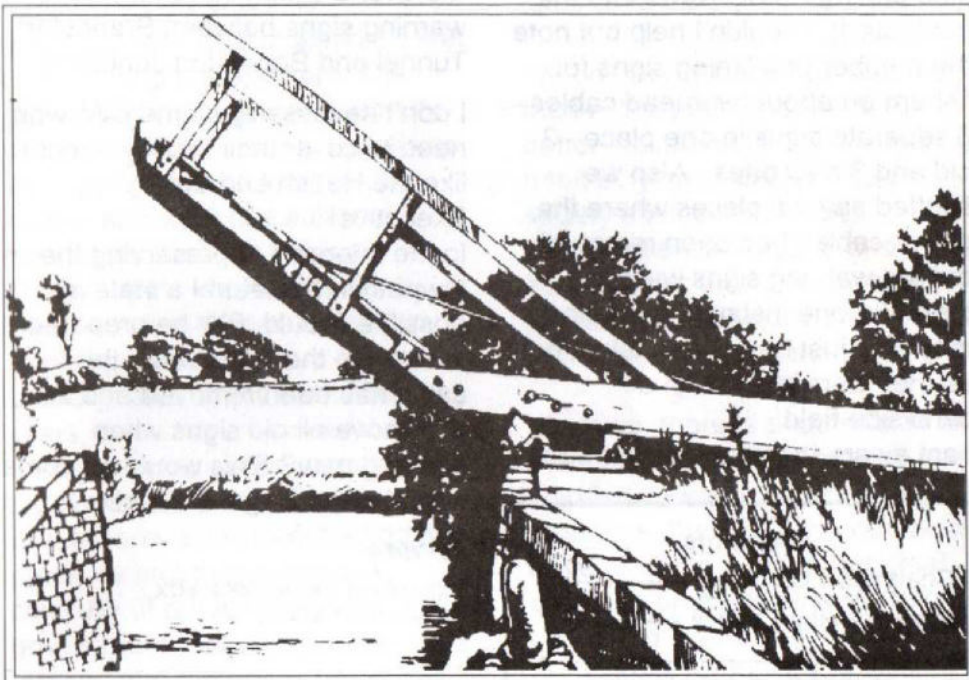




# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue: 6/99



# NABO News

November 1999

## Editorial

We have had many letters recently about the proliferation of signs along the cut, but I make no apology for returning to the issue. Cruising recently along the Leicester arm, between Welford Junction and Crick (I know it isn't far - but I do have to spend some time putting NABO News into the computer!), I couldn't help but note the number of warning signs for fishermen about overhead cables - 6 separate signs in one place - 3 old and 3 new ones. Also we spotted several places where the power cables had been removed, but the warning signs were still there. In one instance the poles may only just have been taken out as they were stacked in a canalside field.

I am aware that there have been

some nasty accidents, but will an excess of signs stop more from happening? I cannot believe that the angling fraternity are so ignorant of danger that they need so many warnings - and would extra signs stop children, who probably don't stop to take any notice of them anyway.

I was recently told by a bailiff on the Grand Union that there are 57 warning signs between Braunston Tunnel and Braunston Junction!

I don't necessarily blame BW, who need to cover their liability - more like the Health and Safety Executive!

In the interests of preserving the towpath in as natural a state as possible, would BW be prepared to remove the signs when the cable has been removed and also to remove all old signs when erecting new? This would go some way to improving the situation.

*Wendy*

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Published by

**National Association of Boat Owners**

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## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

I have decided, after three years as chairman, to retire from NABO Council, so this will be my last Chairman's Column.

There are several reasons for this. Firstly, after six years as vice-chairman and chairman, I feel I am running out of steam. The get-up-and-go is going. Secondly, it is increasingly difficult to balance work commitments and NABO duties, and work has suffered. I need to redress the balance. Thirdly, I think it's time for fresh ideas and fresh faces at the top.

### Looking Back

Looking back over the last few years, there have been a lot of changes in the waterway scene, mostly for the better. Take NABO. We are now an established boater pressure group, listened to carefully (if not always happily!) by government, BW, other user groups, and the press. Our views, backed up by reasoned arguments, have helped bring about many changes that have improved things for all boat owners. There is no question that the Voice of the Boater is heard where it matters.

Secondly, government's attitude to the waterways. This government is

far more responsive to waterway issues than any I can remember. Substantial extra funding, the vital loosening of BWs financial and operational constraints, regular consultation between the DETR and user groups such as ourselves - all these were unthinkable a few years ago.

Thirdly, BW is better managed than in the past, and the "track" is better maintained. The distressing habit of lying to users is now largely a thing of the past. Consultation is frequent and constructive, and Watford now genuinely seeks our views at both formal and informal meetings.

However, there is another side to the story. The cost of boating has spiraled upwards. Licence fees, moorings, the BSS and insurance have all contributed to put great pressure on many long-standing canal and river users. It used to be "Canals for All"; it's fast becoming "Canals for the Affluent". The waterways themselves are over-managed, over-signed, and over-prettyfied; less a linear heritage site than a linear municipal garden. Wharves are sold off for re-development; historic buildings become offices and shops pirate galleons and Chinese junks are mysteriously

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incorporated into the landscape. Glossy publicity brochures, awash with photographs, and slick video presentations replace real information. Many managers still find it easier to use evasion and equivocation rather than being open, frank and co-operative. More petty rules and regulations restrict the freedom of people to enjoy the waterways. BW's management could yet ruin what it seeks to preserve and improve.

Finally, the Environment Agency. The navigation section's staff is friendly and helpful; anxious to listen to user's concerns and try to resolve them. However, their genuine efforts cannot disguise the fact that the Agency as a whole cares little or nothing about navigation, and frequently adopts positions in the name of the environment which are profoundly unhelpful to bodies trying to restore or improve navigation. It does not try to strike a balance between conflicting responsibilities and objectives, nor has it realised that sometime more than a "no" is needed if it is to satisfactorily discharge its duties.

### **Current Matters**

Turning to current matters one of my last jobs as Chairman will be to draft our formal response to BW's plans for a membership scheme and a charitable trust. My thoughts

on the membership scheme were set out in my column in the June 1999 NABO News, and my views haven't changed. As for the charitable trust, obviously it would be controlled by BW and responsive to its wishes. Wouldn't you rather give your money to an independent body, such as WRG?

More importantly, I am meeting BW's Commercial Director Robin Evans and Customer Relations Manager Paul Wagstaffe to discuss license discounts for older boaters and ways of encouraging new boat owners on to the waterways. I believe BW Chief Executive David Fletcher is open-minded on making some concessions. This could be good news for many of our members.

Our vice-chairman, Geof Rogerson, has spent some time analysing BW's rewrite of its Waterway Standards. His conclusion is that all the clear, unequivocal standards in the previous version have been watered down (excuse the pun) or hedged about with conditions. They were standards, they are now merely statements of good intent. And they wonder why we continue to be suspicious...

Further meetings and correspondence with London Regional Director Mark Bensted



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and G U South Waterway Manager Matthew Routledge over what would constitute acceptable estimates of original navigable channel dimensions have failed to achieve much progress. This sounds theoretical, but actually is very important. These dimensions will determine the maximum width and depth of the dredged navigational channel. In London, negotiations are proceeding at a languid pace, and one might at time be tempted to think there is no progress at all. They have barely started on the G U South. Progress is essential, because eventually these figures need to be determined for every wide-beam waterway in the country. If we can reach agreement in these two areas, we could do so elsewhere.

We have received a consultation paper from BW entitled "What Clearly is Not Continuous Cruising". NABO members will know that BW can refuse to issue a licence unless the boat either has a permanent mooring somewhere or "will be used bona fide for navigation throughout the period" (a.k.a. "continuous cruising"). Some boats in the latter category don't actually move very much, and BW and many boaters feel their owners should pay for a mooring. This paper attempts to establish criteria to help determine

whether a given boat is or is not continuously cruising.

Our new Council will draft NABO's formal response, but there are a couple of issues that worry me. One is simply that these conditions could be used to harass innocent people somebody doesn't like. The other is that at present, if your boat has a permanent mooring off BW waters (on the Thames, say, or the Bridgewater) you are given a cruising licence identifying you as continuously cruising. This is legally wrong under the terms of the BW Act and could lead to such a boat owner receiving incorrect and unjust treatment at the hands of BW staff. I have pointed out this anomaly to BW Watford and been assured it is being corrected. My understanding is that it has not - yet.

Our regional reps report "towpath audits" being carried out daily or weekly up and down the network. I have no objection to BW checking up on licence evasion, but what other information are they trying to obtain? One of our members asked a well-known Waterway Manager for the names of the Mooring Wardens in his area, only to be told the information was confidential. I don't like the idea that BW is

using people they refuse to identify to pry into my affairs, nor would I describe it as a measure likely to inspire confidence and trust among "customers"!

### And Finally

I would like to thank all those people who have helped me carry out my job. I refer to present and former Council members, other NABO members, and the many people outside NABO who have unstintingly given me their time, co-operation and help. Without them all I could not have done what I have.

I wish NABO all success in the future, and to its members - happy boating.

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## PSEUDONYM'S View from the Council

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The meeting was again held on a sunny day. For a consideration I will publish dates of our meetings so you will all know when to go cruising. This meeting was the last before the AGM so much of the time was taken with tying up loose ends. Names of proposed new Council members and those who sadly no longer wished to stand were noted. Come to the AGM or wait for the next newsletter to find out who is on Council.

The regional reps are doing a fantastic job on our behalf. A reply has been sent about the commercial use of the river Nene. The lack of towpath edge cutting is causing problems in some areas but not in others. If this is due to environmental reasons why are some areas cut and not others? Dredging on the southern Grand Union: BW want to give us cards so we can tell them where needs dredging as they don't know! They used to before they took staff off the track and put them in offices. Where are the experienced staff they brag about in their glossy magazines? Are we to be the new volunteer work force?

Good News - Matthew Routledge has asked for a "wish list" from boaters as he has some money to spend.

There is a problem with swing

bridges in the north as they have a return chain lying on the bottom of the canal. This is getting caught on propellers, which not only fouls the prop but also closes the bridge on your boat. We also received a report of an elderly lady being refused a licence because in BW's opinion who doesn't move her boat enough. Are BW back to picking on the more vulnerable of our society? The "What is continuous cruising" paper was discussed at length. I am saddened by the bureaucracy and big brother tactics that will be needed to police this. Also the lack of tolerance found amongst boaters that has brought it about. Perhaps we all need to remember that it was boats like Tom Rolt's Cressy that made it possible for all of us to enjoy the canals. Cressy probably wouldn't have passed the Boat Safety Scheme. In Rolt's day navigation may have been difficult but there were no mooring charges and there was freedom.

The Boat Safety Scheme has run into problems with gas again. I have to report that BW is doing its level best to help. The new rules will only add to cost, not contribute to safety. Let's hope BW manage to sort this for us. That's all for now - see you at the AGM.

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## GAS FOR LESS

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The Dutch Barge Association has a national buying scheme for bottled propane that gives a 50% discount. It is now possible for NABO members to take advantage of this scheme.

About three years ago, some DBA members on the Thames realised that between them they were buying quite a lot of bottled gas each year. So they approached Supergas, a gas supplier, to see if they could get a better price by purchasing together under the name of the Association. The result was a buying scheme, first local and then national, which allowed DBA members to buy bottles-full of gas for about half the normal retail price.

The scheme worked well. Last year, though, a possible cloud appeared on the horizon. BG (formerly British Gas) bought the Supergas business. However, things have all turned out fine. BG is happy, even enthusiastic, to carry on the scheme.

Such schemes depend on there being a substantial ongoing volume of sales to the buying group. Now it was dealing with a much bigger vendor, the DBA decided that it would be a good idea to help make sure that the scheme continued by increasing the number of people buying through it. It achieved good

participation from its own members, but there are only some 500 of them. So it recently gained agreement from BG to allow members of a "sister" organisation to join the scheme as well.

We talked it over with your chairman, and the result is that I'm pleased to invite NABO members to join our scheme.

The discount is 50%. So, for example, swapping an empty 19kg bottle of propane for a full one now costs about £8.75 under the scheme, and an 11kg one around £5.25.

And this includes not only the gas and VAT, but also deliver, (to your usual location

- please don't expect BG to deliver to you somewhere else while you are cruising).

Compare with a price of over £16 for 19kg of gas alone at most dealers.

NABO members can join the scheme individually. If you want to participate, phone the BC bottle order line, 0345-626379, and ask for a bottled gas account to be set up in your personal name. Specify that the account is to be part of the Dutch Barge Association buying scheme.



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There will then be the usual bit of bureaucracy (recording your name and address, assigning you an account number, and so on). You will also need to tell BG what sizes of bottle you will be ordering (although you can add other sizes at any time later, if you need to). And that's it.

Once your account is working, you can order bottles through it by phoning BG and quoting your account number. You should get the DBA prices automatically, but you might want to confirm the price when you try it the first time. Please try to order more than one bottle at a time as a courtesy, if you can, to reduce the number of separate deliveries. You will get your own bill through the mail periodically for the gas you buy.

Note that the price given above is swapping an empty bottle for a full one. You will have to lease a BG bottle for a small charge to get started (just like you probably had to lease a Calor bottle all that time ago) because you won't have a bottle to trade in for your first order. You can get more than one bottle, but you can not trade in Calor bottles - BG uses only its own (most of which are still labelled "Supergas"). The hose fittings are the same for Calor and BC bottles.

The scheme works only for propane

(the red bottles), and only for bottles of ~ 1kg or bigger. Butane (the blue bottles) is not covered.

If you do join the scheme, could you please let me know? The better idea we have of how many people are participating, the better we can negotiate with BG. Also, please tell me if you have any problems with the scheme. I can be reached by:

Phone - 0956-299966 (just leave me a message if you get no reply)  
Email - [adrian@enable.telinco.com](mailto:adrian@enable.telinco.com)  
Mail - The Downs, Hertford SC 13 7SA

Gives you a nice warm feeling, doesn't it?

*Adrian Stott is a director of the Dutch Barge Association.*

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## **BSS/CORGI** Briefing

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From BW's point of view, this matter goes back to 1993 when representations/discussions were undertaken with HSE on their proposal to introduce the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations (GSIUR).

Assurances were given at the time, that irrespective of other options, they would consider an Exemption Certificate for inland waterway boats on BW waters when the General Powers Bill giving statute to the BSS was in place and the Scheme in full operation. During October 1998 revisions to the GSIUR were proposed by HSE. In the draft proposals HSE proposed to extend the scope of the Regulations to privately owned boats. The implications of this would have been a legal requirement on every boat owner to have their gas systems inspected annually by a CORGI registered operative. BSS submitted strong objections to this proposal and after a series of meetings with HSE they withdrew the proposal. The GSIUR therefore currently only apply to hire boats but HSE did extend the

scope in October 1998 to cover all houseboats.

At the same time, as the BW Act 1995 was in place and the scheme in full operation, the opportunity was taken to revisit exemption from the Regulations. In fact the proposal to HSE on the exemption certificate option was that the exemption from the Regulations should be applied to all navigation authorities who have adopted the BSS.

During subsequent discussions and correspondence it became evident that the assurances given previously were being progressively negated and new arguments introduced to endeavour to underpin their shifting position. In short, the issue is that HSE may impose CORGI registration on BSS because in their view examiners/surveyors "break into" a gas system to perform the gas system integrity check and this would be deemed "work" as defined under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations. Examiners/surveyors undertaking such



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checks on boats within scope of the Regulations (hire boats and houseboats) would therefore need to belong to a 'class of person' recognised by HSE, CORGI being the only body currently so recognised.

We strongly disagree that the simple act of undoing an installed gas test screw and connecting a manometer is 'work'. There are a host of exemptions within the GSIUR which permit certain things to be undertaken, not least of which is the exemption that allows individuals to change LPG cylinders without having to be CORGI registered. Equally, there is exemption for LPG propelled boats, so a non CORGI person can install, service and maintain a total LPG propulsion system without having to be CORGI registered (- note that the LPGAs COPiS applies and my remarks are strictly limited to the text, content and application of the GSIUR). A further example of an exempted practice is that which allows the student to be able to access a gas system by connecting and disconnecting a bunsen burner (placing a

rubber tube over a nozzle - note analogy) at educational establishments. Examiner/surveyors have been specifically trained and deemed competent to perform this function. The risk involved is no greater than turning on or off a cooker burner and in fact is less given that the examiner/surveyor tests the gas test point for leaks afterwards.

Concurrently, HSE had charged CORGI to undertake and implement a radical change to the way CORGI operatives are assessed as competent. The National Accredited Certification Scheme (ACS). The ACS mechanism is that the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) have to accredit Certification Bodies who would, through assessment, determine whether gas installers reach the required standard to be registered. The ACS was scheduled to be introduced on 1 August 1998 but no Certification Bodies had been accredited by UKAS for LPG assessment. The introduction of ACS marine was deferred until 1 April 1999 then 1

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September 1999 and it remains the case that no Certification Body has yet been accredited by UKAS for LPG marine. We understand that HSE have now further postponed introduction until 1 April 2000. It should be noted that the decision by Certification Bodies to gain accreditation for assessment is a commercial decision of the Certification Bodies - a number have already been accredited for domestic natural gas, given the potential market of operatives to be assessed and periodically re-assessed, for which a fee is levied.

BSS has been approached by a Certification Body for development of the necessary material for LPG Marine accreditation by UKAS which, if taken up would be on a commercial contract basis.

It was with the impending ACS deadline of 1 September 1999 that the forthcoming BSS CPD course on the revised checking procedures taking account of the new BS 5482 Part 3 was orientated to an ACS approach. As the ACS has been deferred, re-negotiations are being

conducted with training providers for a revised CPD which, if successful, will reduce the time and therefore costs of the published proposals.

A statement will shortly be issued to examiners and surveyors about the CPD.

Irrespective of the above, HSE remain committed to the principles of some form of CORGI registration and this will inevitably increase costs to examiners/surveyors. Any loss in the number of examiner/surveyors will need to be reflected in BSS charges in order for it to continue its self-financing status.

Strenuous efforts have been made to persuade HSE that in fact the BSS is in practice enforcing safe LPG systems proactively and the requirement for CORGI registration is an addition expense for no benefit in safety.



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# GLOUCESTER - SHARPNESS CANAL USERS FORUM

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This forum meets 4 times a year in January, April, July and October to discuss any aspect of the canal and River Severn up to Upper Lode lock.

Representatives of all user groups attend, rowing and canoe clubs, businesses, anglers, disabled, EA, BW, IWA and NABO and I represent NABO interests on three of the meetings as I am usually cruising in July.

The following are some of the points raised at the October meeting.

VHF: A policy document has been issued to cover the use of VHF from Sharpness to Stourport the bid to finance the purchase of new radios has been approved and the full system should be up and running next year.

Lock/Bridge opening times: It is proposed to harmonise these for the canal and Severn with daylight hours. This had to be first approved by BW staff unions.

Towpath grass cutting: Mr Dave Tyrell, BW manager pointed out that this was operating on a trial

and error basis and it was actually more expensive to leave the uncut edge than to cut the lot. As all user needs have to be balanced with conservation, he would welcome user's opinions. Duckweed on the C & S. This will be an ongoing problem for some years, as chemicals cannot be used. Half of Bristol's water supply comes from the canal and scooping it out raises the problems of dumping, licences etc Fretherne Bridge. It is planned to replace this bridge with the County paying the larger share of it's half to three-quarters of a million pounds cost. It is hoped that the air draft will be sufficient for the lower canal boats to use without lifting the bridge, subject to the angle of vehicle ramps

Gloucester Docks: BW are interviewing for a basin attendant who should be in place next year. Gloucester lock will now not have holding wires installed this winter due to lack of funds - next winter? I put in a request for bollards or mooring rings, particularly on

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the East wall. Dredging in the docks is planned for this winter. BW has produced a Gloucester Docks User Safety Plan in draft for Forum members to add their own comments.

Mr Tyrell pointed out that a twelve month river licence is treated exactly the same way as a twelve month full licence for the purpose of the free 16 passages through Sharpness lock (obviously a G & S short term licence is needed to transit the canal).

The 16 free passages is a reasonable figure as during this last year's trial, the maximum any boat used was 10, which left three return passages unused.

In response to several NABO members' complaints, including mine, I raised the matter of the early stoppage at the Upper Lode lock - 4th October for three weeks and also the lack of advance information of this closure on notice boards etc. This has not only curtailed our cruising season, but has meant that several of us have been unable to return to our home moorings as the river levels were too high for the two weeks preceding the closure. Mr Tyrell said that it was accepted

by user groups at river closures would be earlier than normal stoppages and this one was done in consultation with the user groups. Who were these groups? He blamed these groups for not informing their members!! He also said that this stoppage was not finalised until August and that individuals should check canalphone, internet or ring up. This to my mind is highly unsatisfactory and I feel that any stoppages (except emergency) that are scheduled before the beginning of November should be organised early in the year and all licence holders should be informed at that time - after all, our licence fees have soared and it is about time BW considered its customers' interests.

If you have any points that you wish to raise, please send them in writing to me. Due to other pressures I will probably not have time to write a reply, except for acknowledgement, but points will be raised on your behalf and answers given in these reports but not in July.

T Gough I22 Flaxpits Lane  
Winterbourne, Bristol BS36 1LB



**Last week I received a questionnaire from BW that was very biased and also didn't ask the questions boaters need asking. So I've designed my own. Before filling it in and sending it to BW, please photocopy it blank, and pass it on to other boaters to repeat the process. To make a point the first question below is designed as if BW had constructed this questionnaire. It is included to raise a smile and need not be filled in.**

	Very good	Excellent	Magnificent
Do you think BW is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Which statements do you agree with?	Agree	Disagree	
BW spends too much on fancy literature.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
BW charges too much for moorings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
BW charges too much for boat for Licenses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
To be charged to moor at the bottom of your own garden is extortion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Because BW loses £50m a year, BW senior salaries should not be so high.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Because there are others who would do his job better and cheaper, the Chief Executive should not receive £100,000 plus per year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Nor should the other half dozen Senior Managers at Head office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
"Consultation" means asking boaters how best to run BW and then discussing the options offered, in open debate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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Agree                      Disagree

"Consultation' doesn't mean spending our money to exclusively promote and sell BW's ideas at the expense of any we might have.

When BW say they are going to continuously raise all prices, on all fronts, to the "limit the market will bear", do you think it will help if boaters and Boating Organisations shout loud and clear "**Enough is enough**"

For the sake of our pockets, I think boaters should shout louder to BW about BW's increasing prices. **BW your prices are too high!**

When boaters ask for more facilities their requests are used as reason to increase prices. Until BW prices are frozen, I will live with the facilities offered.

BW asked in their questionnaire 'which other users spoil your enjoyment of the waterways?'... A question designed to set user against user and split the boating fraternity. So how does BW like this question?

Which BW Manager or Senior Manager most spoils your enjoyment of the waterways? .....

.....

Signed (if you want to): ..... Date: .....

Send to Dr Fletcher. British Waterways. Willow Grange. Church Road. Watford. WD13DW

Produced by Simon Greer (0860688134) in support of clearer, simpler communication between Boaters and BW. Please feel free to add your own statement.



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## Boat Safety Examinations - Will Your Boat Pass Next Time?

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Members will have read elsewhere in the newsletter about imminent changes to be made to the BSS - in particular the sections of the booklet dealing with LPG (Gas) and Appliances. These changes alone promise to create enormous difficulties for boat owners and you are strongly urged to obtain a copy of the proposed amendments and let the BSS office know your feelings before the end of September 1999.

But we must not overlook other subtle changes which will become effective during the next 12 months. If you examine the blue/gray BSS booklet, which you have probably not read since your boat passed its boat safety examinations, you will note that certain Exemptions for existing craft in Part II will be rescinded on 16 June 2000 or the first examination after this date.

Items such as an oil-tight tray under the engine will become mandatory next year and boat owners may be faced with enormous costs if engines have to be lifted out in order to allow a

tray to be installed. Some river and sea-going craft were constructed after the engines were installed and the removal or lifting of an engine is a major structural task.

Some previously exempt hire craft and other new vessels not covered by the EC Recreational Craft Directive will need to replace windows with approved safety glass or other material or apply stick-on safety film. More expense! And fire blankets may require replacement if they do not comply with the BSS requirements after next year. When taken together with the impending changes to the rules for gas installations and appliances the BSS promises to present boat owners with further excessive costs. Don't be fooled into thinking that a boat which passed the examination last time will necessarily pass at the next scheduled inspection!



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# POTTED BIOGRAPHIES: Proposed Council Members

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## **Sue Burchett**

I have been on Council for two years and am still enjoying it, so I am willing to stand again. I feel passionately about being allowed to follow my lifestyle which is living on a boat and cruising where I wish. I am against a continuous cruising licence which is being foisted on us as I believe the existing cruising licence covers this. I am also against excessive bureaucracy and would like to see a more honest British Waterway authority.

## **Roger Davis**

Nearly twenty years around the Waterways, we still appreciate such freedoms to navigation as remain and would seek to maintain and extend them. Although entirely voluntary, NABO has been -and hopefully always will be - at the forefront of those groups of waterways users that actively support such ends. I am glad to have been able over the last three years to make some small contribution as Membership Secretary. If elected I would be happy to continue to fulfil that role for another year.

## **Sadie Dean**

I started my boating on the Middle Level and the river Nene, but during the last 14 years have visited most canals. I now cruise in all seasons, most of my boating is done single handed. This makes me very aware of difficulties created by lack of proper facilities at locks, lift and swing bridges etc. I actively campaign for the improvement of safety features, and the navigation of less used waterways.

During my first year on NABO council I have learned much of waterway bureaucracy and the essential role NABO has representing boaters and ensuring their needs and opinions are considered at all levels.

I am essentially a practical person, travelling extensively on the waterways, involved with canal restoration, historic boats and campaign cruising. I enjoy boating and the waterways and want all of us to be able to continue to do so.

## **Christine Denton**

I have been on NABO Council with responsibility for Marketing and Rallies. I wish to stand again but to become involved in national issues.

## **Simon Greer**

## **Jim Hutchinson**

Deputy head of an independent school with degrees in Classics, History and Computing. My wife and I have owned boats since 1984 and our eldest son has

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a boatmaster's licence and steers trip boats in Little Venice. We currently own joshers boats, Owl and Hampton. My dealings with BW have led me to believe that constant vigilance is essential. Issues of channel dimension, dredging, adequate mooring sites are of particular concern to me.

### **Philip Ogden**

I am a retired Chartered Civil and Water Engineer. I have had an interest in Inland Waterways for very many years and have cruised over 5000miles over most of the canal system. For many years I was the Hon Civil Engineer to the IWA and also the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust. I offered my services to NABO as an Hon Consultant and three years ago was co-opted to Council. I have taken part in a number of projects. I currently represent NABO on the NTA committee of IWA. I would like to continue serving on Council so that I can assist with the continuing saga of channel dimensions and any other tasks where my experience can be of benefit to members of NABO.

### **Stephen Peters**

I have been a member of NABO since 1992 and a Council member for the past 6 years. I own a 30' Seamaster cruiser based on the River Severn and take a particular interest in matters concerning River navigation as the Rivers Users Co-ordinator. It was at my instigation that the Association resolved to give full and effective representation on Council for members with river and sea-going craft. I look forward to continuing to steer NABO river users along a steady course despite the ebb and flow, rise and fall of our fortunes!

I am particularly concerned about the unfair deal which boats based on rivers receive from BW. We pay a fee for a river or a full canal and river licence, yet most river craft cannot physically use the narrow canals and few owners are able to visit the unlinked rivers in their boats. We are now being asked to pay extra for the use of some of the locks! How dare they?

I have a minor commercial interest to declare - in addition to my full-time profession as a Chartered Quantity Surveyer, I am also a part-time Leisure Boating Consultant giving advice on disputes and navigation matters (without conflicting with my voluntary role on Council).

### **Derek Richardson**

55 years old and married to Margaret with one son at home. Deputy Managing Director of a Fruit and Vegetable business encompassing importing, wholesaling and retail, with a staff responsibility got 273 people. A narrowboat owner for 8 years with a 57' trad currently moored at Streetly Wharf, Lichfield on the Coventry canal. Having had the benefit of the excellent work of NABO I feel it is now my turn to do my bit as I should be semi-retired next year.

### **Trevor Rogers**

I have been based with my N/b 'Ranger' on the Kennet and Avon for the last 6



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years. In the past I have also enjoyed living aboard my boat for over 3 years. In addition to cruising, I am particularly interested in the DIY aspects of boating and the freedom to maintain and customise my boat. My career has included over 20 years in the Merchant Marine and Offshore Oil/Gas Industry. I am currently working as a professional engineer within a specialist engineering organisation. I have been interested in and a supporter of Inland Waterways throughout my life. I believe that the character of those waterways can only be preserved if they are primarily used for their intended purpose of "navigation". However, many influential waterway organisations now appear to have conflicting policies. While I respect the needs of other users of the waterways, I feel that boatowners need an organisation which can clearly represent their interests. I have been a supporter of NABO for some years and would like to become more involved in representing NABO and its objectives.

### **Geoffrey Rogerson**

**Owner of Nb "Bristol", large woolwich built in 1963. President Canal Taverner Boat Club. Boating since 1986. Travelled widely throughout mid, north England and Wales. Brough boat from Birmingham to K&A via Severn and Bristol Channel. CTBC rep on local BW User Group. Currently Southern rep on Council.**

### **Andrew Sherrey**

I am a Chartered Accountant in general practice working from home. I have, in conjunction with my wife Margaret, been cruising the inland waterways for the last 15 years, firstly in hire boats and since 1992 in our own narrowboats. We currently own a 60ft narrowboat "Magwitch No 2" which we moor at Kinver on the Staffs and Worcester canal. I have been Treasurer of NABO for the last four years.

### **John Stephens**

I have been boating for 20 years, starting with hire boats, purchased our first boat in 1983, our current and third boat, Trem, a 60ft tug is moored on the Ashby Canal. I have been a NABO member since its formation. My concerns for the future are escalating costs, management of the system and that boating is becoming the domain of the middle to late age groups. Where are the younger generations?

### **Graham Till**

I have a background in Trade Union representation (railways) at various levels and feel that I can make a valid contribution. I am concerned in progressing the interests of boat owners.

## **The Joys of Stourport Basin**

Our roving reporter has sent us the following news: "I am in dry dock at Stourport Basin. The Basin attendant gave me three electric prepayment cards to 'try'. The first didn't work; the second read 9 units; the third didn't work. On trying the second card again I noticed that it read 8 units, so being curious, I removed it and inserted it again, reading now 7 units, or a loss of 1.50 in 15 seconds. Stourport moorings, (I am told by a moorer) has approximately 16 electric points to 30 boats and they have noticed the same phenomena. They take it in turns to buy cards but they are open to theft.

Using the card for all one day with a Makita wire brush has not shown any reduction on the card.

To make life interesting both electric sockets are on the same side - presumably cheaper to install but hardly safer.

To add to our amusement, the end of the pontoon above the dry docks is 5ft away from the dock.

As the wind blows and holds boats against it, it is impossible to help novices that get stuck except by shouting advice. But it does provide much needed relief."

## **Aylesbury Canal Society**

Any NABO members are welcome to join the ACS at their WILSTONE 2000 event. This party will take place on 14 - 16 April 2000 at Wilstone Village Hall, Wilstone, Tring Herts (by boat: between locks 8 and 9 on the Aylesbury Arm) Attractions will include live music, bar & food, Guided tour & talk of Tring Reservoirs, Police Underwater Search unit talk, Roses & Castles painting demonstrations, Archive Waterways film show and Children's games and entertainment. Further details from: 01923 779401.

## **Nottingham Yacht Club**

NABO members are also invited to join with this club at any of the following events:

13 Nov: 8.30 pm Rambleweed

Fun 60/70/80s band - LIVE

27 Nov: 8.30 pm Dinner & Dance at the Conservative Club, Magic & Music

11 Dec: 8.30 pm

Christmas Party

31 Dec: 8.30pm THE Millenium Party - all you can eat or drink for twenty pounds.

Let the Commodore know you are interested on 0115 972 6095



## Calor Gas Information

Members with gas installations on board their craft may be interested to know that Calor Gas produce a very informative free booklet entitled "L.P.G. (Bottled Gas) for Marine Use" which contains a host of useful bits of information and advice on the safe use of butane and propane on board boats.

Copies are obtainable from Caroline Hannington, Boating Industry Liaison, Calor Gas Ltd, Customer Support Centre, Athena Drive, Tachbrook Park, Warwick CV34 6RI. Telephone: 0345 661111 Fax: 01926 318706.

## Can't see the canal for the weeds?

Weeds between the water and the towpath along the Macclesfield canal are well over 5ft high in places. Brambles and nettles are high enough to catch you in the eye. These are a dangerous hazard, how can you get off your boat when there is no space, you can't see what, if anything, you are about to step on/in. There is no way you can haul your boat in event of a breakdown. If walking the dog etc, you can't even see where your boat has got to, following, or in front!

BW are keen to get rid of the problem, so please help by

registering a complaint, preferably on the grounds of safety.

*BW have sent us two licence disks - as a neighbour says, share one with a friend!"*

## Good Pub Guide

The Plough Inn at Mancetter, Bridge 36 on the Coventry Canal provides excellent beer and wholesome home-cooked food. High recommended.

Only a 10 minute walk from the bridge (turn left at the church, the Plough is next to the church).

## NABO WEB SITE

NABO has a new web site! You can find all the news on:

**<http://www.nabo.org.uk>**

More details in the next edition.

## A NEW EDITOR NEEDED FOR NABO NEWS

Regrettably, due to bad health and pressure of (paid) work, I am having to give up the job of editor.

Interested! Then give me a ring if you want further information, or to offer your services.

Wendy Hook

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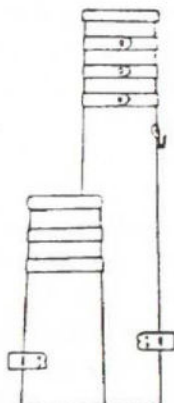
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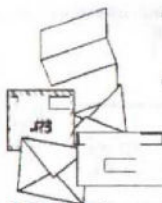
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## LETTERS

Dear Editor  
**Bradley Swing  
Bridge**

My husband and I have cruised the Leeds /Liverpool this summer and have done so on three previous occasions over the last 9 years, everytime experiencing problems with this Bridge. Not only is it very heavy and unbalanced, it has a foot pedal to release the lock and a rather high push bar. If, like me, of shorter stature, you're off balance with one foot on the pedal and your arms up at shoulder height to push the bar allowing very little body weight to get the bridge moving.

My husband assists by pushing the bridge from the towpath side but has to leave the boat without a mooring because there is no convenient bollard - this must be BW's responsibility. On a windy day he cannot leave the boat to assist.

Like Carole Sampson, I have damaged my back and shoulder when attempting to move the bridge single-handed. Who is therefore responsible: North Yorkshire County Council because they own the bridge and fail to maintain it; or BW for failing to maintain the navigation of the system.

I find it difficult to believe that BW cannot exert pressure on North Yorkshire County Council or take over the bridge themselves. They have made excellent improvements mechanising a number of swing bridges towards Bingley, especially the one by the "Marquess of Granby", a notoriously difficult bridge to move. If they can do all this, why not Bradley Swing Bridge?

I am sure you will receive letters similar to this and hope that pressure can be put on BW and the North Yorkshire County Council to mechanise this very difficult bridge before someone is seriously hurt.

*Jean A Fairclough  
Fleetwood*

Dear Wendy  
You published my letter (NABO News 5/99) criticising the closing of Bow Locks over the Millennium? New Year period. I am happy and it is only fair to report that the stoppage has been re-scheduled to start on 10 January.

In the same issue under the heading "Towpath Maintenance" it was stated that "We understand BW's current policy is only to cut the water's edge once a year". Does this mean that BW's policy is to cut to the water's edge every year? It seems to imply this, and



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it is BW's policy, someone should tell the K&A Waterway manager!

*Ron Bingham  
Welling*

I cannot speak for BW on their policy, I'm afraid. Perhaps someone at BW could enlighten us, please. Editor.

Dear Editor

I note that in issue 5/99 (p22) an incorrect comment was made regarding pedaloos and Brayford Pool at Lincoln. I write to point out that I have given no permission to any firm to operate pedaloos in this area and to my knowledge, apart from during the Lincoln Water Festival weekend, none have been used.

I am also concerned about the use of such craft and would be interested to hear if any individual had been using them in the area.

*Caroline Killeavy  
Waterway Manager, East Midland Navigations.*

If anyone has any such information please send it directly to Caroline at The Kiln, Mather Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1FB - Editor

Dear Wendy

**Another license renewal - another price rise**

I've decided BW's policy is to squeeze us for cash until the pips squeak but do we do anything when it starts to hurt? It's no good moaning to each other or hoping

NABO will sort it out for us. I've just sent my cheque back with a note saying that I can't afford any further price rises .... If everyone else does the same perhaps they will start, to listen and I won't have wasted my time. Please support NABO and tell BW when they get it wrong.

"Our Views Matter" !!

*Jeremy Rowe  
Nottingham*

Dear Wendy

Whilst spending a fun day pushing through back-to-bank floating weed, supposed to be caused by warmer water and fertilisers washing off farmland, the thought occurred to me:- what is going to happen when water from GM crop fields washes into the waterways?

*Gerry Stephenson  
Winchester*

Dear Editor

**Re: Salter's Lode Lock**

Having just re-read the River Review article in NABO News (2/99), I'm pleased to inform you that it is now possible to navigate Salter's with a 70' x 2'3" draught narrow boat.

My wife and I have just returned from a month's cruise on the Great Ouse system, having reached Kempston - approximately 3 miles upstream from Bedford - a cruise which was

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thoroughly enjoyable and easy, especially with the help of the Middle level Commission's staff.

In my opinion, the best way to tackle the passage in to arrange transit on a Neap Tide, when tidal flows are generally less. On the return journey, try for a Neap also, and although you may have to wait on the pontoons for a couple of hours, you will find it perfectly safe to do so until level water. They prefer you to go through on a falling tide to prevent saline ingress.

Dredging has been carried out outside the lock and there appear to be plenty of depth outside the Lock.

At Denver they apparently can lock either way at almost any state of the tide. Also Denver and Salter's Lode lock-keepers work closely together to ensure safety.

According to the Lock-keeper, we were only the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> full length boat through Salter's Lode - we passed a full length workboat conversion on our return, to that boat would be presumably of 3' draught, and have also made the passage safely.

*Peter Mills*

*Boston*

I was please to hear of your successful trip - I would love to see more narrowboats on the Ouse at Bedford. Maybe I should try it myself sometime, although Mr

Editor prefers canals to rivers. -  
Editor

*The following letter was sent to our membership secretary but gave so much amusement to the Council that we would like to publish it for the enjoyment of others - many a true word etc, etc .....*

I've just posted a cheque and a grovel in the Freepost envelope but I feel that you deserve a personal grovel.

In fact, I intended to write and resign when we decided at the end of last season that we were getting too old and decrepit for narrow boating. However, the extra time I must have gained without a boat to scrape and paint and polish and enjoy vanished - "like an evening gone" - and I never wrote.

Then we went up to the Braunston Boat Show - for old times' sake - and realised that we'd never get canals out of our system, and would miss NABO News. I would have come and told you all at Braunston, but there always seemed to be a (small) crowd round your stand whenever I drifted past.

So, I decided to post the form, after all. And include some comments on our ten years as boat owners - though Heaven knows how long it would have



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taken me to get round to it without your "Final Warning". Thank you! We were first bitten by the bug in the seventies, when boating was an adventure - basic boats, lots of mud. Running aground - and getting off again - and overgrown towpaths were part of the fun. We had several hilarious/hairy weeks, and twitched whenever we saw a canal for the next ten years, but it wasn't until we got to retirement age that we acquired a boat of our own.

We started with a 20' Water Bug, and graduated to "Good Afternoon" (34') and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves until the lock gates suddenly got much heavier and gentle slopes turned into hills, and we decided to quit while we were winning.

In the last ten years - 1988 - 1998 - when we were boat owners, we saw:

1. The cheerful Boys in Blue become the equally helpful but often disenchanted Thin Green Line;
2. The pruning of lock-keepers and lengthsmen - so helpful, particularly to novice boaters;
3. The introduction of the charming, but BOATLESS, BW logo;
4. A plague of unnecessary and unnecessarily-elaborate notices. (Six-foot high metal notices at every lock instead of the numbers simply

painted on the beams, new oak direction posts at every towpath access for severely disorientated walkers ....

5. The imposition of the "Safety Scheme" with its mobile goalposts which cost us all a lot of money, has done nothing to prevent some horrific accidents in the last few years, and now seems to be regarded as an income-generating scheme by BW;
6. Sprouting picnic sites and other "non boater" fripperies;
7. More - but often more insanitary - sanitary- stations, and double (2 x 70') water points taking up useful visitor moorings.
8. The lovely over-grown hedges reduced to municipal park standard - slashed regularly if they dare to put a twig out of line - no shade, no shelter, no fruits for birds or lock-wheelers;

and so on .....

It's not all BW's fault. The punters (and people generally) are now less adventurous, less patient, less considerate, more demanding and they have to be catered for (I suppose) but, with yet more BW schemes in the pipeline, and more "threats from Europe", I'm glad we did our boating when we did! The only bright spot I can see is that future boaters will not have their money spent on promoting that creepy, giggly pair of puppets!

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Best wishes

*Dennis and Valerie Roseblade.*

PS "Good Afternoon" went to a good home on the K & A at Brassknocker Bottom. Give her our love, if you see her! I don't know whether she's still a NABO boat, although she left us with her sticker attached.

Dear Editor

**Re: Vandalism in the West Midlands Area**

I noticed a request recently for feedback about vandalism and it reminded me of our experiences when we did the BCN Silver Milestone challenge three years ago, or thereabouts.

During the three weeks or so that we were in and out of the BCN we met with three incidents. Some bottles smashed at our feet at Digbeth Locks, tossed over a wall from the road; we were concerned about our dogs cutting their feet, but got away with it. Then a boy attempted to hook me with his fishing tackle which stuck in the cushion I was sitting on and he lost his tackle - shame. Finally someone loosed our overnight mooring outside Burchills Museum. No real harm done, we just woke up with a slightly different view the next morning. BW need to be educated to provide rings for moorings and keep bollards for landing stages.

However, at the end of our visit,

with every signpost in the bag, or rather camera, we wanted water at the tap at Holliday Street Wharf but found it occupied by a hotel pair just up from the Worcester direction. While they filled us up with their hose they wanted to know about vandalism before taking their guests onto the BCN. They were right to be concerned. They told us that, not long ago, a brick had been dropped onto one of their boats from a bridge and caused a guest to have a heart attack. Where? Wheaton Aston on the Shropshire Uniion; not the sort of place you expect that type of trouble. Moral: you are not safe anywhere, but there are prophets of doom who take pleasure in frightening others and fouling the reputation of just about any stretch of waterway you care to mention. (We met someone at Chester last year who claimed his boat had been deliberately torched at Gargrave, near the Yorkshire Dales National Park).

Recently we have moored at Windmill End and opposite the NIA with no bother, but one of the safest seeming places must be that new waterfront development between Salford Junction and Aston Locks with the fountains, there are security cameras and friendly patrols all night. It is on the off side but the local works ventilations is a bit noisy.

*Stuart Sampson.*



## END PIECES

### ERRATUM

I am grateful to the members of BW staff who have pointed out the error made in the advance warning of a stoppage due in August 2000 when a rail bridge is to be replaced. This should have read downstream of Nether Lock, near Newark (not Meadow Lock as stated.) I shall wash my ears out again before taking telephone messages! - Editor.

N° 178189



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**John Denton**

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