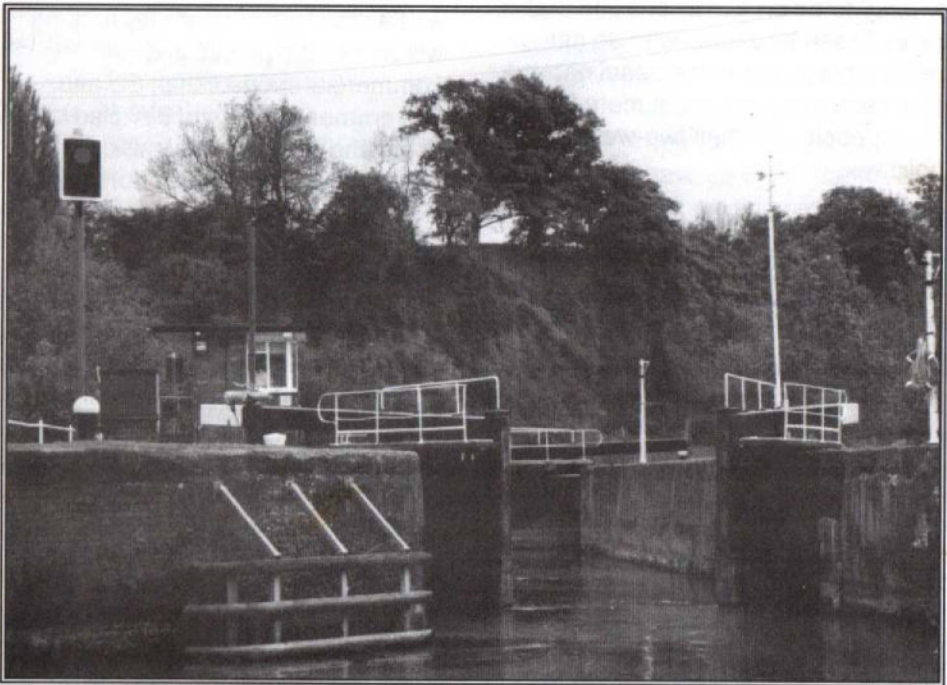




NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BOAT OWNERS

Issue: 4/00



Lock, River Severn

NABO News

August 2000

Editorial

Recently BW bought my local marina, in Bedford, at the head of navigation of the River Great Ouse. Well they bought Sawley Marina which had bought out Harry Kitchener at Priory Marina, Bedford several years ago, but basically it's the same thing.

I wondered why - unless it just came as part of the package - why they wanted to be on a river at a site that is only chosen by people who do not really want to cruise the canal network as it takes too long to get there for most people with their two-week holiday.

Now I wonder if it was the main attraction in buying Sawley with the oft quoted plans, hat I always thought were a pipedream, of a canal link from

Bedford to somewhere on the Grand Union near Milton Keynes.

According to my local paper BW have unveiled a project to do just that - the first canal construction for more than 100 years. The favoured route will probably follow the old Bedford to Bletchley railway line and talks will soon take place with landowners along the route. That only leaves a small matter of the M1, the expansion of Milton Keynes and a small hill. Apparently funding will come from private and commercial sponsorship, EU and Government funds and BW plan to use some of the several million pounds a year it received from the telecommunication firms using the towpath to house cables.

Perhaps, one day, BW will let us know what they are up to! Some of their ideas, like this one, are very good news indeed, and I wish them well.

Wendy

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Published by
National Association of Boat Owners

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THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

At last we appear to be getting somewhere with the "independent" boat safety review. We have accepted that the review will have no independent chairman as the panel has decided to have no chairman. British Waterways the EA & the two IWACC people will all have to agree before anything can go forward. How that is going to work we will have to wait and see. We have got a User Rep of our choice on the review panel as an observer. This is David Smith with John Baylis to assist and to attend meetings when David is unavailable. David Smith is a respected AWCC member with similar views on the BSS as NABO Council. John Baylis knows as much about the BSS and is a respected IWA member. We will now be able to see if the review is addressing the issues that we have with the Boat Safety Scheme and if it will have the clout to alter things. We have now been invited to make submissions and recommendations. To help with this we have set up a sub committee led by Stephen Peters and consisting of Graham Freeman, James Mason & Trevor Rogers. Please send your thoughts to them and we can then add the weight of our organisation to any ideas.

We have been consulted by British Waterways about the perceived problems with gate paddles. Are they

dangerous? Do they need locking up for our safety? Do they need altering to make them safer? As has happened in the past BW have taken our ideas, added them to theirs and thinks we should be happy with the result. We said that the gate paddles had been in existence for a long time and if worked correctly caused no problem. We therefore advocated instructions being put beside the gate paddles as to their correct usage. But British Waterways need a belt, braces

and a bit of string approach so the notices have gone up. Baffles are being designed and tried out and keys are being issued to "competent" boaters to operate locked paddles. The baffles are already causing problem a) they alter the flow of water so if one boat is in a double lock it is shot suddenly into the middle. Dangerous, if you are not expecting it. Also the

baffles are becoming clogged with debris and therefore inoperable. Dangerous, if you are descending a lock and it is jammed open. We told BW this - they haven't listened.

On the Leeds & Liverpool canal they have devised another system. Because the Gate Paddles are locked there a key will be given to "competent" boaters. To prove competency find a lock keeper of at least 2 years standing and ask him/her to watch you go up a lock. If you

Are you a competent boater?

Ask the lock-keeper - so long as he's been one for two years!

are successful you may have a key on the conditions that: - The key will remain the property of BW; the key is to be used SOLELY by the named person; the key is not transferable to any other person; the key should not be reproduced; misuse operating the locks safely or ABUSING the above conditions will result in the key being reclaimed by BW; no liability for the lock operation is accepted by BW by the issuing of the key; under no circumstances should the key holder operate the gate paddles for another boater. The capitals are mine. Presumably this means that you can't go through a lock with another boat. What happens if you both have keys? The BW representative then signs and dates an acknowledgement form, the boat owner does the same adding the boat name and registration no. Is this really necessary? I would have hoped that simple advice from a lock keeper if required and the notice that we advocated would have been quite sufficient

How gullible are boaters? Are they being exploited? British Waterways and Local Councils are teaming up to put on more and more "boaters" events. These follow a set pattern. The "Oldark on Water" event is announced with much hype; boaters send in their money to pay for what is normally a free mooring; everyone else turns up to the event free of charge to look at the main attraction - the boats. If the boaters are local ratepayers they have the satisfaction of knowing that their rates are helping to pay for the event, so they are charged twice! At some events you also have to pay extra to visit a trade show. Surely

dedicated volunteers raising money for charity should run rallies/festivals? Such as IWA and local boat clubs, rather than paid professionals working for BW, local government or even commercial organisations. Your thoughts on this would be welcome as I realise that many enjoy these events.

Start thinking about what you can do for NABO especially if you appreciate what NABO does for you. We are getting towards our AGM. Some of our Council members have served for a long time; some are not standing for re-election. We haven't had anyone doing marketing this year and it shows. Many hands make light work and it is fun

Sue Burchett

Ricochet Films are making a documentary series for Channel 4 following people over the next year as they try to make their dream become a reality. Are you transforming your life in the pursuit of a dream? Are you selling up, leaving the rat race and planning never to return? They are interested in finding people who have recently changed or are just about to change their lives as they search for fresh challenges and fulfilment. Maybe you are preparing to take a risk and downshift to a rural idyll or waterway, or are planning a life change through an exciting new business venture abroad or in the UK. If this sound like you then contact James Christie-Miller, Ricochet Films, telephone 020 7251 6966. Email: mail@ricochet.co.uk

Bear Essentials: View from Council

- by a bear of very little brain

It was very encouraging and cheering to see a new face at the council meeting. There is always some area that doesn't get enough cover, or assistance is needed - just think it could be YOU that offers to help!

Who reads the Newsletter? Of course, I know you do - but who else, and who should it be targeted at? Should it fun or informative? A boring tome or a comic? Or a bit of each?

This was all discussed with the long-suffering editor.

The size of the newsletter is limited so sometimes the more light hearted bits have to give way to the urgent business. One answer is to reduce the print size, so polish up your specs and read closely!

Why do you belong to NABO and why should others join? Look out for the new "Why NABO" leaflets that will be available, also the draft copy of the "Safe Navigation on Rivers" booklet. Also on the cards is a series for boat window display.

The good news and the bad news about new members is that nobody joined at the Braunston Show this year (because there wasn't one) but people are joining via the Internet. O dear, I'm going to have to update my letter in a bottle method of communication.

A short poem -

BSS
What a mess!



It seems that the authorities want a review, where they decide it all and we are allowed to observe, and then they can say we didn't disagree.

Things get more complicated by the meeting as they try to play "Divide and Rule" with the user groups.

BW have published their annual review and accounts. Will this tell us what they are up to, purchasing properties and businesses, selling off the family silver? How much do they spend on wages for 'Events Organisers', marketing and glossy leaflets, etc. Council wants to know.

More to the point, what has it all got to do with their duty to maintain navigation!

Paperwork, paperwork, you could run a salvage campaign collecting the mountains that are produced by EA, much gets onto the table at Council meetings and it takes a patient skilled detective to find references to navigation. Concern for boaters is very low on their list of priorities, so low it seems to have dropped off the bottom.

Council is still trying to get something done about the height of vegetation along the towpath edge. When did you last see your wife or child who hopped off for a walk? Hooray for fishermen (you never thought you would cry) but if they hadn't cut a gap in the weeds you would never see between towpath and canal along some sections.

Sadie Dean.

RIVER REVIEW

● Speeding in the Ouse by selfish people is causing problems to others. Cut your wash for the safety of other boats. Also the Ouse visitors on the Trent seem to ignore the 4 mph limit on the Newark Dyke.

● Clapper gates have been unlawfully removed from the towpath at Newark. These gates are owned by BW, are historic, prevent excessive use and abuse by two-wheelers. Any information regarding this? Get in touch with BW. NABO does not want towpaths changed into something else, even if others may.

● Whilst water levels are low, you will create problems for any moored craft if you pass at anything much above a fast walking pace. Don't pull the water out from the bank because of your speed, then throw it back as wash.

● Last issue had an error which is rather serious. I wrote **R**owing boats when talking of lights and ARA (Amateur Rowing Association) agreement. Unfortunately this was read as **T**owing boats - now at night that's a totally different question regarding lights - you don't really want to know. Don't tow at night - rowing at night is also a no-no, really).

A method has been developed to measure wakes of high speed ships at sea. Can we soon expect the inland waters to be so checked.

● British Waterways claim to run the country's rivers (as well as the 2000

mile canal network). Whilst they do additionally run the Tees, they still do not run all the rivers and should stop "poaching" in this way.

● If you are normally a canal boater and are going onto rivers, get the guide produced by Stephen Peters, especially if you are going onto tidal stretches of water. Your life may depend on it.

● BW are in the marina business, buying, building and controlling. So long as mooring fees don't start going up, this could be good for boaters as the aim is to get moorers off towpaths and so off line releasing canal towpath space for casual overnight stays. So be careful of your facts before screaming at your BW manager.

● Boaters have to be insured. What about other users of the canal and river systems. Discussion recently with BW did not produce a satisfactory answer. If you are involved in an incident make sure you get full names and addresses by seeing it written on a document. Do not merely accept verbal details.

● Some managers are combining user meetings so that they only have one for their area of jurisdiction. Others are splitting their areas thus having specific meeting for specific waterways. I think specific ones are best and are more likely to be held local to the waterway. What do you think?

● Debris removal off the Trent is being dealt with by BW (and it is written into the GWP) but only after flooding. It's a pity those who "rubbish the river" don't restrict themselves to when the river is in flood! Note to BW: some of your 'sweepers' need eye tests perhaps, but the Trent debris situation is better - thanks.

● There have been complaints about rubbish in the Upper Trent/Erewash area as well as on the Soar to Leicester. Report rubbish problems to the manager responsible for the particular waterway as soon as possible. I feel they have a duty to keep the navigation clear and safe for boaters.

● Ian White (BW Regional Director) has been asked to look into the lack of moorings on rivers due to riparian rights and the attitude of EA and BW itself. Anyone with such rights where mooring could be allowed? Come forward.

● The River Ouse has a 'group' set up by Yorkshire Water to look at "sustainable management" of the rivers. It has a wide agenda and we will try to keep ourselves in the picture. Anyone in the York area want to get involved for NABO?

● Newark Town lock is having the pedestals moved to make it better for self-operation. They will be moved to the towpath side, ie the other side of the lock.

● The Police have been asked to keep a special eye on Boston and Antons Gout (Witham) and are trying to get

schools in the area to educate their pupils. We need all schools to do this, emphasising the dangers of their actions. BW have improved the moorings at Boston and other places on the Witham.

● Newark small dry dock is not available for use. Another backward step by BW. Is this due in the main to lack of maintenance since the new lock was built in 1952? The excuse is the asbestos roof. BW would let in a private operator/consortium. Anyone interested?

● Michael Meacher MP has said there will be new legislation. "The Conservation [Natural Habitats] [Amendment] [England] regulations 2000. This will give greater protection to Special Areas of Conservation." The cynics amongst us think this means allow fishing all over the place anytime. Don't bother about wildlife, etc.

● Bridlington Marina is again being discussed. Local feeling is against it. Mainly because of size and attempts to complete with Brighton. Local commercial fishermen are also worried about loss of ancient rights. What boaters need is a safe stop-over at Bridlington. Dredge existing harbour and build a bit more by all means, but don't build another town off the beautiful beach. I wonder if the developers have done their homework about all the places on the East Coast which are now underwater. Don't spoil Bridlington, please.

Peter Foster

TOWPATH TELEGRAPH

Council Changes

Just to let all NABO Members know that Christine Denton has resigned from Council for personal reasons, as she feels she is unable to give NABO the commitment necessary at the moment. She will continue to help by running the Mail Order Department. So, if you want a Dunton Double, Bunting, Polo Shirt etc she is still the one to contact (see the inside back cover for contact details).

Graham Freeman, who is based in Northampton, has been co-opted onto Council

Marketing

NABO has available laminated signs, 6 in all - those of you who came to the Festival in Birmingham will have seen them. They all have the NABO logo with different phrases - the phrases are as follows:

British Waterways - Keep on dredging

Dog Owners - Clean up after your dog

Cyclists respect our towpath

Please slow down past moored boats

*Please do not fish opposite this boat.
Respect our privacy*

and the last one has a print-out of the sound signals to be made by vessels, very useful for keeping on top of the hatch when steering.

Please contact Christine Denton if you require more information.

Services to Members

Books and Charts

May we remind you that it is now possible to purchase books and charts published by nautical publishers Imray at special discounted prices through a scheme arranged by Council member, Stephen Peters (via his own company).

NABO members can benefit from discounts of up to 20%, depending on order value. Non-members can get the same terms if they join NABO when placing their orders. Please tell your friends about this offer.

Items of interest to inland waterway users include new maps of the River Nene, Great Ouse and Middle Level; the unrivalled reference tome "Inland Waterways of GB", as well as guide books, navigation charts and coastal pilotage books.

Details from Stephen Peters, |

NABO Guidance Papers

The newly compiled NABO booklet "Safe Navigation on Rivers" has now rolled off the presses and will be of particular interest to narrowboat owners venturing on to rivers where special precautions will be needed and unfamiliar conditions will be encountered.

This new booklet is free to members and can be purchased for a small fee by non-members.

In addition, guidance papers on Marine VHF radio, Ship Registration and Buying a Boat have been updated and re-issued.

Ask our River Users' Co-ordinator for details of these unique services to NABO members.

DOG S—T !!!!!

Christine Denton has a bee in her bonnet at the moment about dog s—t on the towpath and near the canal. She asks, "What to do you do when you see someone walking their dog on the towpath without a pooa scooper or carrierbag? I ask them if they have left their carrier bag at home, or on their boat, and would they like one? I also remind them that it is an offence to let their dog s—t on the towpath. If they get abusive I take out my camera and take a picture of them.

What about those owners who let their dogs pee on your ropes? Should we be able to buy bottled dog pee and pour it over their shoes? Anyone out there got any comments."



Really Useful Boating Equipment

The Compass Watersports spring/summer catalogue features a wide range of reasonably priced clothing and boating gear - from "Europe's largest marine mail order house".

This company has German parentage and the catalogue reflects this. Amongst the items featured and

illustrated are:-

- A First Aid box marked "Erste Hilfe" which the user should "inflate as necessary"!
- A range of fire extinguishers conforming to DIN EN3 - all bearing fire-fighting instructions in German!
- A fire blanket made from 100% wool. YES - WOOL!
- German Land (state) flags to make your boat look pretty.
- Weather forecast receivers with German frequencies.
- VHF radiotelephones with special Rhine channels.
- Radio-controlled clocks displaying Central European Time.
- Ropes made from Dyneema(?)
- A range of methylated spirit and paraffin cookers, together with a screwtop fuel bottle for "gasoline, spirit and paraffin". WHAT! The Germans use gasoline as a cooking fuel?

Maybe the catalogue has not translated very well from its native language or is it just an example of Teutonic humour?

Seriously though, the catalogue is comprehensive and prices appear to be very competitive; and the company supports RYA and RNLI. So give them a chance and send for a copy from:

Compass Watersports Ltd. Ridout Yard, Great Cheverell, Devizes, Wilts. SN10 5XZ Tel 01380 813100.

Continental Cruising

Several members from IWA Chelmsford Branch are hoping to cruise on continental waters in 2001 in their own boats. They are inviting any interested to join them and as nothing has yet been decided plans are still very flexible. First contact is Chelmsford Branch Chairman, Bob Winter (01702 587508). They would particularly welcome anyone who has the time and ability to act as organiser.

Anyone for Coconuts?

Does anyone have any idea why the waterways in and around north London, particularly on the Paddington Arm, have a large quantity of unbroken coconuts floating around? A lost cargo for a fairground, perhaps? Or perhaps you know better. I'd be interested in your theories!



Surfing the Waterways !?!

Although no expert I have discovered that there are many sites on the Internet devoted to things of interest to Waterways enthusiasts.



At the NIA I met a company

which is at:

www.canaljunction.com

They have hundreds of links to other sites as well as many pages under their own name. They have sections on hiring, owning, building, maintaining and just enjoying boats as well as canalcraft and general interest.

Another site recently recommended to me is Getafloat, described as the on line resource for the boating enthusiast. Their address is:

www.GetAfloat.com

One site I haven't had time to surf is:

www.thewaterweb.net

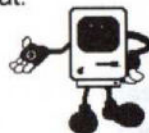
This is described as The site for waterways lovers across Britain, Ireland and the globe.

Of course there is the BW site at:

www.britishwaterways.co.uk

for the latest news.

And for NABO's interpretation of that news don't forget to look at:



NABO WEBSITE
www.nabo.org.uk

A White Knuckle Ride

n.b. Eagle No.5 reporting yesterday's very pleasant, if sometime slightly "white knuckle" voyage for three men in a boat from Sharpness to Bristol.

We made arrangements with Sharpness dock staff, who were all very helpful, for the low-level bridge to be swung at 00.45 and we entered the sea lock ahead of a large coaster and moored to the new pontoon in the outer chamber. This is a vast improvement to the previous arrangement [of trying to make fast to the slimy piles of the outer chamber] and would take 70 foot OK, so our 62 foot plus inflatable tender fitted comfortably. After about an hours sleep we awoke to find ourselves dropped down to the slowly rising river level, and an enormous bank of shiny brown mud sloping up between the hinged arms of the pontoon, (well it looked brown under the floodlights). Watched the coaster edge out at about 3.15 am as soon as depth allowed and followed her out into the rushing Severn; racing clouds occasionally exposing a half moon and the first hint of dawn in the East but otherwise very dark ! It helped to see the lights of the coaster ahead but she soon pushed on and we lost her in the general clutter of shore lights after a while.

Although it was a neap tide (half-moon) it was still flowing strongly and it tried to push our bows upstream as soon as we stuck our nose outside the entrance. We fought round and started

plugging away downstream against it, making about 3 mph over the ground according to the GPS. One immediate advantage of the night time departure was the ease with which we picked out the leading lights and transits, much easier than trying to spot them in daylight. They are now mostly well lit and very reassuring to use.

As daylight slowly dawned and the tide slackened we gradually found our actual speed increasing steadily up to our usual 6 mph in open water at half engine speed (Gardner 3LW); thereafter as the ebb strengthened we fairly flew down the estuary, reaching 9mph at times.

Another 'highlight' was sunrise as we came under the first Severn crossing, a classic half-sun emerging from the clouds astern preceded by long sun-rays. The bridge itself is breathtakingly beautiful from below, much more so than the second crossing.

The dreaded whirlpools and eddies were in evidence, particularly in the "Shoots" below the 2nd crossing but they weren't particularly alarming, just made steering a straight course very challenging. People have referred to the "alien" character of the actual water here and we could see what they meant; it's very brown and almost syrupy and it swirls and rolls very strangely. This was a low neap tide and I understand the effect is far

stronger on a spring tide. The wind meanwhile was picking up as forecast and increased through the day to 20 knots from the SW but we didn't care by then as we were through the worst bits where wind against tide can make such a chop. By 7am we were at anchor off Portishead and ready for a serious fry-up.

After breakfast there were about 5 hours to wait for the returning flood tide to take us up the Avon so we each kept 90 minutes anchor watch while the other two slept, while not zipping around in the dinghy at slack water to take photos. There is a very strange tidal anomaly at Portishead Pool as the incoming tide circles back round and actually pushed us back against a strong breeze to lie facing upstream, stern-on to the tide and the wind; most disconcerting. In fact we circled around the anchor several times, the poor old tender didn't know what to do at all and kept bumping down first one side of the boat and then the other.

By the time the flood was half-way up the river came alive with shipping. First a massive car-transport from the far East arrived too early and had to hang around outside the dock entrances while two ships came out of each of the two locks. Then two more ships arrived to go in and also had to circle around. Seven large ships plus tugs, and one narrow boat waiting to squeeze past between them.

Fortunately, Avonmouth control were very helpful and obliging and told us

when to up anchor: "As soon as the outgoing tanker and tugs clear the lock exit, nip under their stern and get into the river mouth before the transporter comes into the entrance lock." We must have done it reasonably well as one of the staff took the trouble to come out onto the balcony to wave as we passed, a nice gesture.

Thereafter the run up the Avon to Bristol was a piece of cake and the dinghy came in useful again to dash around taking pics. We locked in at about 3pm and Bristol harbour staff were very welcoming; it's a great place to cruise to and quite a sense of achievement to arrive there from rural Cheshire. Our wives came to pick us up from Bristol harbour and wondered whether they might have enjoyed it after all. Probably not!

In retrospect: no regrets at all, it was an excellent experience. Neap tide helped to reduce the excesses of current and wave formation. Pre-dawn departure meant easier course keeping but daylight for anchoring and final arrival. A pilot would undoubtedly have made it less personally challenging and added to the input of local lore and history but would have been expensive and somehow have taken the edge off the sense of attainment. We did it! Thanks to all who helped with advice and suggestions. Now for the K and A and the Thames from the west for a change.

David and Nice' Shorto

So what do fishermen think of boaters?

What is their viewpoint about the rivers and canals where they fish?

I've conducted a survey among 20 or so anglers and 3 fishing tackle shop proprietors. The following quotes, remarkable as some may seem, are a compilation of their thoughts and attitudes towards themselves and boaters.

"Boats on canals are a good thing. They help to keep the weed at bay and aid in keeping the water nice and coloured. After all, it's hard to catch fish in weedy 'gin-clear' waters. Many of the rivers are too clean nowadays and this means river fishing is getting a lot harder."

"Boats using non-navigable waters are a problem, especially canoes as they seem to have a law all to themselves. Boats not keeping to the centre of the waterway on canals are a pain. You get the fish feeding on the far bank and along comes a 'dirty great barge' and goes right over where you're fishing and that could be it for hours. Let's face it there are far too many boats on the canals now, anyway."

"Boaters always look so glum. I reckon one in about 5 might raise a smile. Most of them don't even seem to notice that you are there. Only last week I had a big fish on and a boat was coming. I shouted at him to



stop, but it was as if he didn't hear me. He kept going; broke my line, and I lost the fish."

"Anglers and boaters pay to be on the canals.

Cyclists and walkers do not.

So why shouldn't anglers have their tackle all over the towpath. Walkers can always step over the poles, etc. And for cyclists, well, they should be banned from the towpath. I know many anglers who've had tackle broken by speeding mountain bikes. They just don't care."



"It was about time that British Waterways realised that the close season should end on canals. After all, boats

don't have a close season and they are far more disruptive than anglers. British Waterways have now realised that anglers sit on the bankside and move very little. Smokey, noisy, wave-making boats cause a lot of upset to the habitat, so if you allow boats all year round, then you must allow angling. Dog walkers don't have a close season, nor do cyclists, so there can't be one rule for one and not the other."



"My local pond has a close season. My angling club insist on it so that the vegetation can grow back and the fish can spawn in peace."

"I don't believe that lead shot was ever a problem to swans. Some loony found a couple of dead swans; opened them up and found lead shot inside and so, lead shot was banned. Show me the proof - that's what I say. Yes, I know it's unfortunate that some birds get caught up in fishing line, but it's just another hazard they have to face. We don't deliberately catch trees on the far bank. Hooks with barbs are much better for the fish and wildlife because when they stick in, they stay there. Barbless hooks will rip the flesh and can get dislodged. I know loads of private fisheries insist that you use barbless hooks, but no-one ever checks."



"There is definitely a decline in anglers. There are far less than there were 20 years ago. It's because the youngsters aren't very interested in outdoor hobbies, now that they've got computers."

"The only reason that angers fish where there are "No Fishing" signs is because the signs are in the wrong place."

I promise you, reader, that these statements are 100% genuine and the author's views have not been taken into account at all.

NS Fountain.

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David Bitmead

each morning, after which he is occupied by boats passing through. A lock-keepers duties are not always routine. One morning Graham discovered the body of a young man, hanging by a rope underneath the footbridge between the middle and bottom lock. What a shock that must have been! Attending Coroner's Court afterwards would have brought back the experience as he was obliged to give evidence at hearings.

Susan, too, suffered a similar experience. As a 'Postie' left the cottage one morning, he found a man standing in the canal with only his head above the surface. Graham was roused and the police called. Eventually the man was rescued but later dies.

From records kept by Graham, I saw that 1998 was his busiest year. In August that year, 932 boats passed through the Bratch. This compares with 904 boats in August 1999, even with the 'extra' boats attending the IWA Rally at Worcester.

Graham enjoys his life as a lock-keeper and in general can think of no better job. He does feel, however, that the behaviour and conduct of all classes of visitors leaves room for improvement. He has been verbally abused by boaters, some under the influence of alcohol. He sees cyclists as his biggest problem. For obvious reasons there is a policy of "no cycling" through the lock complex. Gates and notices are situated at each end of the area, clearly instructing the cyclist to dismount. About 50% of cyclists ignore the notices and weave their way through onlookers, dogs and boat crews. He has been deliberately struck by cyclists and verbally abused with obscene

language. Philosophically, Graham believes that the standard of behaviour of all people reflect the low standard of respect for others evident in today's liberal 'third way' society.

Graham does feel that he enjoys the support of his supervisors and is confident that any assault on him would result in prosecution of the offender. He is not so confident of the reaction of his local police to calls for assistance. This he blames on the centralisation of communications, in this case, Stafford. He quotes one evening when a group of fifteen local youths invaded the lock area, jumping over the lock chambers and smashing beer bottles. He called for police without response. Apparently the call was lost. He received a letter of apology from the Chief Constable; small comfort is he had been injured.

A keen conservationist, Graham asks that all boaters travel slowly on the canals. He has seen young moorhens and mallard washed out of their nests and killed by the excessive wash caused by speeding boats.

Whilst we were chatting a hire boat was working up the locks. The GMD crew (*grey matter deficient*) were larking about on the locks. I saw one male crewman walking on the roof of the boat as it passed from chamber to chamber. He laughed when told to 'duck his head' when the low footbridge threatened to knock him down. Not satisfied with that the same man then sat on a lock beam and "walked" the tumblehome of the boat as it passed through. The rest of the foreign crew were laughing at his antics. Hardly surprising that injuries occur.

Greasy Ocker

ROUND THE REGIONS with your Representatives

North East News

As I sit to write these notes, the River Trent is flowing slowly past. It is low, yet we've had a fair bit of rain. Why so low? Is it too much water extraction, where the water is sprayed up in the air to have only a percentage hit the ground as the rest evaporates? Is it another cause? Is it the serious matter up stream of Nottingham? The river there is so low that some marinas cannot operate. This means some boaters cannot boat!

The Beeston Sailing Club slipway is actually so far above water (actually the water is so far below) that launching off a trolley is impossible. The water is so low that people living in the Beeston mobile home park are complaining of problems of graffiti and abuse from "idiots who come down from Clifton and over to our side of the weir (across the weir). Beeston Marina operated by BW is also in trouble and boats are immobile homes. The river has been at drought level, some 2 ft below NSWL.

What you may ask is the cause of the problems from the weir at Beeston right up stream to Cranfleet. That's 5 miles.

Well, it's simple, really. A plughole has been put in the Beeston weir and instead of a plug there is a turbine, ie a Hydro electric power station letting 14,000 gallons of water per second go

through the plug hole. Any fool could see that this would let the water out of the 5 miles between the two locks of Beeston and Cranfleet. Trouble is, it was designed by experts (is this the place to define experts as ...? Well, you know the comparison).

Now further experts are saying that if we (BW) raise the weir by 2ft or more, the boats will all be OK because that will put the 2ft shortage right. What, and still leave the plug out!! Derek Newton (BW manager responsible) says "It is plain to see the river isn't reacting the way it was forecast. We are aware that since the arrival of the power plant the river has not been behaving as it normally does." It needs the fool again to say "Surprise, surprise, why don't you put the plug back? You can't fill a bath with the plug missing".

An independent Environmental Consultant, David Merrick, believes the project as it stands is flawed. He was employed by the Sports Council to look at plans for a similar scheme at Home Pierpoint. He says the Beeston project should be abandoned, adding "This is a cock-up of monumental proportions". Dr John Adams of the Environment Agency as Hyder had not breached guidelines - OK, the guidelines are wrong!

Perhaps the solution is so simple they - the experts - can't see the wood for

the trees (or is it water for the mud bottom?). Why not prevent the power plant, owned by Hyder, from running when the water is below a certain level? Raise the intake pipes to above weir level so they can't run the river dry. The obvious initial fault was in allowing an under shot turbine system in the first place. Who passed these plans? A top fed turbine could have been made self regulating.

The effect of this 5 mile low water problem is being felt outside this immediate area. If you are having depth problems where you are, let me know and I will see if it could be related. Of course, it may be due to a

lack of dredging by BW and too much water extraction. Should all moorers in the Beeston/Cranfleet stretch get a refund from BW?

I am grateful to Terry Goodlud for sending me articles regarding this problem and also for being an able representative for me at a number of user meetings. I am currently updating my list of people willing to go to user meetings for NABO in the North east of England (ie all BW North East and a bit more). Anyone able to do so, please get in touch

Peter Foster

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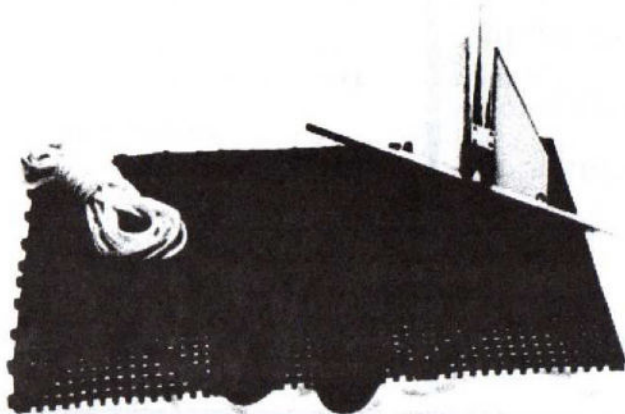
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INLAND WATERWAYS EXHIBITION 2000 in NIA

Never volunteer! - or so they say!

Well I did, and thoroughly enjoyed the day I helped on the NABO stand at the Exhibition at the end of July. With plenty of help on the Saturday we were able to work in two-hour stints and spend the time between looking round the show - for free, as NABO had some Exhibitors passes.

The stand had been erected on the Friday and manned by Christine Denton, such a stalwart of NABO marketing for the past years. Christine is owed a huge amount of thanks for all the hard work she has done helping to put NABO on the marketing map; she is going to be a very hard act to replace.

When I arrived all the sales goods were in place, the literature spread out on the tables and the pictures up on the walls. The stall looked very effective and many people were stopping to look and talk.

I began by looking around the hall to get my bearings - loos and refreshments looming large on my horizon and both needs were well catered for, if somewhat expensively!

There were over 100 exhibitors ranging from boat builders, through the entire contents required on a boat to the Waterway Associations/Trusts and the charitable organisations, both water connected and general.

I wandered round, introduced myself at some stalls as your Editor and gained

a few possibilities for adverts in the future.

Stalls that particularly caught my eye were:

The Guild of Waterway Artists - with their usual high standard of appealing originals and a few prints.

Ragamuffin Rugs - a large crowd was usually gathered around watching how to make pegged and hooked rugs, although I doubt whether many can attempt to match the pictorial skill of Kate Bellwood.

AFT - the makers of Dri-Dek certainly caught the eye with the bright colours of their non slip flooring tile - they do have darker colours for the more conservative!

Having bought all I needed we wandered outside to see the moored boats, with the usual queues of people wanting to see inside, and the parade of historic working boats.

The profile of NABO is high, with people coming to join continually throughout the day - and without any pressure from the stall-manners. By the time I left at 6pm on the Saturday over 30 people had joined- and I'm sure there must have been more on the Sunday.

Try volunteering - you might find you enjoy it, although I would recommend assisting a Council member as they can answer all the difficult questions on policy - and the BSS!

LETTERS

It has been interesting to read people's experiences of travelling along the Stratford Canal, especially as we also travelled the length of this waterway a couple of months ago. Like Simon and Jeanette Angel, we were unable to get onto the river at Stratford but the journey back along the canal was a delight. I was also surprised to hear that they considered the tiny bridges south of Kingswood dangerous. Dangerous? We had no problems at all with them. They ARE very narrow but we found that slowing down allowed us to pass under without a scratch. Our only moans were the locks South of Wilmcote, which were not old or falling to bits but they were certainly stiff and poorly balanced. The swing bridge at King's Norton was also a right pain to move. Despite a call to the BW emergency helpline, we didn't find it any easier to move a week later. If you've ever read about difficult swing bridges on the Leeds and Liverpool, they are featherweights compared with King's Norton swing bridge. Members might be interested to read our recommendations and view some pictures of the Stratford canal and other inland waterways on my web-site "Travelling the Inland Waterways" which can be found at

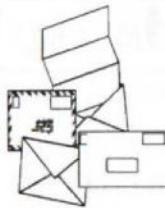
Brett Laniosh



The following letter was received by our membership secretary from a member who is not renewing her NABO membership.

I have succumbed to the inevitable and

sold my narrowboat Asphodel. I did not want to do so and have been extremely upset since last April when I sold her to a gentleman who took her off to the Lancaster Canal where I hope she will be happy!



I found that I just could not possibly justify the continuing expense of upkeep when I was not able to use Asphodel as often as I would have wished. Being on my own, as a widow, means that I rely heavily upon the enthusiasm and availability of my friends, since I am not brave enough to tackle single-handed boating, particularly on the Leeds and Liverpool with the wide locks and the huge number of swing bridges. My friends' time off and mine never seemed to coincide and whilst I was very happy to have Asphodel at the bottom of the garden - yes I was one of the end of garden mooring sufferers - it was becoming financially crippling to have her there doing nothing. The licence goes up every year, the mooring fees which I feel most bitterly should never have been imposed since British Waterways provide me with no facilities whatsoever, other than those which they are forced to provide under my cruising licence, also increase every year. The imposition of the "MOT" cost me £700 because of the inability of the first surveyor to notice facts which could have been pointed out to me and rectified at half the cost. When it appears that the Compliance Certificate

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PERHAPS WE SHOULD BE TALKING

seems to be issued quite illogically on the whim of whichever surveyor happens to carry out the survey, then boating begins to lose its charm! The maintenance becomes an ever increasing burden and what began life as a pleasure especially as Asphodel was purchased as a shell and fitted out just the way I wanted her - was rapidly becoming an impossible financial burden!

I do feel quite bitter that the increasing greed has driven me of the inland waterway system. I wrote a number of articles for Canal and Riverboat, together with a children's story for the same publication and have been boating since 1986, so I am sure you will understand that I miss my boat terribly, especially as my garden borders the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and I am forced to watch more fortunate owners go by - frequently at about 10mph I regret to say!

However this means that I will no longer be a member of NABO. I sympathise entirely with your aims and I wish the organisation every success in the future. Should I ever win a lottery(!) you can rest assured that I shall invest some of my ill-gotten money into another boat and will be back!

Ann Walker



Dear Wendy

I have just managed about 6 weeks boating on my narrowboat "Wat Tyler" and jotted down a few points while I travelled, intending to send them to NABO with a sort of rallying cry to

arms. I was beginning to feel that NABO had taken a more laid back stance of late and was becoming resigned to BW oppression.

However, having read the latest newsletter, and particularly the Chairman's Column, I feel somewhat heartened. Mrs Burchett certainly doesn't sound the sort of lady to be fobbed off easily.

I was also surprised to read a couple of comments in the letter from David about the problems his club is having renewing the lease - "hidden agendas" and "paranoia" I have repeatedly asked myself the same question over the past 6 weeks. Paranoid? Hidden agendas?

I am becoming more and more convinced that BW are taking the mickey out of the boater. They would really like everybody to give up and tie up for good in one of their neat little marinas. What other reasons can there possibly be for their policies. Ground staff, what little remain of them, do not work at weekends because BW won't pay overtime - consequently busy lock flights such as Hatton are left to the mercy of the inexperienced, at the busiest times, resulting in drained pounds and wasted water. The shortage of money was certainly not apparent at Hardings Wood when I passed - there were at least ten white-collars standing around watching progress on the tree planting around the newly surfaced car park (full, as you'd expect, with the latest Mondeos) adjacent to the newly refurbished offices, nor is it particularly

CB

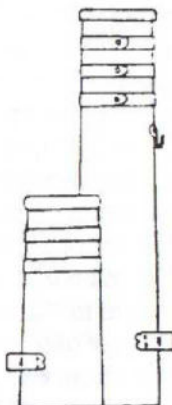
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evident in the hideous development at Hatton.

Their own boats are left tied in all the most inconvenient places such as water points and bridge holes, another ploy to upset the boater and an indication of their utter contempt for boating. They are usually left on a single piece of string and inevitably break loose and block the cut. I rang Andrew Stumpf once to complain about a tug and dumb barge loaded with cut-down wood left at 2.30 pm on a Friday afternoon at the waterpoint opposite the Cape, to be told it had probably been left there for "security reasons" It was the sort of glib, smug retort I have got used to from BW managers. The tug was armour plated and anyone "stealing" the wood would have saved BW the trouble of burning it themselves.

We are all too familiar with the Boat Safety Saga, but we, as boaters, are forced to sign an indemnity each time we renew our licence absolving BW of any liability whatsoever over injury caused by their property. I suppose it's little wonder they protect themselves this way when you consider all the highly dangerous bits of booby trap there are around the cut - overhanging trees left exactly where they will cause maximum damage to steerer and water can, loose lock ladders (apparently they are only for use in an emergency, so single handed boaters presumably have to wait for some passing dog-walker to raise the paddles for them), overgrown towpaths hiding rutted potholes exactly where you need to

jump off, not to mention loose masonry and rusty protruding ironwork.

Then there are the towpaths that do get surfaced, albeit alongside the canal side nettles. I am convinced that the area managers are taking a nice little backhander from the suppliers of that awful dusty brown scalping that seems to be proliferating everywhere. Dusty when it's dry and a filthy brown slime when it's wet - so that one way or another it treads all over the boat.

The attitudes have changed as well. At least we used to be able to say that the lengthmen were friendly, sympathetic and helpful, but there is recently an insidious influx of men with a definite "company" look about them. On the Llangollen the "lock-keeper" at Hurlston couldn't even manage a nod at 8 in the morning while at Grindley Brook a lazily outstretched leg onto one bottom gate during an animated conversation with a colleague was the only recognition that my boat was in that particular employee's patch.

The new breed seems to be epitomised by the recently appointed "Sherriff" - his word - on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, an ex-copper who speeds up and down the length in his speedboat "Virago", complete with blue-flashing light. When introduced to the Users Forum he stated that he was going to be "hard and uncompromising - I'm here to make things happen". He's succeeding too - in a couple of months he's virtually cleared the canal of moored boats. And this is a commercial waterway, 20 feet deep and large enough to carry coastal ships.

There aren't any of course. They were frightened away a long time ago.

They have an excellent "spin" department too, presenting the friendly face to the public - what about the historic boat scheme. They are recruiting all sorts of mugs to hand over cash for next to nothing in return so that BW can show the people how wonderful they are. I have a Big Woolwich motor, the "Birmingham" on which I've spent nearly £10,000 on restoration. It has never ever been converted or altered in any way and it took me six months (during which time they had banked my cheque) to get the meagre 10% licence concession for historic craft. Bruce Harding told me that he knew the boat but that it still had to be authorised at Watford. BW are fast becoming a joke, but unfortunately not a very funny one.

Even the Government allows a free licence for classic vehicles over 25 years old - the "Birmingham" was built in 1936 !!

Paranoid!! Maybe. But I am not going to tie up forever in a secure little haven at Braunston and drink gin on the poop.

If there is anyone else out there who feels as I do it really is time to stand up and be counted before we're all smothered to death by the massive BW bureaucracy machine.

Keith Harris



Dear NABO

I wish to protect the continuing imposition by BW of ever increasing costs of boating causing a reduction in

the number of hours I spend on the local cut between Maghull, Collom and Appley Bridge. Please tell the person who wrote in NABO News extolling BW that it is one thing to pass through once, only everyday use reveals the limitations on this part of the system. So what can I pay for 12 months mooring and licence yet receive notice that I cannot cruise solo (is it possible to clarify this situation?). With the new "Right to Roam" laws our mooring has been changed to a footpath. Why, when the other side is a towpath/footpath? Now missiles and break-ins can take place from both sides, our peace and security have gone, yet fees continue to increase. I asked Watford last year to justify the increase in the light of this reduced security and increased hassle. So far a satisfactory reply has not been received. Also what protection is there against joggers, cyclists, most of all anglers, when waterborne traffic should be designated riparian privileges.

Robert Lamb
Cruiser "Consort"



Dear Wendy
I would like to (briefly!) describe a very serious problem we had aboard our boat 'Bristol Boy' a few years ago. When I say serious I mean we could have been poisoned in our bed due to a malfunctioning Ellis boiler. The said boiler had been situated in a wardrobe in the main bedroom, which was separated from the rest of the boat by an (unventilated) door. The only ventilation to the bedroom was by a mushroom vent (which was screwed

shut) and the only ventilation to the boiler was from within the wardrobe and was easily blocked by clothes and jackets etc. We have been told that the only reason we are alive is because of our habit of sleeping with the door open.

We complained to just about everybody; to BW against the issue of the safety certificate; YBDSA against the Surveyor who suggested and passed the boiler position and construction; to CORGI against the installer of the entire gas system and the Health and Safety Executive against all parties because we nearly died. The result - nothing. Legislation didn't apply, nobody had actually died, the Safety certificate is issued on the boat and the issuer had no 'Duty of Care' to us. In the end we received a one line apology from Mr Fletcher that the investigation had taken so long. And that was after months of waiting. The least I expected was a sincere apology that we had been let down by the scheme and had suffered both physically and financially from exactly the kind of dangerous situation that the scheme was implemented to prevent. To say I have little confidence in the scheme and think it isn't worth the paper it is written on is an understatement. Even toilet paper is worth more.

The biggest warning I have is that despite being CORGI registered and having the Gas installation failed by both another Gas Engineer and the Boat Safety Scheme Quality assessor, no action was taken by CORGI against the original Gas Installer. The reason - the law doesn't

apply to private boats.

My advice to people having their boats inspected is to have the same examiner do it as issued the previous certificate. That way you should only get penalised be the moved goal posts and not the 'opinions' of different examiners. We had a Safety Certificate that was invalidated by the problems described above (which was one of the most annoying things of the whole saga - we complain about other peoples negligence and the only ones to suffer were ourselves because they cancelled our certificate...) and it cost us more than £2000 pounds to rectify. To have had the original gas installation modified to comply would have cost £1700 pounds at least.

Martin and Angie Hook



Dear Wendy

I see with some apprehension that the boating lobby is joining forces to protest at the expense and complication of the Boat Safety Scheme.

Some time ago a protest was made resulting in the creation of Safety Scheme Examiners which caused the loss of discretion that Surveyors had enjoyed and created a cumbersome multi point checklist.

I fear that a similar own goal may be scored this time. I note that there is a request for harmonisation of the Boat Safety Scheme and the RCD. In achieving this there is a danger of introducing yet more things into the safety scheme such as documentation, boat construction and

in particular engine emissions.

It surely should be sufficient to install an emission controlled under the RCD not test it regularly under the Safety Scheme. I should point out that emission controlled engines are designed in most cases to meet standards when used as road propulsion engines and may well not comply after a short time running loaded in a boat.

Similar complications could occur with noise emission standards.

So would our representatives proceed in these negotiations with great care thinking through fully all the implications of their negotiations.

Ian Evans



To the editor...

I've just returned from a single-handed cruise of 14 weeks (without any accidents) and read the report in issue 2/00 where Mr. T.Horan described single-handed boating as "not safe". I hope that Mr. Horan really meant that he thought the element of risk to be unacceptably high (to him) as I cannot think of any activity which is wholly without risk; therefore everything I do is "not safe".

The attitude represented by Mr. Horan's remark is typical of the thinking which seeks to strictly circumscribe the risks which individuals may expose themselves to, always of course in the name of 'safety'.

I think very carefully about each potential hazard I encounter when boating, irrespective of the number of

hands on board, as the responsibility for safe practice is inescapably mine. From observation over many years, I believe that most other boaters do the same. I am very weary of being told I mustn't or shouldn't do certain things because they are "not safe" and even more weary of seeing my freedom of action diminished because BW feel they must protect a minority of waterways users from themselves.

Surely the best approach to safety is to create a waterways system that is non-injurious when used sensibly and to make it crystal-clear to users that they are responsible for the sensible use thereof. Locking up gate paddles or installing interlock systems does nothing to promote user responsibility, quite the reverse in fact.

Alec English



Dear Wendy,

One often wonders how you would deal with an emergency happening whilst boating-well I found out and it has strengthened my faith in human nature and especially the boating fraternity. My wife and I, boaters for sixteen years, have always done our "own thing" and we do not belong to any boating club. This year after reaching Peterborough via the Nene, I decided to have a heart attack leaving my wife Janet with the problem of looking after our 42 foot n/b on her own. Rather than remaining at the embankment mooring which was not really suitable she approached the Peterborough Yacht Club for help. They immediately responded, provided a mooring at no charge, regularly

checked to see if she was OK and provided transport to the hospital when she was visiting me. I immediately relaxed knowing she was safe and now at home I have to recognise what good friends they were at the boat club. Whilst I probably will never join a boat club myself, I now hold such people in much higher esteem than I previously ever did. Thank you Peterborough Yacht Club"

(Mike Jackson n/b Fiddlers Green)

Well Done!, Peterborough YC - it is great to know there are still some Good Samaritans around - Editor



Hello Wendy,

You mentioned the Silver Licence in the March NABO News.

Our Association is suggesting that the BWB Rivers Registration concept be extended to cover all broad-beam BWB navigations, canal and river, and that the Silver Licence cover all these routes plus all EA navigations.

Broad craft have long been overcharged by BWB. Their extra width imposes no significant added costs on the navigation authority, yet they pay the same as narrow boats for canal licences even though they cannot use the narrow canals. It would be much fairer if the price of the licence varied with the length of waterway the craft can actually use.

The current Rivers Registration creates other problems, too. For example, it means that craft on the Bristol Avon have to pay for a canal licence to get to any other river (via the Gloucester &

Sharpness, or the Kennet & Avon, both canals of course). This is very costly since BWB abolished the one-day canals licence (in the teeth of boater opposition). And the Kennet (Newbury to Reading), clearly a river navigation, isn't covered by the Rivers Registration.

Also, a canals licence covers all BWB canals and rivers, but craft with a Rivers Registration (who have already paid for the rivers) pay the same as unlicensed craft for short term canals licences, effectively paying for the rivers twice.

Broad/Narrow appears to us to be a more useful categorisation than River/Canal. The Silver Licence discussion is a good opportunity to settle this issue.

We hope NABO will support our proposal.

Perhaps it could even consider extending the remit of the NABO Rivers Representative!

Adrian Stott,
Director, Dutch Barge Association



Dear Editor

You might like to suggest to David, who wrote about his boat club's problems in the current issue of NABO News, that he could possibly use the Data Protection Act - assume that the results of the survey are being held on computer which gives individuals the right to see data relating to them. It could be worth a try?

Ed Harris

Thank you for the suggestion, I hope David can make use of it - Editor

Magazine Dates

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Philip Ogden is still the representative for disabled boating and boaters and he can be contacted at