

# THE MAGAZINE OF THE



President: Bill O'Brien J.P. M.P.

## ISSUE 1/02 - February 2002

**New BSS / EA Takes Up Reins / NINF & PWG**

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### **2002 CALENDAR**

<b>Council meetings</b>	<b>Copy dates</b>
March 9th	March 16th
April 27th	May 4th
June 15th	June 22nd
July 20th	July 27th
Sept 21st	Sept 28th
<b>Nov 9th A.G.M.</b>	
Nov 23rd	t.b.a.

# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Hi Everyone!

I hope you had an enjoyable Christmas, and that you are all looking forward to a prosperous New Year cruising on our rivers and canals, safe in the knowledge that your Council are negotiating at all levels with British Waterways and the Environment Agency to ensure that towpaths are trimmed, dredging is deep enough and that the Boat Safety Scheme will be simpler and compliance with it will not keep costing you a fortune. If that was all ... **WELL GREAT...** but, as I suspect most of you realise, that is only a part of it.

The number of miles myself and council members clock up attending the different types of meeting all over the country is increasing at an amazing rate, but the good side is that the tone of over 70% of the meetings with BW and EA has changed over the last 12 months from mistrust and "them-and-us", into a willingness to discuss things, with give and take on both sides of the table, and even that magic leveller – good humour. This does not mean to say we are not on our guard, we are – the lion only sleeps. The navigation agencies are certainly changing in their views on consultation with us User Groups, but we must still retain our watching brief.

Yesterday, I attended the 48th London Boat Show preview day. Surprising how many of the new expensive boats on display there **do not** have to worry themselves about the Boat Safety Scheme, as they already comply with the Recreational Craft Directive as they are built, so no expensive tests or 4-yearly re-tests there, they are considered totally safe to go to sea and traverse oceans..... no dangerous 4mph limit, 3' 6" deep canals for them to navigate with trepidation, or fear of brick throwing vandals – but I digress. Whilst there, I attended a reception given by the Environment Agency, a very interesting event with senior BW and EA



executives on hand to answer User Group and media questions. The Agency accepts they have to do more and get it right, A very refreshing admission by a major navigation agency. I am more than happy to work with people who talk like that, it bodes well for the future. I then collected my copy of the new RED book from the BSS

team, and will let you know my views when I have had a chance to digest it.

You should all have received a letter and simple questionnaire from my Technical Committee regarding the Boat Safety Scheme review, which I hope, is self-explanatory. We deliberated many hours over the Christmas period to try and get it simple and unbiased and out to you: never seen so many envelopes get stuffed and stamped that quickly. We do need your views on where and how far we go with the BSS Review results, I felt that an "*ask the audience*" was the best way forward so please fill them out and post them off and we will come to the right decision at the end

I hope lots of members are discussing forming branches within the region to help back up your regional Secretary, he really needs to get more grass root members thoughts filtering back up to council. Our strength is in our membership and we can only formulate our policy and NABO's way forward if I know what you feel and think. It is your association, my job is to direct it on your behalf, so keep it all coming in.

Don't forget any local events happening; let your Regional Secretary or the General Secretary know well in advance, also about any local meetings that might have any effect on boaters.

With that I better go – she-who-must-be-obeyed called – twice.

*James Mason*



# **B. S. S. – Your Response to the NABO Questionnaire**

- as of 26th January 2002

*By Graham Freeman – NABO Technical Committee*

Firstly I would like to thank all members who took the time to reply to this important questionnaire – your efforts (and frank responses) were greatly appreciated\*. Whilst questionnaires traditionally only get a 25 – 30% response rate, we have had to put the 18% return rate down to the time of year. However, if you are still mulling over your response, don't hesitate – send it back as soon as you can. The stats will be published on the Website in the very near future.

Well, what have you told us? In simple terms:-

- only 4% of you are content with the way BW are managing the scheme
- almost 100% of you want Council to continue lobbying for simplification of the BSS.
- some 57% of those that received a copy of BW's TLE questionnaire responded (the majority expressing opinion only).

For those who were able to provide a cost associated with modification to meet BSS standards, the figure comes to a staggering **£58,000** (I wonder what the real figure is ?) Just over 30% of that figure was for retrospective modification !

On the '*what would you like to see changed about the BSS ?*' question, almost all responded with answers that can be reduced to a single, clear objective - **SIMPLIFY THE SCHEME !**

I received over 50 letters included with the responses to the mail-shot (and so did BW's Technical Director !) – the message was clear – whilst most sensible people fully accept the principle of the scheme, the private boating fraternity seriously object to having regulation against 1st Party risks imposed on them under BW's all-enveloping 'Duty of Care' banner. In the main, boaters are responsible people, they understand the issues and take steps to minimise risks to themselves, their families and their friends. After all, we all share one common objective – to ENJOY our boating !

\*and I would like to thank Graham for all the toil dispatching them all - Ed.

As you've probably gathered, we are not alone in our discontentment with the outcome of the review process. We are currently in the process of sharing our findings with other boating organisations to present (another) objection to BW / EA on the proposed management and implementation of the 're-vamped' BSS. You will soon receive a copy of the 'New' BSS guide through the mail (how much did that cost I wonder ?) – please let us know what you think about it.

*Graham*

PS : Did you know that boating is more regulated than Formula 1 Racing ??

Interim results:-

Canal / River	No Returned	Content with BW Magaging ?	NABO Continue to Lobby ?	Respond to TLE quest.?	Costs
GU	62	3	62	36	12194
OXFORD	15	2	15	8	860
K & A	16	1	16	8	5063
T & M	23	1	23	17	7194
Staffs & Worcs	8	0	8	4	780
L & L	6	0	6	5	720
Shroppie	9	0	9	4	1060
Coventry	6	0	6	4	665
Worcs & B'ham	7	0	7	4	1800
Macc	9	1	9	7	1460
Bridgewater	6	1	5	1	1950
BCN	7	0	7	3	2850
Ashby	6	0	6	4	220
G & S	4	1	4	2	1560
Regents	2	0	2	2	404
Peak Forest	3	0	3	3	850
Llangollen	2	0	2	0	400
Caldon	3	0	3	1	80
Lancaster	1	0	1	1	107
Erewash	1	0	1	1	300
Chesterfield	1	0	1	1	200
Mon & Brec	1	0	1	1	0
Ashton	1	0	1	0	0
S'forth & Keadby	1	0	1	0	0
Trent	13	0	13	9	4262
Soar	4	0	4	2	1700
Calder & Hebble	4	0	4	3	650
Lee	2	0	2	1	1000
Stort	1	0	1	1	250
Severn	2	0	2	2	100
Wey	5	0	5	2	1110
Thames	5	0	5	4	4200
Ouse	2	0	2	1	60
Nene	2	0	2	1	325
Middle Level	3	0	3	2	250
Broads	1		1	N/A	0
Avon	4	1	4	0	672
Cont Cruiser	9	0	9	4	900
SOLD = BSS £	3	0	3	1	1850
Ashore	2	0	2	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>£58,046</b>
<b>% Returns</b>		<b>0.042</b>	<b>0.996</b>	<b>0.576</b>	

The password for items with '102' in their names is – **bollard**

## NABO – A SERIOUS PLAYER ON THE WATERWAYS

We have recently celebrated the first ten years of NABO's existence and tales have been recounted about the early days of the association and the great foresight of the founding members. So what about the next ten years, and beyond ....?

Since those early beginnings NABO has grown into a prominent and respected user group in regular touch with the major navigation bodies and other waterway organisations. Nearly all council members are now e-mail accessible and much of our day-to-day business is carried out via the wonders of modern technology – even when on board our boats. Our membership has grown progressively and our members have come to expect that we will tackle any issue related to boat ownership in a well-reasoned and professional manner. Our input into the Boat Safety Scheme review is a case in point. We were the only body to conduct a questionnaire to obtain factual information from boat owners on the true cost of the BSS and the only one to canvas the opinion of our members once the disappointing outcome of the review was known. And, of course, we intend to continue to seek improvements to the scheme.

As the only organisation of its kind to represent solely the interests of boat owners on Britain's inland waterway network, we must strive to offer the best service to our members. This can only be achieved by “moving up a gear” and setting our sights and our standards at a higher level. We shall seek involvement with new major organisations such as the Maritime & Coastguard Agency who appear to be on course to exert far greater influence

on the inland waterways for the first time. We have already joined PIANC (the international navigation body) and have a representative on an influential British Standards Institution committee concerned with small craft. We wish to continue to be involved in various BSS committees where we have had a positive input into both the technical side and the advisory group.

And we have recently accepted the offer of a place on the new Gloucester Harbour Trustees advisory body in advance of their obtaining a Harbour Revision Order to establish a modern and progressive port authority.

At the same time as increasing our profile, we must also seek to attract more new members from waterways where we are not well-represented such as the river Thames, Medway, East Anglian rivers, the Lakes and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. We already attend user group meetings on the Thames (so-called RUGs) together with Port of London Authority meetings, but we urgently need a greater presence on the ground on the Broads and the Environment Agency waterways in general. When the Boat Safety Scheme reaches the Broads we anticipate a surge in membership applications!

We have expressed our desire to join the various EA RFERACs (the advisory bodies covering navigation) in the regions. We believe the EA must improve its performance in navigation matters if it is to achieve the objectives set for it by DEFRA, and they can show their commitment to navigation by allowing more participation by groups such as our own.

But there is a limit to the number of user group meetings that NABO council members and their helpers can presently attend. So we appeal to you, the lifeblood of NABO, to give your support to making the next 10 years even more of a success than the first. How can you help? Well, if every member this year could recruit just one new member we would double our membership. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to work that one out!

We have greatly improved the services we offer to members and our annual subscription is not expensive for what you receive. Not only has our newsletter improved out of all recognition, just visit the NABO website and see what is on offer. Look at our newly launched guidance papers on ship registration, buying a boat, VHF radio and how to combat crime on the cut. There is also some food for thought about Acts of Parliament and boat behaviour. These build upon our first Safe Navigation on Rivers guidance booklet which members received in 2000. And we intend to produce more of these well researched and professionally presented

publications for our members. A series of commercially produced guidebooks will also be launched in 2002 – more information later.

We believe NABO has lots to attract new members, not just canal boaters but also trailboat users, people with small dinghies, speedboats, in fact anything that floats! We already cater for river boat owners and those who venture out on to tidal waters and we are working on producing comprehensive pilotage notes for the passage between Sharpness and Bristol, a popular journey for boats from the Severn and the K&A.

How else can you help? Well, you could let us know about issues of concern on your local waterway and maybe attend local user meetings on our behalf. You may even discover user groups that we haven't heard about!

The next ten years promise to be very exciting and rewarding. We need your help and support to realise our potential.

*Stephen Peters*

## NABO GUIDANCE PAPERS

These documents are now available on our website– [www.nabo.org.uk](http://www.nabo.org.uk)

From the Welcome Page select “Members”, then click the ‘Members Only’ boat ‘window’ at the bottom of the page. A list of links will instigate the downloads of

- **BUYING A BOAT**
- **SHIP REGISTRATION**
- **ACTS OF PARLIAMENT**
- **VHF RADIO**
- **COMBATTING CRIME**
- **BOATS BEHAVING BADLY**

All are in PDF format ready to file away on your computer and print off at your leisure. Apart from the first they are protected for members use by the password ‘**Branch**’

They may be published as pull-outs in future issues of this magazine according to space, postage weight and demand. If your need is urgent and you can't use the internet, ask Roger Davis (Mem. Sec.) if he can send you printouts.

## ENVIRONMENT AGENCY RETAINS NAVIGATION FUNCTION

After a prolonged period of uncertainty, the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Mrs Margaret Beckett, has finally decided that the Environment Agency will retain its present navigation responsibilities.

In a reply to a Parliamentary Question the DEFRA Secretary of State announced that the navigation functions of the EA and BW will remain as they are. This follows the recommendation of the Environment, Transport and Regions Select Committee which had concluded that the status quo should prevail. A subsequent review of the financial and management aspects of the EA also concluded that there were no compelling reasons for a transfer of functions from the EA to BW.

Both BW and EA had heavily lobbied the Secretary of State on the subject and recent press reports indicated that some 'dirty tricks' were being played in an attempt to influence the outcome in favour of one party.

A majority of user organisations had supported the transfer of navigation functions from the EA to BW, but NABO's agreed policy stance was that the EA should take over responsibility for all river navigations if there were to be any changes made.

We support the decision to leave things as they are; and we hope that everyone else will now forget their differences and give the EA personnel the support that they need and deserve if they are to make a success of running the river navigations under their control. The question of EA versus BW should be finally put to rest.

Having said that, it is essential that the Government's decision be matched by increased funding to support the EA as a navigation authority. Navigation has traditionally been given a very low profile in the overall affairs of the EA and now is the ideal opportunity for central Government funding to be reviewed. BW has received considerable increases in grant aid and special funding and now EA must be placed on an equal footing.

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Sadie Dean, last year's Council minutes secretary, was out on the Fens and says,

### **"HURRAH FOR EA!"**

Just before Christmas I was out exploring all of the Middle Level Navigations in order to show them to a friend, who has never been this way before. I thought it would be nice to visit Horseways Lock\*, which belongs to the Middle Level and travel through the channel to Welches Dam, which is a lock belonging to EA.

The channel between the locks is in EA waters and is only flooded on certain weekends in the year, because it leaks. I telephoned EA to say that I wanted to go that way and ask when it would next be in water.

It was due to be flooded on the weekend of 29th December, but as I was keen to travel that way and the channel had not been used much during the year, they kindly flooded it for the weekend of the 22nd for me.

We had a good trip through and went as far as Welney, where the sluice was down. We wended and stayed there for two nights, exploring the area by foot during the day, which worked out very well as the Old Bedford or 100ft River was frozen that day.



It all thawed during the night and we left before dawn to go back to Weches Dam and through the channel early.

A very enjoyable trip, especially for the friend who had never seen locks like Horseways or Welches Dam, and for me as I was involved in the restoration of the locks and channel and spent many happy hours 'playing in the mud' at Weches Dam during the restoration work.

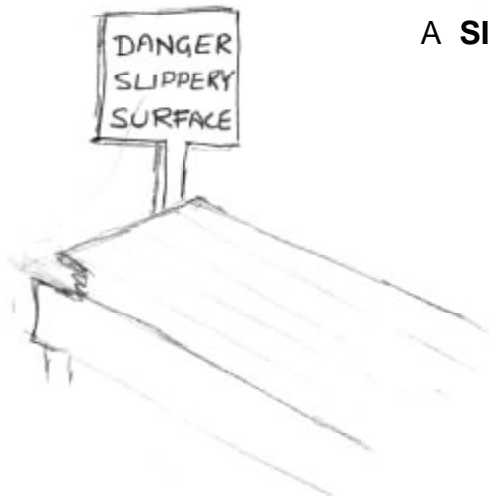
Many thanks to EA personnel for their kindness, especially so near the Christmas Break.

SADIE DEAN

\*Horseways Lock only has a landing stage the Middle Level side. I suppose, logically, why should EA erect a landing stage where they don't have a lock?

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...but no HURRAH for the Middle Level Commissioners....



## A SIGN OF THE TIMES?

We arrived at a landing stage on the Middle Level and moored up. The landing stage was slippery at the front, but had chicken wire secured to cover more than half of it. Vandals had removed the rest (and set fire to the mooring post).

We had been there about half an hour when a Middle Level Operative came along and removed the rest of the chicken wire from the landing stage (with difficulty)

He then erected the sign. He said that there would be plans to put down non-slip paint.

Why remove the chicken wire and leave the whole landing stage in a dangerously slippery state?

Ah! it was the notice. I would more than likely slip on the surface now the wire was removed, but I **had been warned**, so it would be my own fault!

S.D.

# COMING AND GOING IN NABO

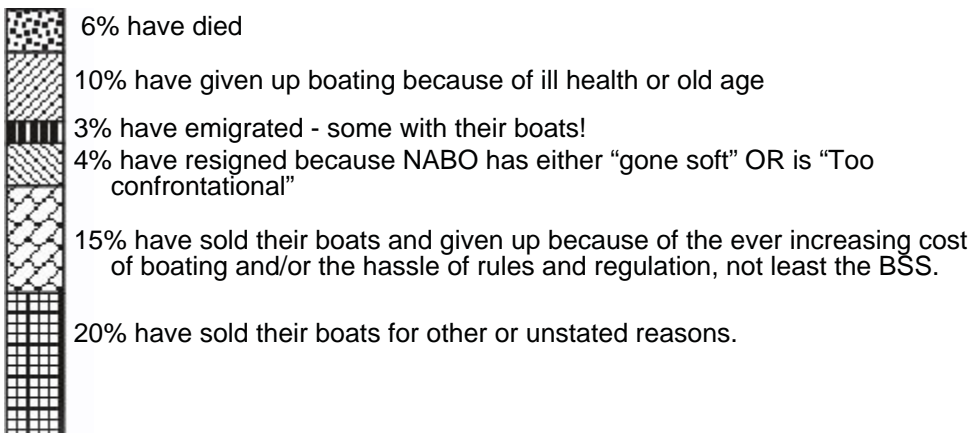
Following questions from members at the AGM in November, Council has asked me to produce - in addition to their normal detailed reports - some statistics of NABO's gains and losses of members over the last couple of years. They thought this would be of interest to our general membership.

The most encouraging fact is that our membership throughout our ten years' existence has consistently grown. The rate of growth has been remarkably steady and recruits have always out-numbered losses in each year. 2001's recruiting was the second highest on record with the lowest ever loss of members.

The reason for people leaving any organisation is always important, especially one such as ours, as it may be significant as to whether we are fulfilling our members' expectations - or not!

So here are some numbers gleaned from the membership records of the last two years.

Of those we have lost:-



?

And the rest. . . .? We wish we knew! One of the most disappointing things about this job is failing to get any response from members when they haven't paid their subs. Before removing members from our list I always write two reminder letters and then, if necessary, e-mail and/or phone.

Sometimes people have moved without telling us and are uncontactable; sometimes they can't be bothered to send back a prepaid envelope or return a phone call with a brief explanation as to why they are not continuing with NABO. Shame really, as it helps Council if we know why people have given up.

So please:-

- make sure we have your correct address and phone number, and
- if you are giving up boating or leaving us from some other reason -

**DO TELL US!**

Roger - Membership Secretary

# completely baffled !

Many of you may remember the debate that led to BW imposing the introduction of baffles to lock gate paddles on safety grounds. The idea was that a slatted steel grill would deflect the water to the side of the lock and reduce the risk of flooding a boat. When first proposed, many boaters and user organisations expressed reservations about the design.

Following lengthy trials on the Buckby top lock (GU), BW declared that the baffles did not cause any problems or significantly increase lock fill times. Subsequently, they have been (or are being) installed in many locks.



The photographs show the same gate paddles used in the trials taken on a cold morning last December. The right hand gate paddles have been fully raised and you can see the resulting poor flow. The cause is a build up of leaves, twigs, plastic bags and other debris behind the steel baffle. This was despite valiant efforts from the local BW staff to keep them clear. The choking was observed on most of the Buckby locks fitted with the baffles. There was also evidence that the debris was causing some paddles not to fully seal when closed.

*Trevor Rogers*

# YOU ARE WELCOME ON THE COMMERCIAL WATERWAYS

NABO is working on a Skipper's Guide to the Aire and Calder Navigation for newcomers to the waterway, maybe to become a pull-out supplement to a future NABO News.

The barge operators have welcomed it and are having a lot of input. They told us that, on the whole, they welcome pleasure craft, and many of the barge crews and skippers have pleasure boats themselves. Differences of opinion, which are few and far between, usually arise from ignorance or pig-headedness.

In spite of the apparent invulnerability of their vessels, they suffer the same vagaries as the rest of us - going aground, cross-winds, low bridges, currents, idiots in smaller vessels they can't see or who don't know the rules of the road etc. - all magnified by a factor of three or more cubed. No way can they pole off a 600 tonne barge, or hold it on a rope while waiting for a lock! However these skippers are very experienced and the navigation is certainly not as unsafe as some correspondents in waterway magazines paint it.

They feel it would be even safer if as many craft as possible had marine-band radio, tuned to VHF Channel 74 on non-tidal waters, or Channel 6 on the tidal Trent. Much can be gained by just listening, so an operator's licence is not needed. Failing that they recommend you phone the Ferrybridge lock keeper (01977 673124) when you come onto the A & C as he is usually well appraised of barge movements.

The commercial waterways are fascinating and present a totally different boating experience. Don't be put off by scare-mongering and, if you are coming to the 'National' at Huddersfield this year, include them in your itinerary. SS

*Advertisement*

*Advertisement*

## **ABOUT THE PARLIAMENTARY WATERWAYS GROUP**

The P. W. G. is an official All-Party Group with members from both Houses of Parliament.

Our Chairman is Bill O'Brien MP,  
Vice-Chairman - Lembit Opik MP,  
Secretary - Dominic Grieve MP and  
Treasurer - Candy Atherton MP.

Any interested organisation or individual can apply for Associate Membership of the Group.

The Group's terms of reference are to consider matters relating to:-

- The inland navigation system of canals and navigable rivers administered by British Waterways
- Canals and navigable rivers in Great Britain under the control of other navigation authorities
- Estuaries and lakes on which boating takes place in Great Britain

All activities associated with the above waterways

The Group will make representations to British Waterways, Government, the Environment Agency, local and other authorities and the European Parliament as necessary in defence of the future use and continuance of inland waterways in Great Britain.

Please note the coast and open sea are specifically excluded from the interest of the Group.

The Group meets at the House of Commons every other month, when the House is sitting. Speakers are usually Government Ministers or Chairs or Chief Executives of relevant Agencies. The meetings are brisk and lively and include ample time for questions.

For further details, please contact our Administrator, Penny Barber

### **MOBILE PHONE MASTS ALONG THE TOWPATHS**

BW is a partner in a commercial venture with Ipsaris (formerly known as Fibreway) and it has recently announced that many communications masts will start to appear along the waterways.

Masts not exceeding 15 metres in height to the top of the supporting structure do not strictly require planning consent but BW has undertaken to advise and consult with local planning authorities before erecting any masts.

Please let NABO know if you hear about any such proposals and give us your views. These masts are controversial because of the fear that radiation from them may be a health risk. The jury is still out on this problem but it appears that the main danger, if any, is from the mobile handsets rather than the masts, especially in low signal strength areas where the telephone has to put out increased power in order to reach the nearest transmitter.

We would ask our members to keep a lookout in their local press for announcements relating to new masts on BW property so that relevant observations and possible objections can be put forward.

## **USER GROUP MEETINGS - THE 'REFORMATION'**

Most BW waterway area offices hold 'User Group' meetings twice a year. In the past they have allowed any 'customer' to apply for an invitation to these meetings, either as a representative of a group or as an individual. Obviously NABO tries to send someone, under the direction of the appropriate Regional Secretary.

This is now becoming even more important as some BW areas are 'reforming' their User Group Meeting policy and closing the door on individuals. Their customers are now being recommended to join an organisation to have input to the meetings in future, which places more onus on the likes of NABO to ensure the private boat owner has a voice.

This is a two edged sword for NABO, it may give a boost to membership, but it is, on the surface, an erosion of opportunities for customer feedback, something that NABO should oppose on principle. However, if the meetings were becoming as unmanageable as they claim, limiting invitations might actually help the meetings focus on the issues that matter.

So, again, we ask anyone who might be able to spare some time, and appetite for buffets, to put their names forward to represent boaters at these meetings. Contact details for your Regional Secretary are on page 35 and if in doubt about the policies you will be supporting, look on page ??

*Advertisement*

## **CRIME ON THE CUT**

Just a quick reminder to members that the Association's campaign to increase towpath and waterway awareness will continue throughout 2002.

BW has shown positive interest in the subject of dealing with criminal activity on the waterways and we are working in conjunction with them to improve security for users, whilst not wishing to exaggerate the problem which seems to be sporadic.

There is a form on the NABO website for members to give reports of incidents in which they have been involved stone-throwing, vandalism, break-ins, etc. and we receive these at the rate of about 2 or 3 per month. This puts the problem in context and it is surprising how many boaters will state that they have never experienced any problems, even in so-called 'blackspots'.

It is undoubtedly the case that some victims will not report an incident because they feel that nothing will be done about it. Whilst this may be so in practice, it is still necessary to report crimes so that the statistics are available to the authorities. This means informing the local police and obtaining a crime number or incident reference so that it appears on police records. If you find yourself or your craft in a situation of imminent or grave danger or personal attack then you must dial 999 immediately and summon assistance. Also, inform the local BW or navigation office so that they are aware of the problems.

## **ALWAYS REPORT IT**

*Advertisement*

## WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

Happy New Year to you all, with my worries we need one!

Eee I do have a lot on my mind.

I was going to go on about **E-mail** for a start, trying to get this to the **Editor**, but I'd better not!

I worry about the **Environment Agency**, especially the Flood Control side of their work. It must be a problem, that despite all they do, planners still allow building on the flood plains. When there is a high water situation the water has to go somewhere. I once heard planners explain that they had included lakes in the plans, for the floodwater to go in! 'But they are already full of water- you idiots,' I wanted to shout at them but, as you know, I am far too genteel, I just worry. No wonder rivers are closed to navigation for longer periods these days.

The name Environment Agency doesn't help because another worry with EA is that, for some years, navigation has been low on their list of priorities, so low that it seemed to have dropped off the bottom of the list. Luckily things are improving in that area, especially as now they can feel more secure about navigation remaining in their hands.

Being concerned about the environment is important and we all do our bit with not polluting and recycling. (Don't you worry I know that this doesn't mean cycling over the same bit twice.)

It is just that some **Environmentalists** go too far, for example-

- Campaigning to stop navigation on some rivers because they say that boat movement damages the environment. The flora and fauna survived and flourished when there was commercial traffic and the anti-pollution laws far less stringent.
- Closing lengths of canals because they claim a rare plant breeds there. Sometimes there are areas 'bogged down' with those so-called rare plants elsewhere.
- Trying to stop boats using recently restored canals, claiming that the boats will damage the ecology. Have they seen a closed canal? Noticed how stagnant and dead it becomes without boat movement and how it attracts 'fly tipping'.
- Attempting to protect growing vegetation by virtually throwing themselves under the strimmers of the men clearing the towpath edges. They don't care about boaters' broken ankles or the damage to the towpath wall or anything else to do with the reason the canal is there in the first place. Nor do they notice the plants growing on the other side of the towpath, by hedge or wall and on the other side of the canal.
- Digging up, even with pneumatic drills, perfectly good towpath edges and replacing them with rolls of water plants held in by wooden stakes. I've seen BW doing this,



despite the worrying consequences. I think it is part of an ongoing scheme to create maintenance work. Maybe they don't think they have enough to do in some areas!

The Environmentalists' concern for wildlife is a worryingly delicate subject.

'Protect these little furry creatures,' they cry; 'Close this tunnel to protect these bats,' 'Keep those dreadful boats away from these water voles.'

What do we do about it?

If we say 'Don't be so daft, there are bats living happily in this and that tunnel and boats are through there constantly.' Will the Environmentalists start campaigns to close those tunnels or limit boat movements? That is the worry.

So we don't tell anyone.

Any old boater could tell you that water voles were living in the most industrialised areas of the canals during the days of commercial carrying and still are.

Could tell you, but won't!

Shh! - Not a word about any living thing, plant or creature, because of the worry that someone will take some sort of anti-boating action.

If folk are concerned about the environment of the canals, they need to take a very close look for a long time. Spend time walking the towpath; travelling by boat; live with it perhaps?

I worry that they just see one little bit and that from a predisposed standpoint.

Now, as you know, I worry. I understand that you don't all agree with me but please don't doubt my veracity.

Go and look.

Check in the BCN, around Galton Bridge for example, 26 kinds of wildflower were found in one day, by a couple walking there.

Referring to passed shared worries, if you question that 'towpath improvements too often mean canal narrowing', check where the old towpath wall is in relation to the new one in some places. I know there are over 2,000 miles of canal so again I give an easy central example. In Birmingham near Gas Street, from the Worcester Bar Lock the canal has been narrowed considerably towards Salvage Turn.

I hope you are all enjoy good boating in 2002.

Leave the worrying to me.

Yours

www Dot

First of all I would like to sound out your opinions on advertising in this publication. NABO News is certainly not ‘Top of the Gloss’, and, although I have tried to make it look a bit more professional, it is still produced to bring you the content at the most reasonable price. To rise in the ‘Gloss charts’ would mean either increasing subscriptions, sacrificing something else NABO has to spend money on, or getting more advertising revenue. It is primarily the member’s magazine, I would welcome the members’ views. Do you use, like or hate adverts?

And now some food for thought ...I wonder if those who first thought of waterways had any idea how many **committees** their idea would have generated by the following millennium? Did they dream that all the three letter acronyms might have been used up by the end of the 21st century? Vying for the top of that list would be all the angling associations of places beginning with ‘A’, and at the other end - would someone form a Zouch Zoological Zone for preservation of otters on the Soar?

Of course there will be bodies with committees devoted to all waterway interests in all parts of the country, but it is the proliferation of national ones that makes understanding waterway politics such a challenge. (See last July’s issue for Graham Freeman’s Glossary.) At least NABO’s purpose is clearly defined, as is RBOA, CBOA, AWCC and the like, but when several organisations form umbrella committees like NINF and AIWA, life gets complicated and the buck seems to bounce around like a pin-ball – and, where is the IWA going in all this, and whatever is a REFRAC?

To further complicate the issue, outside bodies are muscling in. The RYA claims to be the body representing inland boaters, and then the Maritime & Coastguard Agency seems to be looking inland too.

BSS! (pass the soap for a mouth wash!) – here is a prime example of committee proliferation already gone mad. Don’t get me wrong: I too have a dread of uncontrolled fire, especially on a boat. However, do we really need so much bureaucracy to motivate boaters to take the right steps to prevent it? As light reading at the last Council meeting I was handed a 34 page report from our representative on the BSS Advisory Committee, almost wholly devoted to how the scheme was being, or going to be, run. This mentioned yet another tier to their organisation. The BSS Review asked for **more** transparency. Well, I suppose water is transparent, so is air, but what do small droplets of the former suspended in the latter make? - FOG!

Are they taking any notice of what we say, or is this customer consultation business just ‘jobs for the boys’? Is there a danger that, with so much consultation going on, the resources of those being consulted are being quietly bled dry? You can see why NABO has to work as hard now as it ever has done.

*Stuart Sampson*

*Editor– NABO News, 48 Old lane, Bramhope, Leeds LS16 9AZ*

# NOTICES

## **WATERWAY MANAGERS AND BOATERS TAKE NOTE:-**

**The '10 Km Rule' does not exist.**

There is a proposed guideline that boats should move on 10 Km after 14 days and not return, but it is not yet obligatory.

Parish boundaries have been suggested as an alternative and the matter is still under discussion.

NABO does not condone overstaying on moorings, but it doesn't condone enforcement of non-existent powers either. If you become a victim of the latter, let a member of Council know.

### **MEMO:**

**WE URGENTLY REQUIRE SOMEONE TO ATTEND BOTH THE G.H.T. AND G&S USER FORUM MEETINGS ON A REGULAR BASIS**, otherwise we will not be taken seriously.

Also received latest information from National Trust River Wey user meeting from Roy de la Haye (a former NABO member). He will not attend any more meetings and give us feedback. We need a rep to attend River Wey meetings.

**NOTICE of CLOSURE** on the **MIDDLE LEVEL NAVIGATIONS** Marmont Priory Lock will be closed from Monday 38th January until 18th February

**NABO's MOORINGS** at the Inland Waterways Exhibition.

NABO will have a reserved length by the N.I.A. again this summer. If you are coming, put NABO at the top of your list on the form.

Password = bollard

## **TECHNICAL COMMITTEE E-MAIL ADDRESS**

To reach all members of the tech. committee simultaneously, address your message to:  
**techcomm@nabo.org.uk**

Lister HR2 stationary engine for sale.  
Used as a standby only.

Also a Lister Blackstone mechanical gearbox complete.

Too old and too poor to continue cannalling so projects abandoned.  
Sensible offers please

02380 (Southampton) 860190

**Fancy attiring yourself to match your boat?**

Macro have been offering a chef's outfit from Porthwest Clothing with diamond patterned cap, scarf and trousers in red, green, yellow and blue for around £20!



# **Whoops!**

*Humblest apologies to past presidents reading Page 6 of the 10th Anniversary Issue - The headline should have read:-*

*'Bill O'Brien becomes NABO's first non-member president'*

**CALENDAR** of meeting dates and deadlines now on Page 2



# RIVERS



## UPGRADING NENE LOCKS

Users of the River Nene will know that many of the structures have a guillotine gate at the downstream end and traditional mitre gates at the opposite end. During times of flood the locks may be 'reversed' i.e. the pointing gates will be chained open and the vertical gate adjusted to act as a sluice to control the flowing water.

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for local youths to use the vertical gates as platforms from which to dive into the lock chambers. To prevent this misuse of the structures, the Environment Agency is undertaking a scheme of lock gate replacement, starting with the gates at Upper Wellingborough and Higham, which will be replaced with mitre gates.

The Agency has announced that the programme of gate replacement will proceed in autumn 2002 and beyond, with priority sites at Weston Favell, Clifford Hill, Billing, Lower Wellingborough and Irthlingborough on the upper river; and Woodford, Alwalton and Orton downstream.

The trouble is, of course, that Weston Favell, Clifford Hill, Billing and Orton locks have been electrified to aid operation and have had anti-scaling panels recently fitted as part of a series of health & safety measures at considerable expense.

We need more electrified locks along the Nene, not the wasteful replacement of those that have only just been upgraded. We have asked the EA to explain their policy.

## MARINE VHF RADIO

The Radiocommunications Agency has just published the latest edition of its informative AirWaves newsletter and, as usual, it contains some interesting factual articles concerning the use of marine VHF radio.

They have introduced a new Ship Portable radio licence at a new lower fee of £15 pa (a reduction of £5 from last year).

They have also revised the details required on the Ship Fixed radio licence application form to reflect the growing use of Digital Selective Calling radio equipment on boats. Anyone considering upgrading or installing a VHF radiotelephone should be aware that although existing equipment can continue to be used, it is worth considering the purchase of a radio which is DSC capable or can be upgraded in due course. The latest radios will ensure that distress calls will be heard and responded to after 31 January 2005 when the coastguard will stop monitoring Channel 16. All new equipment on sale must, by law, comply with European specifications.



The Agency stresses that a radio licence expires when a boat is sold and the new owner must take out a new licence. They are not transferable and refunds are not possible. The licences are issued by Consignia (The Post Office) at Bristol.

Remember, you must have a current licence if you install a VHF radio but it cannot be used for transmission without the holder of an operator's certificate being on board. This can be obtained by taking a simple examination – either a Restricted VHF exam or a Short Range certificate if you use the latest DSC equipment. BUT did you know that anyone can use a VHF radio in a DISTRESS situation?

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## WORCESTER WATERWAYS USERS' FORUM

NABO was ably represented at this in December and we learnt that:-

EA's recreation strategy for the Severn Corridor included the recommendation that 'we will not support the dual use of footpaths for cycling'. When questioned further the EA representative stated this policy 'was not absolute'!

BW has introduced a new e-mail only 'G&S Newsletter' I. Further information from [jo.betteridge@britishwaterways.co.uk](mailto:jo.betteridge@britishwaterways.co.uk)

The review period for the revised lock and bridge opening times has now started and initial responses have been favourable. Do you have views on this?

BW intends to introduce 'strong stream' warnings rather than flood levels in 2003, using coloured signs at lock sites.

Do you have any views on the new signs at the Worcester City Council municipal moorings? The next meeting of the Forum takes place in Worcester on 13 March 2002.

*Advertisement*

## A GUIDE TO NABO POLICY

If you are representing NABO's interests at any meetings, please bring to the attention of the meeting and our Council anything that goes against the following:-

**The BSS system needs to be simplified and NO FURTHER REGULATIONS should be implemented.**

*BW should help in the cases of difficulty experienced because of failed safety certification, not victimise the boaters.*

*The scheme is constantly evolving and is always under review by NABO.*

**Continuous cruising is not a problem and any problems regarding mooring are covered in the existing BW byelaws and apply to all boats.**

*We are against 'bridge hopping' and boaters moving continuously between two close moorings.*

*We want proper consultation and the interpretation of the rules to be consistent in all regions.*

*Navigation offers **no conflict with biodiversity** and should have priority should any arise.*

**Channel Dimensions** – all authorities should comply with original profiles except where exceptional engineering reasons exist.

*Dredging at designated mooring areas should be sufficient to allow deep draught boats to come alongside.*

**Boaters to have priority over cyclists on the towpath.**

*We are against any organised cycling events on the towpath.*

*We object, on safety grounds, to the 'upgrade' of towpaths in order to create cycleways.*

**There should be no areas of towpath designated for anglers only.**

*The closed season for coarse fishing should be retained.*

**BW is a navigation authority and should concentrate money and resources on that.**

*BW should not diversify into businesses such as, property development, purchasing marinas, including coastal marinas, buying out moorings and taking over festivals and restoration projects.*

*Assisting is one thing, taking control is another.*

**There should be no erosion of existing riparian rights.**

**There should be facilities for boaters to pump out their own toilet holding tanks.**

**Maximum possible notice should be given of all stoppages and better information regarding any emergency closures is needed.**

**Vegetation at the towpath edge should be cut short and maintained in such a way as to be safe.**

**The proposal to disable top gate paddles for safety, following accident at Gargrave, is inappropriate.**

**There should be one licence covering all navigations and unified standards for all waterways**

**\*We do not agree with licence evasion, but insist that it can only be considered a civil offence and never a criminal offence.**

**The law as it stands at present is sufficient.**

*The existing bylaws of the navigation authorities are sufficient to cover any eventualities relating to the consumption of alcohol and boating.*

*Any rules made by authorities should be legal and apply to all boaters.*

# FLY ON THE WALL

## at Council



The bird has finally flown so it's safe for this fly to sit on the wall and observe - with all my eyes - the council meetings. And what an eye opener they can be!

BW has acknowledged that they don't have the legal powers to make "angling only" lengths on their inland waterways. They have tended to rush in and do their own thing without keeping an eye on their Act. They also know now that the 10km/28 day mooring regulation cannot be enforced, but some of their managers are still applying it in their area. The Council wants you to zap them a missive if you've been caught by one recently!

Another BW action Council are keeping their eyes on is the way they turn those favourite mooring spots into 48 hour moorings without so much as a by-your-leave. How can they be encouraged to consult interested parties before even considering such action? And what about turning visitor moorings into

paid moorings in the off season? Council thinks that's probably OK as long as space is left for those still cruising to stop to shop or rest for a day or so.

Have you seen the new revamped version of the Boat Safety Scheme? It's red and in a nice ring binder, and apparently easier to use and understand. BW also seem to be promoting the RYA to take over the BSS. And the Maritime and Coastguard Agency is to become the regulatory body for safety instead of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and would take any prosecutions. Well, the mind boggles at putting narrowboats with yachts and coastguards!

The proposal to certificate part-finished boats led to some ribaldry among members. Their boats seem to be constantly in that state. Hands up those whose boat is ab-so-lute-ly finished!

Do you discuss these things amongst yourselves in your neck of the woods? Why not form a local NABO branch? (and with the blessing of the Council!) But do let your regional secretary know of your decisions so that they and Council can perhaps use their clout to help.

Time to buzz off and keep my eyes on other events, byeeeeeeeeee!

Bluebottle

# ACCESS RESTRICTED?

As you may know, NABO has a rather basic website which is not blessed with all the high power security facilities that commercial sites can afford. However we need to deny the casual interloper free access to those items NABO provides as a service to its members, and, in case we have more confidential items, create a means to ensure they are only read by current bona-fide members. (e.g. messages to co-ordinate a protest against something, should members feel strongly enough about it, or to distribute any other material, public knowledge of which may weaken our bargaining position.)

A secure and cost-free method is to lock each item using the password system provided as a standard feature of the Adobe Acrobat reader. This free program, already installed on most computers, reads the Portable Document Format (PDF) files which are becoming very common on both PCs, Macs and the Web for properly laid out text documents .

So far so good, but how do you ensure only members get to know the password? Publishing it in NABO News is adequate for items where we only wish to exclude the casual visitor, but NABO News is read outside the realm of NABO membership.

Sending out a password as a regular mailing could reach all current members, but it is a long, tedious and costly job stuffing and stamping the better part of 2000 envelopes, so I piggy-backed the yellow slips on the BSS questionnaire in rather a hurry, hence the rather terse wording, for which I apologise.

The other benefit of giving each file its own password is that you can tell your browser to take it as a download

rather than view it straight away. You can then unlock it at leisure when you are off-line. If you want to make it easier to retrieve, rename the file so its name includes its password.

For some items I shall be putting the password in plain view in the News, rather than expect folks to be able to find the 'last word on Page 5'. However for the higher security items I am now committed, so please keep your yellow slips and feel free to e-mail [webmaster@nabo.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@nabo.org.uk) if you have problems.

For those who need to know the whys and wherefores – someone suggested cutting off a whole area of the website with one 'entry gate'. This is difficult. If the URLs of pages within can be found, then a browser can go straight to them with no restriction. You would therefore have to restrict every page with a password, making the system no easier to use than what we have now, and less secure. Protecting a standard HTML web page means some sort of script in the page itself, which slows down loading, may not work with some browsers and can be hacked by anyone who understands 'source code'.

I did an experiment with a script that matched up membership numbers with members' post codes. This worked quite well but it needed to send your computer a compressed version of every member's post code so yours could be validated. This worked fine on a test of Council members but got very clumsy with 1700-ish entries, and would need updating every time folks left or joined.

There had to be a better way.

Stuart Sampson



## HOW TO AVOID THE WORST OF THE BOAT SAFETY SCHEME – SOME NEW YEAR THOUGHTS

The New Year sees the much-heralded re-launch of the BSS following a year that saw the culmination of the review process and the introduction of Time Limited Exemptions. The TLEs permitted a boat to fail its examination on certain items without rendering it unable to obtain a licence.

This year, you may discover that the previous TLEs have ceased to be advisory and you must remedy the defects before you obtain a new licence. On the plus side you may find that some previously mandatory checklist items have now become advisory and will not count towards a BSS failure. Obtain a copy of the latest BSS guidance booklets to ascertain the current position.

The major concession applies to instantaneous gas water heaters ñ the powers-that-be have relented and it is now permissible to install a new Paloma-type water heater to replace an old one or as a new installation.

On the negative side, remember that old style gas-powered fridges lacking a sealed combustion system will have to be scrapped in 4 years' time. Open flame fridges are considered by the BSS to be a danger to life and limb and you will either have to splash out on a new sealed flue refrigerator (Electrolux make a limited range of rather expensive models that cannot be installed on a DIY basis); or else you must disconnect the fridge and use it only from an electric supply if it is a dual-fuel type.

If you feel totally frustrated by the BSS how can you minimise the worst effects of it? Here are a few suggestions.

Forget about LPG. Remove the system from your boat and replace the cooker with one of the alternative fuel models which operate on methylated spirits. Replace your water heater with a storage calorifier which is heated by the engine cooling system or via a mains powered immersion heater. Operate the fridge off 12 volt DC, directly off the shore supply or by means of an inverter unit producing 230 volts AC. But you will find that your boat batteries will take a bit of a hammering.

As a short-term measure, why not take you boat to waters where the BSS does not yet operate? The River Medway navigation, for instance. Or the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads. Or Lake Windermere. So far the BSS is not operating in these areas, and will never apply to the Scottish lochs which form the Caledonian Canal, thanks to the vigilance of the House of Lords. As a last resort, why not emigrate and take your boat with you to Ireland or the inland waterways of Europe?

If your boat has sea-going capability you could base it on tidal waters or in a coastal marina – the BSS does not apply on the sea or the tidal Thames. You will still be able to use all UK inland waterways for up to 56 days every year by obtaining short term licences. You can over-winter in some

private inland marinas without needing to obtain a licence or a BSC and then move to an alternative location for the summer months. This is a popular ploy on rivers such as the Severn or Trent and perfectly legal. It is possible, for instance, to moor on the short length of river Salwarpe north of Worcester, free from any licence fees or regulations. Likewise, on the Severn upstream of the BW jurisdiction at Stourport.

Does anyone else know of mooring locations that are not subject to officialdom?

Our wealthier members might consider the ultimate means of avoiding the BSS by buying a brand new boat (with a CE mark, of course). All new craft must, by law, comply with the EU Recreational Craft Directive which exempts them from the BSS for the first 4 years, and thereafter providing the boat is maintained in conformity with the RCD – or so we understand!

SP

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## Where Size Matters!

### **The National Inland Navigation Forum**

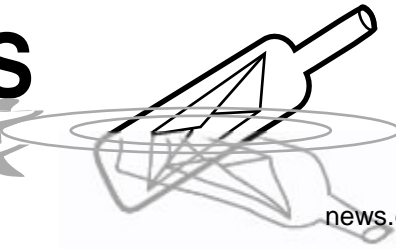
This is a meeting held every couple of months or so for chairmen and vice chairs of about a dozen boating organisations. These include the IWA, Royal Yachting Association, The (Dutch) Barge Association, Historic Narrowboat Owners Association, the Residential Boaters, trade organisations, and holiday organisations.

The idea of the forum is to discuss current issues and if necessary to organise a co-ordinated approach. It doesn't mean we agree all the time. The BW/EA take-over being a case in point. NABO disagreed with several of the larger groups and came out in support of EA with whom we have a good working relationship. On the BSS review the involvement with the forum was and still is invaluable. The user group "observer" was chosen from the forum without any thought of which organisation he belonged to, only was he the right man for the job. David Smith from the AWCC did an excellent job for us all. What NINF doesn't do is to act as a voice for its members. It is up to each individual organisation to progress its argument in its own way. NINF neither writes nor receives communication on its behalf.

NABO was involved at the inception with IWA. It was agreed that there should be two co-chairmen, one from a large organisation and one from a small one. During the formative years Audrey Smith of IWA was the "large chair" and Jon Darlington of NABO was the "small chair". Things have changed this year. Now I am the "large" chair with the co-chair being David Dunning of the Trent Boating Association.

Sue Burchett

# LETTERS



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## A Vote of Thanks

I, as an ex-committee member and member of NABO since the first meeting at Dudley in August 1991, would like to thank Sue Burchett for volunteering to be Chairman at the AGM in 1999. Sue volunteered as she knew that at that time there was no-one else who wanted to do the job, and kept the position for two years. She deserves a big thank you.

I would request our Committee that they ensure that in future they have someone "waiting in the wings" to take on the role of Chairman when the present Chairman expresses a wish to leave the position. I know that the role of Chairman is very time consuming and to find someone willing to fill the position is not an easy task, however, to ensure continuity it would help if a successor was available.

Christine Denton

Council have noted this, but must act according to the NABO Constitution, leaving choice of officers to next year's elected Council. Ed.

## The BSS – Time for Action?

Congratulations again to NABO for its excellent response to Bill 'Safety' Schlegel on the BSS 'Consultation'. NABO has undoubtedly won the argument but will it win the war? The BSS will not, I fear, simply lay down and die to be replaced by a simple fair and inexpensive scheme proportionate to the low risks involved. Boat safety is now big business

with far too much bureaucracy and too many vested interests and reputations at stake.

My request to Bill Schlegel for information about the number of serious injuries or deaths attributable to any of the 'faults' listed in the BSS checklist has been ignored. I must conclude therefore that there is no evidence to question my assertion that inland waterways boating is, and always has been, extremely safe compared with most any other pursuit (certainly safer than staying at home or driving the car to the boat!) and I suspect that most boating 'accidents' are not covered by the BSS, i.e. carelessness, incompetence, slipping overboard or into locks, low bridges and doorways etc. When sledgehammers are used to crack nuts there is inevitably a great deal of collateral damage — in this case to boat owners in the form of anger, heartbreak, frustration and unnecessary expense.

The more I hear about the much vaunted 'BSS Review', the more of an expensive charade it seems to have been with no real likelihood of the final outcome recommending the fundamental and radical changes necessary to produce a reasonable and acceptable scheme.

So do we simply give in when reason and logic have failed? I hope not. As a



**Note** – Views expressed in readers' letters are not to be taken as those of NABO as a whole

lifelong 'non-militant' I am now seriously suggesting that the NABO Council should be actively considering contingency plans to consult NABO members about direct action to emphasise our frustration and anger. Coordinated action could quickly bring the waterways to a halt by, e.g. refusing to move from locks over a busy weekend. I'm sure there are many other ways and we should be pressing our Council to take a firm stand with some imaginative ideas.

David Peck

### Working Boat Priority

I can relieve Dot's worry about mixing freight and pleasure waterways traffic in the October NN. All she has to do is look at the situation in France.

On the French waterways, commercial vessels (of which there are quite a few, including cargo, passenger, hotel, etc.) have absolute priority over pleasure craft. Everyone on the water knows this, and the leisure traveller simply keeps out of the way of the working traffic, and always lets it overtake, use locks first, etc. No-one there seems to have any problem with this rule.

This used to be the custom in Britain, but somehow it seems to have faded away. I suggest it be reinstated as a bylaw.

We'd all be better off with more working traffic, not only for the interest it provides, but also because it keeps BW honest as it requires the equipment and the channel to be properly maintained (and provides revenue towards this).

Adrian Stott

### Catalogue of Moans

I couldn't agree more with Francis Sarre, who wrote that NABO News has a 'depressingly negative tenor' and it's about time we started to realise how much things have improved over recent years. In many cases this has been directly due to the efforts of NABO and other boating groups and NABO News should focus more often on achievements, as well as challenges.

As for the latest catalogue of moans from 'Worried Woman of the Waterways', why not put all the moaning, griping, paranoid depressive contributions together in a new four page section in the middle of the magazine? That way people who have had enough of listening to this kind of negativity could pull the section out and throw it in the bin before even looking at it.

Roy Ullah, nb Panther

Nice idea, but I have better uses for pull-outs in the pipeline - Ed.

### Plantain and Cycleways

Issue 6/01, P. 10: BW annual report — If Floating Water Plantain is found on the whole length of the Monty and on 13 miles of the Rochdale, it can hardly be described as rare. So how can the designation as SSSI because of it be justified?

It is interesting that the 'conservationists' only become interested in a canal after we navigators have done the hard work and restored it. If restoration so improves the conservation value of a canal, why do we never hear of conservationists restoring them? ►

Page 12: cycleways - can Worried Woman, or anyone else, give me examples of where canals have been narrowed so that towpath can be widened for use as cycleways, please?

Ron Bingham

### Nice one!

I may not ever write or contribute but I appreciate your efforts and your mag is great value. Thank you.

Bob Glover, Bridgewater Canal

### LPG Appliances and the BSS

1. Is there really evidence that LPG fridges are such dangerous beasts? I have been told by a source who generally knows what he's talking about, (CORGI registered) although we won't mention any names, that the oxygen demand and CO2 emissions from an LPG fridge are approximately equal to having an additional person on board. Now I rarely fear for my life if we have 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 friends to stay. The rules seem to indicate that I will have to replace my perfectly serviceable LPG fridge in 2006. This is completely ridiculous and I hope that NABO will be fighting this all the way. I bought a new fridge prior to the regulations coming into place and it has many years life in it yet.

Am I missing the point of balanced flue appliances, my fridge is not balanced flue but exhaust gases are vented outside the boat. I grant that it uses up a small amount of the oxygen in the boat but this is replaced by adequate ventilation.

Is it me being cynical or is a more likely explanation that BW have buckled to lobbying from a certain manufacture that

have just spent a small fortune developing a completely pointless balanced flue LPG fridge. Is it not possible to challenge/refute any evidence that they claim to have, I would be happy to contribute to a fighting fund to get these regulations thrown out. LPG is the only practical way of running a fridge and BW are trying to force me to spend £1000 - £1500 to replace my fridge this is daylight robbery and appears to be legal.

2. The rules seem to indicate that I am now able to replace my LPG water heater, even though it uses xxxxxx times as much oxygen as the fridge, but then a balanced flue water heater has not been developed!! At least this is a good point.

3. As for the rest, most expensive items are still mandatory, but then most of us have spent those pennies now so what the hay, at least there appears to be some relaxations so this has to be a good thing.

Mark Northing

### Also fed up with BSS

I have had to sell my boat - 22ft Dawncraft - as it was too much worry. £1,000 to pass the Boat Safety Scheme even though I fitted new fire extinguishers and fire blanket (never used to old ones). I fitted a Gas Alarm (£40) but was told it was not on the 'safety list'. A right "rip off" - never again for me. In the end I wound up with £1,600 instead of £3100. So much for "Boating for All". OAPs and the Disabled like myself are fed up with unnecessary work and money.

James Bayman. Ex Cruiser Adagio,  
Acton Bridge, River Weaver.

## Fishing Practices

For many years, I have viewed some of the practices of fishermen with annoyance. For example, rather than withdrawing their enormous fishing poles as a boat approaches, they raise their poles to allow us boaters to pass — but only under their lethal (to the eyes) hook and disease-filled dripping, dangling maggot - with more interest in getting the hook back in the water as quickly as possible rather than our safety,

Such a practice is more dangerous than most of the items listed for checking in the BSS, but from my own experiences, I know that any written effort to stop the hook from dangling causes the powers that be (including NABO officials) to first agree that rods should be withdrawn rather than raised. However, when new fishing codes were brought out for discussion, nothing about this in the code was changed. A senior BW fishing official — Mr Fisher — even stated in *Waterways World* some years ago that fishermen should never raise their rods then swing them to the side of the canal as this practice might endanger the next fisherman along from that maggot and hook!

A less dangerous practice, but one that can be even more annoying to those who suffer from it, is the one where fishermen on the towpath side attempt to fish under a boat at a permanent mooring on the offside. We have watched them tap their rods on the paint of the boat opposite, shoot bait onto it and all the rest — even residential boats with people inside at

the time. I feel that all towpath sections opposite moorings should be signed as no fishing areas.

Unfortunately BW, those great lovers of signs, are more interested in money than people, so not only is fishing allowed on some lengths opposite boat moorings, but they are actually included in BW approved intensively fished match lengths of canals, for instance along the Shroppie near bridge 55 - the area described in the enclosed clip, from the *Shropshire Star*:-

### It's boat blues for unlucky Jackson

By MALCOLM KELLY

LMS star Terry Jackson has had more than his share of bad luck recently— and is no doubt looking forward to the New Year and a change of fortune.

On the final round of the Winter League Terry drew a good peg on the boats on the Shropshire Union Canal at Goldstone, only to have it ruined shortly after the start of the match.

That's when the owner of the boat moored opposite him decided to run his engine to charge the batteries.

Not too much of a problem ...except that he ran the thing in gear, so the propeller churned the canal up giving Jackso no chance of attacking any fish.

Reading these columns one realises that the writers are persons who regularly fish our canals but are ignorant in connection with any aspect of the canal not directly linked to their sport....

David H.S. Cragg

To save space I have had to compact this letter a bit and could not include all David's views of fishermen or his fear that BW may ban charging with engines in gear. (Perhaps he should know the practice is already discouraged in the *Waterways Code*. Have you ever tried mooring up behind a boat doing this?)

## **In defence of Dot**

First I would like to say thank you for the NABO News and all that you do on our behalf. David freely admits he is not a "join it" sort of person but NABO is something he feels is very well worthwhile; and whenever he gets the NABO News he always has a lot to say about what is going on - repeatedly asking me to write to you, so this time I am doing! We both very much indeed enjoyed the article by John Darlington 'Once upon a time' . . . Interesting and informative and we shall lend it to some friends on the boat nearer us at the moment, who are equally against "joining anything", in the hope that it might persuade them to join NABO.

Dear Dot - when you set off from Fradley to go north, just above the flight of locks there is a lovely mooring stretch on a summer's day under the shade of the trees-and in the best place of all - which is nearly always vacant -there is a rock! It is exactly half way along a 60 ft boat (we moor there and jump ashore or use the plank!) We lost our rudder in a lock on the Leeds & Liverpool thanks to Dot's army of "helpers" - they dissolved as soon as the damage was done. And how we agreed about day boats on occasions!

What really interested us this time though was concerning continuous mooring. We have always stuck to the parish boundary rule and so avoided "outstaying our welcome". We feel that the 10 km/ 28 day proposal makes us feel as though Big Brother Waterways is watching to see if we are 20 m short on a cold wet stretch in the middle of winter. What could they, would they do, if we

were a bit short? Would they notice? We're glad you say they wouldn't. Keep up the good work NABO - On behalf of Dave, Sue.

David Allsebrook and Sue Caunt

## **Stuck for the winter**

Does BW have a Customer Charter similar to other public bodies and services, and if not why not? Is it because it could not meet a Customer Charter and would then be liable to pay compensation to its customers?

We all accept that there are times when work on the canals prohibits movement, but BW seem to believe that there is a five months closed season over the winter, when boaters do not move. I like the winter period, not for long cruises, but two or four days over a weekend when the canals are quiet, is a tonic from the pressures of work. The canals in mist or with frost can look beautiful, and what is better than a snug warm narrow boat after a day on the tiller in cold crisp air.

BW has effectively prohibited me from using my boat over the winter for four and a half months. I unfortunately am moored at Crick on the Leicester arm or the GU, and the Watford flight was closed for maintenance over November. The Avon embankment near Welford has closed the canal from November till Mid March, and there are restrictions on the use of the Watford flight until this work is finished. One can accept that due to the canal closure at Welford, water in the top pound is restricted, and therefore some restrictions on the Watford flight are necessary, but the

present restrictions are too severe. The flight is only opened for 3 days a week and you have to be at the top or bottom lock between 9 am and 10 am, and you must book your passage through. These restrictions are so severe they make it impractical for boaters from Crick to leave the marina, for a weekends boating.

If you contact BW they give you a lot of waffle reference water levels, but what it actually comes down to is money, they are not prepared to pay for the locks to be manned. If they want to restrict the number of movements so that the runoff from the fields and back pumping can keep the water level up, then fine, that's why you have to book your passage through. What they will not do is arrange for that passage to suit the boater, and this comes down to money.

They are willing to take our licence money for the five and a half months, but are not prepared to provide a service for that money. They quote their Boat Licence & Permit Conditions No 23 implying that the licence is to permit you to have your boat on the canal, and not actually move. As this restriction is due to penny pinching by BW then should they not provide some compensation to those boat owners who are effected.

I know that NABO have expressed their concerns over the restrictions to the area manager, but BW are not prepared to make an effort to provide a service to boaters, especially in what they consider the closed season.

R Gleadhall

## **Confrontational - To Be or Not To Be....**

Following the Waterways Ombudsman's recommendation that BW reduce my mooring charge at Kinver and that they refund excessive charges paid since the withdrawal of services some eighteen months ago, a number of the other 30 plus Kinver moorers quite rightly felt that they, too, were entitled to a reduction and refund.

Several letters to local and regional managers followed by a meeting eventually resulted in a response: 'Following a reconsideration of the issues, as a goodwill gesture, we will refund the cost associated with the cessation of the security boat in April 2000 upon your next mooring renewal'.

As these monies were rightfully due to the moorers, they felt this to be somewhat patronising as well as legally suspect and so under the terms of the internal complaints procedure, the Chief Executive was asked to intervene.

To Dave Fletcher's credit (and that is not being patronising!) in less than a fortnight or so of being approached, moorers started receiving their refund cheques of up to nearly £300 with the whole exercise being speedily and satisfactorily concluded.

So, was this confrontational? - if so, it was caused entirely by the failure/inability of BW's line management to be able to deal effectively with a very simple situation - after all, there was no decision to be made as the Ombudsman had already done that for them! Or was it simply standing up for one's rights? I



know the answer but judging from readers letters I am not so sure about those members (and non members) who seem to enjoy accusing NABO of being confrontational - maybe it is an excuse for sitting on backside and doing nothing for an easy life?

Denis R Smith

## One to our Mem. Sec

Dear Mr Davis,

I am sorry that you have had to chase me for my subscription, but I have been away and a bit busy. This, I'm afraid, will be my last subscription as I have sold my boat and do not intend to buy another. I had been involved in canals since the 50's, helping in work parties and helping to run some of the early rallies but did not purchase my own boat until 1990. This was just before the BSS came into being.

I certainly spent the first three years working to get a 25 year old boat up to standard and I seem to have been working on it ever since. Twelve years of constant arguments which are still going on. I have purchased a camper van, twelve years old, which has just passed its MOT with no problems. What is the real problem with the waterways? After an extensive cruise two years ago, I became convinced that there was a hidden agenda to stop boats moving on the canals. I didn't seem to meet anyone who really liked to see us moving (except perhaps, gongoozlers) - people moored in boats, at whatever speed you are going and fishermen in particular. Think of all the savings if there were no moving boats. No need to mend locks or dredge a channel, more canals could become SSI's, more water could be sold off. I could go on. It is now very

expensive to buy, own and insure a boat and costs seem to be spiralling. I am afraid I have had enough. However, I wish NABO well. Keep up the good work.

Douglas Wragg (Nottingham)

## SHAME IF YOU MISSED THIS?

*From the Guardian appointments pages, dated 13th December 2001, Under the heading 'Give your Future a lift', it says:*

### BOAT LIFT OPERATORS

c. £12,000 . Anderton Boat Lift

Built in 1875 to deal with a 50ft height difference between the River Weaver and the Trent and Mersey Canal, the Anderton Boat Lift is now one of British Waterways' flagship restoration projects. From Spring 2002, with your help, boat owners and visitors alike will be able to ride the lift once again.

Join us as an operator and help us create the region's newest visitor attraction. In this broad role you will oversee boats going into and out of the Lift, allocating and checking tickets and ensuring a high standard of customer care. You will also operate the computerised control panel and perform routine maintenance and service inspections.

Training will be provided, but you should have some of the following skills: customer service experience, computer skills, practical maintenance skills, an ability to keep accurate written records, a first aid qualification or a helmsperson certificate. Weekend and bank holiday working is an essential part of the job.

To apply, please send details of your qualifications and experience, quoting reference 319101, to Personnel Department, British Waterways,

Fearn's Wharf, Neptune Street, Leeds L59 9PB.

Closing date for applications: Thursday 3 January 2002.

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