



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue: 2/00



NABO News

Editorial

I am delighted to be able to inform you, and I hope you will be equally pleased to know, that NABO Council have very kindly revisited the arrangements for producing this newsletter and invited me to return as your Editor.

Changes have been made which do not put me under as much pressure as in the past. At the moment it is anticipated that NABO News will appear at approximately 2 month intervals. The next issue will be due in the middle of June.

Contents

Chairman's Comment -----	3
Waterways Ombudsman -----	5
Continuous Cruising -----	6
Towpath Cycling -----	8
NABO Chair at Meetings -----	9
Council Tax -----	12
Round the Regions -----	13
Towpath Telegraph -----	16
River Review -----	26
Bear Essentials -----	22
LPG Appliances -----	23
Boat Safety Scheme -----	24
Young Boaters -----	28
Letters -----	29
Council Contacts -----	32

We are planning our long trip at the moment - can't wait for Good Friday when we set off. Plans so far include a visit to Stratford and then onto the Avon. Tardebigge appears on the route plan for the first time - so if you're around there in May and you see a rather short, overweight woman working a dark green narrowboat called Thurzaway through the locks, you'll know you've found me. Do please stop to talk about NABO News - I'm sure that I will be glad of the opportunity to rest!

We'll be visiting the the BCN and probably moor in Gas Street Basin, but that is as far as Mr Editor will let me in to the secrets of the route. He likes to keep these things as a surprise!

Have fun on the cut this spring.

Wendy

Published by
National Association of Boat Owners

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THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

I have been asked if NABO has lost its teeth. I feel that in the years since

NABO was formed it has evolved. When it began the only way to be heard was to jump up and down and shout loudly. In the meantime we have had some very good Chairmen, especially Peter Lea, who changed the attitude by forging ties with the Department of Transport Environment and the Regions; getting a respected place on the Parliamentary Waterways Group; by forming the National Inland Navigation Forum which the other waterway user groups take an active part and getting a good talking relationship with both British Waterways and the Environment Agency. We now don't need to shout if we can talk. This doesn't mean we have to be less vigilant or that we have to believe all that we are told. We are persistent in our dealings with any authority and will aim to get the best deal that is obtainable for our members.

The continuous cruising rules are a case in point. The name has changed again to "overstaying time on moorings", after B.W. was convinced that the problem is mooring not cruising. B.W. have more or less adopted what they

stated at the consultation. What was gained then was the change from 30km to 10 km, but NABO didn't agree to any set distance. Although many believe 10 km to be reasonable, B.W. is still going against the 1995 Act of Parliament. Laws especially recent ones should not be bypassed in this way at a whim, so we have no intention of letting this rest.

We have now met Lord Whitty, at the fourth attempt. The first cancellation was due to illness, the others due to Parliamentary business. Lord Whitty admitted that his only involvement with canals was occasionally walking the towpath, but he did give us a fair hearing. My impression is that we come well down his list of priorities. Hopefully I will be proved wrong as the number of people interested in canals represent a lot of votes.

The Boat Safety Scheme has got everyone's goat. I haven't heard a word in its favour since taking over. The examiners/surveyors, the trade and the boaters don't know what rule will be brought in next and cannot comply with the existing rules. NABO put out a press release at the beginning of January. The BSS countered with their own at the beginning of

February stating that room sealed appliances are readily available and listing suitable ones. We went to the NEC and checked. All the appliances except for some cookers were upstairs with the Camping & Caravaning section. The water heaters (all of the storage variety) were designed for caravans and motorhomes although most could be adapted for boats. One manufacturer stated that he didn't recommend their water heater being used for boats, another could be adapted but had a plastic vent cover that is rather vulnerable. Alde is well known to boaters but costs £1000. CAK had designed a room heater for horse boxes 5' tall x 1' wide. Although it could be used on a boat, (the vents were in the right place), it was ideally suited for what it had been designed for. Electrolux refused to confirm that their fridge would be available in July sticking very firmly to summer. The Propex warm air heater was not available before April, bearing in mind this was February when the BSS press release went out.

With so many disgruntled organisations, the Chairmen of NABO, RYA, IWA, BIMF, RBOA, AWCC & the Trent Boating Association got together and wrote to the Chairman of B.W. We stated that the cost and complexity of the Scheme had grown with little

apparent gain in safety: that we supported boat safety but that in view of the Recreational Craft Directive offering a number of parallel (but simpler) provisions, we thought it time for an independent review. We need an assessment of its effectiveness (including a detailed cost benefit analysis); a study of the business case and whether it might be better outsourced; An urgent study as to the harmonisation of the BSS and the RCD. Lord Whitty promised to talk to B.W. We have now heard that a review will take place, hopefully more details in the next "NABO News".

Narrow boats are being welcomed by the authorities on the Thames. Partly due to more rules and more costs some boats that can are debunking to the coast. I feel the authorities are forgetting that boating is a holiday pursuit. People need to relax without hassle otherwise they will look for other more congenial pastimes.

I went to a meeting held at St. Pancras Cruising Club and was invited to inspect their new Dry Dock. This is sure to be a welcome addition on the Regents Canal.

Strange things seem to be happening to gate paddles around the country. The Leeds & Liverpool are locking their top

gate paddles due to the Gargrave accident. As this was two years ago I suppose we could ask why now? Simon Ainley has disabled the top gate paddles on the Oxford & Grand Union but they are not being disabled on the K & A or Grand Union South. Steven Goode appears to have disabled the bottom gate paddles for some mysterious reason on the Curdworth flight.

Canals are dangerous places so why is it only fishermen who need warning signs every few yards about the dangers?

My thanks to Marsworth office was omitted in the last issue. B.W. held a meeting with the contractors and finished a day early and so our problem with the stoppage got sorted. Many thanks from us and the volunteers that got fed that weekend.

WANTED !

A representative for the North West region.

We have two people to go to meetings in this area, but we need someone to co-ordinate and attend Council meetings in the Midlands approximately every two months.

WATERWAYS OMBUDSMAN

Sue Burchett, NABO Chairman and Peter Lee, NABO President, recently met Stephen Edell, the Waterways Ombudsman, after the PWG meeting. Mr Edell assured us that he was completely impartial.

Among other things, we discussed his terms of reference and whether he should be able to consider complaints against the Environment Agency and other public sector waterway authorities. He has the capacity to undertake this latter work if it was decided that it would be appropriate for him to do so.

It was an interesting discussion, and gave us a chance to meet him and learn his thoughts on a variety of matters. We finished by inviting him to address a NABO Council meeting on a future occasion.

Sue and Peter found Mr Edell to be a charming man who appears to have the interests of the boater in mind.

CONTINUOUS CRUISING

(or What is Not Continuous Cruising!)

The emotive issue of continuous cruising has once again been raised by BW. In a letter to Canal User groups entitled "What is clearly Not Continuous Cruising" BW set out various criteria and upset a number of people very quickly. Such items as (a) having a job near to where you moor your boat; (b) owning a car and parking regularly in the same spot; (c) on the Electors Roll; (d) receiving milk and post, etc, etc. This would certainly make your friendly Patrol Officer more like the Secret Police and I don't think it would be welcomed by them any more than the boater.

Needless to say, it would all be thrown out by the EU as against Human Rights. Nevertheless, I phoned Paul Wagstaffe, Customer Relations manager at BW, requesting a round table and he promptly invited all the waterways groups - IWA, CBOA, RBOA, AWCC, etc, to a meeting in Watford.

A good start was that BW wanted one of us to chair the meeting and Mr D Stevenson of IWA was duly appointed.

The first thing was to establish the extent and nature of the problem.

Of 25,000+ BW registered boats only 800 are registered as Continuous Cruising and BW believe the problem relates to between 200 and 400, ie between 1 and 2% of the total.

The main problem seems to be with "live aboard" boats that either 'bridge hop' or only move 'round the corner' and then back after 14 days; or boats that are left for weeks with no sign of life in popular sites.

NABO, as a policy, does not approve of this as being in the spirit of boating. However, BW's initial proposal of having to move 30 kilometres after 14 days and not return within 28 days was not acceptable.

NABO's attitude was that this was not so much a continuous cruising problem but more a Continuous Mooring problem, and that to require a movement of 60 kilometres in a month before being able to return was not only ridiculous but unenforceable and that if it were to apply only to Continuous Cruising registered boats would be discriminatory and, again, against EU law.

Following a lot of talk and some argument, BW have now issued revised proposals of 10 kilometres instead of 30 and 'place' to be decided at local level by Waterways Managers.

NABO do not accept the revised proposals and stick to the letter of the Act, Section 17 (1) (3) "will be used for BONE FIDE NAVIGATION" - without remaining continuously in any one PLACE for more than 14 days"

In the final analysis both the above will have to be tested in law and Case Law established.

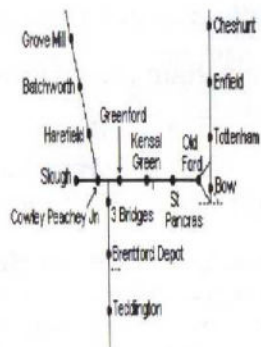
In the meantime it will be seen that as a result of the strength of NABO and the other user groups together with the extensive co-operation between us, BW are now aware that negotiation, consultation and a good relationship is the way forward. We are fortunate in our new Council to have Derek Hackett, who with his legal background has replied in detail to BW on all the above.

As things progress I will keep you informed though the newsletter.

Geoffrey Rogerson.

Chris Clegg's Canal Time Map

A4 sized, laminated, with over 450 named places on the 2 hour map, and with 6, 8 and 10 hour summary maps as well. On the 2 hour map, just count 2, 4, 6, 8 etc. hours as you go from dot to dot, to get the approximate time it will take. See right for a sample of part of the 2 hour map for the London area.



Available by post, price £3.00 (including post and packing) from:

Chris Clegg,

TOWPATH CYCLING

Sustrans who say that they support cyclists, walkers and the disabled, (will the walkers be disabled after the cyclists have ridden the towpaths)? are having a series of sponsored rides and events from 22nd to 25th June. The lengths now open are:-

K & A

Bath to Freshford 7mls

Bradford on Avon to Devizes
14 mls

Benham Marsh to Newbury 4 mls

Thatcham to Reading 12 mls

Oxford Canal: Kidlington 2
miles

Stratford to Wilmcote Manor 2 mls

Birmingham City centre to
Sandwell 3 mls

Worcester & Birmingham canal to
Kings Norton 1 mile

Grand Union Market Harborough to
Debdale Wharf 7 mls

Milton Keynes 2 mls

T&M Burton upon Trent 2 mls

Swarkstone 1mile

Mon. & Brec

south from Brecon 7 mls

Bridgwater & Taunton 9 mls

Chesterfield at Worksop 3 mls

Tennant Canal west of Swansea
6 mls

Forth & Clyde Clydebank to
Bowling 4 mls

Union Canal at Edinburgh 2 mls

We are asking BW if all the cycles will be licenced and these events insured. We hope these events will be adequately supervised to create the minimum disturbance to all users.

Hopefully these will be events to be enjoyed by all canal users. We will be interested to hear if there are problems or not and if there are problems evidence would be very useful. It would be helpful if members kept cameras handy.



NABO CHAIRMAN IN LONDON MEETINGS

Dr George Greener, BW's Chairman, addressed a packed meeting of the Parliamentary Waterways Group at the House of Commons on 1 February. NABO Chairman, Sue Burchett, and President, Peter Lea, were there.

Dr Greener was introduced as a scientist with a background in international finance and the food industry. He spoke on BW's current approach to managing the waterways, in which partnerships play a major part. He emphasised the importance of tourism, leisure and navigation, and the need to invest for the future and to protect the canal system as it exists today.

He paid tribute to the user groups and the work done by volunteers, and said he understood their frustration when BW failed to give them due credit for their efforts. This was a reference to the anger caused by some insensitive press releases issued over the last few months, which suggested that BW had been responsible for the restoration of several major waterways without mentioning the role played by voluntary groups (sometimes in the face of official opposition).

Greener said BW was serious about being open in what it does. Safety is its top priority; and he is pleased with BW's success in tackling the backlog of maintenance on the network. He asked for the help and support from all in the room.

A question and answer session followed. NABO's Chairman asked the first question: "To what extent have managerial and office staff increased or decreased in the period between 1986 and 1998, and in particular, what the increase had been in the areas of marketing and customer relations?"

NABO Chairman queries increase in BW marketing staff

Dr Greener said managerial staff had decreased by 11.5%, while non-managerial staff had fallen by some 62%. There were only two people in public relations in 1986 while now there some 25 at Watford and another 20 in the regions.

The IWA asked whether BW's profits from commercial activities and partnerships would be clawed back by the Treasury by a reduction of Grant-in-Aid. Dr Greener would give no assurances; but emphasised

BW's success in achieving value for money with the funds it had obtained. The urgent maintenance backlog is likely to be eliminated by 2003/04 two years earlier than expected. The scheduled winter maintenance work was almost all completed, for the first time.

The Grantham Society asked for help in negotiating with BW's own environment section over the removal of trees from the canal bed, and the Lichfield & Hatherton Society asked for help in protecting navigation on the Crannock Extension which is under threat from special environmental protection by English Nature. Dr Greener promised assistance to both, but pointed out that BW had no powers in the latter case, and that negotiation would be essential.

The Inland Shipping Group queried whether BW would become involved in freight carrying itself, in competition with private sector carriers. The answer was broadly, no.

The last of many questions concerned BW's recent purchase of two marinas with their boat brokerage businesses, bringing the total it owns to six or seven. The Editor of "Canal Boat & Inland Waterways" asked whether BW was unfairly competing with other marina owners, to whom it often acted as landlord. Dr Greener argued that there was insufficient development of new marinas in some parts of the country, and that BW had a policy of reducing the number of linear moorings. It was pointed out that as these were not new marinas, it was difficult to see how buying them helped either.

Dr Greener has thoroughly mastered his brief during his first few months as Chairman, and put on an accomplished and polished performance. He gave frank answers - and little away.

Please Note:

NABO Webmaster, Michael Wooding, has a new email address. You can now contact him at:

Don't forget to check the NABO Website at:

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

NABO CHAIRMAN MEETS WATERWAY OFFICIALS

Sue Burchett, NABO's new Chairman, met with senior civil servants to discuss waterway matters in January.

Sue and Peter Lea, NABO's President, spent 90 minutes discussing current topics with Brian Glicksman and Colin Jones of the Department of Employment, Transport and the Regions. Sue said, "*Regular discussions like these give us an opportunity to discuss important issues face to face with government*".

Subjects covered included BW's proposed membership scheme, the boat safety scheme, and funding to clear the backlog of maintenance. Also

discussed were NABO's initiative with BW to encourage more new boaters; to help existing ones on fixed incomes; the progress on negotiations with BW on navigable channel dimensions on wider waterways.

BW had received over 16,000 responses to its consultation on a membership scheme, and the replies represented millions of people across the country. There was support for a scheme, though less ambitious than that originally proposed. Mr Glicksman assured NABO that there was no intention that any scheme would dilute the voice of boating interests.

NABO reiterated its support for a

practical and cost-effective boat safety scheme, but explained that the present scheme had lost the confidence and support of boaters because it was too complicated, too expensive, badly run, and the goal posts kept changing. The DETR considered that in the wake of disasters such as the Paddington crash, no politician would be interested in supporting anything which might be perceived as reducing safety requirements.

NABO Chairman talks to DETR about Boat Safety Scheme

Brian Glicksman outlined the government's support for BW's efforts to clear the arrears of maintenance. Extra funding had been promised to clear the urgent arrears within six years, and BW was now

discussing how best to tackle the remainder of the statutory maintenance backlog. Dredging was very much part of this agenda. Ministers were broadly sympathetic with BW's aims. Peter Lea asked whether BW's success in raising money through private/public sector partnerships would lead to a cut in grant in aid from government. The DETR would not rule this out in future, but pointed out that it was unlikely in the short term because it would neither encourage BW to develop the partnerships nor help it overcome the maintenance problem. The meeting concluded by agreeing the exercise had been valuable and should be regularly repeated.

COUNCIL TAX

Thank you to those members who responded with their tales of disputes over council tax.

The way we understand it is :-

a) if the mooring is classed as residential and it is your sole or main residence you will be charged whilst the boat is there. I believe the usual reductions for single occupancy and students should still apply.

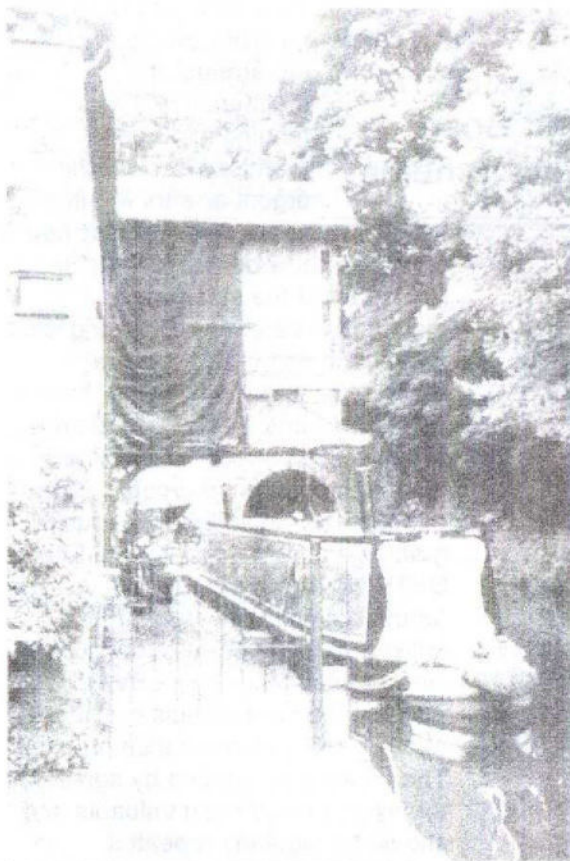
b) if the mooring is classed as residential but you don't live on your boat it may be classed as a second home. The mooring is exempt for the first six months then it will attract a 50% charge. Again only when the boat is there.

c) if the mooring is not classed as residential no council tax should be charged.

The Valuation office sets the rate and the district council acts as tax collector.

If you want your mooring changed from residential to non-residential and the owner of the mooring agrees, contact the Valuation office and they should sort it.

As you can imagine anything to do with either Tax or Law is more complicated than the above simplification so if you have problems contact us, we may be able to clarify your particular problem. Some Councils seem more helpful than others, but I found the Council office that I went to extremely helpful and it is well worth talking to them first.



ROUND THE REGIONS with your Representatives

Kennet & Avon

Recent press releases have been received announcing a close partnership between BW and EA for the management of the River Kennet. This also includes BW part funding an EA lock keeper at Blakes Lock to monitor boat licences.

Whilst increased co-operation must be a beneficial , I am growing concerned about the overall direction in which BW K&A are moving. The whole tone of their presentations gives the impression of reducing their traditional role of navigation in favour of anglers, walkers, cyclists, environmentalists, etc.. At times I feel that the end intention is a countryside 'theme' park in which boaters would only be welcome if they bring increased revenue.

River Thames

Local Thames users are concerned over the anticipated effects of the Gold License. In particular, the perception that an invasion by long stay Narrowboats will put further pressure on the river. The EA have pointed out that the narrowboat style of boat is becoming increasing fashionable along the whole length of the river. Their policy is to welcome these

new visitors. They have been requested by the RUG's to monitor the effect of visiting boats.

Hopwas Embankment

BW engineers used deep piling to stabilise the embankment rather than excavation and lining. The canal was not dewatered as the large piling crane was mounted on a number of pontoons, and its size confirmed the need to close the canal during the work.

Our Midlands rep, John Stevens, was invited to visit the site on 29 February with other User reps to view the work.

The deep piling on the length from Hopwas Wood Bridge to Tamhorn Park Bridge was very near completion. 8-metre long piles have been used, driven in by vibration rather than a drop hammer, and the majority had been driven to full depth which BW engineer advised was approximately 1 metre into the sandstone bed at the base of the embankment. A narrow ribbon of concrete along the water's edge completed an impressive engineering task. The work was ahead of schedule and the canal was due to re-open on 17 March with the towpath work scheduled for completion by Easter,

,depending upon the weather. The canal bed is to be dredged to 1.35 metre profile throughout the length before re-opening.

Grass Cutting

Letters with very constructive views have been received from Ron Bingham, Terry Grove and D Cragg. These have been passed to NABO Council who will use them when considering NABO policy on grass cutting.

River Trent Warning Signs - Wychnor/Alrewas

The installation of flood warning signs with three stages of safety have been agreed. Initial levels have been agreed and they will be monitored to confirm if they are appropriate.

Green - safe to proceed
Amber - proceed according to capability
Red - passage closed.

Emergency Stoppage Signs

Stephen Goode, BW Manager, has responded to a complaint about unexpected stoppages at Atherstone Locks last May by producing reasonably vandal proof encapsulated A3 warning signs that can be fitted into ground level sockets and removed once the stoppage is lifted. At a meeting with the NABO rep, appropriate locations for the sockets in the

Fradley Waterway section (before junctions, winding holes, etc) were agreed. If the system is successful Mr Goode will consider its introduction to the rest of the system.

Leeds & Liverpool Meeting

As N.A.B.O. always likes to attend user group meetings, I was asked by Sue Burchett to attend a Leeds & Liverpool meeting at Burnley on 21st March it is sometime since I attended a User group meeting. It was quite pleasing to see that there was a full attendance of all the user group bodies and the friendly faces of boaters that I have known for sometime.

The user groups previously had been asked for their views on the accident at Gargrave where several fatalities took place. Mr T Horan explained how numerous bodies were involved after this accident i.e. Health & Safety, Maritime & Coastguard also the Marine Accident Investigation Branch. Something had to be done soon to make the use of the locks on the L & L safe for boat operators without being overseen by British Waterways Operatives. It was decided that the gate paddles would be padlocked as soon as possible. We were assured that the ground paddles that are not operative would be made so. It was stated that there

was a four minute difference when gate paddles were not used. It is hoped that a interlocking system could be found so that the gate paddles could be used when the water rises. Baffles were discussed. The only hope in the short term is a interlocking system designed by Mr. H. Mayor of Tarleton boatyard. B.W. engineers were to look at this idea the following day.

The meeting was then opened for other business and a single handed boater pointed out that it would be a lot safer if B.W. could fit landing stages on the operational side of the swing bridges. Mr Horan said that single handed boating was not safe. *(I wouldn't like to be in his shoes when a certain female member of our Council reads this ! - Editor)* Further discussion about the L & L took place and it was pointed out that if a swing bridge could not be left in the closed position then it should be left in the open position even if road users were held up and B.W. informed immediately.

My thoughts on the evening: I hope that as soon as possible an interlock can be designed. I wonder how many single handed boaters Mr Horan meets in his office; all the single handed boaters I have met on the cut have impressed me by their safe and efficient operation of the locks.

Although I do believe that the provision of landing stages on the operational side of swing bridges would make life easier for the single handed boater.

David Gerrard

Stop Press

You were well represented at the meeting at Blowers Green Pumping Station on Monday 27 March. Your Midlands rep. attended, the Anglian rep. and the chairman just happened to be in the area.

The meeting was to tell us that part of the Birmingham Old Main Line (between Spon Lane and Smethwick locks) is being closed for 18 months, to enable repair work to be carried out on the supporting beams of the M5. The closure will start this November and finish at Easter 2002. Our feeling is that the closure is unavoidable and preferable to the M5 falling on our heads; also there is an alternative route.

A Special Christmas Surprise for Sadie !

Cruising from Birmingham towards Tarbebigge top lock one evening before Christmas last year, all was wonderfully peaceful, calm and bright and not soul about. On entering Tardebigge tunnel I was surprised to see another craft ahead of me.

I had seen no boats on the move all day.

As there was no light showing it **MUST** be ahead of me. If so, why was it getting nearer?

BECAUSE IT WAS MOORED IN THE TUNNEL that's why!

Great! And on my side too, so I had to go across to miss it. Pitch dark, no lights on it, no warning notice or anything.

Oh, it was moored there by; Dudley Canal Trust getting ready for their 'Santa's Grotto'.

I'm all for supporting the work that the trust do but, **PLEASE**, at least notices to warn us what we may expect ahead of us, don't keep us surprised in the dark!

Snippet

When asked what he thought of the new style safety gates being installed on the Birmingham and Worcester canal, (you know the ones that sometimes have notices by them asking you to proceed with caution because they are still part raised), a BW operative replied, "What did those Victorians know? In an emergency the old gates would close off the canal in either direction in seconds when we pulled a pin. These new ones have to be wound up, a lengthy operation, then they won't go down again because of all the silt in the way. There's nothing like progress!"

For the attention of all boaters

As British Waterways is concerned that boaters may inadvertently contravene the 14day 10km rule it has designed a specially calibrated wheel to trail behind a boat. This has a day counter up to 14 days and kilometres up to 10 km, and is fitted with an alarm. It is priced at the reasonable sum of £40. All enquiries to Watford (01923) 201120

Wanted THRIFT Volunteers

The Code

Two in a lock

Have you shut up?

Report any serious leaks

Invite oncoming boats through

Follow advice

Think ahead

The Task

Thrift volunteers are all experienced boaters who offer friendly advice, based on the THRIFT code, to waterway users at strategic points on three canals in the midlands area. (ie The Grand Union, The Stratford and the Worcester & Birmingham)

If you are interested in volunteering please send your contact details to the address below and we will send full details of the scheme before it begins. The scheme will run between June and September.

Contact: The Volunteer Co-ordinator, British Waterways, Brome Hall Lane, Lapworth Solihull, West Midlands B94 5RB

New Books

I have recently received a review copy of the '*Locals Guide to the Ashby Canal*' compiled by Douglas E Mass. This publication is a fund raising project for the

Ashby Canal Society's restoration schemes. Compiled by local people, the booklet gives emergency information for each section and has maps showing such details as post box locations and their emptying times, telephone boxes with their number.

The text accompanying each map gives full details, bridge by bridge, and there is good information for each town.

The book costs £3.00 + 70p Post and packing and can be obtained from Inland Waterways Books, 62 Ravenhurst Road, Leicester LE3 2PU.

We have also received a review copy of *Waterways World Annual 2000* (£3.50) which contains a massive amount of information for boaters; addresses for hire boat companies, hotel, restaurant & trip boats for the non-owner; shared ownership, buying & selling boats, boat builders, narrowboat engines, surveyors/examiners and boatyard services for the boat owner. There are suggestions for days out on the cut by car and a full gazeteer on all the waterways in the UK to help plan your trip.

Ideal for dipping into, or to tempt you onto fresh waters. Obtainable from your Waterways World supplier.

RIVER REVIEW

River Severn Lock Changes

Rumours have abounded since the middle of 1999 concerning changes in the way in which the large locks on the River Severn are to be operated. When we received the first intimation of revised operational procedure NABO asked Waterways Manager, Dave Tyrell, for information. His reply was that the proposals were still subject to internal discussion and final proposals had not been formulated. We have, however, been assured that BW will consult with users when their plans are known.

We were somewhat mystified, therefore, to read in reports from local user group meetings that IWA was expressing its satisfaction with the unknown proposals and were very supportive of the initiative! What proposals? What initiative?

The only information given to any users to date is that BW are examining the issues relating to User Operation of the river locks, particularly at off-peak times.

Fearing that NABO is not being kept fully informed we have asked BW to explain what is happening. We need to know how the operation of the locks is going to change. What times will they be

manned? How will single-handed boaters be able to pass through a self-operated lock? Remember these are large locks - the biggest being Tewkesbury 265 ft x 30 ft x 10 ft deep.

What does BW mean by "off-peak"? If capital is to be invested in providing accessible and fool-proof controls at locks (such as exist on the River Trent) is it realistic to expect that these will only be used outside of the current lock opening hours to make best use of daylight during the summer period, as BW have suggested?

We shall reserve judgement on the proposals until we know what they are; and we shall keep our members informed.

Greenwich Meridian to Move

Owners of craft who habitually venture out to sea (that's where the water is salty and moves up and down twice a day, for the benefit of canal users!) frequently adorn their craft with expensive pieces of electronic equipment to aid navigation and safety. Indeed, some owners who never leave the rivers still seem to fit radar and satellite position fixing status symbols to assist them in

finding their way between locks without hitting the banks!

Whatever their motives, one cannot help but be amazed at the capabilities of the Global Positioning System (GPS) which works by receiving satellite signals which are converted into an accurate position anywhere on the globe. When combined with Chart Plotters a visual image or chart on a screen can show the ship's position in relation to other features. And all of this is FREE and courtesy of NASA!

The one drawback of using GPS in the past has been that the datum for latitude and longitude does not accord precisely with the charts. This is soon to be remedied when the Admiralty reprints its charts using the WGS-84 datum changing the co-ordinates of every point on a chart. The result will be that the Greenwich Meridian will no longer be positioned on the Zero degree meridian and all positions could shift by up to 150 metres.

And you thought owning a sea-going boat was easy!

VHF Radio Licence Changes

The Radiocommunications Agency has recently announced that Ship Radio Licences will be issued by a new agent with effect from 1 April 2000. The

distribution of licences will be carried out by POCM - a subsidiary of the Post Office, better known for issuing TV licences. Despite the changes, VHF radio licences will NOT be available over the counter at Post Offices and future payments and enquiries must be directed to The Licensing Centre, Post Office Customer Management, P O Box 1495, Bristol BS99 3QS (Tel 0870 243 4433, Fax 0117 975 8911). It is understood that payment by direct debit will be available for the first time and details can be obtained from POCM.

We have sent a formal letter of thanks to the RA to record our appreciation of the excellent service which boat owners with on-board VHF radios have received over the years from Wray Castle (the previous agents for licences). Their service was always courteous, prompt and efficient and we look forward to a comparable service from POCM.

Boat owners are reminded that a ship radio licence is required if a VHF transceiver is installed on board any vessel and, without an operator's certificate (obtainable after taking a simple exam), the radio can only be legally-used for receive-only purposes. The one exception is in the event of a DISTRESS when it is permissible

for anyone to transmit on Channel 16 to call for assistance.

Our River Users' Co-ordinator holds a complete set of current information concerning marine VHF radio use issued by the Radiocommunications Agency and will be pleased to give any help and advice.



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FMG1	Staffs & Worcs	£2.85
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Monthly premium option.

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No survey required on craft up to 20 years of age.

Optional Legal Protection cover.

**For the right protection for your boat
PERHAPS WE SHOULD BE TALKING**

Bear Essentials

Both Lord Whitty and I have learned something about cycling on the towpath. He never knew it could be a nuisance, and I never knew that when Sustrans said they wouldn't organise an event they meant that they would! Watch out for their 'Cyclethon' 22-25 June (and be ready with your hard hat and protective clothing, should you want to step off your boat as some whiz by). Do they fill in one of those lengthy Events Forms that BW produces? Are they insured? Who pays for the facilities they use? Us Boaters?

What is going to be planned at meetings BW is setting up with anglers only? We want to be present as we hear stories of plans for angling only areas, where mooring will not be allowed and boat movements restricted.

More mooring problems with BW saying that all places are at least 10kms apart (6 and a bit miles to you and me). If we moor at 'a place' we must not return there within 28 days. Well our boat mustn't except if it's a hire boat (or a hotel boat? or a time share boat? or a working boat?)

They have issued new rules 'after consultation' but nobody agreed with what they say. Surely the idea of consultation is to listen to what is said?

Oh, also mooring notices that say "14 days max in one year" are wrong and can be ignored. Should we ignore one, ignore all? Perhaps not, but watch out for what patrol officers say as they seem confused about the interpretation of the latest edicts from above.

Why are BW buying up marinas these days? They give their reasons, but is it a good plan to sell off the historic buildings they own, then say that the money is 'ring-fenced' and they have to buy property with it. Luckily all of us are not as naïve as I and can spot a hidden agenda.

The BSS has got so complicated and 'silly' (we have to install things that don't exist!) that it's great news that ALL user groups are getting together to try to get some simple sense into the scheme. Oh, please let it happen!

They keep talking on council about E-mail (something a Yorkshire father says on being presented with a baby boy?) and Internet, (is that something to catch Heffalumps?). Is there any chance of a boating bear of very little brain to understand and learn to work these things, please?

LPG APPLIANCES

Following the introduction of changes to Parts 7 and 8 of the BSS members are reminded that the new requirements apply to new and replacement appliances only. The provisions specify that all new and replacement LPG appliances must be of the room-sealed type, with the exception of gas cookers. We stress that you are not being asked to replace your old water heaters, or cookers until such time that they are no longer serviceable or acceptable to the examiner.

The implications of the changes are that when faced with having to replace a defective or old water heater or fridge, boat find that it is not a simple job of replacing like-for-like. Indeed, it is no longer possible to replace an instantaneous water heater because no room-sealed models are currently available. In such circumstances, it will be necessary to consider some other form of water heating appliance. Gas-fired storage-type water heaters are manufactured by companies including Alde, Truma and Carver with capacities up to 14 litres'. Most also have a 230 volt immersion heater facility but this is only of use to boats having a mains electricity supply or an on-board generator. Prices for these heaters are in the range of £600 to £900 on top of which must be added the cost of professional installation and modifications consequent on the need

to route the flue and possibly alter the domestic water pipework runs.

At present, no room-sealed gas refrigerators are available but Electrolux are expected to place 2 models on the market in the summer of 2000. Prices are not yet known and owners will need to enquire and also ascertain any critical installations dimensions especially regarding the positioning of the flue pipework and termination.

Marine cookers equipped with the specified flame-supervision devices on all burners are available now but they can be very expensive. Boat owners may consider that paying £1000 to £1 500 for a cooker is beyond the pale and in some cases more than the boat is worth!

If the cost of complying with the latest BSS requirements for new and replacement LPG appliances is too much to bear, it might be worth considering removing the gas installation and all appliances completely. If you don't have gas on board you cannot fail on these items when your boat is next examined!

Please let us know what your views are about the latest changes to the Boat Safety Scheme. Are the new requirements relating to existing and older craft, when the time comes to fit new or replacement appliances, simply going to deter owners?

BOAT SAFETY SCHEME

We have been inundated with letters, Emails, telephone calls and faxes after the article in the last issue of NABO news on this subject. As there has been such a large volume of correspondence with some of the same points made many times, I hope you will understand why they could not all be printed in their entirety and trust that the following excerpts will be of interest. All the correspondence will be passed to the appropriate Council member.

"I was never in favour of this scheme, because

1. the small number of accidents did not justify it, and
2. the considerable proportion of those accidents which were caused by human error (or stupidity), like smoking when filling up with petrol, will not be prevented by this scheme.

That boaters should have *wanted* their boats subject to an "MOT" astounds me. But our superiors in the user movement thought that any proposal which included the magic word "safety" must automatically be a good thing. Now we are paying for that view, literally'.

It is my contention that, if BW had promoted and facilitated the use of Hydrogen gas to replace LPG on boats that one thing would have done more to achieve safe boats than the whole of the current scheme. Hydrogen does not sink to the bottom of boats and accumulate like LPG, but rises to where it can escape to the

atmosphere. The combustion of Hydrogen produces water vapour (as does LPG). but nothing else. LPG produces, among other things, the fatally toxic gas carbon monoxide. Hydrogen is non-polluting."

"During the boat test last year, the surveyor insisted that the gas bottles be secured to the bulkhead by chain. This was a requirement of passing the test. Whilst reading the Canalboat magazine (March edition) ,the new boat report on Valley Cruisers, 'Dove Valley', the gas bottles were apparently unsecured. Perhaps this is something that Stephen Peters could look into. I feel other members may be interested.

I read the NABO News avidly when received.. Keep up the good work. "

"I would definitely take the BSS to task on the latest rules on gas appliances and their-installations. It is no longer permissible to fit any gas appliance(except cookers)on boats unless designed and fitted as a 'room sealed' unit. in other

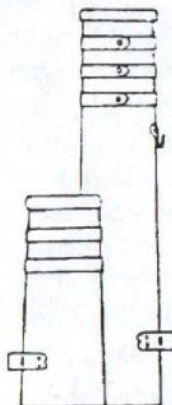
DEREK PEARSON

FENDER AND CHIMNEY MAKER



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THE CANAL NETWORK**

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words, a balanced flue. Firstly, unless the flue joints are perfect, the boat could be filled with toxic fumes.

If the same situation occurs in a conventional flue surrounding air would help the gasses to carry on up the flue. More worrying though is that, as pointed out in issue 1/00 of NABO News.

You will not be able to fit or even get repaired your trusty Morco, Paloma or whatever. So what are you supposed to do when the unit dies?

At the moment, you would have

to carry out a substantial re-fit, probably to squeeze in calorifier. In many boats, such as mine (built July/August 1999), the gas water heater is the only source of hot water. If properly maintained and professionally checked every year or so they are quite safe. These new rules, I believe, will lead to disaster when a little 'tinkering' to keep it going will no doubt happen. BSS should be aware of this!"

One member bought a boat two years ago unaware that there were only 28 days left on a failure certificate. BW gave her only 2 days to get the failure

points corrected or they would not allow her boat onto the water. A point to note when buying second-hand - check the dates very carefully!

"After the inception of the BSS Scheme, some of the more informed professionals realised exactly what was going on (*with the gas regulations*), and some made contact with the HSE who replied quite clearly, stating in writing, that we were breaking the law if we were not properly assessed and Corgi registered, if we carried out BSS routines on craft that came under the Act.

I am under the impression that HSE for about a year after the inception of the scheme did not realise that essential good practice and statutory regulations were being manipulated to the extent they were. Probably they did not take an active interest until the end of the first year (1997) subsequently becoming more and more concerned and frustrated at the BSS's arrogant stance.

Where I believe they became really concerned was the issue of adequate fluing because monoxide poisoning is a major issue and there are quite a few deaths each year and it is an issue the public is aware of."

"The BSS and its administration is out of control until such time as the DETR mount a full and proper enquiry into the Administration's activities. I do not believe BW will do it unless their hand is forced."

Local Fishing match report

"Most of the lengths did not fish as well as they have done recently and most anglers put this down to the lack of boat traffic for this match. The fish have become accustomed to the water moving and if the canal runs they have to use energy and if they use energy they have to feed. The still water encourages them to rest just under the surface and enjoy the sunshine rather than being down in the water searching for food." West Riding local paper

Something to tell the next match fisherman you see - if they'll listen!

From:
CBOA newsletter



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Tel: 0181 477 5055 (24hr brochure request only)

Young Boaters Club Youth Back to the Canal

Following recent articles in the waterways press regarding a lack of young people on the canal a small number of boaters, aged between 18 and 21 have decided to start an organisation to bring the current young people there are on the canal together. The Young Boaters Club will also aim to attract new young people to the canals.

The canals of England have enchanted the organisers of this club from a very early age and they believe it has enhanced their life. They would like their experience to be passed on to other people so they too can benefit from the enjoyment that the canals can bring.

The Young Boaters Club aims to:

- 1) Meet at regular social gatherings.
- 2) Get people involved in boating as much as possible.
- 3) Keep the skills and traditions of the canals alive through the younger generation
- 4) Produce a regular newsletter including articles of interest.

The purpose of this release is to assess the interest and support for such an organisation. If you are aged between 16 and 30 and

would like to be involved or if you have any comments or suggestions please contact:

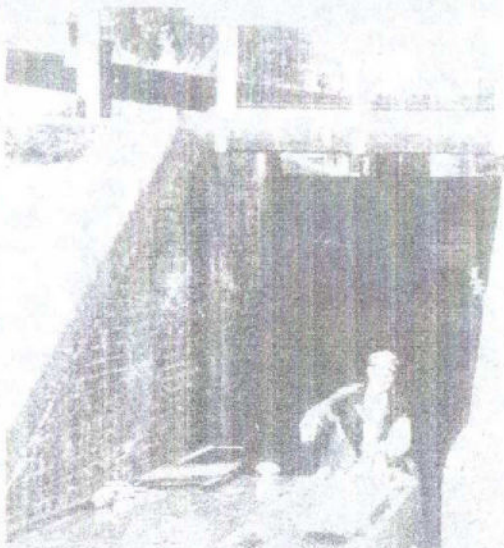
The young boaters club at Lady Melinda (Narrow Boat) Slapton Wharf Leighton Buzzard. Beds. LU7 9DD. e-mail ymbc@andrew-strang.co.uk

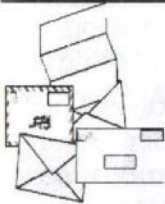
Tel: 07831 827 706

You can also visit http://www.andrew-strang.co.uk/young_boaters.html

This website is kept up to date with future arranged events or gatherings.

NABO is pleased to publicise this organisation and would encourage all members to make it known to any young people they may know.





LETTERS

There are a few points that if I may pass comment on, I might add that I have not

contributed before. My first thoughts were that this is quite a confrontational lot ! but at least NABO has the power of it's convictions, and is prepared to 'grasp the nettle' when it feels necessary to do so.

However, I could not help but think that NABO are going out of their way to knock BW at every possible moment. Now an organisation such as BW are quite vulnerable to be criticised, particularly when they are responsible for much of what we know and love - Inland waterways. My personal experience. with dealings with BW. has for the most part, been courteous and polite. This goes for the individual waterway offices as well.

Other waterways publications - who really ought to know better, knock BW and EA no matter what, only to find that the information "from a reliable source" has to eat humble pie.

I am talking about, for example, the consultation document 'Your Views Matter'.

The magazine in question pre-empted what BW in the preceding months issue, was going to put in

document! I don't think it was in print yet!

The point is that such action by individual publications large or small, do nothing for the credibility of that organisation.

One could argue that the 'squeakiest hinge gets more oil' - that's all well and good, until there is none left! Be warned we have lost at least one council member over NABO's apparent confrontational attitude. Of course criticise BW, EA etc. but there will get to the point where no one will listen any more.

Simon & Jeanette Angel

NB Clara

Thank you both for your views. Neither the chairman nor myself can remember any Council Member being lost through NABOs confrontational attitude, rather the reverse, in fact!. It may be possible that members have been constrained from standing for Council.

I would ask anyone who would like more information about any specific issue to contact any Council member for background information about how Council reached its decision on that subject. Also, if you haven't already done so, please read what our Chairman has to say on the subject (page 3)

Editor



Dear Wendy,
Re: Swans &
Removing
Fishing Line.
Further to Mr
Fountain's letter

(February edition), it does not matter which hand you use to pull an injured swan from the water, and it does not matter about covering their eyes, but NEVER cut the line until the site of the hook has been approximately established.

If you call the RSPCA/swan rescuers, a length of line will enable them to quickly identify swans needing help, and in some cases facilitate removal.

It would be splendid if all fishermen would use barbless hooks - we have x-rays from the last 23 years showing as many as 6 hooks embedded in a swan's throat at once. Throats are torn when hooks are initially swallowed, and fishermen pull their lines away. If possible, err on the side of caution, and seek professional advice.

If only all fishermen had to reincarnate as swans, then perhaps these beautiful birds would have better lives; particularly now the close season for coarse fishing has been abandoned along our canal, putting fish and fowl at risk from the moment they hatch. Will the Environmental Agency

supply staff to pluck drowning cygnets festooned with fishing line from angry parents? We think not.

Meantime, voluntary groups are constantly on call to rescue and fund swan rescue, and provide sanctuary/treatment facilities.

Yours truly,

Lis Dorer, Swan Care,
14 Moorland Road, Hemel
Hempstead HPI 1NH

In a leaflet enclosed with the above letter was the following useful information:

Healthy Swan

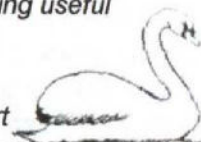
Eye - bright and alert

Neck - sleek feathers, graceful curve or held straight

Wings - held close to body

Tail - straight out behind

Feeding - feeds readily



Sick Swan

Eye - narrow, sleepy looking

Neck - fluffy feathers, kink at base of neck or resting on back

Wings - drooping down aside of body

Tail begins to curve up

Feeding not enthusiastic. Drinks constantly and shakes head - opens and closes beak and becomes isolated from other swans. Shaky legs on land. Watery green or black motions.

Donations can be made to "Swan Care" at the above address.

Telephone 01442 251961



Internet News

Did you know that if you put Grand+Union+Canal on your search engine it gives you 380 sites with information on that waterway? So many, that I haven't had time to read many of them yet!

If you have a favourite, useful, or informative address, then let me know and we'll pass the news on to others.

Don't forget to check the NABO website on:

www.nabo.org.uk

N° 178189



GAS



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