play the numbers game!

One of our advertisers, Derek Pearson, is going walk-about soon. Normally he is found at Marwsorth with his fenders and chimneys but this autumn he will be travelling the waterways on his narrowboat 'Wylo'. If you need to contact him after 9.9.99 then call him - the number's in his advert on page 21

The weather is improving and the waterways are beckoning - there will soon be all those ducklings that need to be fed, so get out there and enjoy it! I intend to.

Wendy

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National Association of Boat Owners

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CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

The government's package of support for the waterways, which was announced on 18th February, has been welcomed by all the major user groups and the press. The broad details have been well publicised. Eight million more a year for three years, possibly some of that continuing after the three years are up. Gradual write-off of some of BW's historic debt dating from the 70's, on which it is paying interest at 13, 14 and 15%. Most importantly, the government appears concerned about BW's backlog of maintenance and wants to see the worst of it cleared. A far cry from the not so distant days when nobody in government wanted to hear about, much less discuss, the problems facing the waterways.

Now for some comments you won't read elsewhere: The canals are to stay in public ownership. The BW National Trust is dead - the government couldn't figure out a way of making it accountable, any more than we could. Rumour has it that the decision was made last November, but BW put up a desperate rearguard action to try to get it changed. Nevertheless, David Fletcher says he is "delighted" with the outcome. Must be all those property deals that BW has planned for its public/private sector

partnerships. The government wants a waterway membership scheme which would support BW and which might eventually get representation on BW's Board of Directors. It could be some sort of registered charity or trust. What role will be left for the IWA (apart from WRG) if and when this takes off? I don't know if their Council is worried - I would be. Waterways Minister Alan Meale said twice during our meeting that BW should be more open and transparent, and consult all its users more. He wasn't just referring to the proposed membership scheme, although that's part of it. He clearly meant with us as well; I picked him up on it and said we welcomed this enthusiastically and had been urging BW to do this for years. Strangely, this remark didn't seem to go down well with BW. Mr Meale also said that BW and the EA needed to talk to each other and co-operate with each other more. Three cheers! The DETR handouts included projections for BW's income and expenses over the next three years. Fascinating reading: salaries and wages are to rise by £38 million over the period, compared with 1996/97. So much for all this extra money going on the backlog of maintenance, as Mr Meale believes. Perhaps it should be tied to a reduction in staff costs. No sooner had the announcement

been made than BW sent me a letter signed by David Fletcher and inviting me to join with him in consultation over the proposals. Much the same letter was sent to every user group chairman; also past chairmen (Jon Darlington got one, also addressed to him as NABO chairman); also all - well, almost all - boat owners (Denis Smith didn't get one, but then nobody in BW wants to talk to Denis). A friend of mine who owns hire boats got thirteen of them, one for every boat, all in separate envelopes. At this rate, most of the £38 million a year not spent on salaries will go on postage.

On a more serious note, we are promised a white paper on the future of the canals, and another on carrying freight by water. (The government is very enthusiastic about this - you should have seen the number of M P's, mostly Labour, at the February Parliamentary Waterways Group meeting on the subject. Were they all there just to hear David Blagrove, or did they know it is "in" politically?) And the DETR is still deciding who Bernard Henderson's successor as BW Chairman will be - even though the announcement was expected before Christmas.

I mentioned the IWA earlier, and I would like to thank them on behalf of all of us for the hard work they've done on the issue of the coarse fishing close season. This blew up

last year because the EA were asked by government to consider whether abolishing the close season affected fish. The EA did a bit of research, decided it didn't, and recommended abolishing it on the canals and other still waters on which it is currently in force. A lot of organisations - including environmental heavyweights English Nature and the RSPB - said the research was flawed and recommended keeping the close season. The EA, which hadn't consulted boaters to begin with (although their fisheries officer had meanwhile promised anglers the close season would go - a fine example of partiality) got stubborn. Now the IWA has experts who know a thing or two about fish, their lives and habitats, and it published a paper proving the EA had got it wrong. The EA was miffed, and a spat by press release between the two followed. By this time, we and other user groups were involved, and there were two extremely lively meetings at the EA's offices.

Now a government Committee is looking into the matter, and the IWA has again presented detailed evidence that demolishes the EA case. (We've written objecting as well, but I have to admit to knowing nothing about the lives and habits of fish). We hope the Committee comes down on our side, which also happens to be that of major environmental bodies.

You will find an article by Nigel on the latest ideas from Brussels elsewhere in this issue. Basically a working paper proposes to impose noise and exhaust emission standards for boat engines which most of our canal boat engines would fail. In particular, vintage or vintage style engines, or large diesels in open engine rooms, would almost all become things of the past. Although the draft is a long way from becoming law, it could change the canal scene more radically than anything that BW or the EA has ever thrown at us. The proposals are so disastrous that if they weren't so serious they'd be funny. As Nigel says, we will all need to put pen to paper on this one, particularly as MEP's come up for re-election in June, so this is the only time they'll really listen.

Geoff Rogerson has done a lot of work on cycling and cycle-ways of late, and has been putting together information from all over the country. BW appear to have given up all attempts to charge cyclists a licence fee, and have put the whole matter in the "too difficult to do anything about" locker. (That's the one where the unlicensed fisherman problem lives. It seems BW are going to go on soaking the boater for every penny they can, but aren't competent to get any money out of anyone else. So much for "the user pays". Why should I pay BW if nobody else has

to?) Coming back to cycle-ways, Sustrans are busy negotiating agreements for new ones with many different BW managers. Michael Goodenough on the K & A has worked out a fairly tough set of standards (environmental, maintenance conditions, etc) which Sustrans and the local authorities in his area have accepted. Trouble is, not all the BW managers elsewhere know about his standards, so in some places Sustrans is getting away with much softer terms. Time to talk to each other, chaps!

Finally, the quietest event of the year so far was the announcement of the Minister's decision on the future of the Anglian Waterways. Responsibility for navigation remains with the EA. BW is asked to help EA develop leisure and tourism on the waterways. Both bodies profess to be "delighted" at the decision (the EA has the more reason to be). The hours of time (including ours!), the forests of paper, and the fortune in publication and presentation costs that were wasted in the argument between the two on this issue don't bear thinking about. That's our license fees which have been spent in futile argument - and our money as taxpayers. Frankly, I'm disgusted.

PSEUDONYM'S **V**iew from the **C**ouncil

I started my journey to this meeting with ½ hr boating on a perfect morning. I hope many of you have taken advantage of the lovely weather this month to do some serious boating to see what BW have been doing all the winter.

At last we have received the long awaited proposals on the future of BW from government and pretty damning they are too. BW can't be trusted with a trust and the Government couldn't see how a franchise arrangement could be made to work. So both BW's ideas were thrown out of the window. BW is to carry on as before but

with £8 million more to spend for the next three years.

NABO council welcomed the news that Simon Greer is to be your NW rep. Your other area reps have been busy on your behalf with John gaining some six day moorings at Stourport on a trial basis. Use them or lose them as IWA would say.

The proposed noise and emission tests could well cause a serious problem, as the only exceptions at present are for boats built before 1950 with their original engine. Not many of those around! It would

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stop the restoration of historic boats and boats being fitted with old engines, plus the cost of testing would be prohibitive. The idea of a Bolinder on a test bed made Nigel smile. Luckily this is still a long way from becoming law.

There is to be no change in the management of Anglian waterways. BW and EA both came out with press releases stating that they are happy with the outcome. Another waste of our money.

Having failed with the Trust and Anglian waterways BW's latest bright idea is to create a network of wide waterways. The idea of getting rid of pinch points has to be applauded. They are considering a range of options including widening the whole Trent & Mersey to make an east - west passage and by passing Foxton & Watford to get from north to south.

Mark Bensted is all for the national policy of dredging to the original profile he says. So dredging one and a half miles of the Slough is to be spot dredging. This does not have to be done to the original profile. Council is asking how long is a spot?

Cycling was discussed at length. NABO are concerned about the lack of insurance now BW seem to

backing away from the cycling permits. We would also like to see signs (I never thought I would write that!) asking cyclists to dismount at bridge holes. this would eliminate the need for railings and make it safer for all of us.

One of council found out at a user group meeting that all events except fishing matches need BW permission. Looking into this they found that six pieces of paper are required including an emergency response plan and an indemnity form. They require acknowledgment - This event is held by the kind permission of British Waterways - If collecting money for charity BW want to know the amount collected.

NABO are opposing the Birminham Post Office wharf plans. The wharves are vital to the canal heritage. It was suggested that BW should do a heritage site audit with possibly three tiers a) keep at all costs; b) handle with care c) may change significantly 'cos no one cares. We are afraid of BW selling all the family silver.

A comment passed at the meeting:- BW antagonises boaters and then they end up on NABO council.

BOAT SAFETY SCHEME

Readers of BW News may well remember that in the autumn 1998 edition there was a news story saying that from 1.1.99 boaters applying for licences would not be able to present a BSS failure certificate as they have in the past. Our Chairman felt this would unfairly prejudice boaters who had old-style Certificates of Compliance valid until the end of 1998 - he admits that this applied to him! He approached BW and I am pleased to be able to print their response.

"It has always been the intention that the first non dangerous Failure Certificate may be submitted to the navigation authority to facilitate licensing the vessel.

It was recognised that there may be boats coming onto the inland waterway system from elsewhere where the BSS was not applicable and would require a bit of time to familiarise themselves with the requirements and undertake any work, if necessary.

The acceptance of the first non dangerous Failure Certificate for licensing is an ongoing arrangement.

The BSS has placed great emphasis on the fact that it is the boat owners' responsibility to maintain their boat in between BSS examinations. Presenting a Failure Certificate for licensing 4 years after receiving a Boat Safety Certificate (not to be confused with the Certificate of Compliance), would not be acceptable.

I trust this is clear and, as I say somewhat surprised it has been raised. It was made very clear in the BW Procedure for Implementation Section 7.1, that "The procedure for dealing with boats that require a licence and are submitting a failure certificate (...) will apply until further notice for all boats on submission of their first failure certificate only."

We are delighted that BW have confirmed that these boaters can take advantage of the same concession that was available to boaters during the last two years. We hope that this will clarify the situation for others who read the same piece in BW news.

Tidy Towpaths

After all the rain everything looks pretty green
But not where BW's "rippers" have been
Meadow sweet sorrel and purple mallow
All cut down, how very callow
BW what is your reason
To destroy in the midst of their season
The beautiful plants that please the eye
And the nettles that please the butterfly
It gets worse' When these plants are mown
Into the canal they're thrown
BW this has to stop
We have bindweed round our prop

Oh thank goodness an uncut stretch
I can see some tutted vetch
Some foxgloves and forget-me-nots
And yellow monkey flowers with spots
The rare corn cockle, what a treat
Even the humble daisy smelling so sweet
Again I'm full of admiration
For the beauty of God's creation

Ian Eaton

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Signs

I was highly amused to receive the following note following our recent correspondence on signage:

"Perhaps I can shed a bit of light on BW high expenditure on signs. While cruising on the GU Leicester Arm behind Watford services in Northamptonshire with my son we came upon a 17m winding hole. I remarked that it was a funny size. My son pointed out that it was cheaper to put up a 17m sign than dredge it to 70 feet.

Evil young man!"

Thank you to Richard Waddy - I think I would describe your son as perspicacious, not evil. - Editor

BW High Intensity Licence

No, it didn't go away - just came back in a different format.

BW have advised that revised proposals are being looked at. These proposals do not relate to the previous "30-week" iniquity but would be made available to licence holders without a mooring who make extensive use of the waterways. It seems this might be an optional add-on for the "Continuous Cruising" licence holders.

Friends of Raymond

!0 large oaks from an Essex Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve that needed felling have been supplied to the restorers of the narrowboat 'Raymond'. Doug Beard arranged for them to be felled, sawn to appropriate lengths during a number of work parties undertaken by IWA Chelmsford branch members during the winter.

A great example of co-operation.

BCN Marathon Challenge

If you fancy a challenge why not take part in the BCN Marathon Challenge. Designed to encourage craft of all types to visit the lesser know parts of the BCN, it takes place on the weekend of 26/27 June.

Cruising for no more than 24 hours, points are acquired for each mile travelled and each lock worked with the less visited waterways qualifying for more points.

Details from: Chris & Helen Davey,

E-mail:

National Waterways Festival

Taking place at Worcester from Friday 27 to Monday 30 August 1999 at Worcester Racecourse, the festival will be open from 10am to 6pm.

Entrance prices will be £5 for adults, £3 for IWA members - accompanied children under 16 will be free.

Boat and caravan entries are £25 for the weekend and entrance tickets will still be required for non IWA members. Car parking will be free.

Boat entry forms from Pat Barton
and Caravan entry
forms from Trevor Ede

Braunston Boat Show

This will run from 29 to 31st May and NABO hope to have a display stand which will need manning. A rota of volunteers would ensure coverage without overloading all.

Volunteer help Wanted

PLEASE LET CHRISTINE DENTON KNOW IF YOU ARE WILLING TO HELP ON NABO STANDS DURING THE FESTIVAL OR AT THE BOAT SHOW.

You can contact her during the day on _____ or in the evenings/weekends on _____.

Her E-mail address is:

Tip from another boater

When the seal on your toilet starts leaking sprinkle a little Sanilav around the edge of the seal and leave overnight.

Blazing boats

A 15 foot fibreglass boat was deliberately cut loose, and set alight to drift down the canal until it was stopped by the barrier across the entrance to the Harecastle Tunnel where it sank. This happened on 15 January. It only goes to show that we must all be even more vigilant in the winter months when there are less people around the canals.

From NABO Secretary, Sue Burchet, to the member who phoned and whose name I have lost.

The plans about the Thames and the millennium. BW and St. Pancras Cruising Club seem to be the two organisations that know what is going on on the Thames. BW are to provide for 2000 moorings in West India Docks. Phone 0171 268 6101 for details. No one will be allowed on to the Thames unless they have booked a mooring in advance. BW are warning of the danger to narrowboats as the river will be crowded with big boats and the plans at present are that the barrier is unlikely to be raised due to EA's objection. Of course everything can change before the event. The other news is that there is to be a three week stoppage free zone either side of the New Year.

River Review

Lock News 1

Evesham Lock

The IWA have offered a grant of £2,000 to the Lower Avon Navigation Trust to help lengthen the Evesham Lock to 72'. This will open up lengths of the Avon to full length wide beam boats.

The work involves the removal of 18" of the centre part of the upper sill which is unusual in that it is of straight construction at tight angles to the lock walls. This will provide a length of 72' to the lower gates. The upper gates will be moved a similar distance as new quoins will be made for the gate.

As a result of this offer and support from the Historic Narrow Boat Owners Club and the London Narrow Boat Association, the Council members of the Lower Avon Trust has decided to proceed with the project.

Lock News II

Ashline Lock, Middle Level

Project Hereward, launched at the National Waterways Festival at Peterborough in 1993, will be completed this spring with the extension of Ashline Lock allowing full length narrowboats to have full access to 90 miles of additional waterways on the Middle Level from next Easter.

Lock News III

Salters Lode Lock



Although it is, in theory, possible for a full length boat to pass through Salters Lode Lock when the tidal Ouse and Well Creek make a level and into the Great Ouse and beyond, in practice it is fraught with danger.

During the past year there have been few occasions when the low tide made a level and fewer still when there was sufficient water depth for a boat to get out of the lock without grounding. It a boat got stuck part way out and couldn't move there might be a risk of saline water getting into Well Creek before the boat was freed by the rising tide - or worse still sunk as happened to an EA dredger recently.

Project Hereward has been extended since 1993 to incorporate improvements to this lock, which will enable an additional 160 miles of waterways within the Great Ouse Basin to be open up to longer boats. The Ouse Monitoring Group, comprising many local boating interests, will for the next 4 years be keeping a close eye on proceedings.

(with thanks to IWA Cambridge Branch newsletter

OF MOORING MATRIXES AND MANAGERS

Most readers will know that the owner of a boat moored on BW moorings is charged for a mooring fee based on the length of the boat, the location of the mooring site, and the facilities at those moorings. The site's location and facilities are scored using (supposedly) set values, and the charge is then determined according to the location of those scores on a chart known as "the mooring matrix". One axis of the chart represents the location factor; the other, the facilities provided.

NABO is often asked to intervene in or comment on disputes between moorers and managers over a site's moorings matrix scores and the resulting mooring charge. Three recent cases are worth comment.

The first involved moorings for disabled boaters on the Gloucester & Sharpness canal. The moorers themselves installed and paid for the facilities there, which were extensive due to their needs, with the encouragement and support of the previous BW chief executive, Brian Dice.

In 1997, BW staff at Gloucester scored the sites facilities at 73 points - a high score, putting the moorings in a high charge band

("Bollard 4").

Several of the individual facility scorings were arguable, and the total appeared to have been added up wrongly. The moorers also felt that the special circumstances - that they needed those facilities and had installed

and paid for them - should be taken into account. They wrote a number of letters to the Waterway Manager, Dave Tyrrell, Chief Executive David Fletcher, and eventually to us.

After much reasoned argument from the NABO member on the moorings, and partly thanks to our intervention, Dave Tyrrell very fairly reduced the facilities charge band from Bollard 4 to 2.

It is worth mentioning that the Chief Executive, who claims to support improved facilities for the disabled, offered neither sympathy nor support to the moorers - in contrast to his predecessor.

Another dispute over facility scoring occurred in the Wigan area last year. Our Regional Representative spent a long time studying the correspondence and evidence, with the full co-operation of the Waterway Manager. We eventually

concluded that the site's facility score was reasonable and could not support the complaint.

The third case involved a former NABO Council member moored on the Staffs and Worcester. He did not wish us to become involved in it, but we were able to help him with information. He eventually took a complaint to the Ombudsman, and has given us permission to quote from the correspondence.

The complaint was in three parts:

1. Lack of consultation by BW over the introduction of additional facilities at the moorings, leading to increased charges;
2. BW's refusal to provide documentation to support their moorings matrix score and the increase to it;
3. Errors in the moorings matrix scoring.

On the first count, the Ombudsman decided that there had in fact been adequate consultation over the installation of new facilities.

On the second, our member requested but failed to obtain from BW the following:

1. A schedule of the facility scores applicable to the site;
2. Explanatory notes as to the calculation of this score;
3. A note of the "location factor";
4. Explanatory notes as to how this location factor had been

calculated;

5. Details of the current mooring charges;
6. An extract from the 1995 Waterways Standards explaining the Environment A/B/C grading policy applicable to the Access Path facility score.

The Ombudsman agreed that this information should be available on request. He did not take the matter further because our member had in fact obtained it (mostly from us). However, he did comment, "If I were to receive a significant number of further complaints about non provision of the information, I would certainly take the matter up with BW". This in our view means that BW must now provide all the above information to any moorer who requests it, or risks being found guilty of maladministration. It is therefore a very important decision.

With regard to the third complaint, Mr Edell visited the moorings and checked how the disputed facility scores had been arrived at. However, he said in his findings, "It is crucial for everybody to under-stand that I can only take action in relation to the scoring under the moorings matrix if I am satisfied that maladministration was involved in the calculation. It would not be

sufficient for me simply to say that I would have given one or more of the ingredients a different score." And he concluded, "I am not satisfied that any maladministration which may have occurred in calculating

the scoring under the Moorings Matrix was sufficiently important to have any practical effect."

In other words, the effect of any maladministration must be sufficient to alter the overall mooring charge.

Two other paragraphs in the Ombudsman's findings are interesting: "British Waterways agrees that the facilities score is not a guide and it is a true reflection of the facilities actually, physically available."

"I have not discussed the effect on this complaint of the fact that the main factor in setting rates is market value. That issue will have to await another day."

Our member was sufficiently intrigued by the last paragraph to ask him whether this would be pertinent if a complaint about an increase in location factor were to be made to him. The answer was "Yes". And in a letter to BW, the Ombudsman said, "if you consider that BW is entitled to fix the fee

at whatever it considers to be the going market rate even though the mooringcharge criteria would produce a lower figure, complainants are likely to query what the matrix is for at all. They will also probably argue that BW must stick with the scheme which it has itself created."

So the facilities score must be based on actual, physically available facilities, and the location score should be capable of being justified objectively according to clearly set out criteria within the context of the moorings matrix. It is not acceptable for a Waterway Manager to decide what he thinks the market rate is for a given mooring, then stretch the facilities score to the maximum possible and call the difference the location factor score. And any increase in the latter would need to be justified.

Although the Ombudsman did not find BW guilty of maladministration on any count, this case is of great interest as it establishes the information which must be provided to moorers and suggests that a mooring's market value is not the same as its location factor.

The way in which this dispute led to a complaint to the Ombudsman is also instructive. Our member was particularly annoyed at the large number of statements that

were made to him by the Waterways Manager and the Regional Manager and which he knew to be incorrect. The statements made by the Regional Manager were evidently based on input from the Waterway Manager.

Whether any of these statements constituted lies (as our member believes) is not my point. BW employees, particularly senior ones, should treat all their customers - even difficult ones - with consideration and should be open and scrupulously accurate. To do otherwise will put people's backs up, engender bad feeling, and cause much management time to be spent in dealing with complaints.

Can this be what BW wants?

NABO NEWS

NABO Council Members will be out in force on Saturday 26 June at Atherstone Locks, Hawkesbury Locks (OK, we know its only shallow!!), Hillmorton Locks and Braunston Locks, recruiting new members and meeting existing ones.

To cover all these we could do with some assistance - it needn't be for the whole day. Please do come and join us - it is a good fun day out.

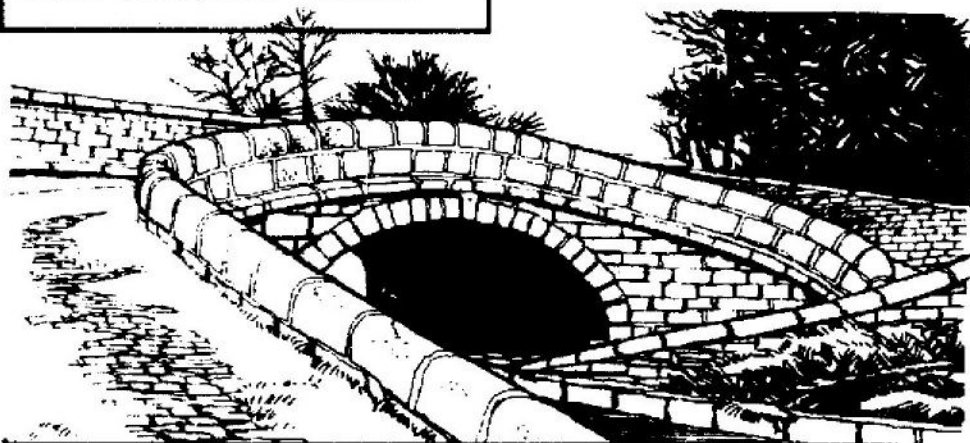
Afterwards there will be a Bar-b-que at John and Christine's mooring on the Coventry Canal at Mancetter. You can moor your boat or come by car.

Please let Christine know if you can come and help with this very valuable PR exercise. Her telephone details etc can be found on the back page.

PLEASE NOTE:

There was an error in the dates given in the last issue for Council Meetings.

The AGM is on 20 November and the Council meeting on 20 November



Reading this letter I am pleased to print BW's response, as sent to IWA.

Dear Editor I've just sent in my questionnaire re the BSC. The next day I came across an astonishing piece of nonsense in the Daily Star which I then checked in the Angling Times. There is apparently a move afoot by Paul Wagstaffe, Customer Services manager for BW to isolate and stock unspecified lengths of canal for the use of anglers only, to the exclusion of boaters and cyclists.

As I have been a boat owner for four and a half years and have never experienced any difficulty with anglers whatsoever, I fail to see why one user group should be given exclusive rights. It's going to cost me about £1,000 to licence and moor my 50' narrowboat this year and I intensely dislike the idea that I should subsidise another user group: are the anglers going to pay for weed cutting, dredging and fish-stocking?

I am afraid that BW have a hate on against boaters, no coherent management plan and utterly minimal knowledge of ecology and limnology. I hope other NABO members have spotted this piece of finangling and will protect accordingly.

Alison McAdam

Newbold on Avon

From BW, Customer Relations Manager:

"The Angling Times Headline does not as you surmise, reflect what the reporter had heard nor, more particularly how I answered his questions over a mobile phone in a Bristol Car Park!

British Waterways is not planning to ban boats from any stretch of the BW waterways.

Our Angling Clubs and Fisheries Managers had identified a major concern for the future viability of Angling Clubs in general, and BW tenant clubs in particular. They are suffering reduced memberships and a number have given

up their BW leases. The competition comes from the pay-as-you-go specially stocked commercial still water fisheries.

Our professionals feel that management of club lengths through the Standard-Angling Agreement provides proper bailiffing and waterside control. A loss of a club and a free for all could cause significant problems for other waterway users.

We are therefore working internally on a Draft Strategy for our Angling Customers.

This is very much a draft and a 'wish list' of over 40 potential ideas has been prepared and is being debated with our Commercial Development Group and Waterway Managers.

One suggestion on this list was the concept of a championship length. The idea was primarily about improved stocking in an area with minimal boat moorings and other public shared use.

As an afterthought, it was linked to the situation on the Norfolk Broads where a relatively under-used section of waterway has a voluntary scheme where boaters are asked not to go through until after 09 30 on an occasional Sunday morning. A Sunday would not necessarily be suitable for BW waterways.

The "wish list" is a long way from reality. This competition length concept may well not be supported by Waterways Managers. If it is developed further, I would give an undertaking that we will consult with all our users long before there is any suggestion of it being developed into any formal plans.

Paul Wagstaffe

3000 by 2000

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**Thanks to Colin Hutchins for this imaginative suggestion.
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BW RESPONDS TO NABO ARTICLE

This is a copy that the Editor received of a letter sent to Stuart Sampson, author of the article

Between 2 "L"s - continued

Re your article in NABO News November 1998, concerning the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in Yorkshire, I was interested in some of the comments made and would respond as follows:-

"Land of the three-handed toilet emptier" - I can't say that anybody has ever raised this issue with us before, but will certainly have a look at it.

"Gales and polythene" - Apologies

re the polythene in this area, certainly not usually a problem, and you must have been unlucky on this occasion. Could you identify as farm plastic, or any other source? One of the ironies of urban regeneration and restoration is that lengths like Liverpool have actually been fully dredged and, although they were much worse than our average canal, because we would normally dredge anywhere to not the average, but an improved standard, depths and channel clearance in Liverpool is probably better than on many of the cruising lengths.

DEREK PEARSON

FENDER AND CHIMNEY MAKER

Narrowboat 'Wylo'

White Lion Wharf

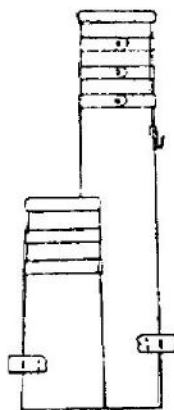
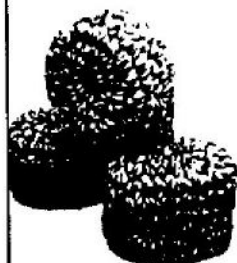
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"Bradley Swing Bridge" - Surprised at this comment as I had thought most regular users were well aware that this swing bridge is owned by North Yorkshire County Council. We are aware of the problems and are continually pressing them for maintenance and improvement of this structure. Any customer comments are always passed onto the County Council.

"Handcuffs on rural bridges" - Currently they are our only means of securing the bridge in the road open position, and are an essential safety feature. We are,

however, investigating different methods achieving the same aim.

"Cattle on swing bridges" - Unfortunately a small number of our swing bridges are used regularly each day by cattle herds returning for milking and this does cause a problem which we are trying to address with farmers.

Thanks for the comments in the last paragraph, we certainly are trying to attract more boaters to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and there is now, as you pointed out, an excellent facility

new to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal of a basin with gated access to jetties, and the main facilities on site ready and waiting for new users to this canal.

Yours sincerely
David Blackburn
Waterway Manager
Leeds and Liverpool
Canal (East)

PS Re your earlier article, I know Terry Horan was very pleased to hear of the comments regarding your journey at the western end of the canal.



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PERHAPS WE SHOULD BE TALKING**

REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORTS

From: Jim Hutchinson, London Rep

Bow Locks: Only complete tidal exclusion will prevent silting up of the Limehouse Cut. EA is objecting to this for various highly technical, but spurious reasons. BW is proposing a solution which will not exclude water at high tides, which is when the siltation is greatest. Unless the job is done properly, the dredging costs will not be significantly reduced. NABO is to put pressure on EA at the appropriate time for total tidal exclusion

Dredging to original profile: Mark Bensted is still not entirely sound on this. He has agreed that before any dredging operation he will consult users so that an agreed profile will be defined. He's on record as saying "We won't skimp on dredging" London User Group Meeting - 3rd March. There will be a test of this policy with the proposed dredging of the Slough Arm and the Limehouse cut. The flaw in his approach is that he will not dredge where "it's not necessary, where there are ecological considerations, when there isn't the finance and where it's impractical" David Fletcher's gave only three caveats - practicality, safety and finance."

Waterways Explorers Licence: This is what the son of high intensity cruising is to be called "There will be further consultation with users" - M.Bensted.

Fibreway: Discussions are taking place between BW and Fibreway for ducting the Regent's Canal.

Tree cutting: Exactly what is BW required to do in a tree felling programme? There are no standards.

BW was pressed to provide such standards before the commencement of tree cutting on the Lee and Stort.

Angling Close season: EA are still pressing for this. The Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Review Group, set up by MAFF due to report next September.

Cycling: Several cycling clubs have been told it's illegal to have mass cycling along the towpath. DETR want cycling off pavements, but are prepared to push for them on the towpath - an anomaly here?

Regeneration of London Waterways: Five areas targeted: Cowley - a new marina, Brentford- houses, hotel, restaurants, Camden Lock, Paddington Basin- permanent basin We need to press that there are proper facilities for boaters. Some worry that the construction of walkways are to be built over the basin. Historic boats to be encouraged to moor at the east end of the basin. Mile End: visitor moorings trip boats. Security will be an issue.

Return of freight to the Lee and Stort: Trials are taking place to use barges to take waste to the Enfield waste disposal facility'.

Grass cutting: Matthew Routledge said at GU South UG that they would not need to cut back undergrowth between the channel and the towpath where it was not deep enough to moor. We need to watch this one else the sequence will go: BW doesn't dredge, moorers don't moor as undergrowth grows, BW say nobody moors therefore we won't dredge".

Spot Dredging: Often spot dredging will not require removal of spoil - the usual reason given for not carrying out such an operation. MR asked if he would encourage his teams to remove rubbish from bridge holes or entrances to locks as part of their day to day operations. Prevaricating reply.

Millennium Night: BW is going to provide for 2000 moorings in West India Docks. No one will be allowed onto the tideway unless they have booked a mooring in advance. The Thames will be very crowded with big boats that night and BW warn of the danger for narrowboats. It is unlikely that the barrier will be closed - EA again

Can you believe it?

The *MAFF* is concerned about the number of alien species in the canals - it's referring to exotic fish which are dumped. They have asked BW - wait for it - to licence these fish under the Import of Live Fishes Act. Just think - they'll have to be a whole new layer of BW bureaucracy' issuing Fish Safety Certificates. checking that they are displaying their licences . . . etc. Etc.

From John Stevens, Midlands Rep.

Stourport Visitor Moorings

Following a request from NABO, Mr Roger Herrington, the Waterways Manager, agreed to extend the 5 day Stourport visitor moorings to 6 days on an experimental basis for the coming cruising season. This arrangement will be especially helpful to weekendng boaters, providing the facility to arrive in a Sunday and depart the following Saturday. Friday evening departures onto the river are not always practical with the river lock restrictions and lack

of river moorings to those traveling to this year's National Festival at Worcester. Visitor moorings are now available for overnight in the basin, 6 days above York Street Lock and 48 hours between bridges 5 and 5A, a good mix of visitor moorings at a busy junction. To help make the trial a success, please ensure that that you comply with the arrangements

Birmingham Canal Navigations

Following my request in the last issue of NABO News I received from Ron & Sheila Cousens, BCN Preservation Officers, an excellent leaflet 'Finding Your Way Around the BCN.' It provides details on all boating requirements including a good list of recommended moorings. The leaflet is available from Kevin Maslin, 4 Grainger Close, Great Bridge, Tipton, West Midlands DY4 0LX. SAE please.

Although I recommend that you obtain a copy of the leaflet before you cruise the BCN, I have listed below 6 suggested mooring sites:-

Conference Centre (security cameras)

Anglesea Basin (very quiet, very remote)

End of Cannock Extension (Close to A5)

Walsall Town Wharf

Black Country Museum

Merry Hill Shopping Centre (security cameras)

The Longwood and Whithy Moor Boat Clubs have also been recommended for providing assistance with moorings.

THE RCD STRIKES BACK

The long running saga of the EU Recreational Craft Directive took a further turn recently with the publication on the Internet of a Draft Working Paper from the EU Commission covering both Noise and Exhaust Emissions. Unlike the original version of the RCD the amendment applies to all boats so that if the amendment were applied a boater could only replace an engine with one that complies with new regulations.

Some probable impacts were:

- No more "vintage" engines installed or rebuilt. (Gardner could not have re-introduced the 2LC;
- No more Lister SR or BMC 1.5 or 1.8 rebuilds or installations'
- No more imported BMC's, foreign Ruston clones etc;
- Any historic working boat where the engine became worn out could not replace it except with a modern engine;
- Anyone else needing a replacement engine would have to buy a new modern one; Home builders would only be able to fit engines which they could show were compliant, both on noise and emissions;
- Enormous potential costs for boat builders who would become responsible for the noise aspect and for small engine

manufacturers who would need to have emissions tests done. At present the noise equipment costs something like £2000 and an emission test about £15-20,000! The biggest UK engine manufacturer, other than the motor and industrial giants like Ford and Lister Petter, imports something like 125 base engines every year and rebuilds another 125 drawn from road vehicles. Not surprisingly this surprised and upset a number of people, from boaters to engine manufacturers, not to mention that Champion of the Boater, BW's own BSS Officer, who weighed in with a Press Release. (I suppose that if you have a tame Media Consultant you might as well employ him.) As a result NABO, together with other user groups, engine manufacturers and boat builders, but not BW or the EA, were able to meet with the DTI Officials charged with representing the UK interests in the Directive. The meeting was largely an exercise in communications. DTI was ready to listen and mainly sought ammunition so that the stupider aspects of the amendment can be headed off at the pass. It is unlikely that any noise or emissions rules can be voided entirely because:

- Some EU Members have decided

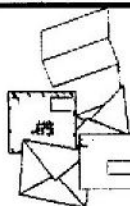
to introduce National Rules if the EU Commission doesn't;

- Green lobbies are currently all powerful. as we know to our cost in other areas;
- The EU Commission (or the one that resigned en-masse anyway) does not want any National Rules to distort the Single Market;
- Unemployed EU Officials need something to do.

We were all able to provide the DTI team with plenty of advice and were clearly preaching to the converted; DTI enlivened the meeting with comments like, "The only consistent thing about the EU

Commission is its inconsistency!" and "It's no good talking to him if he doesn't think you are right he will just ignore you". Shades of earlier BW battles!

While it seems we have a friend in London, the battle is not really joined yet. DTI will attempt to build political support in UK and elsewhere. WE will need to dust off our pens and notepaper and help out. As with Red Diesel, it's time to write to MP's. MEP's and European Officials. Next time we will give you the names to write to and some bullet points to help draft a letter.



LETTERS

Dear Editor

A Bell for Towpath Cyclists?

The Jingly Bell is ingenious, but should cyclists expect pedestrians to clear a way for them on towpaths? Not everyone is able to leap to safety - there are the deaf, elderly, and disabled, also children and animals who don't realise the need.

Towpaths were designed for feet (human and animal) and most users are there because they are unsuited to or dislike life in the fast lane. There is also, at present, a

vulnerable amount of wildlife for the less boisterous to enjoy and wonder at. Surely to turn these pleasant places over to the "full tilt" brigade will be a most regrettable and irrecoverable mistake. Already mopeds and trail bikes are adding to the traffic. How long before four wheeled vehicles join them?

Mrs Freda Bower

Hull

I fully agree with you! I published the article not to imply that cyclists should have a right of way but that pedestrians are entitled to know that there is a cycle coming behind them. It is slightly less of a shock if you know they are going to pass you, and can give you time to gather in a child

or dog. There are also boaters who use cycles and they may like to use this idea. - Editor.

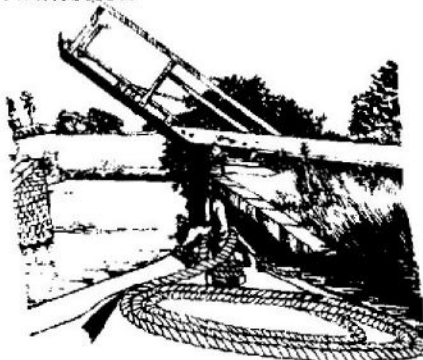
Dear Editor

From the description given by Mr Miller in his letter in NABO news (7/98), I believe the site he mentions to be the Welton Road on the South Stratford Canal.

On stopping "The Rake's Progress" at this site on September 12 last to use the B.W. sanitary station and water point, I was informed by the new "Marine Manager" (his description not mine) that I could use the sluice and take on water this time but that in future a charge would be made.

My enquiry asking if I could claim this back from my licence fee was met with a shrug of the shoulders. I wonder if B.W. have given any thought to the extra revenue that could be raised if all sanitary stations were put into private hands.

John Hogarth
Hillmorton



Dear Editor

Some while ago I was cruising on the canal when I came across a ground paddle where the ratchet would not bite into the teeth of the gearing. Although it was fairly new, the gear and the ratchet moved out of line as the paddle was raised

On the way back through the lock I had the same problem, so, seeing two hardworking BW staff along the towpath, I walked over to tell them of the problem in case an unwary boater lost a windlass (or worse!).

"Arr! That's Management for you!" said one of the BW men with cheerful resignation. "They've changed the design, and I'm not supposed to touch them until I've been on the dismantling course. Here we have a system which has worked well for 200 years, and some new bloke comes along and changes the design. If it ain't broke don't fix it; that's my motto! The old gears and ratchets dropped in place every time."

Geoff Monk
Wantage

Dear Editor

May I heartily endorse Dave Warren's comments about BW and their love of wasting money on signs. I notice some angling signs (planted in masses) only last a couple of years - and then get replaced with new ones. And why

do some canal managers favour small sensible signs while others sport huge placards? Then there are those who create mooring sites with just a wave of a sign - of course trying to use such sites might be difficult as they need dredging. Elsewhere fishermen are warned of the danger of power lines by BW signs stuck to the power poles halfway across a field - we used binoculars to read them - while up north on a BW canal (not river) yachts are warned of overhead

power cables some 30 or so feet above yet a few yards along our mystery yachts get no warning before colliding with a fixed (10' headroom) canal bridge - one of many!

In some places, water points for example, we often feel the odd sign might help us to find them (some are seen just as you motor past). Yet other places have so many signs it is impossible to take them all in without mooring up.

An example of the latter is the nerve centre of BW L&L east at Apperley Bridge. It has signs everywhere, including a notice board right outside the office door full of out of date messages and announcements.

Apperley Bridge has signs of all

sorts - even one warning of thin ice - but out of the many there is one we found so strange when you think about it that a photo of it is enclosed. In the (no parking)

car park the sign controls, 3 of the 6 spaces are used by BW in office hours while the other spaces are, it seems, only for visitors - but not if they are members of the public. There is tons of other space for emergency vehicles around the buildings so why the sign - unless BW need the space for mass



visits - 3 cars, by corporate customers, making their way to the base down the surfaced canalside towpath which connects it to the road a quarter mile away. One assumes the sign is actually to deter people who wish to park at BW and take a walk, or maybe fish, and looking at the space BW have here and the beauty of the canal and its surroundings such a car park would be ideal and feasible. But when BW are more in the signs to stop than the services to help, and anyway, with BW why have one sign when you can have two! So, beyond the car park and the offices is a large empty area and beside it is the BW Welcome Sign - or maybe not that welcome, for it reads "British

Waterways Apperley Bridge
(Welcome) Maintenance Yard. No
Parking. It's a strange world with
BW signs!

David Cragg
Oswestry

Dear Editor

Cyclists and Fishermen

Boating along the Staffs and
Worcs canal recently we were
amazed at the changed attitude of
fishermen. On our last visit to this
waterway the fishermen (as
seems universal) had their gear
strewn across the towpath
blocking progress to walkers and
boaters alike. This time - what a
change - only the odd one had
even his rod withdrawn across the
towpath, while all kept their gear
as near the canal (and as far off
the towpath) as was possible. Not
only that but their attitude to boats
seemed much more "live and let
live" - a welcome change.

We had plenty of chance to
observe this metamorphosis, for
along one section a huge content
- 5 miles of fishermen - was
beginning (we got up early but
only managed 3 miles before they
started). Watching them we felt
that, if anything, they seemed
slightly afraid as they huddled
along the edge. The reason for
this fear was not long in appearing
as the first Sunday cyclist
hummed by barely missing their
backs.

Later we moored up and passing

fishermen chatted to us. Their
main topic of conversation was
the mountain bikers and the
danger they posed. We were told
horror stories of this new menace
(not like you boaters!). One man's
riend has his arm broken in a
collision with a head-down cyclist,
while another has been set upon
by cycling "yobs", who picked up
his fishing gear which blocked
their way and hurled it aside.
Others had their rods and other
gear damaged by cyclists simply
rode over it all without stopping.
An in each case such was the
speed that there was no warning
or chance to get out of the way.

Having seen some of the bike
riding along the canal - with bikers
pedalling furiously down blind
tunnels beside locks (like
Wolverley) with no hope of
stopping - I can appreciate the
danger these people present. As
for the fishermen their only safe
recourse is, as we could see, to
try to keep themselves and all
their equipment out of the way of
the riders by laying it safely along
the water's edge. Still - it's an ill
wind as they say for the
fishermens' desire to stay out of
the bikers way means the towpath
stays clear for us other users - no
piles of fishing gear to negotiate if
you walk - but mind the bikes!

David Cragg
Oswestry

END PIECES

Boats at Saul Junction.

An attempt is being made to establish a Register of boats built by RW Davis and Son at Saul Junction, with particular emphasis being placed on those built whilst Phil Trotter has been there. If you have such a boat (not necessarily a narrowboat), or know of one, please would you contact Kim Sharman at the following address:

The RWD Register,
47 The Street,
Easton Royal,
Wiltshire SN9 5LY
Tel 01672-811230
Fax 01672-811231
e-mail: josh@globalnet.co.uk

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