

## **THE MAGAZINE OF THE**



**ISSUE 5/02 - July 2002**

**BW Reports reviewed/News from BSS**

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## 2002 CALENDAR

<b>Council meetings</b>	<b>Copy dates</b>
Sept 21st	Sept 28th
Nov 16th or 23rd	A.G.M.
Nov 23rd	t.b.a.

# CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

*Gone Fishing', Campin' or perhaps even Boatin' – so while he is enjoying himself (isn't that what it is all about?) our Vice Chairman has written some words of wisdom.*

Our chairman has gone on a well deserved holiday, so I have an opportunity to speak to you again. My holiday comes later. We certainly need it. BW have gone into overdrive and all the user groups are having trouble keeping up. If they wanted to ruin our summer they have succeeded. My husband steers the boat whilst I read the latest missive wondering if we will be able to afford to boat next year.

On the licensing issue they are working very hard to understand our point of view, but why try to rush change through? What we wanted was for IWAAC to have a look at all aspects of licensing with all the licensing authorities. This we hoped would bring about informed change and some simple system throughout the country. BW have a new computer so they have decided to change their system. The computer can cope with the old system so there is really no panic.

Unfortunately a new proposal is to charge you for not having a mooring unless you move 50 kilometres in any three month period. This will go on two sightings per month. You can then



either pay or remove your boat from BW waters within 7 days. Big Brother is alive and well at BW. It is nigh on impossible to move just 10 kilometres in the winter, let alone getting off BW waters. Obviously this was thought up by someone without a clue and we hope to get it struck out. We haven't heard anymore about comparing boating with horse riding.

One thing we have enjoyed is meeting members and prospective members. We have been to the Inland Waterways Exhibition at Birmingham, a succesful venue for us but one with a lot of unfulfilled potential for punters. All the activity was taking place outside and the number of exhibitors was down on last year. A change of name would help – I kept getting emails about meeting at the IWA event! The Reading and Newbury water festivals were made even more enjoyable by catching up with friends and one enthusiastic new member who joined up his friends as well. It is especially nice when people walk by saying "keep up the good work". NABO council is a fun place to be.

We are now the only independant organisation representing ALL

boaters. The Inland Waterways Association has a new Chairman who is also a member of the Waterways Trust and the BW Chief Executive Dr David Fletcher has become a Vice President. The Waterways Trust is so closely connected to BW that it is still using a BW bank account even though we were assured at the Parliamentary Waterways Group last June that this would be soon rectified. Apparently they have changed their minds. All three organisations are so intertwined that the edges are blurred. I queried the Trust's stance on heritage buildings in view of BW's expanding property development and was told that they wouldn't go against BW policy. So a old stable won't stand a chance of surviving against a block of flats. Lets hope the voles appreciate the Trust's work on their behalf.

No water shortage so far this year, the Manchester Waterfest lived up to its name, but we have had some good cruising on the Thames. We got to Henley just as a music festival was about to start. It was lovely cruising by whilst an opera singer's voice floated over the water. Luckily we were able to moor near Tesco's as it got a bit loud in the evening with drums and fireworks.

Good news – We hope we have filled our Anglian sec vacancy. Someone made us an offer after meeting us at Birmingham. There will be more news about this in our next magazine.

Keep in touch & I hope to meet more of you at Huddersfield. Please offer to man the stall for half an hour to give us a loo or coffee break. Four days is a long time.

*Sue Burchett*

*Advertisement*

## **Stephen Peters reviews British Waterways latest offerings from BW Customer Services at Watford.**

(Tel 01923 201120 or email: enquiries@britishwaterways.co.uk)

### **ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2001-2002**

The first thing you notice about the latest annual report to be published by BW is the thickness of the document. It contains nearly twice as many pages as previously. Why?

For a start, the information within is far more extensive and comprehensive. Furthermore, the presentation is even more glossy and slick than before. Colour photographs abound – not just panoramic shots of waterway features but now fewer than 34 pictures of BW board members, executives and directors. If you can't recognise Chairman George Greener or retiring Chief Executive Dave Fletcher after being bombarded with multi-angle shots of them, then there is no hope for you!

Four new board members have joined since the last report – a woman with experience of sustainable cycle tourism (does this have a familiar ring?); a woman from the world of enterprise, health, education, ethnic business and economic development; a professor of civil engineering with expertise in water management; and another gentleman who is a health and water expert. They join the Board in the year which sees the re-appointment of the Chairman for a second 3-year term and the retirement at the end of 2002 of Chief Executive Dr David Fletcher after 7 years. Doesn't time fly when enjoying yourself?

The emphasis in the report is on the massive strides made in regeneration and restoration - the list of newly opened and planned projects is formidable. Partnership is the key word and whereas in the past BW has disposed of land to developers, the future trend will be to retain a commercial interest and carry out the developments in joint ventures with the private sector.

The transfer and supply of water will attain greater importance in future years as will overseas consultancy work. BW is already providing services for the waterways of India and Malaysia.

Navigation is at the heart of what BW does and this year the report includes a section specially devoted to the subject. Last year saw an increase of 4% in the number of boats licensed in England and Wales (now standing at 26,334); and the number of mooring permits is up by over 7% reflecting the recent marina acquisitions by BW. The number of hire craft, however, continues to decline.

The financial section of the report reveals that overall income from boating increased whereas income from angling declined – both following the trends set last year. Board members continued to receive an average of £10,000 per annum for their services, but Chairman George Greener had his remuneration increased

slightly to £65,000 – a useful part-time, pensionable addition to supplement his income from numerous other directorships.

BW now employs over 2,000 people and the wage bill has rocketed by 11% over the past year to a new high of £52m, with an ever-increasing number of staff earning over £50,000 p.a. The highest paid employee (presumably the CEO) received up to £180,000 during the year.

The third party transactions section of the accounts reveals that BW received £936,000 from the Environment Agency during the year in respect of works undertaken and the cost of the Boat Safety Scheme. We also learn that contacts for laying fibre optics along the towpath raised £6.5m from the Easynet Group plc in which BW is a minority shareholder and Dr Dave Fletcher is a director. The involvement with Easynet arose due to the demise of the ill-fated Ipsaris formerly known as Fibreway, a joint venture with Marconi whose shares plummeted during the year. Dr Fletcher originally joined BW from GEC Marconi where he had been Deputy Chairman.

Finally, there is no glossy fold out waterway map this year but it is still worth your while asking for a copy.

## **BW PLAN FOR THE FUTURE 2002-2006**

Do you remember BW producing a small booklet some 6 years ago entitled "Caring for Britain's Waterways" ? It was written to accord with the Citizen's Charter to which BW subscribed and for which it still holds the Charter Mark.

The original booklet contained commitments on standards of service and BW's relationship with users. When it became unobtainable NABO enquired on your behalf and were told that the contents still applied and that BW would be consulting over a successor Charter document. They did not consult but have now announced that their key commitments under the Customer Charter are those to be found on page 9 of their latest rolling five-year plan which is presented with lots of pretty pictures and diagrams in the booklet entitled Our Plan for the Future 2002-2006

They say that much of the information in the original customer charter document is outdated or available elsewhere. So the original 24-page booklet has been condensed down to just 18 bullet points.

If you write or email BW you should no longer "expect to hear from us within 7 days" but now BW phrases it as "we will do our best to respond to you within 7 days". And the response may not be in written form. They may simply give a verbal reply. Where possible this will be a full reply rather than simply an acknowledgement, but they will send a full reply within 21 days. If the issue is likely to take longer than 21 days to resolve they will keep you informed. Remember the above time periods and do not be afraid to remind BW of this commitment if they fail to reply to you.

Incidentally, the new advice is that accidents and crime should be reported to the emergency services in the usual way – not on the BW Helpline. We believe this is incorrect procedure. Most certainly always contact the police, etc but how do you let BW know about the problem on their patch?

The latest BW commitment to consultation contains a subtle variation. They will still hold user group meetings at least twice a year locally and once a year nationally. But gone is the previous commitment to meet users on a regional basis once yearly.

It is refreshing to know that to make consultation with user groups effective, BW will supply enough information and allow enough time so that those who are consulted can give a considered response. But no commitment to adopting the Cabinet Office consultation guidelines.

The BW Complaints Procedure remains unchanged. If you are unhappy you should initially contact the local waterway manager. If still dissatisfied the next step up the ladder is to the Regional Manager; then the Regional Director; finally you may refer your complaint to the Chief Executive. The Customer Relations manager at Watford is the initial person to contact for any complaints about service from HQ departments.

Ultimately, you wish to take your complaint to the Waterways Ombudsman for independent review, subject to your case falling within his terms of reference to see whether there has been maladministration.

The 5-year plan contains numerous goals and targets that BW expects to meet in the various facets of its operations. The plan explains the strategy and objectives which drive BW and the section on waterway standards shows the programme for improving navigation, channel and other aspects of the waterways – the so-called "Sim Standards" (fame at last for BW Operations Director Stewart Sim). An extract appears in the document and BW can make the published version for each waterway available on request.

We invited you to think of a caption to go with this shot of a well vegetated mud hopper barge on the River Trent!



Suggestions included "BW to encourage more floating weed" and Jan Villa's "Sorry, it cannot be touched - English Nature".

# FLOW MATTERS

Following on from the recent comments on flow gauges on the Aire and Calder Navigation it now seems that in times of strong stream the lock-keepers have been instructed not to disallow vessels on to the river. However they will point out that conditions are difficult, advise against proceeding, request a signature on a disclaimer and make boaters aware that on the basis of that advice the boat insurance may be invalidated. Having done that they will then switch the river lock to self-operation so no claim can be made that they assisted in any way.

In the light of the fatality on the Yorkshire Ouse in the early August floods one cannot fault such a course of action.

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## OUR REPRESENTATIVE ON BSS MANAGEMENT REPORTS

I have now attended two Boat Safety Management Committee meetings and I despair of an improvement in the scheme. Nothing I have gleaned from these meetings has altered my view that the 'Review' was an expensive waste of time. The whole scheme is officially under the auspices of the Boat Safety Office which, at the first meeting, we were told wasn't controlled by BW. However at present, apart from paying half of the shortfall, EA seem to have little input. The guide book had been produced before EA had any idea of its cost.

On this committee there were supposed to be two nominees from the user groups but one didn't meet with the Chairmans approval and has not been selected. I have been approved and there is an observer from the BSS Advisory Committee, as their chairman belongs to one of the Navigation Authorities. There will also be an observer from the BSS Technical Committee for a similar reason.

Apart from approving the structure of the Management Committee and approving the constitutions of the other committees, we were given a report on the outcome of the Review. Unfortunately the date when the BSS was said to have been established was out by four years! It went on to say that 45,000 powered craft have passed, we were given no figures on failiures.

A good piece of news (if you have read this far) is that the chunky red book is now available to ALL boaters from local BW offices instead of just BW & EA licence holders.

Patrol staff are to be trained to spot obvious hazards. As most hazards can only be spotted from inside a boat this could be interesting and lead to harrasment, but a boat that looks unsafe can have a valid boat safety certificate and often does.

The BSS standards are now to be appraised to ensure they represent the current navigation authority objectives. This will take into account additional advisory safety items like hull condition, stability & freeboard and lifejackets.

With a large number of CE marked boats comming up for their first BSC a fast track method of dealing with boats that do not comply with the BSS has been developed. A new committee, the Technical Equivalence Panel, has been set up with the job of seeing if the perceived failiure is technically equivalent and therefore doesn't present a risk. If this is the case a licence can then be issued and the alternative can be added to the list of options for all boats. Hence the loose leaf design of the Guide. Hopefully this will stop the kind of saga that the Trent Boating Association have been having over spill racks. This also came up at the meeting and was refered back to the Technical committee although it has been ongoing for 5years.

There is now a so called Quality Assurance Programme (with no iso number) with a booklet on examination checking procedures, a BSS certificate that states on its reverse the limitations of the certificate, and an appliance record which lists all appliances,ventilation, and fire extinguishers. The test now will now take longer – so, guess what? – it will cost more.

Fire extinguishers came up at the second meeting. At the Inland Waterways Exhibition in Birmingham we saw a chrome and a brass fire extinguisher being offered at the Firemaster stand. We were told by the salesman that they were getting approval on the 24th July. This I found interesting as the Management committee meeting met on the 23rd. These extinguishers had been passed by the

Technical Committee as they were obviously exactly the same as the red extinguishers just a different colour. The Advisory Committee had turned them down because they were not red and hadn't an approved mark. By the time it got to the Management Committee a new mark had been approved. This mark states the extinguisher technically meets the requirements of Article 7 except the clause that stipulates the colour should be red.



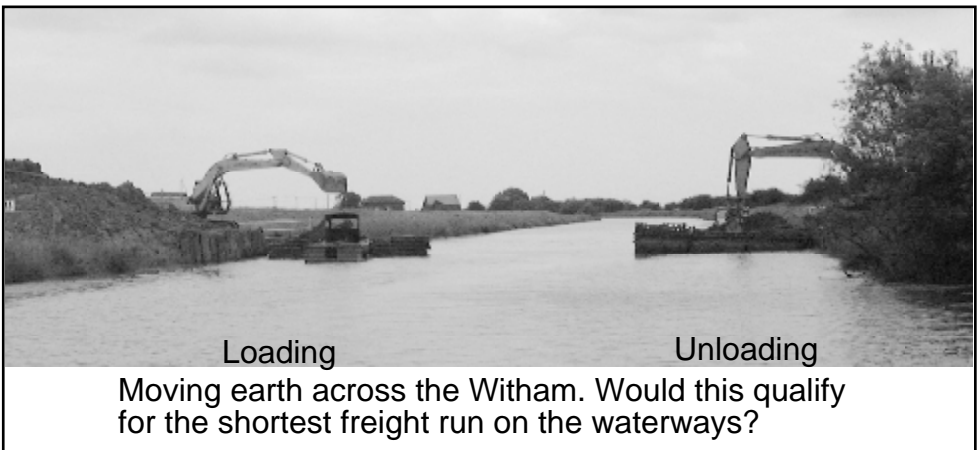
This now paves the way for colour co-ordinated fire extinguishers to match your boat. The discussion went on for over an hour with a sustained lobby from the BSS manager in favour. Many were not happy but there was no vote. The decision taken from the notes of the meeting is as follows,

'It is the MC view that the standards (in the guide) as presently stated do not define colour and the only requirement is appropriate approval evidenced by appropriate marking. It is for the manufacturer to determine how he might meet those requirements and whilst we are pleased to be involved in giving advice, it will in the end be his commercial decision'.

The BSS appears to be able to interperate the rules to suit its own ends whilst boaters are expected to blindly obey.

The idea of having a user representative and user observers is for transparency. The Environment Agency have a ready grasp of this and suggested that the minutes of the Management Committee meeting were put on the BSS web site. They also suggested an annual meeting to which User Groups and other interested people will be invited. Some BW members still have not grasped this concept. A member of BW was introduced as a new co-opted member even though this wasn't put to the Committee before-hand. When there was a suggestion that an item should be put to the user groups, this individual said "no, they only make snide remarks!" We have worked long and hard to get this scheme to incorporate sensible safeguards. Comments such as these do nothing to aid co-operation or transparency.

Sue Burchett



# WORRIED WOMAN of the WATERWAYS

Hello, Hello it's me Dot your Happy Woman of the Waterways.

- Yes I am happy to be out and about boating on the cut and I do say '**Hello**' in a cheery way to all I pass.

Boaters usually do, and have a chat as they work the locks and **help** each other through them and swing or lift bridges.

I have told you before how worrying help can be when it is misguided but helping each other is usually what boaters do, though with the increase of 'status symbol' boating, I'm not the only one who has worried that this is changing.

I have just experienced some genuine help. We got really seriously stuck in a bridge 'ole just now and were still there half an hour later after trying all the tricks we knew. A crew from a hire boat, still in the first hour of their holiday, also wanting to pass through the bridge, helped try to push us off using their shafts too. Later those on another boat coming behind us 'gave us a snatch' and after repeated attempts and us in full reverse, we managed to get back off the rubble and parts of car bodywork that we were on.

I know they were in fact as 'stuck' as we were, as we were blocking their way but they could have taken the 'not my problem' attitude.

You will be pleased to know that worries concerning the tradition of boaters helping each other are mostly unfounded. These people were on **holiday** which most boaters are. They don't want problems and hardship and aggro. Whether on your own boat or a hire boat, canal holidays are expensive. I worry that for some people their canal holiday is not as relaxing as they intended. I also worry that with the increasing number of boats it will soon be impossible for anyone to have a 'get away from it all' holiday on the waterways.

Then there are the **horror** stories that people tell you about different areas of the waterways. Too much weed, too much rubbish, locks too hard, water too high or too low and bandit country with hot and cold running vandals. These stories are intended to worry you, but I worry for those that go on (and on) about them. Do they do it to put you off boating so they can have the canal to themselves? Do they tell you horror stories to make themselves look brave? If it is so awful why don't they do something about it?

Are there as many **hotel** boats about these days? I used to have some worrying times when encountering them. Now I worry as to how they make a living, and who wants to run the boats, with all the hard work, the costs

involved and our varied climate. It must be difficult to compete with cheap package holidays to sunny places.

Do you worry that our waterway **heritage** is being eroded away by all these new developments? The old things are completely disappearing. Surely we have lost enough. Some of the new structures are just not in keeping with the surrounding canal background. Some examples in central Birmingham, the bridge over the exit to Sherbourne wharf and the Mail Box bridge etc. Surely it would have cost no more to match them to the existing structures in the area.

Another heritage aspect I call **heritage hallucinations**. Some of the stories you hear! Even old boaters can suffer from it, and tell tales that others 'don't remember'. Here are some - 'Boaters wore fancy costumes, 'boat lady's bonnets' and white starched aprons. Well the fashion for the fancy bonnets changed to black when Prince Albert died and diesel engine weren't used in boats until long after that. Boaters' fashions were the work clothes of the day. As cameras were rare 'best' clothes were worn if there were photographs being taken. Black Country Boaters ate 'grey peas and bacon'. What? Most had never heard of them. Large families lived in a motor's back cabin. No they didn't! All couples had a motor and a butty, larger families had fore cabins too, and by the time families got that large they would have another motor or pair.

Well here I go boating to the horizon, and the glorious hazy sunshine is not an hallucination.

Happy boating from Dot - Worried Woman of the Waterways

WWW Dot

*Advertisement*



Here's a challenge, what is 'wrong' with the state of Swinton Lock as shown here? A clue is that SSYN lock sluice pillars have a white collar to indicate if they are up or down. Answer on Page 18

*Advertisement*

# BOAT SAFETY SCHEME POSES HEALTH HAZARD?

Do you use a fridge on board your boat?

Many people have one installed on board simply as a matter of convenience and to replicate the civilised standard of living to which they are accustomed when living ashore.

There are a number of different makes and models available but, unless you have the appropriate battery power (or a 230 volt shore supply) the probability is that your fridge is an absorption type that runs off LPG – heat from a small flame goes in one side of the system and cold comes out the other, due to a miracle of physics.

You probably know by now that the architects of the BSS have decreed that all existing non room-sealed gas fridges will have to be scrapped by 2006. Until that date it will still be permissible to have an existing open flue gas fridge on your boat but the BSS does not permit you to install a direct replacement unless it is of the sealed combustion type. In practice, this means that you can only install a new room sealed fridge marketed by Dometic under the Electrolux brand name. Despite the BSS specifying room-sealed gas fridges for a number of years, as far as we know there are still only 2 models currently available from one manufacturer, the Electrolux RM4213SC 60 litre with a consumer guide price of £600 and the larger RM6401LSC 103 litre model with a guide price of £800. These are both approximately £150 more expensive than their non-room sealed equivalent models. However, the absurdity of this monopoly is that you cannot install these new fridges yourself. You have to pay extra for installation. There are 28 appointed dealers who are the only persons permitted to fit the new fridges thanks to special controls imposed by the manufacturers. Is this legal we ask ourselves?

But you must not expect to be able to simply replace your old gas fridge with one of these new models. Firstly, the old flue outlet will not be acceptable as these new models employ a special outlet fitting to accommodate the separate inlet and exhaust pipes. Secondly, and much more importantly, whereas your old fridge may have worked entirely independent of any external electric power source, the new ones require 12 volts to power their sophisticated electronic ignition system. In a nutshell, it is not possible to replace your old gas fridge with a new one on a like-for-like basis.

Faced with the high cost and lack of choice many boat owners have replaced their old gas fridges with new 12-volt models which do not fall foul of the BSS provisions. But the power consumption of absorption fridges when operating off 12 volts can be of the order of 10 Amps and many boats cannot sustain such a current load without quickly draining the batteries. True, some boats have adequate banks of batteries and sophisticated charging systems. But many do not.

This has led to a tendency for owners to regulate their power consumption by switching their fridges off at night, so that they have sufficient battery power the next morning to start the engine. Such a habit can carry health risks. Fridges are designed to store food at about 5 Deg C. If the internal temperature is allowed to rise at night and then reduce in the daytime when 12 volt power is available this can lead to food poisoning. The requirements of the Boat Safety Scheme and the banning of open flued gas fridges could therefore be posing a direct threat to the health of occupants of boats on inland waterways.

We would be interested to hear from boat owners who have experience of replacing an old gas fridge with one of the new room-sealed models. Was it a simple replacement or an expensive option? Was your freedom of choice restricted?

If you have opted to remove your old gas fridge and now use a 12 volt fridge, how do you control your energy consumption whilst still keeping your food fresh? Is your new fridge a practical alternative to LPG?

Other members will benefit from your experiences.

Stephen Peters

*Advertisement*

As you will probably know, this magazine is the second of the two put together while afloat. I had thought of setting each page on a different slope to convey this better, but resisted the temptation! However cruising round the system makes me even more aware that the occupants of suits in waterways offices don't understand the mind of the boater. After all, why should anyone want to forsake a holiday in the sun, or the privacy of a retirement cottage near the South Coast, in favour of bedding down in a steel tube tied up against an urban public thoroughfare?

The first answer is – they don't. The latter is a necessary evil that is hopefully offset by nights spent in the peace and solitude of the British countryside. Secondly, to reduce their feeling of vulnerability when exposed to the less well-meaning of the 'All' in the 'Waterways for All' policy, the majority of boaters take a dog.

This lack of understanding on both counts manifests itself in BW policy. They think they are doing boaters a service by herding them together on 'Visitor Moorings' within easy reach of the local yokels, and then leaving them a narrow channel between reed beds and anglers to proceed to the next moorings before their time limit expires. Why can BW not dredge and trim lengths of bank next to some rural lock landings or under some power lines where it is not safe to fish, so boaters can tie up, stop their engines and enjoy some of the wildlife they are obliged to respect. These lengths should be just enough for one or perhaps two boats so we can really get away from it all.

BW's ignorance of the needs of boating dogs is also obvious, and they are probably more numerous than the number of boats in use at any one time. Demanding that owners should be tethered to their dogs 'at all times', which must therefore include when getting on and off boats and working locks, is downright dangerous. Reminding them that dogs should be under control is fine, but leave the method to the better judgement of the owner, as constant leashing can lead to bad temper, lack of exercise and a guarantee that the dog will defecate on the towpath, with the owner severely hampered when it comes to clearing up the result.

As a final insult, canine boaters have been totally ignored in the arrangements for passage of the Standedge Tunnel, denying this route to the majority of their human crewmates.

*Stuart Sampson*

*Editor– NABO News, c/o 15 Harcourt Way, Hunsbury, Northampton. NN4 8JR*



## NOTICES

### POST FOR NABO NEWS

The Editor will be back on dry land for issue 6/02 so please send contributions to  
48 Old Lane, Bramhope,  
Leeds LS16 9AZ

E-mail still-  
[news.editor@nabo.org.uk](mailto:news.editor@nabo.org.uk)

### BROADS REP NEEDED

Someone to look after NABO interests on the Broads where boating may become history if boater's have no voice.

Please keep sending your e-mail addresses to Roger Davis, Membership Secretary, so we can keep you 'up to speed' with latest developments

### AGM date

In the hope our President can accept our invitation to the AGM it will be held one or possibly two weeks later than previously advertised, viz either the

**16th or 23rd of November**

### NABO and Waterway Guides

NABO has been given the chance to display its logo on the front of a series of new free guides published by Alex Jenkins Associates.

Members with waterway related businesses are invited to advertise therein. Contact Gen. Secretary for details.

Password for website guidance leaflets & mooring tables  
= **Branch** (capital B)

### NABO WEBSITE OUTAGE

At the time of writing everything related to [nabo.org.uk](http://nabo.org.uk) seems to be defunct, both the website and e-mail addresses. Steps are being taken to resolve this.



# RIVERS



## **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY TO INCREASE NAVIGATION CHARGES**

The EA has proposed increases of 2.5% in its navigation registration and mooring charges for 2003/2004. Thames region, however, will be subjected to additional mooring fee increases of a further 5% for the second of three planned years in an attempt to bring mooring charges back in line with local market rates.

Following a reduction in the amount of Grant in Aid received from Government in the early 1990's the Agency imposed above inflation increases in boat registration charges in an attempt to protect navigation budgets but the anticipated increase in income was never fully realised because boat numbers decreased. Consequently, recent increases in charges have been set at current inflation rates to encourage boaters back on to the Agency's rivers.

Statistics published by the EA show the current number of boat licences to be 4,724 in Anglian, 1,462 in Southern and 25,129 in Thames region.

Now that the EA has obtained a more realistic level of funding for its navigation function it intends to limit the increase in charges for next year to just 2.5%. It is hoped that this will act as an incentive to encourage more boats on to its waterways and lead to increased revenue to help fund improvements and developments on the waterways as a consequence of the decision by DEFRA in 2001 that the EA should retain its navigation duties.

## **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY PROGRESS ON NAVIGATION**

The Agency has drawn up a draft 5-year plan for navigation in the context of its duties for integrated catchment management and to encourage regeneration along the waterways in controls. Consultation with users has been promised to develop the proposed framework

So far, in 2002, the EA has appointed a new Head of Recreation and Navigation in the person of David Lawrence, who has joined the Agency from Sport England.

They have also appointed new Waterway Managers in the three regions having navigation responsibilities. Anglian region has 2 managers – John Adams and Irvén Forbes; Southern region has John Morgan; and Eileen McKeever continues as Thames Waterway Manager.

A much higher profile is now being given to navigation in all three regions and the EA has commenced started to improve facilities and is planning new partnerships and projects, with BW, BMF and others. Amongst its plans is the intention to adopt a new set of waterway standards, similar to those used by BW, but including a measure to assess the natural quality of the rivers. The EA also intends to harmonise legislation across its regions and will seek a Transport and Works

Order for this purpose. This could lead to a uniform licensing structure and remove the need for separate licences in each of its regions.

We look forward to an improvement in the way in which the EA delivers its navigation function in all its regions and it is heartening to learn that it intends to devote more attention to navigation and river recreation in the regions where it does not presently have any direct operational functions.

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## **EA TO BECOME NAVIGATION AUTHORITY ON THE RIVER WYE**

Some 6 years after the Environment Agency first sought a Transport & Works Order to become the navigation authority for the River Wye, the Government has finally given it the go ahead. A public inquiry was held at the time and then nothing more was heard until an announcement in early July 2002 confirming the situation.

When the draft order was published, NABO expressed its strong opposition to the proposals which appeared to give the EA total control and the effective veto on pleasure boating on the river. In contrast, the IWA supported the EA in its quest. We must now await publication of the final Order and encourage EA in its statutory duty to promote navigation in the regions where it has a navigation function. Since the publication of the Government's Waterways for Tomorrow policy document and the subsequent decision that the EA should retain its navigation functions, the thinking and culture within the Agency has changed markedly, and it is now taking a positive and pro-active stance and seeking to encourage navigation on its rivers. We are therefore hopeful that the River Wye will witness some improvements and developments to increase navigation usage on the river, and to encourage more water-based recreation. This will require the appointment of a Waterway Manager and active involvement of users in a consultative group which was foreshadowed in the original draft proposals. NABO has pledged to work with the EA in constructing a Waterway Plan strategy for the river.

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## **Seebackscopes**

Those of us who were brought up on Dane Dare in the Eagle may remember these devices advertised for keeping an eye on those behind us in lessons. They should be re-introduced as standard issue for skullers and coxless rowers on our rivers as it is in all navigation bylaws that anyone in charge of a vessel shall keep an adequate watch in case of collision.

### **SWINTON LOCK ANSWER (from Page 13)**

No – the lock-keeper has not gone for a P break leaving the sluices open. There is actually no-one operating the lock, as can be seen from the lack of a key in the pedestal. Locks on the SYN and, we are told, the Aire and Calder, fill themselves after up to half an hour so anyone who falls in has a greater chance of getting out. Woe betide anyone swimming above the lock should they get drawn in, but BW say they have balanced the risks with great care.

# WATERWAY WONDERMENTS

Some challenges to the imagination captured by the Editor's camera



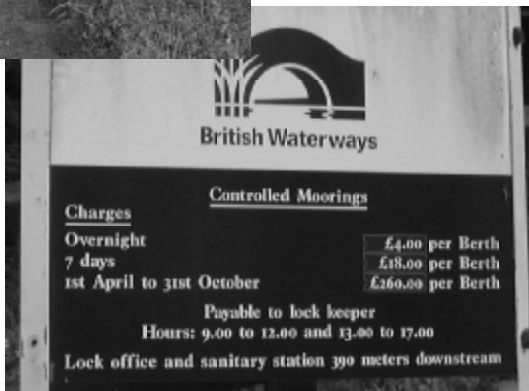
Should you get into difficulties in BW Doncaster's car park, fear not, there is a lifebouy!

This is a towpath on the Chesterfield - honest! ▼



▲ If a road bend was obscured like this, RO.S.P.A. would go ballistic

Boston welcomes you



# AN ENVIRONMENTAL DILEMMA?

Readers will be aware from the last issue that GPS can be used to measure a boat's speed over the canal bed. This was put to use on the Chesterfield Canal to gauge the effect of reed beds on the progress of a boat. It was found that at a constant engine speed setting for canal cruising, a narrow beam boat was found to attain 2.9 m.p.h. on the pound between Locks 61 and 62 in stretches where there were no reeds. Where this same channel was part blocked by reeds the speed dropped to 2.1 m.p.h.

This area is said to be a Site of Special Scientific Interest, so would the 'interested' scientists like to calculate how long it would take for said reeds to photosynthesise away the extra carbon dioxide emissions caused by boat engines due to this obstruction?

If this period is greater than the mean time between boats then the reeds are harming the environment!

It would also be interesting to know how much of BW's precious water was being transpired by all this vegetation.

## Getting your bearings on the Cut

NABO has been in communication with Ordnance Survey with a view to persuading them to include canal bridge numbers on their maps. In reply to approaches made by Stephen Peters they wrote:-

RE: Canal Bridge Identification

Thank you for your email call dated 25th July 2002, regarding the above. The Customer Relations reference number for this query is SAP 278, please quote this in any future communication.

We will be in contact once your query has been fully investigated.

Thank you for taking the time and the trouble to bring this matter to our attention. We do appreciate and value our customers' comments as it enables us to further improve the products and services we offer.

We will keep you informed of progress.

# FLY ON THE WALL



## at Council

It may be the holiday season but your Council is still meeting and doing its best for your interests. At the last meeting I heard that the new NABO Waterways Guide on the Thames Ring should be published in September. Have any of you got businesses you would like to advertise in this guide? If so, contact our General secretary.

While on the subject of the Thames, the Thames Waterway Manager has given an assurance that the river will be better run as a navigation rather than hand the running of it over to BW.

DEFRA (the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) want to update the Broads Act to make the Norfolk Broads a National Park. This would seem to concentrate on conservation rather than navigation. Your Council is appealing again for a representative for the Broads, if only to manage this project. What about the long envisaged link from the Middle

Levels to the Broads and what about the introduction of the BSS to this area? Do read the article about this in this Newsletter.

BW have issued yet another paper on site conditions for moorers. They state that these can be changed without consultation or advance notice. They seem to be unhappy about you letting other people use your mooring space while you are cruising. They are also stating that no hazardous materials can be stored on board. Does this include your gas bottles and fuel (of all types)? They also make points on washing lines and TV aerials, which seem to have been taken from byelaws for flats. Other points come from Yacht Harbour regulations for private coastal marinas. When will BW draft its own conditions for its own customers instead of seemingly being lazy and inappropriately using regulations meant for other users and places? Common annoyances to NABO members like dog dirt and the indiscriminate use of generators were not mentioned. Your Council will be writing to BW on the various points that they are unhappy about or that appear ambivalent.

Moving North, members of the Rochdale Canal Trust seem to have lost their rights 'overnight' and have

not been given the information they need on the BSS and cruising. Your Council's NW Secretary is also trying to clarify the position on taking pets through Standedge Tunnel. At the moment, it seems that they have to travel over the top by taxi while you take your boat through! Difficult for the single-handed boater!

The Rally season is in full swing and NABO tries to man a stand at all major events. Feel free to introduce yourself and comment on or

query anything that interests or concerns you.

Buzzing off back to the boat until next time ...

Byeee....



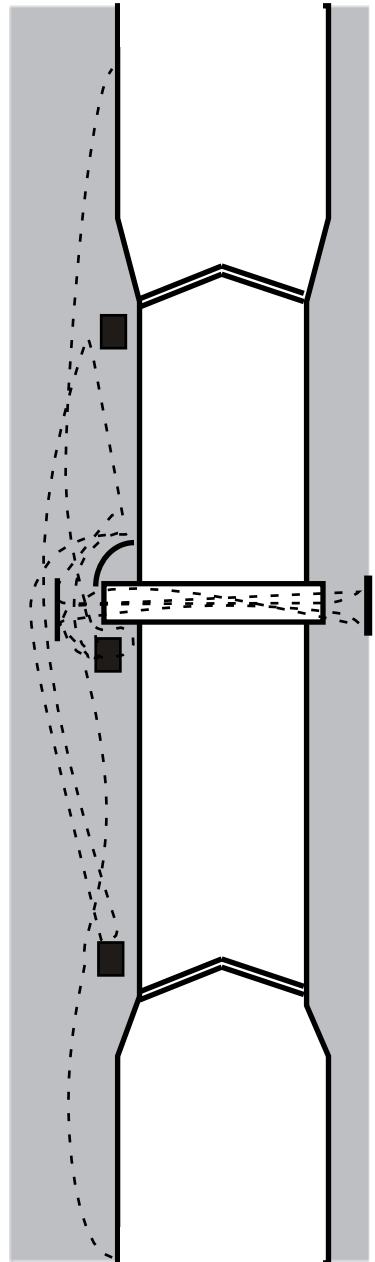
*Advertisement*

*Advertisement*

# THERE'S NOTHING TO DOING PUSH BUTTON LOCKS – OR IS THERE?

Take Sykehouse on the New Junction Canal:-

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| 1) Walk up to lock                      | 80ft          |
| 2) Find the control pedestal            |               |
| 3) Look for keyhole                     |               |
| 4) Read instructions                    |               |
| 5) Walk to swingbridge spanning chamber | 100ft         |
| 6) Insert key and turn                  |               |
| 7) Go to and lower nearest road barrier | 15ft          |
| 8) Cross bridge and lower other barrier | 40ft          |
| 9) Return                               | 40ft          |
| 10) Unlock bridge                       | 10ft          |
| 11) Swing it                            | 15ft          |
| 12) Walk back to first pedestal         | 100ft         |
| 13) Open sluices of required            |               |
| 14) Open gates                          |               |
| 15) Close sluices                       |               |
| 16) Close gates once boat is in         |               |
| 17) Walk to pedestal at other end       | 200ft         |
| 18) Open sluices                        |               |
| 19) When water is level open gates      |               |
| 20) Close sluices                       |               |
| 21) Close gates                         |               |
| 22) Walk to swingbridge                 | 100ft         |
| 23) Unlock swingbridge                  | 10ft          |
| 24) Swing it closed                     | 15ft          |
| 25) Raise nearest road barrier          | 15ft          |
| 26) Cross bridge                        | 40ft          |
| 27) Raise far barrier                   |               |
| 28) Return                              | 40ft          |
| 29) Collect key                         |               |
| 30) Return to boat                      | 180ft         |
| <b>Estimated total walked</b>           | <b>1000ft</b> |





# GLOUCESTER AND SHARPNESS WEED

Stephen Peters is taking it up

There is a serious problem with weeding along the G&S this summer - particularly below Frampton.

Many reports of blocks of weed around propellers, fouled cooling water intakes, inability to moor near the bank, etc.

I will write to BW and implore them to do something.

We know why they don't. They make millions from selling water to Bristol using the canal as a conduit between the intake pumps at Gloucester and the treatment works at Purton. Any chemical treatment to tackle the weed would compromise the water purity. Lack of commercial traffic and inflows of salt water via the sea locks is another factor making this worse. What the canal needs is a resurgence of heavy commercial traffic and a BW management that cares about the dwindling numbers of pleasure craft who take the risk of damaging their craft or having a ruined holiday because of the weed.

I would ask you to insert a short note to this effect in the newsletter and ask our members to inform us if they have experienced problems this year and urge them to complain to BW at Gloucester in writing. Apparently the lock keeper at Gloucester gets many verbal complaints.

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## FREIGHT NEWS

### A BIG THANK YOU!

Boaters tied up in various cuts on the Aire and Calder in early August waiting for the flood waters to run off the Aire, including your Editor, were very impressed by the patience and consideration shown by the barge skippers, whose schedules had also been severely disrupted by both flooding and police diving operations.

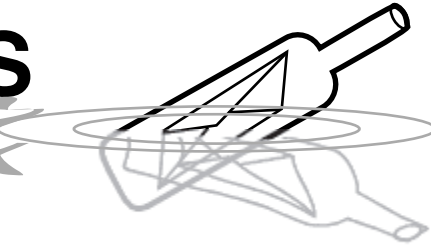
### **ROBERT WYNN & SONS LTD. SECURES £8.5M BOOST FOR INLAND WATERWAYS AND SHORT-SEA SHIPPING**

The £8.5M grant will cover 99% of the cost of building a Multi Purpose Pontoon (MPP) vessel and converting a former inland barge (the *Inland Navigator*) to transport Abnormal Indivisible Loads, typically in excess of 150 tonnes. Over the next 20 years the project will remove significant numbers of abnormal loads from the increasingly congested road network.

The MPP system, which comprises the two vessels, will operate on short-sea routes around the British coast and on the larger inland waterways. Inland locations such as Leeds, Manchester, Marlow, Nottingham, Rotherham, Worcester and York will all now become accessible.

More details on [www.mpp.org.uk](http://www.mpp.org.uk)

# LETTERS



## Guide to Overnight Moorings

I think the format looks good and I think the concept is excellent.

How about showing a selection of the information in the next magazine to show members what you are trying to achieve and the format you need the information in. I still think the best way to get this information is for a member to adopt a "Home Stretch". How about asking for volunteers to contribute.

Also, how would a member get a copy of the information if they are not on the web?

Moving about the system as we do, this sort of information is invaluable and I think gives a very positive image of NABO and its members helping each other.

I think I have mentioned this before, but why could we not keep a central record of members, who might like to exchange moorings for a period of time.

We leave our moorings at Norbury Junction on the Shroppie for at least four months every year,

mooring on towpaths around the system as we go. I am sure a member who would like to explore the Shroppie at leisure would be interested in swapping their mooring on a different part of the system for a period of time.

Just a thought and I don't know how BW would feel but it might be worth asking the members the question.

John Robinson

To remind folks, the moorings info John refers to was mentioned in Issue 5/01 (p.14) and is at present on the NABO web site via the Members Only page (Password = Branch). I have put a sample on Page ?? in this issue but, as it is still 'under construction', we haven't committed it to print on paper. Roger Davis has offered to provide hard copy on request, I suggest you send him an S.A.E. with your request and name the waterways you need. Don't be suprised if the return is a bit lean, John is one of very few members who has contributed to this project. I doubt if I shall have time to progress it much until October. Ed

## **Another 'In Season' Stoppage**

Good to receive Issue 4/02 of NABO News - but not good at all to read "Another 'In Season' Stoppage on the Notices page.

We have had a five-week trip organised for a couple of months now, which involves Stourport to Worcester on Friday 20th September, i.e. five days after the Stoppage is due to start. Many family and other things are planned around the trip, so it cannot simply be re-dated. More amazingly I have just received the Boater's Code and Waterway Information on the G&S Canal and the River Severn from BW Gloucester, in response to a request and no mention in with them of any 'in season' stoppage.

In other words, if one does not belong to NABO and so receive the 'News', one does not get to know - until far too late.

I now have to replan completely, and let everyone know that BW apparently are unable to plan ahead - as I have done, and wasted my time doing so.

Richard Smith

## **License Debate**

The proposed new continuous cruising licence does not just affect continuous cruisers, it is a threat to

everyone who ever moves their boat. BW want to introduce this licence to reflect the 'intensity of use'. It is a very crude beginning to what could become a whole raft of usage related charges.

If BW are allowed to introduce the continuous cruising licence, the principle of usage-related charging will be established.

It is not too difficult to image the charging structure becoming:

- a) A 'mooring fee' to reserve a water space. (Except that BW can re-let it when you are away)
- b) A 'licence fee' to float your boat on your reserved water space (why else would you want a reserved space anyway?)
- c) A 'usage charge' whenever you move from your reserved space. (Based on miles moved, locks passed, days spent away, drinking water used, rubbish collected, loos emptied...) You will probably have to file a cruise plan with BW before you go so that they can work out the charge. As they are currently proposing a 150% uplift for 12 months' cruising, perhaps the uplift if you leave your moorings for 3 months in the summer will only be 100% (at some sort of short term rate), plus a fixed charge per lock and mile. When will this slippery slope end - in the cut?

Once upon a time you could go cruising when you felt like it. Now there are so many boats on the system that BW seems to need to find a way to make them stay on their moorings. Of course hire boats and timeshares will be allowed to cruise, because they are the major leisure industry earners. Private boaters are just simply a nuisance.

David Mann

## **Credit where Credit is due !**

An Open Letter to BW, EA and MSC

Last year, apart from the occasional local potter, we cruised nowhere - after ten years the boat fit-out really ought to have been finished. Well, as far as a boat ever is, it is finished now and to celebrate we decided to go to this year's Russell Newbery annual rally which was to be held in July at Anderton.

Wherever it is held this is always great, relaxed and interesting with speakers of the calibre of Tony Lewery.

This year the added bonus of a ride on the Lift at last and the chance to cruise the Weaver and MSC was irresistible. The only snag were deadlines, like availability of accommodation at the local cattery, meant that the whole trip from

Dundas at the bottom of the K&A and back would have to be accomplished in less than five weeks.

To make the trip interesting and also to attempt a number of rendezvous meant that the outward run went via the N.Oxford to the T&M. Homeward would be via the Ship Canal at Ellesmere Port to continue via the Shroppie, BCN (stop for the NIA), N Stratford, and back to our Coal Canal mooring - a tight schedule but possible. In reality, it was a brilliant trip with every objective fulfilled and the total of 668 miles and 581 locks taking in 15 different waterways completed in four weeks and three days of totally trouble free cruising.

Which is actually why I am taking up space with this piece - to say thanks to those who made it possible.

I have been on Council now for six years. We seem to get ever busier beset with having to respond to so many changes and innovations that one way or another threaten to curtail our boating pleasure or make it impossible other than to an affluent and aging minority.

For me, this year's cruise has been a welcome antidote. We have boated during the last twenty years over virtually all of the system, some parts many times. Never have we had had a more trouble free trip.

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

The general state of the track was in almost every regard better than we have ever known it. All the BW staff we met around the system could not have been more courteous - with an especial thank you to those on the Weaver and one in particular at Caen Hill

Water levels were universally up to weir with only one exception. For the first time ever from start to finish, we never had to lift the weed hatch. So a very big thank you to all at BW, EA and MSC who feel they can take some of the credit for such a great trip.

No gripes then? Well just a few to be fair and balanced - which we always are on NABO Council! Why the great variations in basic and simple maintenance - such as greasing the paddle gear? E.g. compare the easiest ascent we have ever made on the transformed Wolverhampton 21 with piggish bottom paddles on the Cheshire locks, especially approaching Wheelock

Where is the knowledgeable Quality Control of restoration on the K&A? E.g. the newly laid brick quadrants and foot holds on the Crofton flight are just put in the same place as the old concrete ones which were designed for a different length of lock beam - result very nice bricks three feet or more from the end of

the beam and almost useless. Has anyone broken an ankle on those iron foot stirrups on some of the K&A beams? Sooner or later they will as anyone with a size 11 boot or over will get jammed.

Wonderful to see the resurrection of gate paddles on the Grand Union but ruined by those stupid baffles which invite every bit of rubbish to join the party - we could have spat more into Denham Deep Lock than the new paddles contributed.

Chatting to a number of BW employees we got the distinct impression that a major gripe is lack of any waterway/ boating experience amongst some of those appointed to some recent middle management posts eg actual neophyte manager instruction to hoary BW operative: "you can't tie those two boats next to each other - they might bang together and sink".

Why not make it a requirement that anyone aspiring to middle or higher management must demonstrate experience of at least six months, or even a year, on the track working locks, meeting and talking to boaters - maybe, even doing a bit of actual boating themselves.

Roger Davis (Membership Secretary) (Sara No5)

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